

Attendance Policy

Registered pupils of compulsory school age are required by law to be in school.

Created Autumn 23 from model DCC policy
Next review Autumn 2026

Legal Framework

This policy meets the requirements of the working together to improve school attendance from the Department for Education (DfE) and refers to the DfE's statutory guidance on school attendance parental responsibility measures. These documents are 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 and Inspections Act (2006)
- The Education (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations (2006)
- The Education (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations (Amendment 2010)
- The Education (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations (Amendment 2011)
- The Education (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations (Amendment 2013)
- The Education (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations (Amendment 2016)
- The Education (Penalty Notices) England) Regulations (Amendment 2013)

This policy also refers to the DfE's guidance on the school census, which explains the persistent absence threshold.

Responsibilities

- All children aged 5 - 16 years must receive suitable education. (Section 7, *Education Act (1996)*). A pupil of compulsory school age who is registered at a school must, by law, attend regularly.
- By law, parents have the prime responsibility for ensuring that pupils of compulsory school age attend regularly. (Section 576, *Education Act (1996)*).
- The Local Authority (LA) must offer educational provision for all children of school age.
- By law, all schools (except those where all pupils are boarders) are required to keep an attendance register, and all pupils must be placed on this register from the beginning of the first day on which the school has agreed or has been notified that the pupil will attend the school.
- Every entry in the attendance register will be preserved for 3 years after the date on which the entry was made.
- By law, all schools must keep an admissions' register, the contents of which includes all pupils, their personal details, (including at least two telephone numbers for different safe adults, to ensure that we can always contact someone in the event of an emergency), the date of admission (or re-admission), information regarding parents and details of the school last attended.
- Pupils will be removed from roll only when they complete their education stage, transfer to another school, move out of the area or emigrate or following a parental request for elective home education. We follow statutory guidance for removing pupils from roll and notifying the local authority. Further information can be found in Appendix 6.
- There is a clear link between attainment and attendance. Under **section 444 (1)** of the **Education Act 1996** (EA 1996), a parent commits an offence if they fail to ensure their child's regular attendance at a school where the child is registered. We therefore enforce the use of statutory action to encourage and promote attendance, this is done to ensure that all pupils can benefit from their legal right to receive an education.
- School will communicate attendance concerns to the pupil's social worker, if they have one or The Virtual School Head, if the pupil is a looked after child. This will be done as soon as there is an attendance concern and immediately upon becoming a persistent absentee. Unexplained absences will also be communicated to the social worker and Virtual School Head, where relevant.

Definitions

- A pupil is classed as absent if they arrive after the register has closed or if they do not attend for any reason.
- An authorised absence is when approval has been given in advance for a pupil of compulsory school age to be absent for a specific (legal) purpose, or we have accepted an explanation offered afterwards as justification for absence from a parent or carer. This may include:
 - An absence for illness for which we have granted leave
 - Medical or dental appointments may be granted leave where every attempt has been made to arrange outside of school hours, has been unsuccessful and so cannot be avoided, or where the appointment is a genuine emergency
 - Religious or cultural observances for which we have granted leave. The day must be exclusively set apart for religious observance by the religious body to which the parents or pupil belong. Where necessary, we will seek advice from the parents' religious body about whether it has set the day apart for religious observance
 - An absence due to a change to exceptional circumstances
- An unauthorised absence is defined as one where we are not satisfied with the reasons given for the absence. Reasons may include:
 - Parents keeping children from attending unnecessarily or without reason
 - Missing sessions before or during the school day
 - Absences which have never been properly explained
 - Arrival after the register has closed
 - Day trips and holidays in term time that have not been agreed
 - Leaving our school without authorisation during the day
- Persistent Absence is defined as: 10% or more of sessions missed (based on each pupil's possible sessions). Absences may be authorised or unauthorised.
- Severe Absence is defined as: 50% or more of sessions missed (based on each pupil's possible sessions). Absences may be authorised or unauthorised.
- Persistent lateness is defined as pupils who have five or more late marks recorded in a single half-term.

Monitoring and Reviewing Attendance

We recognise that early intervention can prevent poor attendance. We monitor attendance and punctuality throughout the year. We recognise that certain groups of pupils may be more at risk of poor attendance and will provide support and assistance wherever possible.

