



ATTENDANCE POLICY

INFORMATION FOR PARENTS

As a school we aim to:

- Maintain an attendance rate of a minimum of 95%
- Maintain parents' and pupils' awareness of the importance of regular attendance
- Maintain good time keeping
- Support the ongoing learning of pupils who have extended absence due to medical difficulties

Good attendance is important because:

- Statistics show a direct link between under-achievement and poor attendance
- Regular attenders make better progress, both socially and academically
- Regular attenders find school routines, school work and friendships easier
- Regular attenders find learning more satisfying
- Regular attenders settle into high school more easily

As a parent you can help us by:

- Ensuring your child attends school regularly. Absence should only happen when your child is significantly ill and therefore unfit to attend school; or if there is an unavoidable/unforeseen reason or circumstance which is causing a difficulty/period of difficulty
- Telephoning on the first morning of any absence to give us the reason and tell us when the child is likely to return to school – *a message through the escort is not sufficient.*
- Arranging all non-emergency medical appointments out of school hours or during school holidays
- Sending us a note confirming the reason for your child's absence when s/he returns to school
- Supporting frequent absence claimed as illness by medical evidence
- Keeping us updated by telephone or letter if your child has any extended period of absence
- Making sure we always have your current contact numbers; this includes all telephone numbers, child minders and emergency contact details

We shall:

- Follow up unexplained absences by phone calls and letters as necessary
- Remind parents of the importance of regular attendance and punctuality in our letters, the school brochure, open evenings and Annual Reviews
- Acknowledge and praise good attendance and punctuality
- Publish your child's attendance rate on her/his annual school report
- Let you know if we have concerns regarding your child's attendance and punctuality
- Work closely with outside agencies (e.g. wheelchair clinic, blue badge scheme operators) to arrange meetings in school to reduce the necessity to take pupils out of school for appointments elsewhere.

Authorised Absence

Some absences are allowed by law and are known as "authorised absences". For example: if a child is ill, family bereavement, religious observance. Requests for foreseeable absences (e.g. appointments) or for exceptional leave should be made in advance using the application form available from the school office. Where possible, this should be submitted to the Headteacher at least two weeks before the requested date.

Following operations:

Pupils should always stay at home the day after an operation to ensure they are recovering well from anaesthetic and to allow for a handover if necessary.

If the operation has resulted in a change of positioning or chair, then a plan needs to be given to the school so that a moving and handling assessment can be arranged.

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We would expect the therapy and health teams to liaise with the school MDT to allow for a successful handover.

Unauthorised Absence

There are times when children are absent for reasons, which are not permitted by law. These are known as “unauthorised absences”. Examples of unauthorised absence are:

- Waiting for a delivery
- Taking or collecting a relative to/from the airport
- Going for a family day out
- Sleeping in after a late night
- Going shopping or for a hair cut
- Because it is your child’s birthday
- Term time holiday/Cheap flights
- Parent’s illness
- Forgetting what day is the first day of term.

Where there is no explanation for an absence or where the explanation or reason for the absence is considered unsatisfactory, absence will be recorded as ‘unauthorised’. Unauthorised Absences have to be reported to the Local Authority. The School Attendance Service may contact you where unauthorised absence continues to be a problem. **Unauthorised absence could result in a Fixed Penalty Fine or other legal action.**

Punctuality

- If your child comes in by school bus, you must ensure your child is ready for the bus in the morning. The bus will only wait a maximum of 5 minutes for your child. If your child is not ready for the bus, misses the bus for any reason or the bus does not operate, you still have an obligation to ensure that your child attends school.
- It is important to be on time as the first part of the school day is used to give out instructions or organise schoolwork for the rest that day. It is also a time for children to settle down so they are ready for lessons immediately after registration.
- Morning registration is at 8.45 a.m. This is the time your child must be in school. Late arrivals are disruptive to the whole class and often embarrassing for your child.
- If you are bringing your child in to school late for any reason, you must report in to the school office so that your child can be marked as present in the building. Office staff will then take your child to the relevant classroom.
- Lateness - particularly if the lateness is frequent or persistent and due to the parent rather than the school bus - after the close of registration will be marked as unauthorised absence code ‘U’ in line with the DfE guidance. This is effectively an absence.
- All lateness is recorded daily. The number of minutes late and the reason for lateness if known will also be recorded. This information can be made available to the courts in the form of a report, should a prosecution be the outcome of repeated lateness. Lateness due to the delay of the school bus will be recorded as such and is not considered in the control of the parent.
- If you collect your child from school, please collect your child promptly at the end of the school day. Where late collection is persistent and/or significantly late, the school is obliged to take any uncollected pupil to a place of safety and share concerns with other agencies.

