CATHEDRAL PRIMARY SCHOOL



ATTENDANCE POLICY

Updated October 2025

Introduction

The publication of school's attendance levels is a significant indicator of a school's performance. Regular attendance of pupils correlates closely to raising achievement thus underlying the importance of improving attendance rates in schools. All staff should be committed to the successful implementation of the whole school attendance policy as a necessary step towards improving overall attendance as part of the School Improvement Plan. If children are to derive maximum benefit from their education, they must attend school regularly and on time.

The school is committed to providing full and efficient education to all pupils. We recognise that if pupils are to benefit from education, punctuality and good attendance are crucial. Problems which impede punctuality and regular attendance, will be identified and addressed as speedily as possible. The School is sensitive to the needs of families and will endeavour to communicate as openly and supportively as possible. We can only do our best work in conjunction with the support of parents/carers. The school is committed to working with other agencies e.g. GP surgeries, health visitors etc, in order to secure the best attendance for its children.

At school, priority will be given to conveying to parents and pupils the importance of regular attendance and punctuality. The vital role of parents is recognised. Where there are problems which affect a pupil's attendance, the School will investigate and strive, in partnership with parents and pupils, to resolve problems quickly and efficiently, aimed at returning the pupil to full attendance at all times.

SECTION 1

1.1 Registration

- All schools are required to call attendance registers at the start of the morning sessions and at the start of the afternoon session to record pupils present and absent. The attendance register is a legal document and it is imperative that it is accurate at all times. Registers can be used in a court of law.
- Local requirements for completing the register are outlined in the register itself. All pupils must have an appropriate mark by their name.
- Teachers must ensure that the register is taken on time. The register should be delivered to the school office by 9:00am.
- Registers are taken back to teachers for afternoon registration and returned to the school office by 1.30pm where they are then kept until the next day.

1.2 Illness during the day.

- In cases of a pupil being sent home ill, a note should be made in the register
- Where a child has a high (5 days in a half term) level of absence due to ill health, the school will inform the parents that in future, only absences covered by a medical certificate or doctor's letter will be authorised.

SECTION 2 - Authorised and unauthorised absence

The School will monitor and support pupils to maintain regular school attendance. The register must show whether any absence is authorised or unauthorised.

2.1 Authorised Absences

An authorised absence is where the school has either given approval in advance for a pupil of compulsory school age to be away, or has accepted an explanation offered afterwards as satisfactory justification for absence. All other absences are treated as unauthorised. Schools, not parents, authorise absences.

- Absence should be authorised where appropriate, and when notification has been received, should be noted on the system, using the standardised symbols outlined. Under no circumstances should an unnotified/unverified absence be regarded as authorised
- By law only the school can authorise an absence. A written note or telephone explanation by a parent/carer does not, in itself, oblige the school to authorise the absence if the school does not accept the explanation offered as a valid reason for absence. All reasons for absence must be recorded in the register and notes filed in an agreed place. There must be consistency throughout the school in what is authorised.

2.2 Requests for special leave and overseas visits during term time

Taking your child out of school during term time for a holiday, without the school's permission could result in a fixed penalty notice of £80 per parent per child, being issued.

The general rule is no holidays will be authorised during term time. There is no parental right to a ten-day period and schools are not obliged to agree to family holidays during term time. The ten day

period merely reflects the remit of the school to authorise the absence. Where pupils of compulsory school age are concerned, all applications should be carefully considered on their merits in the light of the need to maintain continuity of learning. Booking holidays during term time because it is cheaper, is likely to be rejected. Only in exceptional circumstances will special leave be granted in any one school year.

All requests for special leave during term time should be made on the 'Application for Leave During Term Time' form available via the office. Parents will be directed to this form if they request absence through any other means (e.g. letter, phone calls or email). The Headteacher may ask for further evidence before making a final decision.

2.3 Extenuating circumstances that may lead to unintentional extension of special leave

The School recognises that there may be extenuating and exceptional circumstances that occur during special leave, which may mean that the family/child are unable to return to school on the agreed date. Such circumstances may include:

- Flights being cancelled or rerouted
- Illness preventing members of the family flying
- Freak weather conditions leading to a flight being cancelled or delayed.
- Death of a family member whilst on special leave

In any of these circumstances, upon the child's return - The School is only able to authorise the further absence if the following documents are produced, confirming what has happened:

- A letter from the airline, within a month of your return, on their headed paper, confirming that the family's flight had been delayed, oversold, cancelled due to unforeseen circumstances. One of the circumstances may be freak weather conditions.
- A letter from the doctor, with their name and telephone number stating the medical reasons why the person couldn't fly on the flight scheduled.

