



ST CHRISTOPHER'S PREP SCHOOL & NURSERY
ATTENDANCE POLICY

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1. Policy Statement

St Christopher's Prep School & Nursery is committed to ensuring that every pupil receives the maximum benefit from their education and is able to attend school regularly, punctually and safely.

Regular attendance is essential to pupils' educational attainment, personal development, wellbeing and safeguarding. Good attendance is a shared responsibility between the School, pupils, parents and carers, and, where appropriate, the Local Authority and other external agencies.

The School's approach is based on the Department for Education's statutory guidance, Working together to improve school attendance (July 2026). The guidance applies to independent schools and requires schools to have regard to its expectations as part of their efforts to maintain high levels of attendance.

The School recognises that barriers to attendance can be complex and individual to pupils and families. Consequently, St Christopher's operates a support-first approach, seeking to understand the reasons for absence, identify barriers and work collaboratively with pupils and parents/carers to improve attendance before considering formal or legal intervention, unless such intervention is immediately appropriate.

The School aims to provide a calm, orderly, safe and supportive environment in which pupils want to attend and are ready to learn. Attendance is therefore considered alongside safeguarding, pastoral care, behaviour, SEND, medical needs, wellbeing and educational provision.

The School maintains admission and attendance registers in accordance with the Education (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2024 and the requirements of the Independent School Standards Regulations.

For pupils in Reception to Year 6, attendance is recorded electronically using the School's ISAMS Management Information System. The Nursery records attendance through the School's Family app in accordance with the arrangements applicable to non-compulsory school-age children.

Attendance registers are legal documents and must be completed accurately and consistently.

The School recognises that unexplained, prolonged, persistent or severe absence, repeated lateness or a pupil's failure to return to school may indicate a safeguarding concern. Attendance information will therefore be considered as part of the School's wider safeguarding procedures.

This policy should be read alongside:

- Child Protection and Safeguarding Policy
- Missing Child and Critical Incident Policy
- Admissions Policy
- Fire Safety and Emergency Evacuation procedures
- SEND Policy
- Medical Conditions Policy
- Behaviour Policy
- Educational Visits Policy

2. Attendance Expectations

Parents and carers have a legal responsibility to ensure that children of compulsory school age who are registered at the School attend regularly.

Regular attendance means attending all sessions, for the full duration of those sessions, except where there is a statutory reason for absence or the School has granted leave of absence.

St Christopher's expects pupils to:

- attend school every day that the School is open;
- arrive punctually and be ready to learn;
- attend all timetabled sessions;
- remain in school for the full school day unless permission to leave has been granted;
- attend school following an absence as soon as they are fit to do so.

Parents and carers are expected to:

- ensure their child attends school regularly and punctually;
 - notify the School promptly when their child is unable to attend;
 - provide an appropriate explanation for every absence;
 - work positively with the School where attendance concerns arise;
 - provide information requested by the School where necessary to understand an attendance concern;
 - avoid arranging holidays or other unnecessary absences during term time;
 - make medical and other appointments outside school hours wherever reasonably possible.
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3. Registration

The School is required to maintain an accurate attendance register.

For pupils of all ages, the attendance register must be taken:

- at the beginning of the morning session (8:45am); and
- once during the afternoon session (1:30pm)

The register must be taken at the same time for all registered pupils and must remain open for a maximum of 30 minutes.

The School will use the national attendance codes specified in the Education (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2024.

Teachers are responsible for ensuring that registers are completed accurately and promptly. Staff must not mark a pupil as present if they are not physically present in school at the time the register is taken.

Where a pupil arrives after the register has opened but before it closes, the appropriate late code will be recorded.

Where a pupil arrives after the register has closed, the appropriate absence code will be recorded unless another statutory absence code applies.

4. Day-to-Day Attendance Procedures

All teaching staff must be familiar with the School's attendance procedures and know how to access the attendance register.

The School Office and Form Teachers are responsible for monitoring and following up attendance.

The School will:

- monitor attendance and punctuality every day;
- identify unexplained absences promptly;
- contact parents/carers on the first day of unexplained absence;
- ensure the reason for absence is established and appropriately coded;
- maintain accurate records of attendance and absence;
- monitor patterns of absence and lateness;
- communicate attendance concerns to parents/carers at an early stage;
- provide appropriate support where barriers to attendance are identified.

Where a reason for absence is initially unknown, it will be recorded using the appropriate unexplained absence procedure. Once the reason has been established, the register will be amended to the appropriate code as soon as possible and no later than five working days after the session.

Where reasonably practicable, the School will maintain more than one emergency contact number for each pupil.

5. Reporting an Absence

Parents/carers must notify the School Office by telephone or email **before 9.00am on each day of absence**.

Parents/carers should provide:

- the pupil's name;
- class;
- reason for absence; and
- expected date of return, where known.

If a pupil remains absent, parents/carers should continue to provide an update each day unless the School has agreed an alternative arrangement.

Where no explanation has been received, the School Office will contact parents/carers on the first day of absence, normally before 10.00am.

