



Attendance Policy

Last reviewed:	August 2026
Date of next review:	August 2027

Attendance Policy

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1. STATUS, SCOPE AND AIMS

This policy sets out Chessington School's expectations and statutory approach to attendance and punctuality. It applies to every student on roll, including students above compulsory school age where relevant, and should be read with the safeguarding, SEND, medical conditions, behaviour, children missing education and complaints policies. This policy is published on the school website, provided or signposted when a student joins and is brought to parents' attention annually whenever materially updated.

AIMS:

- Protect every student's right to a suitable full-time education.
- Make high attendance and punctuality a visible whole-school priority.
- Identify changes and patterns early, including for vulnerable groups.
- Listen to students and families, understand barriers and provide proportionate support.
- Reduce persistent and severe absence and prevent concerns becoming entrenched.
- Keep accurate statutory registers and follow up absence promptly.
- Use formal or legal intervention where support is inappropriate, unsuccessful or not engaged with.

2. VISION AND PRINCIPLES

At Chessington School, every day matters. Regular attendance supports learning, relationships, belonging, wellbeing, safeguarding and future opportunity. Our message is: We're Better When You're Here.

Our organising principle: Chessington uses a consistent whole-school model of early identification, targeted support and staged escalation.

- Expect high attendance from every student.
- Monitor accurate information and identify patterns promptly.
- Listen to students and families and understand the primary barrier.
- Facilitate support in school and access to wider help.
- Formalise support and enforce attendance where the statutory tests are met.

3. LEGAL FRAMEWORK AND DEFINITIONS

Parents have a legal duty to secure a suitable full-time education for children of compulsory school age. Where a child is registered at school, the parent must ensure regular attendance. The school must maintain electronic admission and attendance registers, use national codes, follow up absence and make required returns.

PRINCIPAL LEGISLATION AND GUIDANCE

- Education Act 1996, including sections 7, 19 and 444.
- School Attendance (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2024.
- Education (Penalty Notices) (England) Regulations 2007, as amended.
- Equality Act 2010 and the Public Sector Equality Duty.
- Children and Families Act 2014 and the SEND Code of Practice.
- Working together to improve school attendance (July 2026).
- Keeping children safe in education 2026 and Children missing education guidance.

FAIR AND INDIVIDUAL APPLICATION

The school applies this policy consistently while considering disability, medical needs, SEND, mental health, caring responsibilities, social care involvement and other barriers. High expectations remain, alongside reasonable adjustments and appropriate support. Attendance information can be a safeguarding indicator and is shared lawfully when necessary.

DEFINITIONS

Term | Meaning

Regular attendance | Every required session for its full duration, except where a statutory reason applies.

Persistent absence | Missing 10% or more of possible sessions for any reason.

Severe absence | Missing 50% or more of possible sessions for any reason.

Unauthorised absence | Absence without leave or where no acceptable statutory reason is established.

4. ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

LOCAL GOVERNING BODY AND TRUST

- Promote attendance through the school's ethos and policies.

- Ensure leaders fulfil statutory duties and the work is resourced.
- Review attendance, persistent and severe absence and group trends.
- Support and challenge leaders on impact, training and improvement.

HEADTEACHER

- Secure implementation, culture and resources.
- Appoint a Senior Attendance Champion from the leadership team.
- Determine or lawfully delegate leave decisions.
- Ensure registers, safeguarding responses and legal referrals are compliant.

SENIOR ATTENDANCE CHAMPION

- Set strategic direction and evaluate impact.
- Analyse attendance and focus effort on students and groups who need it most.
- Coordinate pastoral, inclusion, safeguarding and external-agency work.
- Report to governors and ensure staff are trained and accountable.

Contact: bcaven@chessington.kingston.sch.uk | 020 8974 1156

ATTENDANCE OFFICER

- Manage daily attendance processes, absence follow-up and accurate records.
- Support family communication, coding decisions and required returns.
- Coordinate monitoring, evidence and referrals with pastoral and senior leaders.

Contact: attendance@chessington.kingston.sch.uk | 020 8974 1156 ext. 207

ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES CONTINUED

HEADS OF YEAR AND TUTORS

Heads of Year lead attendance improvement within their year groups. Tutors know their groups, reinforce expectations, notice changes, build trusted relationships, contact families when asked, contribute to routine pastoral reviews and complete agreed actions. Pastoral leaders review patterns regularly so concerns, support and next steps remain visible and owned.

ALL STAFF

- Take registers accurately and correct errors promptly.
- Promote attendance consistently and do not normalise avoidable absence.
- Report patterns, in-school barriers and safeguarding concerns.
- Make reasonable adjustments within their role and complete agreed actions.
- Protect confidential information and use school systems appropriately.

