



**CHEPSTOW
SCHOOL**
INSPIRING LEARNING

CHEPSTOW SCHOOL

ATTENDANCE POLICY

Approved by: Full Governing Body

Last Reviewed on: 13/03/2025

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In the event of pupil absence, parents/carers need to contact the school via telephone or email:

Absence line: 01291 635795 **Email:** General enquiries - info@chepstowschool.net

Family and Community Engagement Officer - Hannahsprake@chepstowschool.net

Chepstow School's unique approach to excellent attendance for all learners

Chepstow School is fortunate to employ our very own Family and Community Engagement Officer, a strategy which has been at the heart of our approach to improve family engagement and pupil attendance before, during and in the aftermath of the pandemic. Getting 'the right person for the job' is considered a key factor in the success of this approach - we have learned that this officer needs to have credibility in the local community and to know it well; helping families to overcome any barriers to their children's learning.

As a result of identifying the individual needs of the families in this way, the school has been able to help with supporting mental health issues and also helping with practical and financial problems. Several other factors that the school feels are essential in improving attendance are: strong leadership and a relentless focus on attendance improvement; clear processes that are well understood by both parents and school staff; a whole-team approach involving all aspects of the school's wellbeing team, including the ALNCo and the learning coaches; good relationships with external agencies including the police, and other schools as well as with local authority services and the town council; and improving the quality of teaching and the extra-curricular provision.

Family engagement is a key element of the 'community-focused schools' approach, which sees improving attendance not in isolation but as part of a broader strategy for helping all learners achieve their best. This approach underpins and strengthens all other ways of improving engagement and attendance.

Attendance is shared with all learners on a weekly basis and this information is also shared with parents/carers continuously throughout the year. Chepstow School is passionate to celebrate and reward excellent and improved attendance on a weekly basis; this strategy has inspired many of our learners to strive for our target of 98% and see significant improvements. We facilitate an attendance league whereby all tutor groups compete for the 'top attendance' position in each cohort, these pupils receive a reward every Friday to acknowledge their commitment to their learning and embody our core values of positivity, perseverance, ambition, curiosity and equity.

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1. The Law

Under section 7 of the Education Act 1996, the parent/carer is responsible for ensuring that their child of compulsory school age (age 5 to 16 years) receives efficient full-time education that is suitable to their child's age, ability, aptitude and to any special educational need the child may have. Parents can choose if they wish their child to attend at school, an alternative provision or by elective home education. If parents intend to send their child to Chepstow School, they should familiarise themselves with the attendance expectations captured in this policy.

The local authority is required under section 437 of the Education Act 1996 to ensure a child for whom they are responsible is receiving suitable education by regular attendance at school or otherwise.

NB: Where this policy states parent/parents this refers to parents, carers or guardians

2. Why is good attendance important?

Without good attendance, our efforts to provide high-quality education come to nothing; if a child is not present at school they cannot learn or reach their full potential.

Chepstow School is committed to achieving a positive and supportive ethos where children feel valued and respected and where children understand the importance of excellent attendance unless there are exceptional, extenuating circumstances. Chepstow students are expected to meet or exceed the school's minimum individual attendance requirement of 98%.

We recognise that excellent attendance is a critical factor to a productive and successful school carer and for establishing habits for the workplace; our school actively promotes and encourages 100% attendance for all pupils. Research has consistently demonstrated that missing school for even short periods of time can impact upon a pupil's chances of reaching their true academic and wider potential. There is a strong link between attendance rates and examination success. Missing 17 days in a school a year (an attendance rate of 91%) can result in a drop of a whole GCSE grade across all subjects. Unauthorised absences would not be accepted in the workplace and it is our duty to help our learners to prepare for life as effective adults.

Good attendance does not go unnoticed, to promote equity, our attendance award initiative is a weekly celebration of 100% attendance.

* A Cause for concern is when attendance falls below 95%.

