
ATTENDANCE (STUDENT)

PREFACE

Chiltern Hills Academy is a learning environment at the heart of its community. We encourage every person in our community to:

Create, Aspire and Excel to 'Live life in all its fullness' (John 10:10)

We achieve this through our dedication to the seven Christian values of love, hope, self-discipline, compassion, forgiveness, respect and honesty.

We are a community in which staff, students and parents work collaboratively to develop a learning environment and organisation which is spiritual, safe, innovative, creative and exciting. All members of the Academy are motivated and inspired by the vision to give their best and to play a full part in the life of the school and in their own developing lives.

The Governors at Chiltern Hills Academy are committed to achieving the vision and values. They oversee and monitor this policy to ensure that this is being achieved.

1. INTRODUCTION

Regular school attendance is essential if students are to achieve their potential.

Chiltern Hills Academy believes that regular school attendance is the key to enabling children to maximise the educational opportunities available to them and become emotionally resilient, confident and competent adults who are able to realise their potential and make a positive contribution to their community.

Chiltern Hills Academy values all its students. As set out in this policy, we will work with families to identify the reasons for poor attendance and try to resolve any difficulties.

Chiltern Hills Academy recognises that attendance is a matter for the whole school community. Our Attendance Policy should not be viewed in isolation; it is a strand that runs through all aspects of school improvement, supported by our policies on safeguarding, bullying, behaviour and inclusive learning. This policy also takes into account the Human Rights Act 1998, the Disability Discrimination Act 1995 and the Race Relations Act 2000.

2. LEGAL FRAMEWORK

Section 7 of the 1996 Education Act states that parents must ensure that children of compulsory school age receive efficient full-time education suitable to their age, ability and aptitude and to any special educational needs they may have, either by regular attendance at school or otherwise.

A child is of Compulsory School Age at the beginning of the term following their fifth birthday. A child ceases to be of compulsory school age on the last Friday in June of the school year in which they reach the age of 16. After this age it is expected that a young person will follow one of three pathways: apprenticeship, further education or part-time education and part-time work.

Under the Education Act 1996, the Local Authority has a statutory responsibility to ensure that parents secure education for children of compulsory school age and where necessary, use legal enforcement.

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The Education (Student Registration) (England) Regulations 2006, require schools to take an attendance register twice a day, once at the start of the morning session and then again during the afternoon session.

The register must record whether the student was:

- present
- absent
- present at approved educational activity, or
- unable to attend due to exceptional circumstances.

3. CATEGORISING ABSENCE

Where students of compulsory school age are recorded as absent, the register must show whether the absence is authorised or unauthorised.

Absence can only be authorised by the school and cannot be authorised by parents. All absences will be treated as unauthorised unless a satisfactory explanation for the student's absence has been received.

Parents should advise the school by telephone, text or email on the first day of absence and provide the school with an expected date of return. This should be followed up in the form of a written note from the parent/carer, though verbal explanations may be acceptable where this is considered appropriate. A note for the academic tutor may instead be written in the Student's Planner

Absence will be categorised as follows:

Illness

In most cases a telephone call or a note from the parent informing the school that their child is ill will be acceptable. Parents must be asked to provide medical evidence where there are repeated absences or a prolonged absence due to reported illness. This will usually be in the form of an appointment card, prescription etc.

Medical/Dental Appointments

Parents are advised to make medical and dental appointments outside the school day. Where this is not possible, students should attend school for as great a part of the day as possible. Appointments made late or early in the day will support this. The Academic Form Tutor or Student Services staff will need to see a note or appointment card and will give the student an exeat slip to authorise this.

Other Authorised Circumstances

This relates to occasions where there is cause for absence due to exceptional circumstances, for example family bereavement or part time timetable agreed as part of a reintegration package with the Attendance Officer, the Academic Year Leader or a senior member of staff.

Excluded (No alternative provision made)

Exclusion from attending school is counted as an authorised absence. The student's Academic Year Leader will make arrangements for work to be collected for completion at home.

Late Arrival

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Students must be in their form rooms by 8.40am on Monday, Wednesday, Thursday and Friday and at 9.25am on Tuesday. They will be recorded as late after this time. Registration closes at 9.00am on Monday, Wednesday, Thursday and Friday and at 9.30am on Tuesday. If the student arrives after this time, this will not be authorised and will count as an absence. Late arrival will incur up to a 10 minute detention at the end of the day. Persistent lates will result in an hour's detention after school.

