



# Student Attendance Policy

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## Rationale

The school is committed to providing every student with an appropriate, effective and full-time education, suitable to their age, aptitude and special educational needs, in a safe, welcoming and inclusive environment. Regular and punctual attendance supports learning, wellbeing, safeguarding, communication, independence and preparation for adult life.

We recognise that students attending our School may face complex barriers to attendance, including physical or mental ill-health, sensory and communication needs, anxiety, transport difficulties and changes in care or family circumstances. We will maintain high expectations while responding with curiosity, compassion, reasonable adjustments and individualised support.

Improving attendance is everyone's business. The school will work in partnership with students, parents and carers, the local authority, health and social care professionals and other relevant services to understand and remove barriers as early as possible.

This policy has regard to the Department for Education's statutory guidance Working together to improve School attendance, updated July 2026; the School Attendance (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2024; Children missing education statutory guidance; Keeping Children Safe in Education; and guidance on supporting students with medical conditions and mental health issues affecting attendance.

- Developing and maintaining a whole-School culture that promotes the benefits of regular attendance and a strong sense of belonging.
- Having robust systems to record attendance accurately, identify emerging patterns promptly and act early before absence becomes persistent or severe.
- Listening to students and families to understand the individual drivers of absence and agreeing support that is recorded, regularly reviewed and adjusted where necessary.
- Working collaboratively with the local authority and other services, using formal or legal intervention only where support has not worked, has not been engaged with, or would not be appropriate in the circumstances.

Good attendance is important because of:

#### The impact on learning

- Any absence affects the pattern of a student's Schooling and regular absence will seriously affect their learning.
- Ensuring regular attendance at School is a legal responsibility and permitting absence from School without a good reason creates an offence in law.

#### Safeguarding

- Unexplained, prolonged or repeated absence can be an important safeguarding indicator and will be followed up promptly in accordance with the school's safeguarding procedures.
- Attendance concerns will be considered alongside all other information known about the student and family. Where a student's whereabouts or welfare cannot be established, the matter will be escalated without delay to the Designated Safeguarding Lead and, where appropriate, the local authority or other agencies.

#### **Promoting Regular Attendance**

Helping to create a pattern of regular attendance is everybody's responsibility - parents, students and all members of School staff.

To help us all to focus on this the school will:

- Communicate attendance and punctuality information to parents and carers regularly and in accessible formats, including the number of days or sessions missed where this helps families understand the impact.
- Celebrate strong and improving attendance sensitively, avoiding approaches that disadvantage students whose absence is related to disability, ill-health or other circumstances beyond their control.
- Use student and parent or carer voice to strengthen belonging and identify aspects of the School day, curriculum or environment that may create barriers.
- Ensure attendance expectations, available support and possible consequences are explained clearly, consistently and without jargon.
- Include attendance responsibilities and procedures in staff induction, training and regular briefings.

#### **Registration and Punctuality**

The attendance register will be taken accurately at the start of each morning and afternoon session using the current statutory attendance and absence codes. Morning registration will close at 9.30am and afternoon registration at 2.00pm. Registers are legal records and must be completed promptly.

A student who arrives after registration has begun but before the register closes will be recorded as late using the appropriate code. Arrival after the register has closed, without an authorised reason, will be recorded as an unauthorised late absence. Repeated lateness will be reviewed to identify causes and agree support.

- Contact parents or carers to understand the reason for repeated lateness and agree practical support.
- Review patterns of lateness rather than relying only on a fixed trigger, and communicate concerns promptly and sensitively.
- Where local-authority-arranged transport is delayed repeatedly, record the circumstances accurately and liaise with the relevant transport service and commissioning local authority.

### Absence Terms

Every morning and afternoon session must be recorded using the appropriate statutory code. The school, not the parent or carer, decides whether an absence is authorised, based on the circumstances and the evidence available.

