



St Paul's CofE Junior School

'One body, every person, growing together.'

Attendance Policy

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ATTENDANCE POLICY

“One body, every person, growing together.”

1. Policy Statement

At St Paul's C of E Junior School, we believe that regular attendance at school is fundamental to every child's education, wellbeing, personal development and safeguarding.

Our Christian vision recognises every child as a valued member of our school family. We therefore seek to work respectfully and constructively with children and their families, recognising that barriers to attendance can be complex and that some children will require additional support in order to attend school regularly.

The Department for Education states that school attendance is vital for children's learning, wellbeing and wider development and is a strong protective factor, particularly for vulnerable children.

Our approach is therefore to:

- expect every pupil to attend school every day that they are able to do so;
- promote the benefits of good attendance and punctuality;
- identify emerging attendance problems early;
- listen to children and families and seek to understand barriers to attendance;
- provide or facilitate appropriate support;
- maintain accurate statutory admission and attendance registers;
- recognise attendance as an important safeguarding matter;
- work collaboratively with Wokingham Borough Council and other relevant agencies;
- take proportionate formal action where support is unsuccessful, inappropriate or not engaged with; and
- ensure that statutory attendance procedures are applied consistently and fairly.

This reflects the DfE's July 2026 statutory guidance, which expects schools to build strong relationships with families, promote a whole-school culture of good attendance, maintain an attendance policy, keep accurate registers, analyse attendance information and work with local authorities and other partners where absence becomes a concern.

2. Legal and Statutory Framework

This policy has been prepared with regard to the legislation and statutory guidance applicable to school attendance in England, including:

- Education Act 1996;
- School Attendance (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2024;
- Education (Penalty Notices) (England) Regulations 2007, as amended;
- Education (Penalty Notices) (England) (Amendment) Regulations 2024;
- Children and Families Act 2014, where relevant;
- Equality Act 2010;
- Human Rights Act 1998;
- Data Protection Act 2018 and UK GDPR;
- current statutory safeguarding requirements; and
- Department for Education, Working together to improve school attendance, July 2026.

The School Attendance (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2024 came into force on 19 August 2024 and require schools to keep electronic admission and attendance registers, prescribe information to be recorded and address circumstances concerning deletion from the admission register and information provided to local authorities.

This policy should be read alongside the school's:

- Child Protection and Safeguarding Policy;
- Supporting Pupils with Medical Conditions Policy;
- SEND Policy and SEN Information Report;
- Behaviour Policy;
- Children Missing Education procedures;
- Equality policies;
- Data Protection Policy; and
- other relevant school and Wokingham Borough Council procedures.
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3. Roles and Responsibilities

3.1 Governing Board

The Governing Board will:

- recognise the importance of attendance and promote good attendance throughout the school's ethos and policies;
- ensure school leaders fulfil their statutory responsibilities;
- hold leaders to account for the effective implementation of this policy;
- regularly consider school attendance information and emerging trends;
- support leaders in focusing improvement activity on pupils or cohorts requiring additional help;
- ensure appropriate staff training is available; and
- review this policy regularly.

These responsibilities reflect the specific expectations placed on governing bodies of maintained schools by the July 2026 DfE statutory guidance.

3.2 Headteacher

The Headteacher has overall responsibility for improving attendance and for implementing this policy and will:

- establish high expectations for attendance and punctuality;
- ensure effective systems exist for registering pupils and following up absence;
- ensure attendance concerns are identified and addressed;
- ensure appropriate support is offered to families;
- ensure safeguarding concerns arising through absence are dealt with promptly;
- make decisions on applications for leave of absence;
- work with the local authority and other agencies as appropriate; and
- provide attendance information to governors.

3.3 Senior Attendance Champion – Julieanne Taylor - Headteacher

The Senior Attendance Champion will oversee the school's strategic approach to attendance, including analysis, intervention, support for individual pupils and families and liaison with external partners.

3.4 School staff

All staff have a role in creating a welcoming environment in which pupils feel that they belong.

Staff should:

- promote the importance of regular attendance;
- accurately complete attendance requirements relevant to their role;
- notice changes and emerging patterns in attendance or punctuality;
- raise concerns promptly;
- avoid making assumptions about barriers to attendance;
- recognise that absence may indicate a safeguarding or welfare concern; and
- support agreed attendance plans and interventions.

3.5 Parents and carers

Parents have the principal legal responsibility for ensuring that their child receives a suitable full-time education where the child is of compulsory school age.

For most parents whose child is registered at a school, this means ensuring that their child attends school regularly. DfE guidance for parents explains that parents are legally responsible for ensuring their child receives a suitable full-time education, normally from age 5 to 16.

