



CHATHAM & CLARENDON GRAMMAR SCHOOL

Attendance Policy

Agreed by Governors: June 2024

1. Statement of Intent - Attendance is everyone's responsibility

Chatham & Clarendon Grammar School (CCGS) adheres to the principles and guidance outlined in 'Working Together to Improve School Attendance' August 2024.

CCGS is committed to the continuous raising of achievement of all our students. Regular attendance both in school and in all lessons is critical if our students are to be successful and benefit from the opportunities presented to them.

The CCGS ATTENDANCE CHAMPION is Clark Goodwin
(cgoodwin@ccgrammarschool.co.uk).

The CCGS ATTENDANCE OFFICER is Carol Bowrage
(cbowrage@ccgrammarschool.co.uk)

Our school culture promotes the benefits of high attendance, and we work hard to build strong relationships with families to support this. Prevention and early intervention Where a pattern of absence is at risk of becoming problematic, the school will work sensitively and closely with families to listen to and understand barriers to attendance.

Consistently promoting the benefits of good attendance and punctuality is fundamental to a successful and fulfilling school experience. The Governors, Headteacher and Staff in partnership with parents have a duty to promote the highest possible attendance at CCGS.

The law entitles every child of compulsory school age to an efficient, full-time education suitable to their age, aptitude, and any special educational need they may have. CCGS recognises and values the importance of all partners working together and will:

- **EXPECT** (Aspire to high attendance from all students)
- **MONITOR** (Rigorously use attendance data to identify patterns of poor attendance)
- **LISTEN & UNDERSTANDING** (Discuss with families re: barriers outside of school. Look at voluntary support options to tackle barriers to attendance)
- **FACILITATE SUPPORT** (Remove school barriers to help families access support)
- **FORMALISE SUPPORT** (Where above strategies are not successful, clearly explain consequences and consider formalizing support.)
- **ENFORCE** (If all other avenues are exhausted, enforce attendance through statutory intervention)

2. Parental Responsibility

It is the legal responsibility of every parent to make sure their child receives that education either by attendance at a school or by education otherwise than at a school.

School starts with registration at 8.40am. The normal school finish time is 3.15pm.

When parents decide to have their child registered at school, they have an additional legal duty to ensure their child attends that school regularly.

Parents have a legal duty to ensure that their child(ren) attend school regularly and arrive on time.

Regular attendance is essential to the all-round development of the child and they should be allowed to take full advantage of educational opportunities available to them. Poor attendance undermines their education and can put a student at risk.

Regular attendance in school and lessons is essential for students to get the most out of their school experience

Attendance Groups:

- 100-95% = Good attendance
- 90%-95% = At risk of attendance affecting learning
- Below 90% = Persistently absent student
- Below 50% = Severely absent student

It is a parents' responsibility to contact the school on the first day their child is absent, and subsequently, either by phone or by email. This is a safeguarding issue so that all parties know that your child is safe and their whereabouts are known. Parents should regularly update the school and inform the school when their child is returning.

- **Email:** loweroffice@ccgrammarschool.co.uk every day of absence to let us know that your child is not in school, giving the reason why and possible length of absence.
- **Text Message:** 01843 482028, these should include the student's full name, reg group and the reason for absence.
- **School Gateway App message option:** Use message option to inform school of absence details.

Students are expected to arrive by 8.40am (registration). All students that arrive late must report to the school office where the reason for lateness is recorded.

Parents can contact school reception or their child's form tutor, Head of House or our attendance officer with any attendance support needs.

When can your child miss school -

Parents can only allow their child to miss school if either:

- They are too ill to go in (school can offer additional support if your child cannot go to school for long periods because of a health problem). NHS link below may help:
<https://www.nhs.uk/live-well/is-my-child-too-ill-for-school/>

- If you have been given advanced permission from the school (you need permission from the headteacher if you want to take your child out of school during term time e.g. religious observance).
- If the local authority fails to provide your child's transport (not including public transport issues)

In law, these are the only acceptable reasons for a child being absent from school.