- We set challenging attendance targets for the whole school.
- Pupil-level absence data is collected regularly and published at national and local authority level through the DfE's school absence national statistics releases. We compare our attendance data to the national average.
- Specific measures are taken to monitor attendance. These processes are embedded and regularly checked to ensure the effective safeguarding of all pupils through specific tailored interventions. Data on attendance is collected and analysed a minimum of once a term. Key analysis is made of:
 - Patterns of absence
 - Patterns of lateness
 - Patterns of medical appointments
 - Correct and consistent use of absence codes
 - Trends in reasons for absence, for example, use of the C code, leave of absence and exclusions
 - Trends in particular groups of children for example, pupils with Special Educational Needs and Disability (SEND).

Template letter for termly monitoring to parents/carers:

Attendance Monitoring for period: Autumn first half term 2023

Dear parent/carers,

This is an automated letter that we are sending out to every parent at St Peter's School whose child's attendance is below 95%. This is part of our aim to maximise your child's educational opportunities and to ensure they are able to reach their full potential at school.

To put attendance in perspective, having a 90% attendance average for your child's entire school career (until they are 16) actually means they miss a whole year of school. Even a 95% attendance equates to missing two thirds of a school year.

Attendance for «Student» is currently «»%.

If you would like a copy of your child's attendance report, please ask the school office.

Your child might have been absent from school for a very clear reason, like a recent long illness. If this is the case, and you are confident that their attendance will rise this year to above 95%, **you do not need to worry**. You don't need to do anything else at this point, but please do let us know if you need any support.

Yours truly,

XXXXX

Maintaining the Attendance Register

The attendance register will be taken at the start of the first session of each school day and once during the pm session. It will mark whether each pupil is:

- Present
- Attending an approved off-site educational activity
- Absent
- Unable to attend due to exceptional circumstances

Any amendment to the attendance register will include:

- The original entry
- The amended entry
- The reason for the amendment
- The date on which the amendment was made
- The name and position of the person making the amendment

The school gates are open from: 8:45pm. The school day starts at 8.55am.

- The first (morning) registration session starts at 8.55am. Pupils will receive a late mark if they are not in their designated classroom by 9.10am. The register closes at 9.30am. Pupils will receive a mark of absence if they do not attend before this time. Attendance after the register closes will receive a mark to show that the pupil is on site, (U) but will count as an absent mark.
- Pupils arriving late should report to the main school office and sign in via the late system.

The second (afternoon) registration session starts at 1.10pm.

- If a pupil needs to leave school during the day, they must sign out at the main reception with a parent once authorisation has been given from the Headteacher or Deputy.
- Pupils educated off-site are monitored daily for their attendance at the off-site/alternative provision. Staff work closely with the staff at the off-site provision, the pupil, and their parents to support the pupil to maintain good attendance.

Reporting Absence

It is the responsibility of the parent to inform us of a pupil absence and to inform us of any changes to contact details. Parents are expected to inform us of their pupil's absence before 9.00 a.m. on each day of absence providing the reason for absence and when their pupil will be returning to school. We will contact parents and/or other listed emergency contacts where no contact has been made. Where required, we may conduct reasonable enquiries with friends or neighbours and will carry out welfare home visits as necessary. If no contact is made, we may request a welfare check from the police.

Reasons for Absence

Appointments

- As far as possible, medical, and dental appointments should be made outside of the school day. Where this is not possible, a note and appointment card should be sent to us prior to the appointment.
- Pupils must attend before and after the appointment wherever possible. If the appointment requires the pupil to leave during the day, they must be signed out by an adult listed on the pupil's record. Should a pupil arrive late following an appointment, they should report to the school office to be signed in.
- Absences for medical appointments will be recorded with an M code.

Religious Observance

- Parents must inform us, in advance, if absences are required for days of religious observance. We will authorise absences where a reasonable request is made. The day must be exclusively set apart for religious observance by the religious body to which the parents belong. Where necessary, we will seek advice from the parents' religious body about whether it has set the day apart for religious observance.
- Absences for religious observance will be recorded with the R code.