**Authorised absence applies only where the relevant statutory conditions are met, for example illness, an unavoidable medical appointment, religious observance on a day exclusively set apart for that purpose, or leave granted in advance for exceptional circumstances.**

**Examples of authorised absence may include:**

- Illness, including physical or mental ill-health, where the student is not well enough to attend.
- An unavoidable medical or dental appointment; wherever possible, appointments should be arranged outside School hours and students should attend before or after the appointment when well enough.
- A day of religious observance exclusively set apart by the religious body to which the family belongs.
- Leave granted in advance by the principal because the circumstances are exceptional.
- Attendance at approved educational activity, dual registration, work experience, transition activity or other provision, recorded using the appropriate code.
- Failure of local-authority-arranged transport where no suitable alternative is available; the correct statutory code will be applied.

**Unauthorised absence is absence that does not meet the statutory requirements for authorised absence, or where sufficient information has not been provided to enable the school to authorise it.**

**Examples may include:**

- Parents keeping their child / young person off School unnecessarily
- Absences which have never been properly explained
- Children / young people who arrive at School too late to get a mark
- Holidays in term time (unless there are exceptional circumstances)
- Shopping
- Haircuts
- Missed bus
- Slept late
- No uniform
- Birthdays
- Holidays not agreed in advance

Where a student is reluctant or anxious about attending, the school will consider with the student and family, consider communication, sensory, health, safeguarding and environmental factors, and agree a coordinated plan. Parents and carers should not conceal the absence; early, honest communication enables the School and partner services to provide effective support.

### Leave of Absence

Requests for leave of absence should be made in writing to the principal in advance and, wherever possible, at least two weeks before the proposed absence. Leave during term time may be granted only where the principal considers the circumstances to be exceptional, with each request considered individually. For religious observance, absence will be authorised for the day or part-day exclusively set apart by the relevant religious body; additional travel or celebration time is not automatically authorised and must be considered separately under the exceptional-circumstances test.

### Students with Medical Needs and Mental Health Related Barriers

The School recognises that some students have complex or fluctuating health needs which may cause frequent or prolonged absence. We will not apply blanket attendance responses. We will work with the family, the student and relevant health professionals to understand needs, make reasonable adjustments and support the student to access suitable education.

- Maintain regular, agreed contact with the student and family, taking account of their circumstances and preferred communication method.
- Work with the local authority and relevant professionals to secure suitable educational support when illness prevents attendance, including notifying the local authority where a student is expected to miss 15 School days consecutively or cumulatively because of sickness.
- Plan a safe and supported return as soon as the student is able, including reasonable adjustments, therapeutic input and a temporary part-time timetable only where exceptionally required and, in the student's, best interests.

Medical evidence will not routinely be required for every illness. The school may request reasonable evidence where there is genuine and reasonable doubt about the authenticity of the illness or where evidence would help the School understand prolonged or repeated illness and put appropriate support in place. Evidence may come from a range of health professionals and should not create unnecessary cost or delay for families.

### Holidays During Term Time

A holiday is not considered an exceptional circumstance and there is no automatic entitlement to take a student out of School during term time. Parents and carers are expected to arrange holidays during School closure periods.

All applications must be made in advance. The principal will consider the specific facts and context of each request and decide whether exceptional circumstances exist and, if so, the number of sessions authorised. Previous attendance alone will not determine whether leave is granted.

Any leave taken without permission, or beyond the period authorised, will be recorded as unauthorised.

***For students of compulsory School age, where the national threshold of 10 sessions of unauthorised absence in a rolling period of 10 School weeks is met, the School must consider whether a penalty notice is appropriate in the individual case and will act in accordance with the local authority's code of conduct and the national framework.***

### Persistent and Severe Absence

A student is persistently absent when they miss 10% or more of possible School sessions, for any reason. A student is severely absent when they miss 50% or more. These thresholds are indicators for intensified scrutiny and support; the School will intervene earlier where attendance is declining or patterns cause concern.