If students arrive after 8.40am on Monday, Wednesday, Thursday and Friday, or after 9.25am on Tuesday, they must immediately report to the Student Services office to sign in. This ensures that we can be responsible for their health, safety and welfare whilst they are in school. If a student does not do this, first day absence calling will take place.

The absence will only be authorised if a satisfactory explanation for the late arrival can be provided, for example, attendance at a medical appointment (Code M).

The absence will be recorded as **unauthorised** if the student has arrived late after the registers close without justifiable cause (eg; if they woke up late, were waiting for a friend or were dropping a sibling off at school) (Code U).

Unauthorised absence

Absence will not be authorised unless parents have provided a satisfactory explanation and that it has been accepted as such by the school.

Examples of unsatisfactory explanations include:

- A student's/family member's birthday
- Shopping for uniforms
- Having hair cut
- Closure of a sibling's school for INSET (or other) purposes
- Waking up late
- Illness where the child is considered well enough to attend school. (This will also include absence from school when the child is "active" during the school day or in the evening)
- Family holidays taken during school term time

Leave of Absence and Extended Leave

Parents do not have a right to remove their child from school during term time for the purpose of a holiday. Parents should be aware that if their child is absent for 10 school days they will miss 5% of their education during that academic year.

However, in exceptional circumstances (which does **not** include a family holiday) leave of absence **may** be granted at the discretion of the Principal. (An example might be on compassionate grounds in the case of the death of a very close relative).

Parents wishing to take their child out of school during term should make an application on the Leave of Absence form available from Student Services **before** arrangements are made. Documentary evidence of leave and return dates may be required in order to process your request. Retrospective requests will not be considered and therefore will result in the absence being categorised as unauthorised. Each request will be considered individually and will take the following factors into account:

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- Length of the proposed leave
- Age of the student
- The student's general absence/attendance record
- Proximity of public examinations
- Student's ability to catch up the work missed
- Student's educational needs
- General welfare of the student
- Circumstances of the request
- Purpose of the leave
- When the request was made

All requests for leave of absence will be responded to in writing. Where a request has been granted the letter should state:

- The expected date of return
- That parents must contact school should any delays occur

If the permission to take leave is not granted and the student is absent, the absence will be **unauthorised**. In such cases the school may refer the matter to the Education Welfare Service who will issue a Penalty Notice.

Religious Observance

Chiltern Hills Academy acknowledges the multi-faith nature of British society and recognises that on some occasions, religious festivals may fall outside school holiday periods or weekends and this necessitates a consideration of authorised absence or special leave for religious observance. (Code R)

It is reasonable for a parent to allow their children not to attend school on any day of religious observance if recognised by the parent's religious body.

Parents are requested to give advance notice to the school if they intend their child to be absent.

However, in the interests of fulfilling the academic requirements of the school and limiting the authorised absence rate of the school, it is identified as reasonable that no more than one day be designated for any individual occasion of religious observance/festival and no more than three days in total in any academic year.

Any further absence will be categorised as unauthorised.

Traveller Absence

The aim for the attendance of Traveller children, in common with all other children, is to attend school as regularly and as frequently as possible.

To protect Traveller parents from unreasonable prosecution for non-attendance, the Education Act 1944, section 86, states that a Traveller parent is safe from prosecution if their child accrues 200 attendances (i.e. 200 half days) in a year. This is only when the family are engaged in a trade or business that requires them to travel and when the child is attending school as regularly as that trade permits.

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It does not mean that part-time education for Traveller children is legally acceptable, nor does it relieve parents of their duties to ensure that their children are receiving suitable education when not at school.

When in or around Buckinghamshire, if a family can reasonably travel back to their Base School (see below) then the expectation is that their child will attend full-time.

Chiltern Hills Academy will be regarded as the base school if it is the school where the child normally attends when they are not travelling. However, the student must have attended in the last 18 months. Traveller children can register at other schools temporarily while away from their base school. In such cases, the student's school place at Chiltern Hills Academy will be kept open for them whilst travelling. This is to protect them from unfairly losing their place at their school of usual attendance.