Parents/carers are expected to:

- ensure their child attends every day the school is open unless an absence is properly authorised or another statutory reason applies;
- ensure their child arrives punctually;
- contact school as early as possible on the first day of an unexpected absence;
- explain the reason for absence;
- keep the school informed where an absence continues;
- provide more information where reasonably requested;
- keep contact details up to date;

- engage constructively with attendance support;
- attend meetings where requested; and
- avoid arranging holidays or other avoidable absence during term time.

4. The School Day and Punctuality

Pupils are expected to arrive in sufficient time to be ready for the beginning of the school day.

- **School gates open:** 8.30am
Morning registration: 8.40am
Register closes: 9.10am
Afternoon registration: 1.35pm

Parents are responsible for ensuring their child arrives punctually.

Where a pupil arrives after registration has begun but before the register closes, the pupil will be recorded as late using the appropriate attendance code.

Where a pupil arrives after the register has closed, the school will record the pupil using the appropriate statutory attendance code according to the circumstances.

Persistent lateness will be followed up with parents and may form part of the school's wider attendance support process.

5. Attendance Register

The school will maintain its attendance and admission registers electronically in accordance with the School Attendance (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2024. The statutory regulations require all schools to keep electronic admission and attendance registers.

Attendance will be recorded for each morning and afternoon session.

The school will use the national statutory attendance and absence codes applicable to the circumstances.

Staff must not create or substitute informal codes for statutory attendance codes.

Where the correct code is initially unclear, the school will make appropriate enquiries and amend the register where necessary in accordance with the statutory requirements.

6. Reporting Absence

If a child is unable to attend school unexpectedly, parents/carers should contact the school as early as possible on the first day of absence.

Telephone: 0118 978 5219

Email: absence@stpauls.wokingham.sch.uk

Parents should explain:

- the pupil's full name and class;
- the reason for the absence;
- where appropriate, the expected duration; and
- any information that the school needs in order to support the pupil.

Where the school has not received an explanation, it will make contact with the parent/carer. Parents should contact the school as early as possible on the first day of absence; where they do not, the school will contact them on the first morning to establish the reason.

Unexplained absence will not simply be assumed to be illness.

Where contact cannot be established, or where information received gives rise to a concern about the child's welfare, the school will follow its safeguarding procedures and take further action appropriate to the circumstances.

7. Illness

The school recognises that children will sometimes be too unwell to attend and that absence due to genuine illness can be unavoidable.

Parents should inform the school promptly of the reason for illness.

The school will consider each case according to its circumstances. Attendance concerns will not be addressed solely by reference to a percentage figure.

Where illness is recurrent, prolonged or significantly affects attendance, the school may discuss with parents:

- the barriers affecting attendance;
- reasonable support that could facilitate attendance;
- relevant medical or other professional support;

- adjustments which may be required for disability or special educational needs;
- reintegration following prolonged absence; and
- whether other services should be involved.

The school will be particularly mindful of pupils absent because of mental or physical ill health, or because of special educational needs and/or disabilities, and to provide additional support.

8. SEND, Disability and Health Needs

St Paul's recognises that some pupils with SEND, disabilities, mental health difficulties or medical conditions may face greater barriers to attendance.

The school will seek to understand these barriers and will make reasonable adjustments where legally required.

Support may involve the SENCO, Designated Safeguarding Lead, health professionals, local authority services or other relevant agencies.

Having SEND or a health condition does not in itself mean that a pupil should routinely be absent. Equally, attendance procedures must not be applied mechanically without considering the individual circumstances and the school's legal duties.

Any attendance support plan will be considered alongside relevant SEND, medical, safeguarding and equality responsibilities.

9. Leave of Absence during Term Time

Parents must request leave of absence in advance from the school.

For a maintained school, leave of absence will only be granted where permitted by the applicable regulations.

Requests should be made using the school's leave-of-absence request process and should explain:

- the reason for the request;
- proposed dates of absence; and
- relevant circumstances or supporting information.

Each application will be determined individually.

Where the applicable ground is exceptional circumstances, the Headteacher will determine whether exceptional circumstances exist and, if leave is granted, the period for which leave is permitted.

There is no automatic entitlement to a family holiday during term time.

The DfE's guidance to parents states that parents may request leave of absence, that the school determines whether it is approved and for how long, and that a holiday would not generally be classed as an exceptional circumstance.

Where leave has not been granted, absence will be recorded using the appropriate statutory code.

10. Religious Observance

Absence for religious observance will be recorded in accordance with the statutory attendance-code framework.

Parents should notify the school in advance wherever possible.

The DfE's attendance information recognises the relevant exception where a pupil is absent on a day set apart exclusively for religious observance by the religious body to which the parent belongs.

11. Part-time Timetables

As a general principle, pupils of compulsory school age are entitled to a full-time education.

A part-time timetable will not be used simply as a means of managing poor attendance or behaviour.