Illness

- In order to make informed decisions about their pupil's fitness for attending parents are encouraged to refer to the NHS guidance 'Is My Child Too Ill for School?'. Any authorisation of absence through illness is done so at the discretion of the Headteacher or member of staff delegated to carry out this task.
- In the case of an illness which lasts for five days or more (or four days in the event of an INSET day or Bank Holiday), parents may be asked to provide additional medical evidence before authorising the absence, however this will only be requested if there is any genuine and reasonable doubt about the authenticity of the illness. In this instance, if medical evidence is not provided, the absence may be recorded as unauthorised.
- Where attendance is of a serious concern, we may require medical evidence to authorise any further periods of absence through illness. This will be determined on an individual basis. Parents will be notified of this by letter. Telephone calls and handwritten notes from a parent will not be accepted as medical evidence when attendance is a serious concern. For the purpose of this policy, 'serious concern' may be defined as: repeated unexplained/unauthorised absences or 3 x separate illnesses within a half term where no medical condition or underlying health issues have been identified.

Acceptable forms of medical evidence include:

- Medical card with one appointment entered with the pupil's name and surgery stamp included, signed by the receptionist
- Letter from a professional such as a hospital consultant
- Evidence of consultation with NHS 111
- Medication prescribed by a GP
- Copy of prescription
- Print screen of medical notes / call log
- Letters detailing hospital appointments Doctor or GP 'sick notes' are not required, and we do not expect parents to request these from their GPs.

In some cases, a pupil may be absent for long term due to an illness or injury. We will liaise with families to ensure children return to school quickly and that there are no safeguarding concerns. On occasions where this is not possible, and the section 19 threshold is met, we will make a referral to the Local Authority Medical Panel which provides educational opportunities for pupils who are unable to attend their regular school.

Traveller Pupils Travelling for Occupational Purposes

Traveller pupils travelling for occupational purposes covers Roma, English and Welsh Travellers, Irish and Scottish Travellers, Circus workers, Bargees (occupational boat dwellers), Showman and New Travellers. Absence may be authorised only when a Traveller family is known to be travelling for occupational purposes and has agreed this with us, but it is not known whether the pupil is attending educational provision.

The aim for the attendance of Traveller students, in common with all other students, is to attend school as regularly and as frequently as possible.

To protect Traveller parents from unreasonable prosecution for non-attendance, the Education Act (1944), Section 86, states that a Traveller parent/carer is safe from prosecution if their child accrues 200 attendances (i.e., 200 half days) in a year. It is important to note that this is only relevant when the family are engaged in a trade or business that requires them to travel and when the child is regularly attending school when that trade/business permits following a request from parents (and the minimum 200 session criteria is met). It does not mean that part-time education for Traveller pupils is legally acceptable, nor does it relieve parents/carers of their duties to ensure that their child is receiving a suitable education when not at school. It is parent's responsibility to:

- Ensure that your child's ethnicity has been registered with the school. You can ask the school to correct this or update it.
- Ensure you tell your child's school ahead of time. 2 weeks' notice is useful.
- Your children should attend as much school as possible.
- It is the parent's responsibility to ensure their child is accessing at least 100 days (200 sessions) of school in any 12-month period.
- To have regular contact with their child's school whilst travelling. Once a week is suggested.
- To support their child to complete the work set by schools whilst travelling.
- If staying in a new area for a week or more, the parent/guardian can register their child for a temporary place at any school – called 'dual registration'.
- It is the school's responsibility to:
 - Allow Traveller pupils to travel with their parents for work purposes.
 - Create work packs for their pupils to complete when away.
 - Arrange times for at least a weekly 'check in' with the family. This can be through a call or email.
 - Contact the Local Authority if they have concerns.
 - Mark pupil's work and provide valuable feedback.
 - Ensure missed opportunities such as parents evening, vaccinations and careers advice are supported on the pupil's return.

Pupils with medical conditions or special educational needs and disabilities

Some pupils face greater barriers to attendance than their peers. These can include pupils 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 pupil and therefore the attendance ambition for these pupils should be the same as they are for any other pupil.

School will:

- Work with parents to improve attendance, be mindful of the barriers pupils face, make reasonable adjustments, and put additional support in place where necessary to help them access their full-time education. It is also expected that parents will engage with the support offered both internally and with external partners to ensure our children have all the support they need to thrive.
- Encourage positive conversations so that a good support plan can put in place including making reasonable adjustments.
- Consider possible explanations for absence including Emotionally Based School Avoidance (EBSA).
- Work with parents to consider whether additional support from external partners (including the local authority or health services) would be appropriate, making referrals in a timely manner and working together with those services to deliver any subsequent support.
- Ensure relevant referrals are made for pupils who are too ill to attend school, which may include medical panel (under section 19) and or medical agency support such as CAMHS.
- Establish strategies for removing the in-school barriers this may include considering support or reasonable adjustments for uniform, transport, routines, access to support in school and lunchtime arrangements.
- Ensure joined up pastoral care is in place and consider whether a time-limited, closely monitored and reviewed, phased return to school would be appropriate, for example for those affected by anxiety about school attendance.

