

CCGS Attendance Supplementary Guidance

Long-term Absence

'There is no substitute for face-to-face learning in the classroom'

Preamble:

This document is supplementary guidance to our main school attendance policy (see main school attendance policy pg7 and Appendix 2 – Stage 11 support).

This document outlines additional information regarding long-term absences including EBSA. It includes a CCGS reintegration plan framework which may be used to support a student towards a return to full-time face-to-face learning (as highlighted in paragraph 57 of statutory DFE guidance: Working together to improve attendance).

Overview:

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. There is no substitute for face-to-face learning in the classroom and this policy supplement is a steppingstone towards that end goal.

Where a student is unable to attend for a period of 15+ days, school is committed to providing appropriate support and reasonable adjustments to engage and enable a positive reintegration into full time education.

CCGS will provide necessary statutory data returns to local authority details of those students recorded as I (illness) who have or are likely to miss 15+ days (cumulatively or consecutively).

Parental Responsibilities:

Parents/carers have a duty, under section 7 of the Education Act 1996, to ensure that their child receives an efficient full-time education.

Parents should engage with school support offered and be reminded of the importance of regular attendance and the emotional and mental wellbeing benefits of attending school.

Where support offered is not engaged with, or where other options have been exhausted or deemed inappropriate, CCGS will work with the KPAS to consider whether to formalise support or enforce attendance through legal intervention.

Coding an Absence as I (Illness):

I Code: The pupil is not able to attend school due to illness (both physical and mental).

Medical Evidence

Although school will not routinely request parents provide medical evidence to support illness absences, in the case of long-term illness or repeated illness (15+ days), school will work with the parent to establish and validate reasons for absence and to mitigate and reduce potential barriers to attendance. This will also allow for additional support options to be considered.

If a parent proactively seeks a note from a GP, **it does not imply a need for absence unless this is explicit** in their letter.

SEMH (Social, Emotional, Mental Health)

School staff are not expected to diagnose mental health conditions or perform mental health interventions. School are expected to work to ensure regular attendance for every child.

CCGS recognises that attendance at school may serve to help with the underlying issue as much as being away from school might exacerbate it, and a prolonged period of absence may heighten their anxiety about attending in future.

All students are expected to attend school regularly, and CCGS will work to make any 'reasonable adjustments' to this aim.

CCGS Attendance Support General Principles:

- A clear aim to improve attendance whilst supporting any underlying mental health issue
- Maintenance of a calm, safe, supportive school environment
- Early identification/targeted support – working with student, parents/carers
- Focus on individual needs and **reasonable adjustment** to mitigate any school attendance barriers (through clear communication and agreement) which might include but not limited to:
 - adapted start and finish time
 - additional pastoral support
 - reviewed and adapted TT
 - additional break/lunchtime support
 - quiet space
 - additional external support access
 - additional mentoring/support
 - early leave/toilet pass/exit card support

Any 'reasonable adjustment should be agreed in consultation with parents/carers and include a recorded time-based review of actions and next steps. All developed plans need to recognise that such **steps are to maximise face to face attendance** and support the child back to regular attendance.

CCGS Attendance Support for Serious Absence (50%) / Long-term absence due to ongoing issue

Where attendance is less than 50%/more than 15 days – where appropriate, additional provision will be explored. Consideration regarding the type and level of support will include the complexity of need and/or the length of time the student is likely to be out of school.

Any such provision will take in to account any EHCP or other known factors, online safety and safeguarding. **Such provision will form part of a plan to reintegrate the student back in to school.**

Any remote education offer will be a last resort and only in exceptional circumstances. Such education will only be considered if it is judged that doing so would not adversely affect a student's return to school. This provision is to be seen as a short-term solution to help students keep on track.

In cases where a student has a temporary reduction in mobility, a risk assessment, adapted and/or phased return to school will be considered and school will work alongside parents to offer sufficient work in the interim period.

Stages of Support (for those students who find a return to school challenging):

The stages of support are outlined in the Reintegration Form.

The student will be marked as C2 (Leave of absence subject to part-time timetable) during this reintegration period.

Planning and Meeting Agreement

A Reintegration plan must be in place and all stakeholders involved prior to/or as part of any additional, remote learning offer – time related against agreed support and targets. The plan should be a graduated response to supporting a pupil back to school.