Where a temporary part-time timetable is considered necessary for an individual pupil, the school will ensure that the arrangement is justified by the child's individual circumstances, is kept under review and has the objective of returning the pupil to full-time education as soon as appropriate.

The July 2026 statutory guidance specifically addresses part-time timetables and the attendance code applicable to them.

12. Children Missing Education and Safeguarding

Attendance is a safeguarding matter.

Unexpected, unexplained, prolonged or repeated absence may indicate that a child needs additional support or may be at risk of harm.

The school will therefore:

1. identify absence promptly;
2. seek an explanation from parents/carers;
3. consider information already known about the pupil and family;
4. follow up unexplained or concerning absence;
5. involve the Designated Safeguarding Lead where appropriate;
6. undertake proportionate welfare and safeguarding action;
7. liaise with other agencies where appropriate; and
8. make statutory notifications and referrals when required.

The school's attendance procedures do not replace its Child Protection and Safeguarding Policy. Attendance is recognised by DfE as a protective factor, particularly for vulnerable children, and schools have an important role in identifying emerging risk.

13. Pupils with a Social Worker and Other Vulnerable Pupils

The school will pay particular attention to attendance where a pupil:

- has a social worker;
- is subject to safeguarding arrangements;
- has SEND;
- has significant physical or mental health needs;
- is a young carer;
- is experiencing disadvantage;
- is at risk of becoming persistently or severely absent; or
- has other circumstances which make regular attendance more difficult.

The July 2026 statutory guidance specifically addresses pupils with social workers and/or youth offending team workers and pupils who are young carers.

Information will be shared with relevant professionals where lawful, necessary and proportionate.

14. Responding to Emerging Attendance Concerns

The school will seek to intervene early rather than wait until absence has become entrenched.

Our approach will ordinarily be:

Stage 1: Understand

We will identify the pattern and talk with the pupil and family to understand the reasons and barriers.

Stage 2: Support

Where barriers exist, the school will work with the family to agree appropriate support.

Stage 3: Formalise

Where absence continues, more formal attendance support may be appropriate. This may include:

- an attendance meeting;
- an agreed attendance plan;
- involvement of relevant school staff;
- consideration of SEND, medical or safeguarding needs;
- involvement of local authority or other services; and
- clear expectations and review arrangements.

Stage 4: Formal or legal intervention

Where voluntary support has not been successful or engaged with, or where it is not appropriate, formal intervention may be considered in partnership with the local authority.

The DfE statutory guidance describes a support-first approach involving schools, families and local authorities, whilst also providing for legal intervention where attendance support does not work, is not engaged with or is inappropriate.gov

15. Persistent and Severe Absence

The school will use DfE attendance definitions applicable at the time and monitor pupils whose absence reaches or approaches the thresholds for persistent or severe absence.

A numerical threshold is a trigger for attention and support, not a substitute for understanding the circumstances of an individual child.

For pupils experiencing significant absence, the school will seek to:

- understand the causes;
- identify what needs to change;
- coordinate support;
- involve appropriate agencies;
- agree clear actions;
- monitor progress; and
- maintain safeguarding oversight.

16. Attendance Support and Working with Wokingham Borough Council

The school will work collaboratively with Wokingham Borough Council, including relevant attendance, education, SEND, early-help and safeguarding services where appropriate.

This may include seeking advice, participating in attendance-support arrangements, coordinating support for individual families and considering formal attendance intervention.

The July 2026 DfE statutory guidance expects schools and local authorities to work collaboratively when absence is at risk of becoming persistent or severe and identifies local authority school-attendance support functions, including communication and advice, targeted support and multidisciplinary family support.

17. Penalty Notices

A penalty notice is one of the legal interventions available in relation to unauthorised absence. It is not the school's default response to an attendance difficulty.

Schools must consider on a case-by-case basis whether a penalty notice should be issued, or whether the school should ask another authorised officer such as the local authority to issue one, when the national threshold has been met.

The national threshold is 10 sessions of unauthorised absence within a rolling period of 10 school weeks, typically equivalent to five school days. Meeting the threshold does not mean that a penalty notice must automatically be issued. The individual circumstances and appropriate intervention must be considered.

Under the national framework:

First penalty notice

For the first penalty notice issued to a parent in respect of the same child within the relevant three-year period:

- **£80** if paid within 21 days;
- increasing to **£160** if not paid within that period.

Second penalty notice

A second penalty notice to the same parent for the same child within three years is £160, payable within 28 days.

National limit

The national framework limits penalty notices to two penalty notices issued to a parent in respect of an individual child within a three-year period.

Where the national limit has been reached, or a penalty notice is otherwise inappropriate, the school and local authority may need to consider other legal intervention in accordance with the legislation and applicable local authority arrangements.