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3. Promoting effective attendance via robust target setting

Guided by The Local Authority, schools are required to set robust attendance targets using benchmark quartile data and their own school's previous attendance rates. The Local Authority believes that all targets should be set above the medium benchmark quartile. The Local Authority will suggest targets but recognises that schools will need to agree their own targets and secure agreement from their Governing Body.

4. Recording and monitoring attendance

Chepstow School have systems in place to ensure accuracy and consistency, all pupils are registered electronically via the School Information Management System (SIMS). Using SIMS, we can monitor attendance, punctuality and investigate absence across the school. We analyse data, patterns and trends to develop future action planning and target setting.

We recognise that parents have a vital role to play in ensuring their child attends school regularly. Parents lead in the attendance drive and it is important to establish strong home-school links and communication systems that can be utilised whenever there is an attendance concern. If there are problems which affect a pupil's attendance we will investigate, identify and strive, in partnership with parent and pupils, to resolve those problems as quickly as possible with maximum support, compassion and empathy.

When recording attendance on the school register, we adhere to the Welsh Government definitions of the use of attendance codes:

Code	Meaning	Statistical Category
/\	Present at registration	Present
L	Late but arrived before the register closed	Present
B	Educated off-site (not dual registration)	Approved Educational Activity
D	Dual registered (i.e. present at another school approved educational activity or at a PRU)	
P	Approved sporting activity	Approved Educational Activity
V	Educational visit or trip	Approved Educational Activity
J	Interview	Approved Educational Activity
W	Work experience (not work based training)	Approved Educational Activity
C	Other authorised circumstances (not covered authorised absence by another appropriate code/description)	

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F	Agreed extended family holiday	Authorised Absence
H	Agreed family holiday	Authorised Absence
I	Illness	Authorised Absence
M	Medical or dental appointment	Authorised Absence
S	Study leave	Authorised Absence
E	Excluded but no alternative provision made	Authorised Absence
R	Day set aside exclusively for religious observance	Authorised Absence
T	Traveller absence	Authorised Absence
N	No reason for the absence provided yet	Unauthorised Absence
O	Other unauthorised (not covered by other unauthorised absence codes or descriptions)	Unauthorised Absence
G	Family holiday (not agreed or sessions in unauthorised absence excess of agreement)	Unauthorised Absence
U	Late and arrived after the register closed	Unauthorised Absence
X	Untimetabled sessions for non-compulsory not required to attend school-age pupils	
Y	Partial and forced closure not required to attend	
Z	Pupil not on roll yet not required to attend	
#	School closed to all pupils not required to attend	

The headteacher or their designated nominee determine an appropriate coding if a child is not present in school. Parents are required to provide a reason for any absence and the school will decide whether the absence will be authorised or unauthorised.

If the school has reason to question the validity of an absence then the code should signify that the absence is unauthorised.

Where a school uses a code which signifies that a child is present, (i.e. a B or a D code- either in school or engaged in an approved educational activity), then the statistical meaning of this code is that the child is present, engaged in provision, supervised by an appropriately qualified member of staff and is safe. Hence, the schools need to ensure that they are confident that their pastoral support plans reflect any supervision arrangements, which safeguard children who gave bespoke packages. Where pupils are being reintegrated or have a bespoke timetable then any sessions where they are not engaged in provision or that are not supervised by an appropriately qualified member of staff should be coded using the C code. Where pupils are being reintegrated or have a bespoke timetable then any sessions where they are not engaged in provision or that are not supervised by an appropriately qualified member of staff should be coded using the C code.

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5. Lateness

Pupils are registered within the first 10 minutes of Form Time and subsequent lessons. Pupils are required to be in their tutor room at 8:45am each morning, any pupil arriving after 8:45am is defined as late. Parents play a significant role in promoting attendance and engagement by ensuring that their child arrives at school on time and are fully equipped for the day ahead.