Such plans will be formulated as part of a set of agreed steps but will avoid putting unsuitable pressure on an ill child in the early stages of their absence.

Prior to this meeting, appropriate EBSA support material (KCC) will be shared with parent/carer.

Stage 1

Meeting & Agreed initial 2wk plan

Provision will **focus on small incremental steps of support and will focus on core subjects** (although students will continue to have access to all curriculum resources, Satchel One and other subject TEAMS) to make sure students do not become overloaded. All stakeholders should recognise that such provision is not an equal alternative to school attendance.

Wk1 and Wk2 target to be agreed at this meeting.

This meeting will also discuss different triggers for the student and support options for the parent.

SENCO/Attendance Officer/Attendance Champion will notify teachers of the individual student(s) which require any additional remote learning offer.

Staff will highlight work/activities each week via the appropriate class TEAMS area. This work is to support students to keep on track with their education.

Completed work by the absent student should be emailed/uploaded to subject staff who will check/mark (as would be the case for students in school). This will form part of the monitoring process. Staff will not be required to make additional requests for missing work.

Review 1 WK1 (virtual)

Review by school/parent/student regarding success/challenges faced in wk1.

Successful completion of wk1 will then be followed by wk2 targets

Unsuccessful completion of wk1 – consideration to repeat week or consider alternative offer.

Review 1 WK2 (meeting)

Review by school/parent/student regarding success/challenges faced in wk2.

Successful completion of wk2 will then be followed by agreement for wk3 & 4 targets.

Unsuccessful completion of wk2 – consideration to repeat week or consider alternative offer.

Stage 2

Meeting & Agreed 2wk plan (wk3 and 4)

Provision will focus on small, continued incremental steps of support and will focus on extending and developing wider subject content and in-school learning.

All stakeholders should recognise that such provision is not an equal alternative to school attendance.

Same process of reviews to take place for Stage 2 as with Stage 1

Stage 3

Meeting & Agreed 2wk plan (wk5 and 6)

Provision will focus on small, continued incremental steps of support and will focus actions on full time reintegration in to school.

Same process of reviews to take place for Stage 3 as with Stage 1 and 2.

After the maximum of three, two-week cycles, evidence should be collated and assessed to decide on next steps to support student reintegration.

The aim will be to return the student to face to face learning within a 6-week period.

If a student has not accessed work or returned work as agreed as part of the reintegration plan, school will consider if it is viable or appropriate to continue to offer further work.

Any such agreed reintegration plan should not be ongoing beyond the timeframe set out above (6 weeks), unless there is clear evidence of further need prior to a phased return to school. School will consider each plan independently and take in to account individual circumstances.

If, after this period, school concludes that there is no further school-based support available and parental and student engagement is not successful, it will seek to explore further external options and may decide that any further absence should be coded unauthorised.

EBSA (Emotionally Based School Avoidance)

EBSA is an umbrella term for a complex, emotional anxiety which can lead to difficulty in attending school. This is different from a student who chooses to truant.

EBSA characteristics include:

- Difficulty in attending school due to anxiety
- Severe emotional reactions
- Absence with parent knowledge
- Absence of anti-social behaviour

Anxiety is a normal feeling. Issues arise when anxiety becomes chronic and negatively affects an individual. It is important to normalise the feelings of anxiety but find alternative coping strategies other than avoidance.

Different factors may cause a student to link anxiety to school attendance. However, often, such anxiety will continue outside of the school environment and as such absenteeism is not an answer to the underlying issue of anxiety perception and anxiety management.

Often, support will require several prolonged/different support strategies. However, regular cycles of assessment, planning, implementation and reviews should be used to offer a positive, adaptable series of interventions.

Key Triggers of EBSA

1. Uncomfortable feelings e.g. fear of going to the school toilets
2. Avoidance of social/stressful situations e.g. fear of being left out
3. Separation anxiety e.g. need to gain/maintain attention (family)
4. Pursue tangible reinforcers e.g. low demand environment / gaming

Triggers 1 and 2 are focused around school

In supporting and working with parents, students and other agencies, CCGS will work to identify and put in early interventions to try to avoid the student's stress exceeding the support available.

If specific school barriers are identified, school will work with student and family to make appropriate adaptations to support a full return to school.