Advanced permission requests should be due to exceptional circumstances and can only be agreed to by the headteacher. It is up to the head teacher how many days your child can be away from school if leave is granted.

Students with the highest attainment at the end of key stage 4 have higher rates of attendance over the key stage compared to those with the lowest attainment.

Higher Attendance = Higher Attainment

3. Students with Medical Conditions or Special Educational Needs or Disabilities

CCGS adheres to the principles and guidance outlined by updated clarification relating to students who are prevented from attending school due to physical or mental ill health. This includes updated guidance within:

- Providing remote education Jan 2023
- Working together to improve school attendance August 2024
- Keeping children safe in education September 2023
- Arranging education for children who cannot attend school because of health needs December 2023
- Support for pupils where a mental health issue is affecting attendance February 2023
- Summary of responsibilities where a mental health issue is affecting attendance February 2023

Some students face greater barriers to attendance than their peers. These can include students who suffer from long-term medical conditions or who have special educational needs and disabilities. Their right to an education is the same as any other student and therefore the attendance ambition for these students should be the same as they are for any other student.

The school recognises that some students with a SEND need may be more anxious about attending school. Specific barriers to attendance will be considered by the school.

The school will work with parents to overcome and remove barriers to learning and will consider individual circumstances, being mindful of safeguarding responsibilities (KCSIE guidance 2022). The school approach will focus on:



CCGS will record absences as authorised where students cannot attend due to illness (both physical and mental health related). In instances of long-term or repeated absences for the same reason, further medical evidence may be appropriate.

If a parent seeks a note from a GP, this does not imply a need for absence unless explicitly noted in their letter.

Effective support and practices to improve attendance may include:

Reasonable Adjustments:

- Short-term withdrawal from lessons to facilitate emotional regulation and building resilience (School Relational Approach – Thrive Approach)
- Supported break and lunch spaces
- Exit Cards
- PSHE and additional assemblies/activities to support anxiety
- Access arrangements for assessments
- Fidget toys/Ear defenders
- Adapted school uniform for students with sensory difficulties

Part Time Timetable:

All pupils of compulsory school age are entitled to a full-time education. In very exceptional circumstances, where it is in a student's best interests, there may be a need for a temporary part-time timetable to meet their individual needs as part of a re-integration package. **Any part-time timetable should seek to maximise face-to-face school time as much as possible.**

In consideration of non-statutory guidance (Summary of responsibilities where a mental health

issue is affecting attendance Feb 2023, Support for pupils where a mental health issue is affecting attendance Feb 2023), a part-time timetable **must** only be in place for the shortest time necessary and not be treated as a long-term solution.

At CCGS, a part-time timetable **will be limited to no more than 6 weeks (and it may be less, dependent on individual circumstances)**, with an agreed phased return to full-time education expected over that 6-week period. This will be regularly reviewed by the student and their parents.

Remote Learning:

In consideration of non-statutory guidance (Providing remote education Jan 2023), in exceptional circumstances it may be appropriate to consider providing accessible high quality remote education. Such provision cannot be seen as an equal alternative to attendance in school.

There should be limited circumstances where a student is unable to attend school but is able and well enough to continue their education remotely.

In some exceptional cases, these circumstances might also include students whose attendance is being affected by a special educational need or disability or mental health issue. CCGS will consider the provision of remote education on a case-by-case basis. Where this is agreed, it should be seen as a short-term solution only and will focus on core subjects.

Close monitoring and clear timelines will be agreed along with robust reviews of efficacy to help ease the student back to school at the earliest opportunity.

CCGS will work closely with the local authority and any relevant medical professionals to ensure that a student's healthcare needs are fully supported, and that the local authority is made aware of students likely to miss more than 15 days.