PARENTS AND CARERS

- Ensure their child attends every required session, on time and ready to learn.
- Report unexpected absence before 8:00am on every day of absence, giving a specific reason.
- Request leave in advance and provide information needed for a lawful decision.
- Keep addresses, contact details and at least two emergency contacts current where possible.
- Engage with meetings, support and reasonable plans to improve attendance.

STUDENTS

- Attend every day and lesson, arrive punctually and remain on site unless authorised to leave.
- Tell a trusted adult about barriers, worries, bullying, learning gaps or wellbeing concerns.
- Participate in agreed support and reintegration plans.

5. EXPECTATIONS, SCHOOL DAY AND PUNCTUALITY

Milestone | Time and expectation

- Arrival on site | By 8:25am
- School day begins | 8:30am; students are in tutor time and ready to learn
- Morning register marked | By 8:35am
- Morning register closes | 8:55am
- Afternoon register marked | By 1:15pm
- Afternoon register closes | 1:30pm
- Normal school day ends | 3:00pm; planned activities may continue to 4:00pm

Arrival after the register starts but before it closes receives code L. Arrival after it closes receives code U unless another national code applies. Persistent lateness is analysed and addressed because it reduces learning and may indicate a wider barrier.

6. REPORTING AND FOLLOWING UP ABSENCE

- Parents report through Studybugs as soon as possible and before 8:00am. If they cannot access Studybugs, they email or telephone the Attendance Officer.
- The parent gives the student's name, form, specific reason, expected duration and relevant information. Contact is made every day unless another arrangement is agreed.
- If no reason is received, the Attendance Team contacts the parent promptly after the register closes and follows up until the reason and safety are established.
- Where contact cannot be made or risk is identified, the school may use emergency contacts, pastoral or safeguarding leaders, a home visit or an external-agency referral.

Safeguarding Unexplained, unexpected or unusual absence is not an administrative issue alone. The response reflects known risk and individual circumstances.

7. REGISTERS AND ATTENDANCE CODES

The admission and attendance registers are maintained electronically in the school management information system. The attendance register is taken at the beginning of each morning session and once during each afternoon session, at the times set out in section 5. Registration takes place at the same time for all students, including those on part-time timetables. The register remains open for the same period during each session and never for more than 30 minutes.

The school uses the national attendance and absence codes required by the School Attendance (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2024 and the current DfE guidance. Staff identify the primary reason why a student is not attending and apply the code that most accurately describes the circumstances. Detailed decisions follow the school's attendance coding procedure. The Attendance Officer or Senior Attendance Champion approves less common or complex codes.

- Register entries are legal records and are retained for six years from the date of entry.

- Any amendment preserves the original entry, amended entry, reason for the amendment, date and name of the person making it.
- Code N is used temporarily when the reason for absence has not been established before the register closes. The correct code is entered as soon as the reason is known and no later than five school days after the session. If no reason has been established by then, Code N must be amended to Code O.
- Code U is used when a student arrives after the register has closed and no reason has been established that would justify another authorised absence code.
- Remote education does not count as attendance. A student receiving remote education is recorded as absent using the code that describes the reason for absence. Engagement with remote education is monitored separately.
- Off-site education is recorded as attendance only where the relevant statutory conditions are met, the activity is supervised appropriately and the student's attendance at the provision is confirmed.
- Code D is used only when the student is registered at another school and is scheduled to attend that school for the session. The setting the student is due to attend records their actual attendance or reason for absence.
- Code C2 is used only for sessions missed under an agreed, temporary part-time timetable for a student of compulsory school age. It is not used for dual registration, flexi-schooling or part-time alternative provision.
- Where the school has agreed a flexi-schooling arrangement, authorised sessions during which the student receives education at home are recorded using Code C.
- Code Q is used only in the specific legal circumstances where required access or home-to-school travel arrangements have not been made. It is not used for ordinary transport difficulties.
- Code T applies only where the student has no fixed abode, travels with a parent and the parent's trade or business requires travel from place to place.
- Code Y6 applies where the student is well enough to attend but government public-health guidance or law says that they should not attend. Where the student is ill, Code I is normally used.
- Unexpected or unexplained absence from another school or off-site provision is followed up promptly through agreed same-day safeguarding arrangements.

A student is entered on the admission register on the agreed or notified starting day. An offer of a place, or the school being named in an EHC plan, does not by itself authorise earlier registration. Where a student has been entered without the required agreement or notification and has never attended, the invalid registration is removed promptly in accordance with the Regulations.

A student's name is removed from the admission and attendance registers only when a ground in Regulation 9 is fully met. Removal cannot be retrospective, and the name is removed from both registers at the same time. The school makes the required local-authority return and completes appropriate safeguarding and children-missing-education checks.

ILLNESS AND EVIDENCE

The school does not routinely request medical evidence for ordinary short-term illness. Evidence may be sought where there is genuine and reasonable doubt, absence is repeated or prolonged, or it is needed to agree support. Different forms of evidence may be accepted so that families are not required to obtain unnecessary appointments.