18. Legal Intervention

The school's central aim is to secure improvements in attendance and remove barriers to education.

Where support is unsuccessful, is not engaged with or is not appropriate, the school will work with Wokingham Borough Council to consider whether formal legal intervention is necessary and proportionate.

Any legal action will be considered in accordance with:

- the Education Act 1996;
- relevant regulations;
- DfE statutory guidance; and
- Wokingham Borough Council's applicable attendance and penalty-notice arrangements.

19. Attendance Data

The school will monitor and analyse attendance systematically.

Analysis will be used to:

- identify individual pupils whose attendance requires attention;
- identify emerging patterns before they become entrenched;
- identify cohorts experiencing disproportionate absence;
- assess patterns of authorised and unauthorised absence;
- monitor punctuality;
- evaluate attendance interventions; and
- inform strategic priorities.

The DfE expects schools to regularly analyse attendance and absence information to identify pupils and cohorts requiring support and to put effective strategies in place. Governing bodies should regularly review attendance data and challenge trends.

Information will be processed and shared in accordance with statutory data-sharing, safeguarding and data-protection requirements.

20. Rewards and Promoting Good Attendance

The school will promote the benefits of regular attendance positively and sensitively.

We recognise that some pupils face substantial barriers to attending school. Attendance recognition will therefore be designed carefully so that pupils are not blamed, embarrassed or disadvantaged for circumstances outside their control, including disability, medical conditions or other legitimate reasons for absence.

The emphasis will be on:

- belonging;
- engagement;
- improvement;
- positive routines;
- partnership with families; and
- enabling every pupil to attend as regularly as possible.

21. Staff Training

Staff responsible for attendance will receive appropriate training and updates.

Training will ensure staff understand:

- statutory attendance requirements;
- national attendance codes;
- school procedures;
- safeguarding implications;
- escalation routes;
- effective communication with families; and
- relevant SEND, disability and equality considerations.

The July 2026 statutory guidance specifically expects governing bodies to ensure staff receive adequate training on attendance.

22. Equality and Reasonable Adjustments

The school is committed to applying this policy fairly and have proper regard to our duties under equality legislation, considering reasonable adjustments for disabled pupils where required.

Attendance action will take account of the circumstances of the individual pupil. The existence of an attendance concern will not prevent the school from considering whether unmet educational, SEND, health, safeguarding or other needs contribute to the child's absence.

23. Complaints

Concerns about the school's implementation of this policy should initially be raised with the school.

Where a matter cannot be resolved informally, parents may use the school's published Complaints Policy.

Statutory legal processes, penalty notices and decisions made by other public authorities may be subject to separate procedures and should be addressed through the route applicable to that decision.

24. Monitoring and Review

The Headteacher will monitor implementation of this policy.

The Governing Board will receive appropriate attendance information enabling it to scrutinise attendance patterns, evaluate the school's response and satisfy itself that statutory responsibilities are being met.

The policy will be reviewed:

- annually;
- following material changes to legislation or DfE statutory guidance; or
- sooner where monitoring indicates that changes are necessary.

Date	Notes	Amendments
26.9.26	New policy - Version 1	Written to reflect the specific expectations placed on governing bodies of maintained schools by the July 2026 DfE statutory guidance.

Appendix 1: Attendance Escalation Framework

Emerging concern

- Early conversation with pupil/parent
- Identify barriers
- Offer appropriate support

Continuing concern

- Attendance review
- Meeting with family
- Agree actions/support
- Monitor impact

Persistent/significant absence

- Individualised attendance plan
- Consider SEND/health/safeguarding issues
- Multi-agency/local authority support where appropriate
- Regular review

Support unsuccessful/not engaged with/not appropriate

- Consider formal attendance intervention
- Consider penalty notice where statutory/national threshold is met
- Consider other legal intervention with Wokingham Borough Council where appropriate

The underlying DfE model is one of partnership and early intervention, with legal intervention available where support is unsuccessful, not engaged with or unsuitable.

Appendix 2: Parent Quick Guide

My child is ill

Contact the school **as early as possible on the first day of absence** and explain the reason for absence: absence@stpauls.wokingham.sch.uk with pupil's full name, class and reason for absence. Include expected duration if known.

The illness continues

Keep the school informed on a daily basis.

I need to take my child out of school

Apply for leave **in advance**. Do not assume that permission will be given.

Can I take my child on holiday during term time?

There is **no automatic entitlement** to term-time holiday. DfE guidance explains that a holiday would not generally constitute exceptional circumstances.

My child is struggling to attend

Please contact us early. Our first priority is to understand the problem and work with you to help your child attend.

Could I receive a penalty notice?

The national threshold is **10 unauthorised sessions in 10 school weeks**, but reaching the threshold triggers consideration of the appropriate response rather than an automatic fine.