4. The Role of the School Staff

At CCGS there is a whole school responsibility and approach for improving school attendance, with specific staff taking individual responsibility.

A senior member of staff will have responsibility for the strategic overview of school attendance. This '**Attendance Champion**' will support the effective, operational delivery of the school attendance framework.

The Attendance Officer has overall responsibility for monitoring attendance issues.

CCGS will use robust data tracking to target attendance improvement efforts. Termly checks will be made of whole school patterns and those of specific groups. Individual checks will be completed weekly as part of KS attendance meetings and relevant attendance reports will be shared with key staff to aid discussions with families. Data will be used to understand and evaluate the impact of any such interventions.

Coding for attendance at CCGS is shown in Appendix 5 and uses the appropriate national attendance and absence codes from regulation 10 of the School Attendance (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2024.

Day to day processes:

Form Tutor/Class teacher – completes a register at the beginning of each morning. Class teachers register their classes. The pd5 register acts as our afternoon session. Marking the attendance registers twice daily is a legal requirement. (The Education (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2006). Teachers mark students present, absent or late.

Any unauthorised absence is recorded (if SIMS not available then a hard copy register should be taken and sent to reception). Staff raise any attendance concerns during the day using the TEAMS school alert system.

Form tutors will work with HOH and attendance staff to support and challenge any attendance issues.

School Reception / Attendance Officer – will contact home directly by phone and text to:

1. Make parents aware that the student is absent
2. Ask for explanation for absence
3. Log parental responses in order to determine appropriate registration coding

It is the responsibility of the Attendance Officer to ensure:

- Attendance and lateness records are up to date.
- Where there has been no communication, text messages/emails/phone calls are sent to parents requesting reasons for absence with a seven day reply to deadline before the absence is unauthorised.
- The appropriate attendance code is entered into the register (National Attendance Codes).
- Parents are informed termly of child's attendance figure.

The school will share information from registers with the local authority including new pupil and deletion returns, attendance returns and sickness returns. This is to facilitate and promote timely collaborative working across partners. CCGS will also use data tracking to identify and support any attendance trends of individuals, groups or cohorts of students.

5. Timeline for School Support

- **95 - 100%** All Students attendance – monitor and celebrate.
- **90 - 95%** At Risk Students attendance - monitored through attendance meetings and consideration of next steps. Move to stage 3 as required.
- **Below 90%** Persistently absent students - engage with family regarding any barriers to attendance. Move to stage 3-5 as required.
- **Below 50%** Severely absent students - Use all additional support/actions to reduce absence. Consider Local Authority or Penalty Notice referral where the absences have not been authorised and referral criteria are met.

CCGS will use the following stages of support. It will not always be appropriate to progress through these stages or to carry them out in the order listed.

Monitor & Support Stage		
1	Monitor and review weekly	90-95%
2	Attendance Letter 1	Below 90%
3	Contact with home (AO)	No improvement from above
4	Attendance Letter 2	Below 85%
5	Parent Meeting (AO & HOH)	As above
Additional Support/Actions		
6	Attendance Contract	With parental agreement
7	Home visit (as required)	3rd day absence and/or if safeguarding concern
8	External Support	Below 80% or if no improvement from above actions
9	Withdrawn from course (6th form only)	Failure to improve following support/actions
10	Penalty Notice Proceedings	Below 50% and/or in accordance with gov. guidance
11	Other Action (comment needed)	Personalised support/actions undertaken

Monitoring – all staff involved in monitoring and assessing attendance data.

Stage 1 –Discussion within weekly monitoring meeting / monitor as necessary.

Stage 2 –Generic CCGS Attendance Letter 1 to be sent.

Stage 3 –Attendance Officer to contact home.

Stage 4 –If attendance declines/not improves, CCGS Attendance Letter 2 to be sent.

Stage 5 –Meet with parents regarding school support to reduce any barriers to attendance.

Additional Support/Actions will be selected based on individual circumstances.

