



Attendance Policy

St Columba C.of E. Primary School

Growing Futures, rooted in love, hope and respect.

Revision No.	Date Issued	Prepared By	Approved	Comments
I	September 2025	K Viola		

Academy	St Columba C. of. E Primary Academy
TB (Transition Board) ratified date	October 2023

Type of Policy	Tick <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
DCAT Statutory Policy	<input type="checkbox"/>
DCAT Non-statutory Policy	<input type="checkbox"/>
DCAT Model Optional Policy	<input type="checkbox"/>
Academy Policy	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>

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1. Aims

This policy aims to show our commitment to meeting our obligations with regards to school attendance, including those laid out in the Department for Education's (DfE's) statutory guidance on [working together to improve school attendance \(applies from 19 August 2024\)](#). We will first aim to support families with reduced attendance and act quickly when attendance is noticed to be on a decline to intervene and work together to improve this. Through our whole-school culture and ethos that values good attendance, including:

- a) Develop and maintain a whole school culture that promotes high attendance and reduces absence, including persistent absence.
- b) Setting high expectations for the attendance and punctuality of all pupils
- c) Promoting good attendance and the benefits of good attendance
- d) Reducing absence, including persistent and severe absence
- e) Ensuring every pupil has access to the full-time education to which they are entitled
- f) Acting early to address patterns of absence
- g) Building strong relationships with families to make sure pupils have the support in place to attend school
- h) We will also promote and support punctuality in attending lessons

2. Legislation and guidance

This policy is based on the Department for Education's (DfE's) statutory guidance on [working together to improve school attendance \(applies from 19 August 2024\)](#) and [school attendance parental responsibility measures](#). The guidance is based on the following pieces of legislation, which set out the legal powers and duties that govern school attendance:

- Part 6 of the [Education Act 1996](#)
- Part 3 of the [Education Act 2002](#)
- Part 7 of the [Education and Inspections Act 2006](#)
- [The Education \(Pupil Registration\) \(England\) Regulations 2006 \(and 2010, 2011, 2013, and 2016 amendments\)](#)
- [The School Attendance \(Pupil Registration\) \(England\) Regulations 2024](#)
- <https://www.legislation.gov.uk/uksi/2006/1751/contents> [The Education \(Penalty Notices\) \(England\) \(Amendment\) Regulations 2013 and the 2024 amendment](#)
- <https://www.legislation.gov.uk/uksi/2013/757/regulation/2/made> It also refers to:
 - [School census guidance](#)
 - [Keeping Children Safe in Education](#)
 - [Mental health issues affecting a pupil's attendance: guidance for schools](#)

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

This policy complies with DCAT's Funding Agreement and Articles of Association.

3. School procedures

a. Attendance register

By law, St Columba is required to keep an attendance register, and all pupils must be placed on this register.

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

- i. Present
- ii. Attending an approved off-site educational activity
- iii. Absent
- iv. Unable to attend due to exceptional circumstances

Any amendment to the attendance register will include:

- a) The amended entry
- b) The reason for the amendment
- c) The date on which the amendment was made
- d) The name and position of the person who made the amendment

See appendix 1 for the DfE attendance codes.

Every entry in the attendance register will be preserved for 6 years after the date on which the entry was made.

Pupils must arrive in school by 8.40am on each school day.

The register for the first session will be taken at 8.45am. The register for the second session will be taken at 1pm.

b. Unplanned absence

Parents must notify the school on the first day of an unplanned absence – for example, if their child is unable to attend due to ill health – by 8.40am or as soon as practically possible (see also section 6).

This can be done by contacting the school on 01329 843226 and selecting 'Report Absence' where you will be able to leave a message. You can also email admin@stcolumba.school, however we may still need to speak with you regarding your child's absence, and will call if required.

Parents will need to call on the morning of each day of absence after this to notify school their child will not be attending.

Absence due to illness will be authorised unless the school has a genuine concern about the authenticity of the illness. If the authenticity of the illness is in doubt, the school may ask parents to provide medical evidence, such as a doctor's note, prescription, appointment card or other appropriate form of evidence. We will not ask for medical evidence unnecessarily.

If the school is not satisfied about the authenticity of the illness, the absence will be recorded as unauthorised and parents will be notified of this in advance.

c. Medical or dental appointments

Missing registration for a medical or dental appointment is counted as an authorised absence; advance notice is required for authorising these absences and proof of the appointment will be required. Without this the absence may be unauthorised.

However, we encourage parents to make medical and dental appointments out of school hours where possible. Where this is not possible, the pupil should be out of school for the minimum amount of time necessary and be in school before the appointment and return to school after the appointment.

Parents are asked to provide as much notice as possible for pre planned absence. This will support your child to ensure teachers can best support them with any missed learning.