Chepstow School - School Day		
	Starts	Ends
Form Time	8:45am	9:05am
Period 1	9:05am	10:05am
Period 2	10:05am	11:05am
BREAK	11:05am	11:25am
Period 3	11:25am	12:25pm
Period 4	12:25pm	1:25pm
LUNCH	1:25pm	2:15pm
Period 5	2:15pm	3:15pm

Arriving late at school, or leaving school part way through the day, can be disruptive for the child, the teacher and other children in the class. If a child is late for registration then they will be coded with a late mark. In line with Welsh Government Guidance, the Local Authority advises that registers remain open for 30 minutes in both morning and afternoon sessions. If a child arrives after the register closes the child's absence should be recorded as an unauthorised absence for that session. If parents are having difficulty in getting their child to school, it is essential that they contact an appropriate school point of contact in the first instance; e.g. Family and Community Engagement Officer (01291 635795), Form tutor, Head of Year or Deputy Headteacher.

Persistent late arrival is regarded as truancy. Punctuality to school and to lesson is closely monitored and the appropriate intervention implemented, including communication with parents and applying appropriate sanctions.

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6. Absence from school

There are two types of absence from school, authorised and unauthorised. It is important to remember that any absence, whether authorised or unauthorised is included in the attendance figure (total attendance %).

First day contact – Parents have a responsibility to contact the school by 8:45am on the first day of absence to explain the reason for the absence. Thereafter, the parent must still contact school by 8:45am on each day of absence. Failure to contact the school will spark a safeguarding concern, each and every pupil must be accounted for on each school day, regardless if they are in attendance. Failure to contact the school and maintain regular communication could result in an unplanned home visit or support from the Education Welfare Service.

Authorised absence:

Authorised absence is defined as the school either giving approval in advance for the pupil being absent from school, or when an explanation offered is accepted by the school as satisfactory justification for absence. Please note, illnesses are generally regarded as unauthorised absence unless supported by medical evidence, i.e. an hospital appointment letter. Only school, not parents, can authorise an absence, and school must consider whether the reason for absence is reasonable before doing so. Where an absence is authorised, schools will use the appropriate and recognised codes to record the absence.

Unauthorised absence:

The Local Authority would advise that the following absences are not authorised by the school. These can include: -

- Truancy – Whole day or part of the day or lesson (including pupils truanting on or offsite)
- Absence which is condoned by the family without a valid reason (Parents keeping their child off school unnecessarily)
- Unexplained absences
- Leave taken without prior permission from the Headteacher
- Late arrival (after the register has closed)
- Holidays or trips in term time
- Birthdays, concerts or shopping trips
- Absences relating to breach of school policy, i.e. The Uniform Policy

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- Medical appointments without supporting medical evidence
- Any other absence not agreed by school

This is not a definitive list and schools should advise that if parents are requesting that their child have time off for other reasons, that parents contact the Headteacher.

Medical appointments:

Chepstow School does not authorise a full day's absence for a medical appointment such as dentist/orthodontist/GP. All appointments are requested to be made outside of the school day wherever possible but if an appointment has to be made during the school day we expect the pupil to be in before and/or after the appointment, depending on time. If a pupil is absent for the full day we will mark the absence as unauthorised for either the AM or PM register (unless otherwise agreed by the Headteacher).

Medical appointments **must** be supported by medical evidence or will otherwise be marked as unauthorised. It is the parent's responsibility to provide medical evidence in advance of the appointment where possible.

Examples of medical evidence include –

- A doctor/hospital appointment letter/card
- A named and dated photograph of medication prescribed on the day of absence
- Correspondence from medical team stating the date of absence, i.e. A screen shot of a GP text message appointment reminder
- Any direct correspondence from the medical professional to school confirming the date of absence and stating the reason why.

Holidays during term time

Local Authority strongly discourages holidays/short breaks during term time, holidays/short breaks during term time are not permitted and will be recorded as unauthorised.

If parents are considering booking a holiday/short break in term time they are strongly advised to contact the Headteacher before confirming any booking. Term dates can be obtained from the school either verbally, in writing or on a school's website.

