



# St Christopher's the Hall School



## Pupil Attendance

Policy Owner: Head

ISSR Reference: 14b Missing child policy; 15a Attendance policy

Reviewed: Michaelmas 2025

Approved: Education Committee (JS) Michaelmas 2025

Next Review: Michaelmas 2026

## Version Control Information

<b>Reason for Amendment</b>	<b>Role</b>	<b>Date</b>	<b>Main Changes</b>
Annual review	Head	Autumn 2025	New template Converted to a St Dunstan's policy

## Contents

1. Aims.....	3
2. Legislation .....	3
3. Roles and responsibilities .....	4
4. Pupils Attendance .....	5
5. Monitoring .....	13
6. Links with other policies .....	13

### 1. Aims

This policy is applicable school staff, pupils and parents.

It is the responsibility of the school to support attendance and to take seriously problems that may lead to non-attendance.

The school aims to meet its obligations with regards to attendance by:

- Ensuring a culture of good attendance is central to the school’s ethos and culture
- Working to reduce absence, including persistent absence
- Ensuring every pupil has access to full-time education
- Acting early to address patterns of absence
- Promoting punctuality in attending lessons
- Working with the relevant Local Authority when there are attendance concerns

### 2. Legislation

**2.1** This policy is based on the expectations laid out by the Independent Schools Inspectorate (ISI) and references the Independent Schools Standards and Regulations (ISSRs). Complaints relating to Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) provision can also be directed to Ofsted and by doing so operate on different timelines to the ones outlined in this policy.

**2.2** This policy meets the requirements of Working Together to Improve School Attendance (August 2024) from the Department for Education. This is drawn from the following legislation setting out the legal powers and duties that govern school attendance:

- The Education Act 1996
- The Education Act 2002
- The Education (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2006 (including subsequent amendments)

- Keeping Children Safe in Education (September 2024)
- Working together to improve school attendance (August 2024)

**2.3** According to the The Education (Independent School Standards) Regulations 2014, Regulation 3(15) “The standard in this paragraph is met if the proprietor ensures that an admission and an attendance register is maintained in accordance with the Education (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2006.”

**2.4** Every school is required by law to maintain two separate registers, an admissions register, known as the “School Roll” and an attendance register. School Inspectors are required to check both registers and assure themselves that the requirements of the regulations are being met.

**2.5** The Regulations covering school admission and attendance are very prescriptive, reflecting the importance that successive Governments have attached to ensuring that all children of compulsory school age attend school. Schools are required to ensure that an attendance register is taken twice a day, at the start of the morning session, and during the afternoon for all day pupils. The Regulations specify the contents of both registers and the manner in which they are operated and maintained. Where any reference is made to school procedures, this is inclusive of pupils in the EYFS.

### **3. Roles and responsibilities**

#### **3.1 St Dunstan’s Education Group**

The governing body has ultimate responsibility for attendance but will delegate day-to-day responsibility to the Head of St Dunstan’s Education Group, who delegates responsibility to the Head of St Christopher’s

The governing body has a duty to:

Review this policy annually and ensure it adheres to the ISSRs

#### **3.2 The Head of St Christopher’s**

The Head of Head of St Christopher’s is responsible for ensuring that promoting good attendance is a priority. Good attendance begins with pupils being somewhere pupils want to be and therefore the foundation of securing good attendance is that school is a calm, orderly, safe and supportive environment where all pupils are keen and ready to learn.

This involves:

- Developing and maintaining a whole school culture that promotes the benefit of high attendance.
- Setting high expectations for every pupil and communicating those expectations clearly and consistently to pupils, parents and staff.

- Ensuring processes are in place to monitor and analyse attendance regularly and having a procedure to follow when children are persistently absent.
- Ensuring the contents of this policy are understood by parents and staff.

### **3.3 School office administration team**

- The team is responsible for ascertaining reasons for absence of pupils on a daily basis. This involves:
  - Monitor attendance data at school and individual pupil level
  - Update the attendance register following communication on absence/lateness from parents via the [mail@stchristophersthehall.org.uk](mailto:mail@stchristophersthehall.org.uk) email address
  - Contacting parents/carers to query unexplained absences
  - Updating iSAMS registers to ensure they reflect the reasons for absence
  - Reporting attendance concerns to the relevant Head of Section
  - Alerting the safeguarding team to any unexplained absence
  - In liaison with the of Head Pastoral, monitor particularly vulnerable children including but not limited to those in private fostering arrangements, school refusers, children with medical or learning needs and children in Local Authority Care.