Attendance will be reviewed by absence band, pattern and context, including current and cumulative attendance, persistent and severe absence, day-of-week patterns, punctuality and relevant cohorts. The School will consider the student's individual additional needs, medical needs, EHCP provision and known family circumstances rather than relying on percentages alone.

### School Procedures

If students are absent parents / carers must:

- Contact the School before 9.00am, or as soon as reasonably possible, on every day of unexpected absence unless another reporting arrangement has been agreed.
- Use the School's published attendance contact details and provide the student's name, class, reason for absence and likely duration.
- Parents / Carers should also inform the Local Authority taxi/minibus company that transports their child / young person (if applicable).
- Keep the School informed of any change in circumstances and ensure that emergency contact information remains current.
- Work with the School where illness is prolonged or repeated so that appropriate support and, where reasonable, relevant evidence can be considered.
- Engage with an early conversation where attendance is declining or a concerning pattern emerges, regardless of the percentage, so that barriers can be identified before absence becomes persistent.
- Attend support meetings and contribute to an individual attendance support plan where the student is persistently or severely absent, or at risk of becoming so.
- Provide any further information reasonably requested to enable the School to apply the correct attendance code and support the student.
- Provide evidence of a medical appointment where reasonably requested. The School will handle health information confidentially and only retain what is necessary.
- Avoid arranging non-urgent appointments during School hours where possible and support the student to attend before or after an appointment when they are well enough.

If a student is absent the School will:

- Make same-day contact where no explanation has been received, using the available emergency contacts and agreed communication methods. If contact cannot be established or there are welfare concerns, follow safeguarding procedures promptly; this may include liaison with relevant agencies or a home visit.
- Use a support-first approach, listening without judgement to understand barriers and agreeing clear, realistic actions with the student and family.
- Record the support agreed, the intended impact, responsibilities and review dates. Plans will be monitored regularly and adjusted where they are not improving attendance or meeting the student's needs.

This may involve:

- A coordinated attendance support meeting involving the student, parents or carers, relevant School staff and health, social care or local authority professionals as appropriate.
- Supportive home visits, where appropriate and carried out in accordance with safeguarding and lone-working procedures.
- Liaison with the relevant local authority about transport barriers and temporary alternatives where possible.
- Referral or signposting to appropriate internal and external services, including the School's multidisciplinary team, health services, social care and local authority attendance or SEND services.
- Reasonable adjustments to the learning environment, routines or curriculum. A temporary part-time timetable may be used only in very exceptional circumstances, where it is in the student's best interests, agreed with the parent or carer, time limited, recorded using the correct code, regularly reviewed and designed to return the student to full-time education as soon as possible.

### **Attendance Support**

The school works in partnership with the local authority attendance service and each student's home and commissioning authority. We will participate in regular Targeting Support Meetings, share information lawfully, seek advice for persistently and severely absent students, and coordinate attendance work with SEND, health, social care and safeguarding processes.

If absences persist and issues cannot be resolved:

- An individual attendance support plan may be agreed with the student, family and relevant professionals. The plan will identify barriers, adjustments, actions, named responsibilities, intended outcomes and review dates.
- Where voluntary support has not worked or has not been engaged with, or where support would not be appropriate, the school and local authority may consider formal support or legal intervention for a student of compulsory School age. This may include a Notice to Improve, an attendance contract, an Education Supervision Order, a penalty notice or prosecution. Decisions will be proportionate, consider the individual circumstances and equality implications, and follow statutory guidance and the local authority code of conduct.

### **Reintegration Following Long Term Absence**

- During prolonged absence, maintain regular and sensitive contact, preserve the student's connection and sense of belonging, and work with the local authority and relevant professionals to ensure access to suitable education.
- Before or at the point of return, hold a supportive reintegration conversation with the student and family to capture student voice, understand continuing barriers and agree practical next steps and reasonable adjustments.
- A trusted member of staff will provide regular check-ins and coordinate the reintegration plan. Progress will be reviewed until the return is secure and sustainable.