Examples of absence that is unauthorised:

- Child's or family members' birthday/s
- Shopping trips
- Where there are excessive amounts of authorised absence due to illness (at the
- school's discretion but usually 5 or more days in a half term period)
- Where the child has gone to bed late and has 'slept in'
- Parent/carer has an appointment and takes child with them
- Another child in the family is ill, so all are kept off school
- The child has to look after a younger sibling/child on a school day
- Picking up someone from an airport - except where this is part of an agreed holiday period with the school
- Short medical/dental appointments causing a full day absence. (In this case, one morning or afternoon would be unauthorised)

SECTION 3 - Promoting positive attendance

At The School, we give high priority to the collecting and publicising of data related to attendance and punctuality. The most up to data attendance figures for each class can be seen in the newsletter. We have a consistent and supportive attitude towards attendance and punctuality, and wish above all, to resolve any problems on a voluntary basis. We firmly believe that establishing contact with home on the first day of absence is crucial to improving our attendance figures, and the quality and consistency of the education each child receives. All parents/carers know what are grounds for authorisation of absence and the attendance policy is explained when the child is admitted to the school.

3.1 Recording good attendance

We record and promote good attendance in the following ways:

- Headteacher announces the % figures for attendance for each class for the week in a whole school assembly. 5 minutes of extra playtime for each class are given for 97% and above.
- Attendance and punctuality figures are recorded on the report to Parents and Carers at the end of the academic year, along with positive comments for effort where appropriate
- Attendance and punctuality certificates are given out for 100% attendance and punctuality at the end of the academic year
- We ensure our parents/carers receive accurate and clear information about the child's education and how important it is that pupils attend school.

SECTION 4 - Resolving school attendance problems

The School believes that where problems of attendance occur the key to successfully resolving these problems is engaging the child through collaborative working between the parent, the school and the LEA. The School believes that the best way to resolve attendance issues, is on a voluntary basis, with the school being supportive to the families concerned. If, however, issues cannot be resolved this way, then the school may refer problems to the Education Welfare Service.

4.1 Monitoring attendance: ABSENCE

- On the first day of absence - Parents should phone the school **before 9:15am** on the morning of the first absence to give a reason for the absence. Failing this, school staff will make a phone call home where appropriate to find out the reason for absence
- Where we are not able to ascertain a reason for the absence on the day, it will be recorded as code N in the register. This code will remain for 1 week, giving parents/carers a chance to inform the school of the reason for absence. If no reason is given during this time, the code N will become a code O, meaning 'no reason given for the absence'. Code O is an unauthorised absence.
- Please see section 5 below for the consequences of excessive absence and what happens after we have monitored the attendance of every child every half term.

4.2 Monitoring attendance: PUNCTUALITY

- When a child arrives late but before 9.15am parents must wait in the reception with their children until collective worship is finished.
- Code L is recorded on the register if a child is late but before 9:30. Code U is recorded on the register if a child is late at 9:31 and after.
- Time will be taken from the clock in the school office.
- Please see section 5 below for the consequences of excessive lateness and what happens after we have monitored the lateness of every child every half term.

4.3 Monitoring attendance: SICKNESS

- After the third consecutive day of absence due to sickness the school will need a doctor's note to authorise the absence.
- If the amount of absence due to sickness is an unacceptable amount, the school will need to have a doctor's note for any days off sick.
- Any child whose attendance is less than 90% in a half term period will have their attendance record looked at closely for the academic year. If it is down to sickness, a general letter will be issued reminding parents of the policy to bring in medical evidence after the third consecutive day. If the level of sickness absence remains high after 3-4 of these letters, then a target of at least 95% is set the following half term period. If that target is not met over 2-3 half term periods then we ask for GP evidence EVERY time the child is absent due to sickness.

SECTION 5 - Penalty Notices Explained

Under the **School Attendance (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2024**, headteachers may not grant any leave of absence during term time unless there are **exceptional circumstances**. Headteachers must decide how many days' absence, if any, to authorise. Requests should be made in advance, and the headteacher will consider each case individually.

Taking a child out of school without permission may result in a **penalty notice** being issued in accordance with the **Education (Penalty Notices) (England) Regulations 2007**, as amended by the **2024 Regulations (SI 2024/210)**.

5.1 – Penalty Notices

Amendments to 2007 regulations will reduce the timescales for paying a penalty notice. 'Parents must, from August 2024, pay £80 within 21 days or £160 within 28 days. This fine is per parent, per child. This brings attendance penalty notices into line with other types of penalty notices and allows local authorities to act faster on prosecutions.' (The Education (Penalty Notices) (England) (Amendment) Regulations 2024

A maximum of **two penalty notices** can be issued to the same parent for the same child within a **three-year period**.

https://www.legislation.gov.uk/uksi/2024/210

https://services.southwark.gov.uk/childcare-and-parenting/children-s-social-care/family-early-help-feh/education-inclusion-handbook/education-penalty-notice-code-of-conduct?chapter=9

5.2 Criteria for court/court panel

The School works closely with Southwark Attendance team to ensure that we are following the correct process. The School gives plenty of warning to parents and carers about their child's unsatisfactory attendance. Court panel usually results from the following actions:

- Several warning letters have been written to parents over the half term periods and there has been no improvement in attendance so it is maintained on or around 90%
- The parents may have been fined several times but there has been no significant and/or sustained improvement and the attendance continues to be on or around 90%
- The parents will have received 2 court warning letters
- The school will have provided support for the child and the family as appropriate and this has not been taken up e.g. the parents has not signed the consent forms needed, the parent has not turned up to appointments at the school

All cases of children on roll but not attending, poor attendance and lateness are dealt with under section 444 of 1996 Education Act, through the use of first and second court warning notices - issued by the welfare officer as part of the '5 major contacts' procedures.