Applications for other types of absence in term time must also be made in writing/by email in advance. Information relating to whether the school can authorise such absences can be found in section 4.

d. Lateness and punctuality

A pupil who arrives late, but before the register has closed, will be marked as late, using the appropriate code. This is before 9am.

A pupil who arrives after the register has closed will be marked as absent, using the appropriate unauthorised code. This is for any arrival after 9am.

e. Following up absence

The school will follow up any absences to ascertain the reason, ensure safeguarding action is taken where necessary, identify whether the absence is approved or not and identify the correct attendance code to use.

f. Reporting to parents

St Columba will report to parents on their child's attendance record annually in the written end-of-year report. We will also report absence data for any children that we have concerns regarding attendance, to raise awareness of children's attendance..

4. Authorised and unauthorised absence

a. Granting approval for term-time absence

Headteachers may not grant any leave of absence to pupils during term time unless they consider there to be 'exceptional circumstances' and only for a very limited length of time.

The request for absence must be in writing and sent to the school office email: admin@stcolumba.school

Examples of any exceptional circumstances where leave may be granted during term time are as follows:

- i. If a parent is service personnel and is returning from a tour of duty abroad where it is evidenced the individual will not be in receipt of any leave in the near future that coincides with school holidays.
- ii. Where an absence from school is recommended by a health professional as part of a parent or child's rehabilitation from a medical or emotional issue.
- iii. The death or terminal illness of a close relative, only if Headteacher is satisfied that the circumstances are truly exceptional (max 2 days including day of funeral);
- iv. Out-of-school programmes such as music, arts, or sport operating at a high standard of achievement. Documentary evidence of this event will be required.
- v. Religious observance – The Education Act 1996 S444(3) (c), states "on any day exclusively set apart for religious observance by the religious body to which his/her parent belongs"; (Maximum 2 days)
- vi. To attend a wedding or funeral of a close relative if the Headteacher is satisfied that the circumstances are truly exceptional; Leave should only be authorised for this purpose when a Headteacher is satisfied that there is a persuasive reason for holding the wedding during term time and there will be an onus on parents to show clear evidence that this absence is absolutely an

exceptional circumstance. In difficult family situations the Headteacher may use his/her discretion in granting leave and each case should be addressed on its individual merits, taking into account the overall welfare of the child. (max 2 days for a wedding)

vii. As part of a support plan where the pupil is on a temporary part time timetable

Where there are exceptional and unforeseen circumstances that fall outside of the above, the Headteacher agrees to consult with the Transition Board prior to any authorisation being given to the parent.

Evidence would be required in each case.

The school considers each application for term-time absence individually, taking into account the specific facts, circumstances, and relevant context behind the request. A leave of absence is granted entirely at the Headteacher's discretion. Valid reasons for authorised absence include:

- a) Illness and medical/dental appointments – as explained in sections 3.2 and 3.3
- b) Religious observance – where the day is exclusively set apart for religious observance by the religious body to which the pupil's parents belong. If necessary, the school will seek advice from the parents' religious body to confirm whether the day is set apart
- c) Traveller pupils travelling for occupational purposes – this covers Roma, English, and Welsh Gypsies, Irish and Scottish Travellers, Showmen (fairground people) and Circus people, Bargees (occupational boat dwellers) 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 the school, but it is not known whether the pupil is attending educational provision

Examples of circumstances NOT considered as exceptional

- a) Holidays abroad for the purpose of visiting a sick relative, except where that person is seriously ill. Medical evidence may be requested.
- b) Holidays taken in term time due to lower cost/parental work commitments.

Information about targeting unauthorised attendance

The school uses the Arbor data management system to help monitor pupil attendance. Where there are concerns about a pupil's attendance parents/carers will be contacted by the school to discuss ways of supporting improved attendance. Where concerns remain despite support, referral to external agencies will be made where appropriate.

b. Legal sanctions

Hampshire County Council and the DFE works with schools and considers legal action and fines according to current guidelines.

Further guidance and advice can be found at:

[Attendance guidance for parents/carers | Hampshire County Council \(hants.gov.uk\)](https://www.hants.gov.uk/attendance-guidance-for-parents-carers)

There are a number of legal measures that the Local Authority can pursue, these include:

- an Attendance contract
- being included in the fast track system which means you will be expected to improve your child's attendance within a given period of time
- Receiving a penalty notice. If issued with a first penalty notice, each parent must pay £80 within 21 days or £160 within 22-28 days. The payment must be made directly to the local authority.