### **3.4 Detail all other key role holders and their duties**

The Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL) is responsible for regularly analysing attendance and absence data to identify pupils or cohorts that require support with their attendance and put effective strategies in place.

This involves:

- Monitoring and analysing termly and annual data to identify patterns and trends.
- Communicating attendance concerns with parents and offering support and guidance as appropriate

### **3.5 Staff**

Staff are responsible for adhering to the contents of this policy.

Staff will:

- Take the register twice a day within the permitted time frame and use the codes as described in annex 1
- Flag children with attendance concerns to the DSL and add context where necessary e.g. family, mental health.
- Promote the importance of good attendance to the pupils and parents

### **3.6 Pupils and parents/carers**

- Pupils and parent/carers are responsible for the pupils' attendance.
- Pupils and parents /carers will:
- Email/telephone the school office promptly to advise of non-attendance through illness
- Ensure any leaves of absence requested are for permitted or exceptional circumstances only. These leaves of absence should be requested at least 2 weeks in advance where possible.

## **4. Pupils Attendance**

### **4.1 Registration**

Schools must take the attendance register at the start of each morning session of each school day and once during the afternoon session. On each occasion we must record whether each registered pupil is physically in school or, if not, the reason they are not in school by using the appropriate national attendance and absence codes from regulation 10 of the School Attendance Regulations 2024.

In Preschool – Year 6 registers are called at 0830 each morning and close at 0845 for the first session of the day. Registers for the second session of the day are called between 13:20 but must be completed by 13:30. The calling of the Register must be undertaken by an adult and they must be marked using the official codes (see Annex 1).

We use the electronic management system Isams to complete attendance registers and this enables us to quickly and accurately share and analyse information. Registers are legal records and schools must preserve every entry in the attendance register for 6 years from the date the data was entered.

Parents/carers are required to telephone or email the school office prior to 0815 on the first morning of a child's absence. In the case of an extended period of absence through illness, parents/carers are asked to update the school of the child's progress. If a parent does not contact the school before 0815 to advise of an unexpected absence, the school will telephone or email the parent. It is vital and part of our safeguarding procedures that all unexpected absences are explained and accounted for.

### **4.2 Granting Leaves of Absence**

The Head can grant a leave of absence when a pupil needs to be absent from school with permission. We are expected to restrict leaves of absence to specific circumstances, which may include:

- Medical or dental appointments
- Days of religious observance
- Family bereavement
- Involvement in a public performance
- Off-site examination/interview
- School visits

- A temporary, time-limited part-time timetable
- Exceptional circumstances- the nature of such exceptional circumstances will be determined by the school on an individual basis. Schools are then expected to consider each application individually taking into account the specific facts and circumstances and relevant background context behind the request. If a leave of absence is granted, it is for the school to determine the length of time the pupil can be away from school.

Generally, the DfE does not consider a need or desire for a holiday or other absence for the purpose of leisure and recreation to be an exceptional circumstance.

Parents may not authorise absence; only schools can do this. Should school staff have reason to doubt that the explanation offered about a particular absence is not genuine, the absence should be treated as unauthorised.

Children are not allowed, without permission from the Head, to leave early or to be absent for any cause other than illness or emergency.

Excessive amounts of authorised absence may often be as damaging to continuity of learning as unauthorised absence. Schools are therefore only able to authorise absence sparingly and only after careful consideration, particularly where children have a history of irregular attendance.

Inappropriate authorisation of absence may seriously undermine effective intervention by the local education authority and compromise any potential legal action.

When leave of absence is required for some special reason, a request must be sent to the Head Teacher for the attention of the Head Teacher at least 14 days before which absence is requested.