Flexible school attendance

A flexi schooling approach is a temporary part-time attendance arrangement which works as a bridge to reintegrate those children and young people who are

- Excluded from other schools.
- Going through social and emotional difficulty
- Experiencing a phobia of school.
- Recovering from a protracted illness.
- Returning to school gradually after a period of absence such as Covid, recuperation from an operation.
- Challenging housing situation that prevent pupil from leaving the house.

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It gives freedom to start school again on a gradual basis or an agreed phased return.

We monitor and review the 'Flexi schooling' approach to ensure that the pupil is returned to full-time attendance as soon as possible.

Often there are other agencies involved with the pupils such as health and social care. In these cases multi agency meeting (that could be part of a Child in Need or Child Protection Plan) are held to move the case forward as swiftly and safely as possible.

Part time/flexible school arrangements are recorded on the Part Time Attendance sheet which is returned to the Local Authority twice a year.

For pupils who have an agreed flexible attendance a blended learning approach is implemented and monitored.

Blended learning approach

John Chilton School provides a Blended Learning approach for students who find attending school challenging for different reasons. Some pupils may be on a flexi attendance agreement; others may not be able to attend for an extended period due to:

- chronic illnesses needing bed rest, hospitalisation or a period of shielding before and after and operation
- major operations such as back surgery that involves lengthy hospital stays and recuperation
- shielding due to a pandemic and a chronic condition which makes the pupil extremely vulnerable
- an extended trip abroad due to family crisis or medical treatment

This learning approach ensures that pupils are still able to access appropriate learning activities, meet their tutor/teacher regularly, have packs of learning to reinforce and maintain concept knowledge and skills.

Blended learning involves a combination of:

- Visits home for learning/therapy sessions with an appropriate member of staff
- Virtual lessons with a qualified member of staff or attending the class lessons through a link
- Learning packs sent home for completion, returned to school- marked and monitored
- Tutor time 1:1 through a virtual platform

Exceptional Leave - Term Time Leave of Absence

We are always concerned about the amount of school time pupils miss as a result of term time leave. There is **no entitlement** to time off during term time. Leave of absence is only granted in exceptional circumstances at the discretion of the Headteacher in accordance with the school policy as agreed by the governing body.

It is our policy that:

- Only in an exceptional circumstance will term time leave be allowed. Parents/Carers wishing to apply for leave of absence need to get in contact with the Headteacher before booking tickets or making travel arrangements.
- If a child is not present at the beginning of a school term, we cannot guarantee that a place will remain available on their return to school
- **If term time leave is taken without prior permission from the school, the absence will be unauthorised and you may be liable for a fixed-penalty fine or other legal action and in certain instances the child may also lose their school place.**

Please remember that absence, for whatever reason, disadvantages a child by creating gaps in his/her learning. A good understanding of the work and good progress can only take place when the child is in the classroom regularly and on time.

Leavers

If your child is leaving our school (other than at the end of Year 11) parents are asked to:

- Give the school comprehensive information about their plans including any date of a move, your new address and telephone numbers, your child's new school and the start date when known. This should be submitted to our school in writing

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- When pupils leave and we do not have information, about where they have gone, then your child is considered to be a 'Child Missing Education'. This means that the Local Authority has a legal duty to carry out investigations, which will include liaising with Children's Services (formerly Social Services), the Police and other agencies, to try to locate your child.

By giving us the above information, these investigations can be avoided.

Legal Note

Parents have a legal duty to ensure the regular and full time attendance at school of registered pupils (Education Act 1996). This policy is based on the law and on Best Practice guidance produced by the DCSF and the Local Authority. The School Attendance Service aims to work with schools and families to promote good attendance and avoid legal action. However in some cases, parents are prosecuted (taken to court) or have to pay a Fixed Penalty (fine) if these absences continue.

We value your support in helping us to maintain the high standards to which we always aspire.

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