### **Roles and Responsibilities**

Those people responsible for attendance matters in this School are:

Principal: Natasha Johnson

Senior Leaders: Nicky Chance, Karolina Pelikan, Sarah Tomlin

Attendance Officer: Germana Kerr

The Principal and Senior Leadership Team will:

- Provide visible strategic leadership for attendance and ensure clear day-to-day responsibilities, sufficient capacity, training and resources.
- Ensure compliance with statutory attendance and admission register duties, daily data-sharing requirements and local authority returns.
- Analyse whole-School and individual data, including persistent and severe absence and relevant cohorts; coordinate support; quality assure practice; and report impact, risks and priorities regularly to senior leaders and governors or trustees.

Parents / Carers who will:

- Ensure students of compulsory School age attend regularly and punctually, and support older students to maintain strong attendance.
- Avoid requesting leave during term time except where genuinely exceptional circumstances apply.
- Report absence promptly, provide accurate information, keep contact details updated and respond to the school's contact.

- Work in partnership with the school and relevant services, engaging with support intended to remove barriers to attendance.

All staff who will:

- Promote a warm, predictable and inclusive environment in which every student feels safe, valued and that they belong.
- Notice changes in attendance or punctuality, listen to student concerns and share relevant information promptly with the senior Leadership Team or Designated Safeguarding Lead.
- Follow registration, absence reporting and escalation procedures consistently and contribute to agreed attendance support plans.
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Governors or trustees will set high expectations, provide support and challenge, review attendance data and trends, and assure themselves that the school's strategy, systems and use of resources are effective.

Students will be supported to understand the benefits of attendance, share their views about barriers and contribute to plans and reasonable adjustments in a way appropriate to their communication needs.

### Monitoring Procedure

Daily: The Attendance Officer will check that registers are complete and coded accurately, follow up unexplained absence on the same day, record contact and actions, escalate safeguarding concerns, and share relevant information with senior leaders.

Weekly: The SEND and PBS Lead will review absence bandings, individual patterns, punctuality, students whose attendance is declining, and progress against support plans. Relevant information will be shared with class teams, the multidisciplinary team and safeguarding leads on a need-to-know basis.

Half-termly: the senior leadership team will scrutinise current and cumulative attendance, persistent and severe absence, patterns by day or session, and cohorts including key stage, pathway, SEND, disadvantage, looked-after status and local authority. The impact of interventions will be reviewed and actions adjusted.

Termly: attendance trends, benchmarking, priorities, the impact of the attendance strategy and the position of persistently and severely absent students will be reported to governors or trustees. The school will participate in local authority Targeting Support Meetings and complete required returns.

Attendance data and practice will be quality assured regularly, including register coding, the timeliness and accessibility of communications, support-plan reviews, staff training and whether actions are improving attendance and student wellbeing.

### Admission Register and Children Missing Education

The school will maintain the admission register in accordance with the School Attendance (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2024. Where a student fails to attend as expected, the school will make reasonable enquiries promptly and work with the relevant local authorities. A compulsory-School-age student placed at a special School under local-authority arrangements will not be removed from the admission register without the local authority's consent, except where a statutory exception applies.

Where the School cannot establish a student's whereabouts or believes that a student may be missing education, it will follow the current Children missing education statutory guidance and safeguarding procedures. Information will be shared lawfully and without delay where this is necessary to protect the student or secure suitable education.

### Summary

The school will combine high expectations with early, individualised support. Accurate data, prompt follow-up, strong relationships, student voice and coordinated multi-agency working will underpin all attendance decisions.

Parents and carers have legal responsibilities for children of compulsory School age and are essential partners in identifying and overcoming attendance barriers.

This policy will be reviewed at least annually, and sooner where statutory guidance or local procedures change. The effectiveness of the attendance strategy will be evaluated through attendance outcomes, the progress of individual support plans, safeguarding information and feedback from students and families.