APPOINTMENTS

Routine medical and dental appointments should be outside the school day where possible. When that is not possible, parents provide appointment information and students attend before and/or after the appointment so only necessary time is missed.

REQUIRED RETURNS

The school shares daily data with the Department for Education and makes statutory new-pupil, deletion, attendance and sickness returns. A name is removed from roll only where a lawful ground applies and never to improve reported attendance.

8. BARRIER-LED SUPPORT, INCLUSION AND REINTEGRATION

Attendance percentages identify concern; they do not explain it. The school listens to the student and family, considers staff and professional information, identifies the primary barrier and matches the response to need. Secondary factors are recorded where relevant.

GRADUATED SUPPORT

- Early conversation, parent contact, tutor check-in or short monitoring period.
- Targeted pastoral, academic, SEND, medical, mental health or family support.
- An attendance support plan with actions, owners, measures and a review date.
- Reintegration and catch-up after significant absence.
- Multi-agency, early help, health, social care or local-authority involvement.
- Formalised support and legal intervention where statutory tests are met.

SEND, DISABILITY, HEALTH AND MENTAL HEALTH

The school maintains high ambition while making reasonable adjustments. Plans are developed with the student, parent and relevant professionals and reviewed as needs change. A temporary part-time timetable is exceptional, agreed with the parent, safeguarded, reviewed regularly and linked to a defined return to full-time education.

REINTEGRATION

A returning student should feel welcomed, safe and able to rejoin learning. Support may include a reintegration meeting, trusted adult, access arrangements, prioritised catch-up, Return to Learn materials, peer connection and planned review. Remote education is a last resort within a time-limited reintegration plan.

RECOGNITION

The school uses tutor time, assemblies, 23 to Progress and 24 to Achieve More, positive communication and inclusive recognition of consistency, improvement, resilience and engagement - not perfect attendance alone.

9. PERSISTENT AND SEVERE ABSENCE

A student is persistently absent when 10% or more of possible sessions are missed and severely absent when 50% or more are missed. The school also monitors students approaching persistent absence, including those above 90% but below 93%.

- Meet the student and parent to understand barriers and agree actions.
- Intensify support as absence intensifies and keep a consistent lead adult where possible.
- Review progress frequently and change approaches that lack impact.
- Work with the local authority and other partners where absence is persistent or severe.
- Prioritise disadvantaged, SEND, young-carer and social-care cohorts and other groups with lower attendance. Young carers are identified and recorded in the school census. Where caring responsibilities affect attendance, the school works with the student and family and facilitates access to early help, a young-carer needs assessment or other local support.
- Consider safeguarding action where absence increases risk or indicates neglect or exploitation.

10. LEAVE OF ABSENCE AND LEGAL INTERVENTION

The Headteacher may grant leave only in circumstances allowed by the 2024 Regulations. Requests for exceptional circumstances are made in advance and considered individually. The school does not operate automatic approvals. Holiday or leisure travel is not generally exceptional and Leave of absence cannot be granted retrospectively.

Where support is appropriate, the school and local authority seek to provide it before enforcement. Where it is inappropriate, unsuccessful or not engaged with, an attendance contract, education supervision order, Notice to Improve, penalty notice or prosecution may be considered.

NATIONAL FRAMEWORK FOR PENALTY NOTICES

- The national threshold for considering a penalty notice is 10 unauthorised sessions in a rolling 10-school-week period. Codes can be combined and the period can span terms or school years.
- The threshold triggers an individual decision, not an automatic penalty notice.
- Where support is appropriate but has not worked or been engaged with, a Notice to Improve will usually provide a final 3-6 week opportunity.
- The first penalty notice issued to a parent for a particular child is £160, payable within 28 days and reduced to £80 if paid within 21 days. A second notice issued to the same parent for the same child within three years of the first notice is £160, payable within 28 days, with no reduction. A third notice cannot be issued to the same parent for the same child within that three-year period. The local authority will instead consider alternative action, which may include prosecution or another legal intervention.
- Decisions follow the Royal Borough of Kingston upon Thames code of conduct and equality duties.

11. DATA, GOVERNANCE AND REVIEW

Leaders analyse whole-school, year, group and individual attendance; authorised and unauthorised absence; punctuality; code use; day and lesson patterns; persistent and severe absence; variability; and intervention impact. Data is benchmarked appropriately and used to focus action.

- The Attendance Team undertakes weekly analysis of individual, cohort, year-group and punctuality patterns so that emerging concerns receive early support.
- Pastoral leaders and tutors review emerging concerns and active plans routinely.
- Senior leaders review vulnerable cohorts, system quality and escalated cases.
- The Attendance Board reviews strategic indicators, impact and resourcing at least half-termly.
- Governors receive regular reports and challenge gaps, trends, impact and compliance.
- The policy is reviewed annually and after significant change, informed by student and parent voice.