All cases of children not enrolled are dealt with under Section 443 of the 1996 Education Act, through the use of the Attendance Order Procedure.

The LEA can also apply for an Education Supervision Order under Section 36 of the Children Act 1989, to assist parents/carers to carry out their parental responsibility by working in partnership.

If the unsatisfactory improvement after one term is due to difficulties not attributable to the parents, the Team Manager will advise.

SECTION 6 - Roles of those involved with attendance and punctuality

6.1 Teachers

• Will ensure that all registers are taken accurately, and sent to the office on time.
• They will form positive links with parents; positively promote good attendance within the classroom, communicate with Headteacher

6.2 Office staff

- Will phone parents/carers on the morning of first absence to ask for an explanation.
- Will form positive links with parents and outside agencies
- Will set up the registers at the beginning of the school year
- Receive telephone communication from parents/carers, will record that information correctly and arrange for that to be communicated to the teaching staff or the attendance lead for consideration or authorisation
- Assist the attendance lead in the collection of data
- Assist the attendance lead with the admission and off rolling procedures

- Will notify the attendance lead of any patterns of lateness and attendance that are causing concern
- Will form positive links with parents and outside agencies.

6.3 The Attendance Leads

- Will oversee the implementation of the attendance policies and procedures
- Ensure the collection of accurate statistical data, monitor, analyse and evaluate data collected
- Form positive links with outside agencies such as the EWS and Social Services and parents
- Will refer pupils to the EWS using the referral form
- Report regularly to the governing body on attendance.
- Will notify Headteacher of any patterns of lateness and attendance that are causing concern.

6.4 Headteacher and Governing Body

- Will see that the registers are properly kept
- Ensure that regular returns of attendance figures are made to Southwark
- Produce an annual report to parents/carers in which the school's attendance figures are included.

6.5 The Education Welfare Service

- The EWS will work in accordance with the guidelines, policies and conditions of service of Southwark Council and the LEA.
- Will maintain confidentiality in accordance with council policies. Any information relating to parental contacts or other agency involvement outside the school, will be shared with the school unless specific consent has not been given to the EWS
- Will assess pupils within 2 weeks of a referral - such cases will necessitate a family intervention plan to be drawn up, and this will be reviewed on a 6 weekly basis. An assessment could include home visits, office interviews, telephone contact with families and discussion with the school or other agencies.
- Written records summarising 'agreed action' will be kept for each EWS visit.
- Will make referrals to court as and when necessary

Section 7 - Roles and responsibilities of the school, parents/carers and pupils

7.1 Pupils will:

- Attend school regularly
- Arrive on time

7.2 Parents/carers will:

- Ensure their child attends school regularly (at least 95%)
- Ensure their child arrives on time for school

- Contact the school on the first day of absence, if their child is unable to attend for a valid reason and/or provide a note if they wish the absence to be considered for authorisation
- Ensure their child is prepared with the necessary uniform to attend school
- Support the school in its aim to raise the achievement of their child through full school attendance
- Under Section 7 of the Education Act 1996, parents/carers are ultimately responsible for ensuring that their child/children attend and stay at school

7.3 The School will:

- Ensure efficient and accurate registration of pupils
- Contact the parents/carers if a child fails to attend without a satisfactory explanation.
- Provide regular reports on the school's attendance statistics
- Promote positive attendance by taking account of pupil's individual needs
- Have in place clear communication routes to discuss any difficulties which may be preventing a pupil from attending school.
- Expect parents and carers to support the school to raise the achievement of their child through full school attendance

7.4 Southwark Education/EWS will:

- Ensure that parents/carers are fulfilling their statutory obligations as to their child's education including, where necessary, taking action through the courts (section 444 of Education Act 1996). Conviction following an offence under section 444 attracts a fine of up to £1000
- Also apply, if necessary, to the Family proceedings court for an Education Supervision Order (section 36 of the Children Act 1989). This will apply to cases of unauthorised absence invoking statutory backing for a planned programme for a child in collaboration with the parents/carers. The effects of an ESO will be to place a child under the supervision of the LEA for a specifically defined period. At this time EWO are designated by the LEA to be the names Supervising Officers in such cases. As such they are required to advise, assist and befriend the child, reinforce parental responsibility and give reasonable direction to ensure the child's proper education.