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If parents are considering taking their child on a family holiday during school term time, there are certain things they should consider:

- Do they really need to take a holiday in term time or can they take the holiday during school holidays?
- Have they considered the disruption to their child's education?

If they feel that they must take the holiday during school term, they must notify school in writing stating the exact dates of absence and reason for term time holiday.

Requests for leave of absence for Children who are Looked After must be made by the Social Worker and NOT the Foster Carer, if such a request is received the School should immediately refer this case to their Educational Welfare Officer or Principal Officer Inclusion.

7. Response to non-attendance

If a pupil's attendance becomes causes a concern, school staff may respond in a number of ways to include:

- Issuing attendance related letters, i.e. 90% attendance warning letters
- Telephone parent meetings
- Face to face parent meetings
- Interventions to support attendance
- Collaborative approach, i.e. working with wider professionals to support attendance
- If all of the above have been exhausted we will refer to the Education Welfare Service (EWS).

8. Pupil Attendance and the Role of the Education Welfare Service

The main aim of the Education Welfare Service is to improve school attendance to ensure that all pupils are able to access and engage with all opportunities available to them.

The Education Welfare Service works closely in partnership with schools, other Local Authorities and all agencies to promote both the attendance and engagement of pupils of referred pupils.

The Education Welfare Service plays a critical role in supporting the well-being of young people. All staff within the Education Welfare Service adhere to the principles of confidentiality and follow the All Wales Child Protection Processes and the Local Safeguarding Policy. If supportive intervention does not impact positively upon the attendance of the pupil then the Education Welfare Service can progress formal processes in line with provision in the Education Act 1996 (Section 444 and 444A).

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Referrals to the Education Welfare Service need to be sent to the Education Welfare Service which will be operating a referral panel process from September 2019. The panel will operate on a fortnightly basis. Once a referral is accepted by the panel, actions will be identified for each individual Education Welfare Officer.

9. Fixed Penalty Notices

The Welsh Government has published Guidance on the use of Fixed Penalty Notices, Circular 116/2013. This requires each Local Authority to develop a Code of Conduct for the imposition of Fixed Penalty Notices. Monmouthshire has developed a Code of Conduct and this allied to the Local Authority Attendance Policy enables schools to request the imposition of a Fixed Penalty Notice.

The Welsh Government Guidance allows each Local Authority to impose a Fixed Penalty Notice if a child's unauthorised absence is in excess of 10 sessions per term. A session is defined as half a day. Hence it is vital that parents inform schools of reasons behind their child's absence. It is then up to the Headteacher who will decide whether to authorise the child's absence or not.

The Local Authority would need to follow the guidance as contained in Section 444 and 444A of the Education Act 1996. The Local Authority would issue a First Warning Notice and if there were no improvement, a Final Warning Notice would be issued. After issuing a Final Warning Notice and there was no improvement, a statement would be sent to Monmouthshire's Legal Department, highlighting interventions and actions undertaken by the Education Welfare Officer as evidence towards a prosecution. It is vitally important that registers are accurate and the coding reflects the child's engagement with any provision provided as schools could be called to give evidence in court.

10. Governor Attendance Panel Meetings

In the instance when a child's attendance does not improve, despite extensive support from the school, and other services, a Governor Attendance Panel Meeting will be facilitated. At the panel meeting, a representative from the school will present the attendance report, highlighting any barriers to school, along with all of the support and interventions put in place. Parents/Carers are given the opportunity to share the reasons why their child's attendance has been irregular, along with any other key agencies working with the family, e.g. Education Welfare Officer, Social Services, etc.

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The rationale for the meeting is to work together to identify and address all barriers to attending school, discuss current interventions and support in place, and if necessary then make further adaptations to support all involved. In some cases, it is recommended that the school offers more support, with the understanding that parents/carers will accept this support, working together with the FaCE Officer. The school may make referrals to appropriate and specialist services, in discussion with the parents/carers all working together to improve attendance.

The named Governor for Attendance on the Governing Body is Philip Averay.