- A second Penalty Notice may be issued if a Penalty Notice has previously been issued in the preceding three-year period in respect of the same child. A second Penalty Notice is £160 if paid within 21 days with no option for this second offence to be discharged at the lower rate of £80.
- being prosecuted in the Magistrates' Court. This means you could receive a community order, a fine of up to £2,500 per parent/carer, a custodial sentence or an Education Supervision Order

The decision on whether or not to issue a penalty notice ultimately rests with the Headteacher, following the local authority's code of conduct for issuing penalty notices. This may take into account:

- i. A number of unauthorised absences occurring within a rolling academic year
- ii. One-off instances of irregular attendance, such as holidays taken in term time without permission
- iii. Where an excluded or suspended pupil is found in a public place during school hours without a justifiable reason

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

5. Strategies for promoting attendance

At the end of each half term any pupil that has had 100% attendance that term is placed into a draw. During the last assembly of the half term a name is drawn (from all the 100% pupils) and the pupil drawn receives a prize. All 100% pupils are celebrated in the Assembly and are known as Attendance HERO's (Here, Every day, Ready. On time).

Each week the class with the highest attendance wins the school Attendance Bear for the week.

6. Attendance monitoring

The school will monitor attendance and absence data (including punctuality), weekly, half-termly, termly and yearly across the school and at an individual pupil, year group and cohort level.

Specific pupil information will be shared with the DfE on request. The school has granted the DfE access to its management information system so the data can be accessed regularly and securely.

The Family Liaison Officer monitors pupil absence on a daily basis.

Parents are expected to call the school in the morning before 8.40 am if their child is going to be absent due to ill health (see section 3.2).

Parents are expected to call the school each day a child is absent, unless otherwise agreed.

If a pupil's absence goes above 3 days, we will contact the parents to discuss the reasons for this.

If we have concerns over a child's absence, and after contacting parents a pupil's absence continues to rise, we will consider involving Hampshire County Council and the relevant services. The persistent absence threshold is 10%. If a pupil's individual overall absence rate is greater than or equal to 10%, the pupil will be classified as a persistent absentee, and will be closely monitored throughout the year.

Pupil-level absence data is collected each term and published at national and local authority level through the DfE's school absence national statistics releases. The underlying school-level absence data is published alongside the national statistics. We compare our attendance data to the national average and share this with the Transition Board.

Attendance is recorded on the school's management system called Arbor. Analysis and monitoring of the attendance data is undertaken using a software module within Arbor.

8.4 Reducing persistent and severe absence

Persistent absence is where a pupil misses 10% or more of school, and severe absence is where a pupil misses 50% or more of school. Reducing persistent and severe absence is central to the school's strategy for improving attendance.

The school will:

Use attendance data to find patterns and trends of persistent and severe absence

Consider potential safeguarding issues and, where suspected or present, address them in line with Keeping Children Safe in Education

Hold regular meetings with the parents of pupils who the school (and/or local authority) considers to be vulnerable or at risk of persistent or severe absence, or who are persistently or severely absent, to:

- o Discuss attendance and engagement at school
- o Listen, and understand barriers to attendance
- o Explain the help that is available
- o Explain the potential consequences of, and sanctions for, persistent and severe absence
- o Review any existing actions or interventions

Provide access to wider support services to remove the barriers to attendance, in conjunction with the local authority, where relevant

Consider alternative support that could be put in place to remove any barriers to attendance and re-engage these pupils. In doing so, the school will sensitively consider some of the reasons for absence

Implement sanctions, where necessary

7. Roles and responsibilities

7.1 The governing board

The governing board is responsible for:

- Setting high expectations of all school leaders, staff, pupils and parents/carers
- Making sure school leaders fulfil expectations and statutory duties, including:
 - o Making sure the school records attendance accurately in the register, and shares the required information with the DfE and local authority
 - o Making sure the school works effectively with local partners to help remove barriers to attendance, and keeps them informed regarding specific pupils, where appropriate
- Recognising and promoting the importance of school attendance across the school's policies and ethos
- Making sure the school's attendance management processes are delivered effectively, and that consistent support is provided for pupils who need it most by prioritising staff and resources
- Making sure the school has high aspirations for all pupils, but adapts processes and support to pupils' individual needs
- Regularly reviewing and challenging attendance data and helping school leaders focus improvement efforts on individual pupils or cohorts who need it most
- Working with school leaders to set goals or areas of focus for attendance and providing support and challenge
- Monitoring attendance figures for the whole school and repeatedly evaluating the effectiveness of the school's processes and improvement efforts to make sure they are meeting pupils' needs

- Where the school is struggling with attendance, working with school leaders to develop a comprehensive action plan to improve attendance
- Making sure dedicated training is provided to staff with a specific attendance function in their role, including in interpreting and analysing attendance data
- Holding the headteacher to account for the implementation of this policy

If you have a link governor for attendance, or a committee responsible for attendance, add details of their role in monitoring pupil attendance.