Chiltern Hills Academy can only effectively operate as the child's base school if it is engaged in on-going dialogue with Traveller families. This means that parents must:

- advise of their forthcoming travelling patterns before they happen; and
- inform the school regarding proposed return dates

Chiltern Hills Academy will authorise absence of Traveller children if we are satisfied that a family is travelling and parents have given indication that they intend to return.

Traveller children will be recorded as attending an approved educational activity when:

- The child is on roll and attending another visited school
- Undertaking supervised educational activity under the jurisdiction of another local authority's Traveller Education Service
- The child is undertaking computer based distance learning that is time evidenced

Where Traveller children are registered students at a school and are known to be present either at a site (official or otherwise) or in a house and are not attending school, the absence will be investigated in the same way as that for any student.

4. DELETIONS FROM THE REGISTER

In accordance with the Education (Student Registration) (England) Regulations 2006, students will only be deleted from the register when one of the following circumstances applies:

- The school is replaced by another school on a School Attendance Order
- The School Attendance Order is revoked by the local authority
- The student has ceased to be of compulsory school age
- The student has moved out of the area with no intention of returning and unable to commute
- Permanent exclusion has occurred and procedures have been completed
- Death of a student
- Transfer between schools
- When a parent informs the school in writing that the student is to be withdrawn to be educated outside the school system
- Failure to return from an extended holiday after both the school and the local authority have tried to locate the student

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- A medical condition prevents their attendance and return to the school before ending compulsory school-age
- In custody for more than four months (in discussion with The Youth Offending Team)
- 20 days continuous unauthorised absence and both the local authority and school have tried to locate the student
- Left the school but not known where he/she has gone after both the school and the local authority have tried to locate the student

Chiltern Hills Academy will follow Buckinghamshire County Council's Children Missing Education Protocol when a student's whereabouts is unknown.

5. ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

Chiltern Hills Academy believe that improved school attendance can only be achieved if it is viewed as a shared responsibility of the school staff, governors, parents, students and the wider school community.

Senior Leadership Team, Academic Year Leaders, Subject Leaders, Academic Tutors, Pastoral staff and all other staff (as appropriate) will:

- Actively promote the importance and value of good attendance to students and their parents
- Form positive relationships with students and parents
- Contribute to a whole school approach which reinforces good school attendance. Good teaching and learning experiences will encourage all students to attend and to achieve
- Comply with the Registration Regulations, England, 2006 and other attendance related legislation
- Implement systems to report, record and monitor the attendance of all students, including those who are educated off-site
- Analyse attendance data to identify causes and patterns of absence
- Contribute to the evaluation of school strategies and interventions
- Work with other agencies to improve attendance and support students and their families
- Document interventions used to a standard required by the local authority should legal proceedings be instigated

The Academy expects that Parents will:

- Talk to their child about school and what goes on there, taking a positive interest in their child's work and educational progress
- Instil the value of education and regular school attendance within the home environment
- Encourage their child to look to the future and have high aspirations
- Contact the Academy if their child is absent to let them know the reason why and the expected date of return. Follow this up with a note where possible.
- Avoid unnecessary absences. Wherever possible appointments for the doctor, dentist etc. should be made outside school hours
- Ask the school for help if their child is experiencing difficulties
- Inform the school of any change in circumstances that may impact on their child's attendance
- Support the school; take every opportunity to get involved in their child's education, form a positive relationship with school and acknowledge the importance of children receiving the same messages from both school and home

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- Encourage routine at home such as bed times, home-work and preparing school bag and uniform the evening before
- Not keep their child away from school to go shopping, to help at home or to look after other members of the family
- Not take their child on holiday during term-time.

6. USING ATTENDANCE DATA

Students' attendance will be monitored and will be shared with the Local Authority and other agencies if any student's attendance is a cause for concern.

Academic Year Leaders and Academy Attendance Officer will monitor year group attendance. AYLs will regularly receive Attendance Data for all those students in their year group with under 90% attendance. Depending upon reasons for absence the AYL will continue to monitor or contact parents.

Weekly, the Academy Attendance Officer will publish the previous week's attendance on the Student/Staff Bulletin.

Updated Tutor Group Attendance data and individual students with 100% Attendance will be posted on the Attendance Noticeboard each month.

Weekly the Academy Attendance Officer will provide Academic Year Leaders with Attendance Data for each individual student in their year group. The list will be presented in numerical descending order with the highest attendees at the top. Academic Year Leaders will receive a complete set of data for their year groups to inform actions.