Requesting Leave in Term Time

Absence for purposes of leave during term time can only be authorised by the Headteacher within the boundaries set by the Education (Pupil Registrations) (England) Regulations (2006). "Head Teachers may not authorise leave during

term time except where the circumstances are exceptional.” Under the Regulations, retrospective authorisation for leave in exceptional circumstances is not permitted.

The fundamental principles for defining ‘exceptional circumstances’ are that they are: **‘rare; significant; unavoidable and short’**. **Holidays during term time will not usually be considered as exceptional circumstances.** The following guiding principles apply:

- Term-times are for education. This is the priority. Children and families have 175 days off a year including weekends and school holidays. We will rightly prioritise attendance.
- The decision to authorise a pupil’s absence is wholly at the Headteacher’s discretion based on their assessment and merits of each individual request.
- If an event can be reasonably scheduled outside of term-time, then it would be normal to authorise absence for such an event – holidays are therefore not considered ‘exceptional circumstances’. It is acceptable for the Headteacher to take a pupil’s record of attendance into account when making absence-related decisions.
- We will take the needs of the families of service personnel into account if this prevents them from being able to take family holidays during scheduled holiday time.
- We have a duty to make reasonable adjustments for pupils with special needs and/or disabilities.

Family emergencies need careful consideration before decisions about attendance are made. It is not always appropriate or in the best interests of the pupil to miss education for emergencies which are being dealt with by adult family members. Being at school with support from staff and peers can provide children with stability. The school routine can offer a safe and familiar background during times of uncertainty. Relevant members of staff will work with parents to decide what is in the best interest of the pupil.

Persistent and Severe Absence

- Pupils with 90% or less attendance are classified as Persistent Absence (PA). PA includes both authorised and unauthorised absences.
- Pupils with 50% or less attendance are classified as Severe Absence (SA). SA includes both authorised and unauthorised absences
- All PA pupils will have bespoke action plans to try to improve their attendance to above 97%. This will be monitored. Where pupils have an identified special educational need, the school's SENCO will also provide support, so that the impact of needs are clearly understood and appropriate, supportive actions are taken.

Following Up Absence and Taking Statutory Action

We will follow up any absences to ascertain the reason. Any pupils who fail to attend regularly or who are absent for more than one week will be referred to the headteacher.

- Unexplained absences will be followed up on the morning of the first day of unexplained absence and the school will identify whether the absence is approved or not. The school will identify the correct code to use and will input it as soon as the reason for absence is ascertained. This will take no longer than 5 working days after the session.
- In the case where the reason for absence cannot be ascertained by the school and no reason has been issued for the pupil’s absence, the school will initiate safeguarding procedures and the DSL will decide on the best course of action to ensure the safety of the pupil, following procedures for children missing in education as outlined in the document from the Department of Education.
- It may occasionally be necessary to inform parents that no further absences will be authorised for a particular pupil unless medical evidence is provided.
- It is a parent’s legal responsibility to ensure their children receive appropriate education. Failing to send children to school regularly without good reason is a criminal offence. Schools can fine parents for the unauthorised absence of their pupil, where the pupil is of compulsory school age. The decision on whether or not to issue a penalty notice ultimately rests with the Headteacher, in line with the local authority’s code of conduct for issuing penalty notices. This may consider:
 - A number of unauthorised absences occurring within a rolling academic year
 - Singular incidences of irregular attendance, such as holidays taken in term time without permission
 - Where an excluded pupil is seen in a public place during school hours without a justifiable reason
- Issuing Penalty Notices: each parent receives a penalty notice for each pupil who has unauthorised absence. If issued with a penalty notice, parents must pay £60 within 21 days or £120 within 28 days. The payment must

be made directly to the local authority. If the payment has not been made after 28 days, the local authority can decide whether to prosecute the parent or withdraw the notice.

- Taking Parents to Court for unauthorised absence: The Education Act (1996) Section 444 (1) states that courts can fine each parent up to £1000 per pupil, order payment of prosecution costs and/or impose a Parenting Order.
- Taking Parents to Court for Persistent Unauthorised Absence: The Education Act (1996) – Section 444 (1A) states that courts can fine each parent up to £2500 per pupil, order payment of the prosecution costs, impose a Parenting Order and/or sentence parents to a period of imprisonment of up to three months.