Stage 6 – An attendance contract is a formal written agreement between a parent and school. Although not legally binding, it is a more formal route to secure parental engagement.

An Attendance Contract is not a punitive tool. At CCGS, Attendance Contracts may be considered if appropriate as a means of exploring alternative actions before moving forward to an education supervision order or prosecution. If an attendance contract is not successful, parents should be informed of the possibility of the contract being terminated, and another course of action considered.

Stage 7 -Home visit by member of staff / virtual meeting may be appropriate.

A home visit by the Attendance Officer may be appropriate as part of a wellbeing check regarding attendance/safeguarding. Individual circumstances will necessitate reasonable consideration of a given situation.

In principle, the following steps (not exhaustive) will result in a home visit. In some settings, a virtual meeting via TEAMS may be the most appropriate and timely course of action (although this is not to be seen as a preferred 'check' mechanism). At any point, if there are concerns raised regarding a child's safety, the appropriate DSL referral will be made immediately.

- No home contact established regarding period of absence (by 5th day)
- Prolonged period of absence without justifiable cause and/or ongoing safety concern (attendance/safeguarding) (by 10th day)
- Ongoing support of student to encourage and breakdown possible barriers to attendance (as necessary)

The Attendance Officer will work in tandem with other relevant staff and/or external agencies where a home visit is necessary (e.g. Attendance Leads, SENCO etc).

Staff will follow the steps set out in the CCGS Lone Worker Policy.

Stage 8 -External Support. Where there is no improvement in a student's attendance and/or there are at least 10 sessions (5 days) unauthorised absence in a term (Autumn/Spring/Summer) the school will consider external support e.g. SLO, PIAS)

School Liaison Officer actions may include:

- Attendance Improvement Meeting
- Home visits
- Sign posting to supportive agencies e.g. Child and Adolescent Mental Health Service, Social Services and Family Group Conference Service.
- Fast Track to Prosecution

Stage 9 - Withdrawn from course (6th form only – additional information available).

Stage 10 - Penalty Notice Proceedings (see Section 11)

6. Lateness

At CCCS the register is taken at 8.40am and 2.15pm. Students arriving after these times must enter school by the main entrance and report to reception. The end of the normal school day is 3.15pm.

The register will close at 9.00am and 2.15pm. Students arriving after the register has closed will be marked as late after registration (Code 'U') and this will count as an unauthorised absence.

Frequent lateness will be discussed with parents and may be referred to the School Liaison Officer (SLO). It can provide grounds for prosecution or Penalty Notice.

7. Children Missing Education

No child will be removed from the school roll without consultation between the Head Teacher and the Attendance Service. Where a child is missing from education, Local Authority guidance will be followed

8. Penalty Notice Proceedings

The school will follow the National framework for penalty notices as identified in the 'Working together to improve school attendance August 2024' statutory guidance. The school will also adhere to the Local Authority Code of Conduct for issuing penalty notices.

The National threshold for considering penalty notices is:

- 10 sessions of unauthorised absence in a rolling period of 10 school weeks.

- A school week means any week in which there is at least one school session.
- This can be met with any combination of unauthorised absence.

Where the National threshold has been met, CCGS will consider and decide whether a penalty notice should be issued (eg. Is a penalty notice the best available tool to improve attendance?).

9. Authorising Absence

Only the Headteacher can authorise absence. Where there is doubt, the Headteacher, on behalf of the governing body, should take a consistent approach. The absence must be unavoidable. The Headteacher is not obliged to accept a parent's explanation, a letter or telephone message from a parent does not in itself authorise an absence. If absences are not authorised, parents will be notified.

If no explanation is received, absences will not be authorised.