Triggers 3 and 4 are focused around the family

Although these triggers are more-family centred, CCGS will work to support student and families.

Separation anxiety – may affect both child and parent. CCGS will work to support parent to identify best practice ideas (e.g. positive goodbyes, special time) and guide parents/student towards wider support and links to managing anxiety.

Tangible Reinforcers – there needs to be a balanced approach to managing reinforcers which limit stimulating activities and which have clear boundaries to support as part of a stepped plan to reintegrate back into school.

Additional Information

CCGS will support students/families to remain in communication as part of school community – all generic information will continue to be shared with parents/carers/students.

Where some form of remote provision is necessary but identified as a barrier to engagement due to home provision, school will work with family to overcome any digital access barriers.

In the first instance, should parents or the child be dissatisfied with the support provided by CCGS, they should discuss their concerns directly. If, for whatever reason this does not resolve the issue, parents may follow our school complaints procedures.

Appendix Policy Checks as part of CCGS development of this supplementary document

- CCGS Attendance Policy (Aug 2024)
- Working Together to improve school attendance (Aug 2024)
- Kent Draft Policy – supporting children unable to attend school (June2024)
- 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)
- Providing remote education (Jan 2023)
- Emotionally Based School Avoidance Pathway (Kent Educational Psychology Service)
- Summary table of responsibilities for school attendance (Aug 2024)
- Promoting children and young people's mental health and wellbeing (Sep 2021)
- Arranging education for children who cannot attend school because of health needs (Dec 2023)
- CCGS Policy for children with health needs that cannot attend school (Jul 2020)

KCC Support Material (selected)



For Parents

Capturing your Child's EBSA Needs

This resource could be shared with parents before attending a meeting with the school setting to record their concerns in one place:

School

Home & Family

Health

Friendships

Other

Managing Separation Anxiety

Separation anxiety is excessive fear or worry about separation from home or someone such as a parent or carer. A child may withdraw from the situation to avoid becoming overwhelmed. It can lead to school avoidance.

To support your child, it is important that they:

- feel safe and secure at home.
- have trust for people other than a parent or carer.
- know that their parent or carer will come back to them.

How to help a child with separation anxiety

Have regular opportunities to experience small separations

Begin with a small situation and build over time at a pace that is right for your child. This will increase confidence over time.

Make goodbye normal

When handing over to a trusted adult, say goodbye with loving words or a hug. Let them know when you will be back and what you will do together. Keep goodbyes calm and brief and tell them they will be ok.

Leave a reminder

Give them an object that will comfort them such as a small toy, note or photo.

Come back on time

If you are unable to come back on time, try to call and let your child know so that they are not anxious

Playtime

Help your child to play with toys or dolls, that can be with an adult who makes them feel safe.

Sunday and Monday Plans

Mondays are often hard: it can help to have evening and morning routines to get your child ready for the school day. Think about a positive routine that can start on Sunday evening and maybe plan something for them to look forward too. The plan could be made with your child so they can give you their thoughts and ideas. You can make plans visual with pictures or photographs if this helps.

The following suggestions have been adapted from Dr. Tina Rae's "Sunday evening/Monday morning".

Sunday plans

Soothe Think about calming activities you can do with your child before they go to bed, such as naming 3 positive things about their day or listening to a sleep story / gentle music. Breathing exercises or mindfulness meditation can also help to calm the nervous system before going to sleep.

Understand Reassure your child that you understand how difficult it is and that their feelings are valid.

Neutralise Encourage your child to share their worries (ideally a few hours before bed) and talk through each one of them together. Drawing or writing in a journal or worry book can support this. Help them come to solutions or just listen and comfort them. Challenge any irrational thoughts by highlighting the evidence against them.

Decide Discuss what a successful day would look like and consider with your child what needs to happen in the evening to make it successful. Look through their schedule together, step-by-step, and make sure they have everything ready and laid out for the morning, for example, books, uniform, and PE kit.

Attend Be aware of your child's emotional state and be more attentive to them if needed. Consider using a transitional object with a younger child.

Yourself Ensure you feel calm and schedule time for your own self-soothing activities.

Monday plans

Organise Ensure you feel organised and ready in the morning. For example, your own bag is packed, and breakfast is set out so that you are available to support your child in a calm way.