7.2 The Headteacher

The headteacher is responsible for:

- The implementation of this policy at the school
- Monitoring school-level absence data and reporting it to governors
- Supporting staff with monitoring the attendance of individual pupils
- Monitoring the impact of any implemented attendance strategies
- Issuing fixed-penalty notices, where necessary, and/or authorising [role] to be able to do so
- Working with the parents/carers of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) to develop specific support approaches for attendance for pupils with SEND, including where school transport is regularly being missed, and where pupils with SEND face in-school barriers
- Communicating with the local authority when a pupil with an education, health and care (EHC) plan has falling attendance, or where there are barriers to attendance that relate to the pupil's needs
- Communicating the school's high expectations for attendance and punctuality regularly to pupils and parents/carers through all available channels
- Sharing information from the school register with the local authority, including:
 - Notifying the local authority when a pupil's name is added to or deleted from the school admission register outside of standard transition times
 - Providing the local authority with the details of pupils who fail to attend school regularly, or who have been marked with an unauthorised absence for a continuous period of 10 school days
 - Providing the local authority with the details of pupils who the school believes will miss 15 days consecutively or cumulatively because of sickness

7.4 The attendance officer / Family Liaison Officer

- Leading, championing and improving attendance across the school
- Evaluating and monitoring expectations and processes
- Having a strong grasp of absence data and oversight of absence data analysis
- Regularly monitoring and evaluating progress in attendance
- Establishing and maintaining effective systems for tackling absence, and making sure they are followed by all staff
- Liaising with pupils, parents/carers and external agencies, where needed
- Building close and productive relationships with parents/carers to discuss and tackle attendance issues
- Creating intervention or reintegration plans in partnership with pupils and their parents/carers
- Delivering targeted intervention and support to pupils and families

The designated staff member responsible for attendance is Tracy Hatton and can be contacted via the school office.

7.5 Class teachers

Class teachers are responsible for recording attendance for both morning and afternoon sessions on a daily basis, using the correct codes (see Appendix 1), and submitting this information on to Arbor in a

timely way.

7.6 Parents

Where this policy refers to a parent, it refers to the adult the school and/or local authority decides is most appropriate to work with, including:

- All natural parents, whether they are married or not
- All those who have parental responsibility for a child or young person
- Those who have day-to-day responsibility for the child (i.e. lives with and looks after them)

Parents are expected to:

- Make sure their child attends every day on time
- Call the school to report their child's absence before 8.40am on the day of the absence and each subsequent day of absence, and advise when they are expected to return
- Provide the school with more than one emergency contact number for their child
- Ensure that, where possible, appointments for their child are made outside of the school day
- Seek support, where necessary, for maintaining good attendance, by contacting our Family Liaison Officer who can be contacted via the school office

7.4 Class Teachers

Class teachers are responsible for recording attendance on a daily basis, using the correct codes, and submitting this information to the school office. Class teachers are also responsible for ensuring that the classroom is a calm, orderly, safe, and supportive environment where all pupils are keen and ready to learn.

8. Monitoring arrangements

This policy will be reviewed annually by DCAT and the Headteacher. At every review, the policy will be shared with the Transition Board (TB)

9. Links with other policies

This policy is linked to

- Child protection and safeguarding policy
- Teaching and Learning Policy
- SEN Policy and Information Report

Appendix 1

ATTENDANCE CODES, DESCRIPTIONS AND MEANINGS

CODE	DESCRIPTION	MEANING
/	Present (AM)	Present
\	Present (PM)	Present
B	Educated off site (NOT Dual registration)	Approved Education Activity
C	Other Authorised Circumstances (not covered by another appropriate code/description)	Authorised absence
E	Excluded (no alternative provision made)	Authorised absence
G	Family holiday (NOT agreed <u>or</u> days in excess of exceptional circumstances)	Unauthorised absence
I	Illness (NOT medical or dental etc. appointments)	Authorised absence
J	Interview	Approved Education Activity
L	Late (before registers closed)	Present
M	Medical/Dental appointments	Authorised absence
N	No reason yet provided for absence	Unauthorised absence
O	Unauthorised absence (not covered by any other code/description)	Unauthorised absence
P	Approved sporting activity	Approved Education Activity
R	Religious observance	Authorised absence
S	Study leave	Authorised absence
T	Traveller absence	Authorised absence
U	Late (after registers closed)	Unauthorised absence
V	Educational visit or trip	Approved Education Activity
W	Work experience	Approved Education Activity
D	Dual registration (i.e. pupil attending other establishment)	Not counted in possible attendances
X	Untimetabled sessions for noncompulsory school-age pupils	Not counted in possible attendances
Y	Enforced and partial enforced closure	Not counted in possible attendances
Z	Pupil not yet on roll	Not counted in possible attendances
#	School closed to pupils	Not counted in possible attendances

KEY

Present
Authorised absence
Unauthorised absence
Approved Education Activity (Present)
Not counted in possible attendances