This student data will be used to trigger school action as set out in the escalation of intervention (Appendix 1).

Attendance data will also be used to identify emerging patterns and trends to inform whole school strategies to improve attendance and attainment.

Chiltern Hills Academy will share attendance data with the Local Authority as required. All information shared will be done so in accordance with the Data Protection Act 1998.

7. SUPPORT SYSTEMS

Chiltern Hills Academy recognises that poor attendance is often an indication of difficulties in a child's life. This may be related to problems at home and/or in school. Parents should make school aware of any difficulties or changes in circumstances that may affect their child's attendance and or behaviour in school, for example, bereavement, divorce/ separation. This will help the school identify any additional support that may be required.

Chiltern Hills Academy also recognises that some students are more likely to require additional support to attain good attendance. For example, those students with special educational needs, **young carers**, those with physical or mental health needs, migrant and refugee students and looked-after children.

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The Academy will select from a range of strategies to support improved attendance. Strategies used will include:

- Discussion with parents and students
- Referrals to support agencies
- Use of learning mentors
- Use of friendship groups and student mentors
- Positive re-enforcement through reward systems
- Time limited part time time-tables
 - Additional learning support
 - Behaviour support
 - Inclusion Unit and Learning Zone support
 - Reintegration support packages

Support offered to families will be child-centred and planned in discussion and agreement with both parents and students.

8. LEGAL SANCTIONS

Where intervention fails to bring about an improvement in attendance, Chiltern Hills Academy will notify the Buckinghamshire County Attendance Team of the irregular attendance.

The County Attendance Team may invite parents to attend a Parenting Contract Meeting (if not already conducted by the Academy) and issue a formal warning of a Penalty Notice.

Parenting Contracts

(Anti-social Behaviour Act 2003). A Parenting contract is a voluntary agreement between the Local Authority, school and the parent, it can also be extended to include the child and any other agencies offering support to resolve any difficulties leading to improved attendance.

The contract will outline attendance targets and will detail agreed actions that will help to achieve the target. The contract will be reviewed regularly.

The contract can be used as evidence in a prosecution should irregular attendance continue.

Penalty Notices

(Anti-social Behaviour Act 2003). Penalty Notices will be considered when:

- Intervention has failed to bring about improvement and further unauthorised absence has occurred following written warning to improve.
- A student has taken leave of absence i.e. for the purpose of a holiday in term time and the absence has not been authorised by the school

The Academy will provide information to Bucks County Council to support the issuance of a Penalty Notice. Failure to pay the Penalty Notice may result in a prosecution under Section 444 of the Education Act 1996.

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Prosecution

The Academy will provide the Local Authority with evidence required for a prosecution under Section 444 of the Education Act 1996. This is to ensure that parents realise their own responsibilities in ensuring attendance at school and most importantly about returning children to education.

MONITORING, EVALUATION AND REVIEW

This policy will be reviewed when there are changes in the law or at least every two years, to assess implementation and effectiveness.

This policy will be promoted and implemented throughout the Academy.

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Appendix I Intervention Flow Chart

The Academy will notify parent(s) of the child's irregular school attendance and offer them the opportunity and support to improve.

- If you receive a letter informing you of concerns regarding your child's attendance you should
- Speak with your child to see if there are any reasons why they are reluctant to attend
 - Contact the Academy to discuss any difficulties you or your child may be experiencing.
 - Ensure your child attends regularly

If there is no improvement and the parent has not provided a good reason for the absence, the Academy will ask for a meeting with the parent(s) to agree and sign a Parenting Contract

If there continues to be no improvement The Education Welfare Service may issue a Warning of a Penalty Notice.

A Parenting Contract is a voluntary agreement between you and the school aimed at supporting you in improving your child's school attendance.

Whilst your involvement in a Parenting Contract is voluntary, if you fail to engage with the support offered and your child's attendance remains irregular the Education Welfare Service may issue a Penalty Notice or begin legal proceedings in the Magistrates Court.

If you are issued with a Penalty Notice of £60 this must be paid in full within 28 days otherwise the Penalty will increase to £120. If you fail to pay the Penalty the Education Welfare Service may instigate legal proceedings against you.

If you are found guilty of this offence you can be fined up to £2500 and or be imprisoned for a period of three months.