### **4.3 Education off Site**

We can allow pupils to be absent from the school site for certain educational activities or to attend other schools or settings:

- To attend an offsite approved educational activity. (Code B)
- To attend another school at which the pupil is registered (dual-registration). (Code D)
- To attend provision arranged by the local authority. e.g. alternative provision or as part of an education, health and care plan. (Code K)
- To participate in an approved sporting activity. (Code P)
- To attend an educational visit or trip arranged by the school. (Code V)
- As these circumstances are part of delivering a full time education they are not classified as absences for statistical purposes.

### **4.4 Unauthorised Absence**

Unauthorised absence is where no explanation has been given for the child's absence or where the

explanation offered is considered by the school to be unacceptable.

Absence should not be authorised in the following circumstances:

- No explanation is offered by the parent/carer;
- The explanation offered is unsatisfactory (shopping, minding the house);
- Family holidays (which are taken without the school's prior consent or knowledge and/or are in excess of any time agreed with the school);
- Lateness when the child arrives after the register has closed and fails to offer a satisfactory explanation;
- Special occasions (when the school does not agree that these should be given).

#### **4.5 Persistent and Severe Absence**

Where absence escalates and pupils miss 10% or more of school, the DSL or Head will scrutinise their attendance data and review authorised and unauthorised absences. Where applicable children whose attendance falls below 90% will be contacted by the DSL and given an opportunity to discuss ways the school can support the family in improving their child's attendance.

As poor attendance is habitual, prevention and early intervention is crucial. The key to this is regular data analysis to both identify and provide additional support to pupils or pupil cohorts that need it, and to look at historic and emerging patterns across the school and develop strategies to address them.

The DSL will monitor termly and annual attendance data to identify patterns and trends. Where a pattern of absence is at risk of becoming, or becomes problematic we will work with families to listen to and understand any barriers to attendance the pupil or family is experiencing. We will take into consideration the sensitivity of some of the reasons for absence and understand the importance of school as a place of safety and support rather than immediately reaching for punitive approaches.

Where barriers are outside of the school's control, we will work with pupils and parents to access any support they may need voluntarily. This may include referrals to services and organisations that can provide support. Where absence intensifies, so should the support provided, which may require the school to work in tandem with the local authority.

Where voluntary support has not been effective and/or has not been engaged with all schools should work with the local authority to:

- Put formal support in place in the form of an attendance contract or an education supervision order.
- Issue a Notice to Improve and/or penalty notice where support would not be appropriate or has not been successful or engaged with and it is likely to change the parents' behaviour.
- Intensify support through statutory children's social care involvement where there are safeguarding concerns, especially where absence becomes severe (below 50% attendance).

- Prosecute parents where all other routes have failed or are not deemed appropriate. This could include making the case for a community or parenting order where the parent is convicted to secure engagement with support.

#### **4.6 Pupils Absent from School due to Mental or Physical Ill Health or their Special Educational Needs and/or Disabilities**

Many children will experience normal but difficult emotions that make them nervous about attending school, such as worries about friendships, schoolwork, examinations or variable moods. It is important to note that these pupils are still expected to attend school regularly - in many instances, attendance at school may serve to help with the underlying issue as being away from school might exacerbate it, and a prolonged period of absence may heighten anxious feelings about attending in future.

School staff play a critical role in communicating this expectation to parents. We will work alongside families to ensure that such circumstances do not act as a barrier to regular attendance by mitigating anxious feelings in school as much as possible. The DfE's non-statutory guidance on 'Mental Health Issues Affecting a Pupil's Attendance' may be of use.

Some pupils face more complex barriers to attendance. This can include pupils who have long term physical or mental health conditions or who have special educational needs and disabilities (SEND). Their right to an education is the same as any other pupil and therefore the attendance ambition for these pupils should be the same as it is for any other pupil but additional support may need to be provided.

In developing this support, the usual processes relevant to any attendance case apply:

- Understanding the individual needs of the pupil and family
- Working in partnership with the pupil and family to put in-school support in place and working with other the local authority and other agencies where external support is needed (and available)
- Regularly reviewing and updating the support approach to make sure it continues to meet individual needs
- In cases of both long term physical or mental ill health, school staff are not expected to diagnose or treat physical or mental health conditions but will work together with families and other agencies with the aim of ensuring regular attendance for every pupil.