Absence (leave) during term time can only be approved in "exceptional circumstances". The following reasons are examples of absence that will **not** be authorised:

- Persistent non-specific illness e.g. poorly/unwell
- Absence of siblings if one child is ill
- Oversleeping
- Inadequate clothing/uniform
- Confusion over school dates
- Medical/dental appointments of more than half a day without very good reasons
- Child's/family birthday
- Shopping trip
- Family Holidays (with some rare exceptions)

Persistent unauthorised absence (10% or more of the school year) may result in an AS1 referral to the School Liaison Officer for consideration of prosecution. The school will follow procedures prior to referral and parents will be notified in writing.

10. New Students with attendance or lateness concerns

If a new student has a history of poor attendance at their previous school, there will be a pre-start attendance meeting held.

11. Penalty Notices

The school will follow the National framework for penalty notices as identified in the 'Working together to improve school attendance August 2024' statutory guidance and the Local Authority Code of Conduct. CCGS will consider each case individually and also consider the full range of legal interventions available. Such interventions may include a Notice to Improve, penalty notice or other legal interventions.

The National threshold for considering penalty notices is:

- 10 sessions of unauthorised absence in a rolling period of 10 school weeks.
- A school week means any week in which there is at least one school session.
- This can be met with any combination of unauthorised absence.
- A Penalty Notice can also be issued where an excluded child is found in a public place during school hours.

- After the appropriate request for a Penalty Notice is received, the Local Authority will issue a warning letter setting out 15 school days during which no unauthorised absence is to be recorded.
- If an unauthorised absence is recorded during the 15 day period a Penalty Notice will be issued (one per parent per child). If Penalty Notice(s) is/are not paid within 28 days of issue, the Local Authority may instigate court proceedings.

Any examples provided are illustrative rather than exhaustive. It is acceptable to take a student's previous record of attendance into account when the school is making decisions. The fundamental principles for defining 'exceptional' are rare, significant, unavoidable and short. And by 'unavoidable' it implies that an event could not reasonably be scheduled at another time. It is important to note that Headteachers can agree the absence of a child in exceptional circumstances and this discretion can be used also to determine the length of the authorised absence.

Section 444 of the Education Act 1996 says that parents are **guilty** of an offence of failing to secure regular attendance at school unless they can prove that the child was absent due to the circumstances highlighted in 'When can your child miss school' (page 2).

Where the National threshold has been met, CCGS will consider and decide whether a penalty notice should be issued (eg. Is a penalty notice the best available tool to improve attendance).

12. Leave of Absence/Holiday

CCGS will follow and restrict leave of absence to the specific circumstances set out in regulation 11 of the School Attendance (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2024.

From September 2013 the Department for Education amended the Pupil Registration Regulations, removing the Headteacher's ability to authorise leave of absence for the purpose of a family holiday.

Section 444 of the Education Act 1996 says that parents are **guilty** of an offence of failing to secure regular attendance at school unless they can prove that the child was absent due to the circumstances highlighted in 'When can your child miss school' (page 2).

In law, these are the only acceptable reasons for a child being absent from school.

The Headteacher may authorise absence in "exceptional circumstances" but this must be requested in advance (at least 2 weeks in advance of the absence) and agreement to each request is at the discretion of the Headteacher, acting on behalf of the Governing Body (Education (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2006).

Each case will be judged on its merits and the Headteacher's decision is final.

Exceptional circumstances could include:

- Service personnel returning from a tour of duty abroad where it is evidenced the parent will not be in receipt of any leave soon that coincides with school holidays.
- Where an absence from school is recommended by a health professional as part of a parent's or child's rehabilitation from a medical or emotional issue.
- The death or terminal illness of a person close to the family.
- To attend a wedding or funeral of a person close to the family.
- Any strong personal reasons why a family might need to take a child away from school for a short break.

Family holidays, for whatever reason, cannot be approved, even if the parent is unable to take time off work at any other time. Requests for holidays in term time will not be authorised. If the absence is not authorised and the holiday is taken anyway, the case will be referred to the Attendance Service who will issue a Penalty Notice to each parent for each child taken out of school.