Children Missing from Education (CME)

We have due regard to our statutory duty to safeguard pupils who are CME. We follow the Local Authority's processes for reporting pupils missing from education. [The DfE guide can be found here.](#)

If a pupil fails to return following a period of absence, investigations will be made by staff to their whereabouts. If our investigations fail to contact the parents/pupil the case will be referred to the Local Authority Children Missing Education (CME) Team within 20 days.

Ethnic Minority Pupils

Pupil registration regulations states that absence should only be granted due to the exceptional circumstances relating to that application. It is important to note that Headteachers can determine the length of the authorised absence, as well as whether absence is authorised at all.

The following might be considered as exceptional circumstance for ethnic minority pupils:

- Religious festivals: the school should authorise any absence where the parent/carer's religious organisation sets the day as a religious festival. For example: There are two key festivals in Islam, Eid-ul-Fitr (celebration that takes place at the end of Ramadan, the period of fasting) and Eid-ul-Adha (festival of sacrifice). The dates of these key events are set according to the Islamic calendar. Muslim families usually need to take one or two days to celebrate these important festivals. Absences may be recorded as R.
- Religious rites e.g. Bar Mitzvah, Holy Communion. The Headteacher will consider each request for leave of absence individually to determine the number of days approved.
- Close family wedding if dates cannot be during school holidays.
- Illness or death of an immediate family member; the head teacher should consider time needed for the length of journey when child needs to travel abroad.
- Child, parent/carer requires medical treatment overseas or elsewhere in the UK due to language barrier or requiring specialist treatment elsewhere.
- Length of journey from abroad; the Headteacher will consider length of journey or limited regional flights.
- Cultural celebrations such as Chinese New Year or Diwali. Cultural celebrations give children a feeling of belonging and make them feel part of their culture. This sense of identity is like a natural buoy for a child's emotional health.
- Children attending their annual exam in their home country. There are exams which are compulsory in some EU countries. They are normally during holidays but can occasionally be requested during term time.
- Child, parent/ carer's visa have been revoked and they need to return to their birth country whilst pursuing the renewal of a visa.

Appendix - Attendance Codes

The following codes are taken from the DfE's guidance on school attendance

Code	Definition	Scenario
/	Present (am)	Pupil is present at morning registration
\	Present (pm)	Pupil is present at afternoon registration
L	Late Arrival	Pupil arrives late before register has closed
B	Off-site educational activity	Pupil is at a supervised off-site educational activity approved by the school
D	Dual registered	Pupil is attending a session at another setting where they are also registered
J	Interview	Pupil has an interview with a prospective employer/educational establishment
P	Sporting activity	Pupil is participating in a supervised sporting activity approved by the school
V	Educational trip or visit	Pupil is on an educational visit/trip organised, or approved, by the school
W	Work experience	Pupil is on a work experience placement

Code	Definition	Scenario
Authorised absence		
C	Authorised leave of absence	Pupil has been granted a leave of absence due to exceptional circumstances
E	Excluded	Pupil has been excluded but no alternative provision has been made
H	Authorised holiday	Pupil has been allowed to go on holiday due to exceptional circumstance
I	Illness	School has been notified that a pupil will be absent due to illness
M	Medical/dental appointment	Pupil is at a medical or dental appointment
R	Religious observance	Pupil is taking part in a day of religious observance
S	Study Leave	Year 11 pupil is on study leave during their public examinations
T	Gypsy, Roma, and Traveller absence	Pupil from a Traveller community is travelling, as agreed with the school
Unauthorised Absence		
G	Unauthorised Holiday	Pupil is on a holiday that was not approved by the school

N	Reason not provided	Pupil is absent for an unknown reason (this code should be amended when the reason emerges, or replaced with code O if no reason for absence has been provided after a reasonable amount of time)
O	Unauthorised absence	School is not satisfied with reason for pupil's absence
U	Arrival after registration	Pupil arrived at school after the register closed
Other		
X	Not required to be in school	Pupil of non-compulsory school age is not required to attend
Y	Unable to attend due to exceptional circumstances	School site is closed, there is disruption to travel because of a local/national emergency, or pupil is in custody
Z	Pupil not on admission register	Register set up but pupil has not yet joined the school
#	Planned school closure	Whole or partial school closure due to half term/bank holiday