Neutralise Allow time to speak with your child about their worries. Help them come to solutions or just listen and comfort. Challenge any irrational thoughts by highlighting the evidence against them.

Decide Go through the morning plan with them to get them into school. Clearly tell them how they will go to school, for example, the form of transport, who they will go with, and the route they will take, so they feel prepared and certain about what will happen when they leave for school.

Accept Attune to your child's emotional state and reassure them that they are loved and safe. Remind them that their feelings are valid, and it is okay to feel worried. Let them know that you will help to manage their worries. You might consider having a transitional object.

Your self-care Take time out to manage your own emotional state and use self-soothing strategies. Remind yourself of the following script 'if I stay calm, I will make him / her feel safe.'

Parent Support Resources and Organisations.

It is essential to build collaborative working partnerships with parents. Signposting to helpful resources and parent support organisations is an important part of this:

Young Minds

<https://youngminds.org.uk/find-help/for-parents/parents-guide-to-support-a-z/parents-guide-to-support-school-anxiety-and-refusal/>

Kent Resilience Hub

[Kent Resilience Hub - Kent Resilience Hub](#)

Square Peg

<https://www.teamsquarepeg.org/>

Not Fine in School

<https://notfineinschool.org.uk/>

The Solihull Approach

A well-researched framework for supporting mental health and emotional wellbeing. This website offers resources for parents including access to online training courses and parent groups and links for practitioners, schools, children centres etc.

<https://solihullapproachparenting.com/online-courses/>

Attendance Meeting Script

Purpose of today
<p>We are having this meeting today to talk about a plan that will support you/your child or young person to increase your school attendance. The key for this being a success is to understand the difficulties you are experiencing and to build on your strengths. We are all here to find the best way forward for you/your child or young person, so it is important to listen to what everyone is saying. If anyone needs a break, just say and we can pause the meeting, we can also end the meeting if required.</p> <p>I will be using the following headings throughout to record the meeting:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Your story, including the Push and Pull Factors, and the impact around of your non-attendance – this helps frame your attendance difficulties, so we can build a meaningful plan. • Your strengths – it is important we build on the positives in your life. • Your Plan – A targeted plan, with the aim of improving your school attendance. <p>At the end of the meeting, I will recap everything, and together we can consider if a review meeting is needed next term.</p>

Your Story
Your current school attendance is...
We know attending school has been difficult for you since...
You have said you don't attend school because...
What are your thoughts and feelings about attending school?

Push Factors – What are the things that push you away from attending school? For example, difficulties with friendships/a specific worry you have/a subject you are avoiding.	Pull Factors – What are the things that pull you away from attending school? For example, other friends not attending school/worried about something at home/inconsistent boundaries

How does your non-school attendance impact on...	
You	
Parents/Carer	
Siblings	
School	

Building a Plan
All attendees' views need to be gained in response to each question.
General school-based questions
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Tell me about something that is going well at the moment? • Talk to me about your favourite subjects/teacher/things you like doing at school. • Tell me about your friends in school. • How can we make the school a better place for you? • What would an ideal school/school day look like for you? • Can you name at least one thing we can try and change that will help you get into school more? • Is there anything your parent/carer can do to help you attend school? • Is there a school staff member you can talk to? If not, is there a member of staff you have in mind? • Tell me about a time you did go to school. What helped you? • Imagine you are back in school more. What difference would that make for you and the people around you? • What are your hope and dreams for the future? • How will you know this meeting today has been helpful?
School Transitions
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What are you most looking forward to about your new school? • What does a successful transition to (new school).....look like?
Year 10-11
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Think ahead to the end of year 11. What does life look like? What are you looking forward to doing? How do we get there?

Your Plan		
Action	Person Responsible	To be completed by

By signing the following plan, you all agree to complete the actions with the purpose of increasing school attendance for you (child's name) _____

Name	Signature

Review date: _____

Helpful tips for parents when tackling non-attendance:

1. Emphasise strengths, hope, and positivity
2. Increase your child or young person's self-esteem by making plans for activities, like cooking, going for a walk, watching a film together.
3. Consider setting rules around screen time/console use as a motivator to attend school.
4. Remember your own mental health – look after yourself.

Additional advice and support can be accessed:

Emotional based school avoidance webinar - <https://youtu.be/SY4Nu48OVrE>

Kent Education Psychologist Parent Consultation Line – School can refer.