We will:

- Facilitate any relevant pastoral support with the clear aim of improving attendance as much as possible whilst supporting the underlying health issue.
- Consider adjustments to practice and policies to help meet the needs of pupils who are struggling to attend school, as well as making formal reasonable adjustments under section 20 of the Equality Act 2010 where a pupil has a disability. Any adjustments should be agreed by, and regularly reviewed with, the pupil and their parents.

- Consider whether a time-limited phased return to school would be appropriate, for example for those affected by anxious feelings about school attendance.

For pupils with special educational needs and disabilities, we will:

- Work in partnership with parents to develop specific support approaches for attendance for pupils with special educational needs and disabilities, including, where applicable, ensuring the provision outlined in the pupil's education, health and care plan is accessed.
- Work in partnership with families to help support routines and work with other partners to encourage the scheduling of additional support interventions or medical appointments outside of the main school day.
- Establish strategies for removing the in-school barriers these pupils face, including considering support or reasonable adjustments for uniform, transport, routines, access to support in school and lunchtime arrangements.
- Consider adjustments to practice and policies to help meet the needs of pupils who are struggling to attend school, as well as making formal reasonable adjustments under section 82 of the Equality Act 2010 where a pupil has a disability. Any adjustments should be agreed by, and regularly reviewed with the pupil and their parents.
- Ensure joined up pastoral care is in place where needed and consider whether a time-limited phased return to school would be appropriate.

Attendance is everyone's business so in many of these cases school will not be able to fully support a pupil without the assistance of a range of other agencies.

School should:

- Make use of school nursing services and mental health support teams where they are available.
- Consider whether additional support from other external partners (including the local authority, children and young people's mental health services, GPs or other health services) would be appropriate and make referrals.
- Where external support is provided work together with those services to deliver any subsequent support.
- If the child has an education health and care plan, school staff should:
- Communicate with the local authority where a pupil's attendance falls, or they become aware of barriers to attendance that relate to the pupil's needs.
- Where possible agree adjustments to its policies and practices that are consistent with the special educational provision set out in the education health and care plan in collaboration with parents.
- Where needed work with the local authority to review and amend the education health and care plan to incorporate the additional or different attendance support identified
- Where parents do not engage in support, schools should work with the local authority or other local partners to formalise that support and as a last resort, enforce attendance through legal intervention.

## **4.7 Attendance monitoring and record-keeping**

The Department for Education (DfE) expects every student attending school to maintain an attendance level of approximately 90 per cent and above. Students whose attendance is below 90 per cent are classed as 'persistently absent'. The school is obliged to contact the parents/guardians if their child's attendance drops below that figure. If attendance does not improve and absence continues to be persistent, the school will contact the appropriate Attendance, Inclusion and Participation Service from the child's local authority.

Local authorities have a legal responsibility to identify children of compulsory school age who are not in education. Schools may therefore receive an enquiry about whether they are educating a specific child. The school will alert their local authority after a student of compulsory school age has:

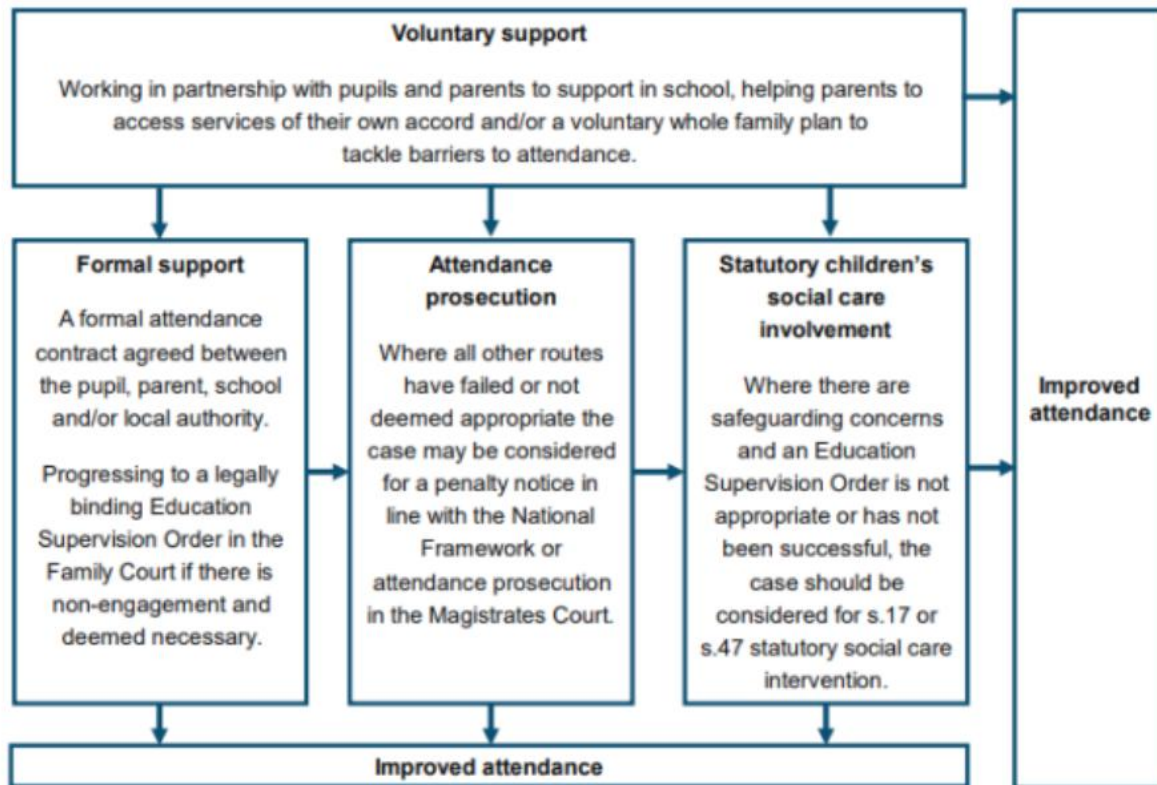
- Been absent without authority for 10 consecutive school days, or
- Failed to attend school regularly, or
- Been removed from the school without the school being informed formally, in writing, or
- If there is a safeguarding concern (including Children Missing Education) about the pupil in question, or
- They have 15 days of absence recorded as illness across the academic year. This does not need to be continuous but does all need to have been recorded as illness.

## **4.8 Legal Intervention**

Where all voluntary support options are unsuccessful or are not appropriate (e.g. an unauthorised holiday in term time), the local authority's school Attendance Support Team should liaise with school and the Head or DSL to take forward attendance legal intervention to formalise support and/or enforce attendance.

Barriers to attendance will always be analysed and support provided. Where that is not successful, or is not engaged with, the law protects pupils' right to an education and provides a range of legal interventions to formalise attendance improvement efforts, and where all other avenues have been exhausted, enforce it through prosecuting parents. Attendance legal intervention can only be used for pupils of compulsory school age and decisions should be made on an individual case by case basis.

## Providing support first before attendance legal intervention



### APPENDIX 1- Register Codes

Code	Description	Statistical Classification
/ or \	Present (/ = morning, \ = afternoon)	Attending
#	Planned whole-school closure	Not collected
B	Attending other approved educational activity	Attending approved educational activity
C	Leave of absence for exceptional circumstances	Authorised absence

C1	Leave for performance/employment abroad	Authorised absence
C2	Leave for compulsory-age pupil on part-time timetable	Authorised absence
D	Dual registered at another school	Not possible attendance (to avoid double counting)
E	Suspended or permanently excluded	Authorised absence
G	Holiday not granted by school	Unauthorised absence
I	Illness	Authorised absence
J1	Leave for job/school interview	Authorised absence
K	Attending education provision arranged by the local authority	Attending an approved educational activity
L	Late, but before register closes	Attending
M	Leave for medical/dental appointment	Authorised absence
N	Reason for absence not yet established	Unauthorised absence
O	Absent for other/unknown reason	Unauthorised absence
P	Participating in a sporting activity	Attending an approved educational activity
Q	Unable to attend due to lack of access arrangements	Not possible attendance
R	Religious observance	Authorised absence
S	Study leave for public exam	Authorised absence

## 5. Monitoring

This policy will be reviewed by the Head Teacher annually.

At every review, the policy will be approved by the full governing board.

## 6. Links with other policies

This Attendance policy links to the following policies:

- P1 - Safeguarding Policy