

Attendance and Children Missing or Absent from Education Policy

The Villa is committed to regular and punctual attendance for our Pre-Prep students aged 4 to 7 years old, recognising its crucial role in their academic success, social development, and overall well-being. It sets forth procedures for reporting and managing absences, as well as guidelines for addressing continuing absenteeism and unauthorised absences.

This policy is based on the expectations laid out by the Independent Schools Inspectorate (ISI) and references the Independent Schools Standards and Regulations (ISSRs).

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 2007 (including subsequent amendments)
- The Children and Young Persons Acts 1933 and 1963
- Keeping Children Safe in Education (September 2024)
- Working together to improve school attendance (August 2024)

Roles and Responsibilities

The Head Teacher

The Head Teacher is committed to promote good attendance as 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.

Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL)

The 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 weekly, half termly, termly and annual data to identify patterns and trends.
- Communicating attendance concerns with parents and offering support and guidance as appropriate

Staff

Teachers and Teaching Assistance 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

Pupils and parents /carers

They will:

- Sign the Parent Contract, which highlights the importance of good attendance
- Email/Telephone the school office promptly to advise of non-attendance
- 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.

Policy content

Teachers and Teaching Assistants must take the attendance register at the start of each morning session (between 9.00am to 9.15am) of each school day and once during the afternoon session (between 12.00pm to 2.00pm). 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. (see Annex 1). We use the electronic management system SearSoft to track registers but they are taken by staff on paper form each day. Registers are legal records and the school will keep these records for 6 years. Parents/carers are required to telephone or email the school office prior to 10am 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. We will contact the parents/cares via telephone or email if we do not receive an update. It is vital and part of our safeguarding procedures that all unexpected absences are explained and accounted for.

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 form (available from the parent area of the website) must be completed and sent to the Head at least two weeks in advance of the day for which absence is requested.

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.

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).

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 sent an Attendance Letter from 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.

Where a pattern of absence is at risk of becoming, or becomes severe 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, we would 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.
- 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.

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.

We will work alongside families to ensure that such circumstances are not 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 local authority and 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.

The school 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. 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 20 of the Equality Act 2010. 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 responsibility, in some cases we will not be able to fully support a pupil without the assistance of a range of other agencies.

The school should:

- Make use of school SEN department including ELSA.
- 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 the pupils

If the child has an education health and care plan, school staff should:

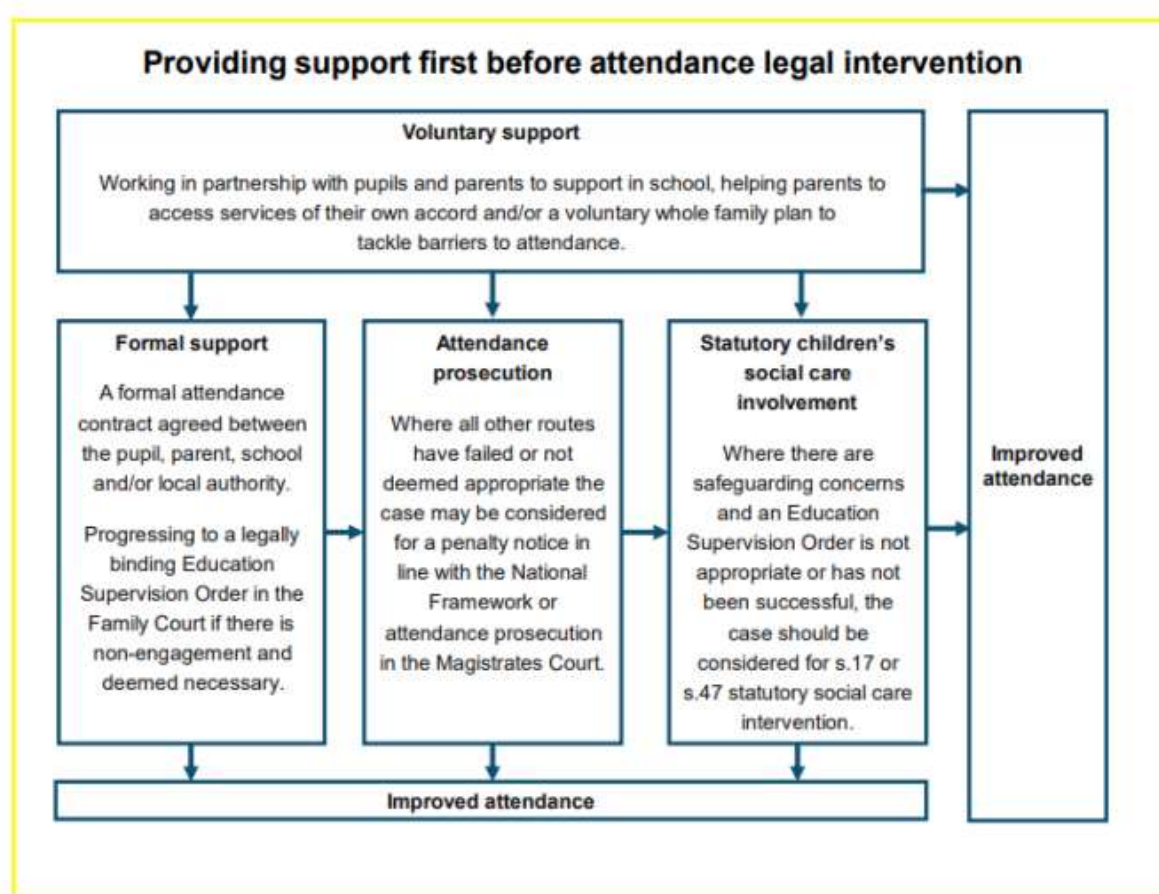
- Communicate with the local authority where a pupil's attendance falls or they become aware of barriers to attendance that relate to the pupil's needs.
- Where possible agree adjustments to its policies and practices that are consistent with the special educational provision set out in the education 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.

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 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, legal action will be taken. 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.



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
T	Parent traveling for work (mobile child)	Authorised absence
U	Arrived after register closed	Unauthorised absence
V	Attending an educational visit or trip	Attending an approved educational activity
W	Attending work experience	Attending an approved educational activity
X	Non-compulsory pupil not required to attend	Not possible attendance
Y1	Unable to attend due to unavailable transport	Not possible attendance
Y2	Unable to attend due to widespread travel disruption	Not possible attendance
Y3	Unable to attend due to partial school closure	Not possible attendance
Y4	Unable to attend due to unexpected school closure	Not possible attendance
Y5	Unable to attend due to being in criminal justice detention	Not possible attendance
Y6	Unable to attend due to public health guidance/law	Not possible attendance
Y7	Unable to attend due to other unavoidable cause	Not possible attendance
Z	Prospective pupil not yet on admission register	Not collected

Monitoring

This policy will be reviewed by the Head Teacher annually and updated as needed to reflect changes in school policies or regulations.

Links with other policies

This Pupil Attendance policy links to the following policies:

- Safeguarding and Child Protection
- SEND