If the School cannot establish the reason for absence or make appropriate contact with the family, further contact will be made. Where necessary, the matter will be escalated in accordance with safeguarding and attendance procedures.

Unexplained absence will be treated seriously because it may indicate that a pupil is at risk or missing from education.

Where a pupil has a social worker or youth offending team worker, the School will inform the relevant professional of unexplained absences where required by the DfE guidance.

6. Leave of Absence

Parents/carers should not arrange holidays during term time.

Leave of absence during term time is only granted at the School's discretion and must be requested in advance where appropriate.

The DfE guidance states that holidays or other absences for leisure and recreation would generally not constitute exceptional circumstances.

Where a request for leave of absence is made on the basis of exceptional circumstances, the Headteacher will consider the individual facts and circumstances of the request, including any relevant background information.

The School will not operate a blanket policy under which leave of absence is automatically granted for particular events or circumstances.

Where leave is granted, the Headteacher will determine the length of the absence.

The School may refuse requests for term-time holidays and other non-essential absences. Unauthorised absence may result in referral to the Local Authority where appropriate.

7. Medical and Health-Related Absence

The School recognises that illness and medical conditions can affect attendance.

Parents/carers should notify the School of illness in accordance with Section 5.

Medical evidence will not routinely be required for ordinary short-term illness. The DfE guidance makes clear that medical evidence should generally only be required in a minority of cases, particularly where a pupil has complex, long-term or frequently recurring health needs and evidence is necessary to understand the pupil's needs and identify suitable support.

Where a pupil experiences prolonged or recurring absence due to physical or mental health needs, the School will work with the pupil, parents/carers and, where appropriate, relevant professionals to:

- understand the barriers to attendance;
- provide pastoral support;
- consider reasonable adjustments;
- consider a phased or supported return where appropriate;
- liaise with the Local Authority or other agencies where additional support is required;
- regularly review the effectiveness of support.

Where there are reasonable grounds to believe that a pupil will be absent through illness for 15 consecutive school days or more, or their cumulative illness absence during the school year will reach 15 school days or more, the appropriate sickness return will be made to the Local Authority.

8. Pupils with SEND or Additional Needs

The School recognises that pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities may experience additional barriers to regular attendance.

The School will maintain high expectations for attendance while recognising that individual pupils may require additional support or reasonable adjustments.

Where appropriate, the School will work with pupils and parents/carers to:

- identify barriers to attendance;

- consider reasonable adjustments;
- review pastoral and educational support;
- consider issues relating to transport, uniform, routines and access to support;
- work with external agencies where appropriate;
- ensure any relevant provision in an Education, Health and Care Plan is considered;
- review attendance support regularly.

Attendance data for pupils with SEND will be monitored as part of the School's wider attendance and safeguarding monitoring.

9. Part-Time Timetables

All pupils of compulsory school age are entitled to a full-time education.

A temporary part-time timetable will only be used in **very exceptional circumstances**, where it is considered to be in the pupil's best interests.

A part-time timetable:

- must be agreed by the School and the parent/carer with whom the pupil normally lives;
- must have a clear purpose and form part of a wider support, health care or reintegration plan;
- must have regular review dates;
- should operate for the shortest period necessary;
- should have a proposed end date and an ambition for a return to full-time education;
- must not be used as a means of managing behaviour.

Where a pupil has a social worker or an Education, Health and Care Plan, the relevant professionals/local authority should be involved as appropriate.

10. Attendance Monitoring and Data Analysis

Attendance will be monitored proactively throughout the academic year.

The School will analyse attendance data at least weekly to identify:

- individual pupils whose attendance is declining;
- patterns of absence;
- repeated lateness;
- persistent absence;
- severe absence;
- year-group and cohort trends;
- patterns relating to SEND and other relevant pupil groups;
- emerging safeguarding concerns.

The School will not rely solely on headline attendance percentages. Attendance will also be considered in terms of the actual amount of education missed and the pattern and reasons for absence.

Attendance information will be shared with relevant staff, including the Headteacher, Deputy Headteacher/Attendance Champion, SEN Lead and Designated Safeguarding Lead where appropriate.

Attendance data will also be reported to the Governance Board as part of the School's safeguarding and leadership monitoring.

The DfE guidance expects schools to use attendance data to identify pupils and cohorts requiring support and to intervene at an early stage.

11. Persistent and Severe Absence

A pupil is considered **persistently absent (PA)** when they miss **10% or more of their possible school sessions**.

A pupil is considered **severely absent (SA)** when they miss **50% or more of their possible school sessions**.

These are national definitions and are not the same as the School's internal attendance concerns threshold.

Where a pupil is at risk of becoming persistently absent, the School will act at an early stage rather than waiting for the pupil to reach the 10% threshold.

Where absence reaches or approaches 10%, the School will seek to understand the reasons for absence, discuss barriers with the pupil and family, and agree appropriate support.

Pupils experiencing persistent absence will receive targeted support proportionate to their individual circumstances.

Severe absence will receive particular attention because pupils who are absent for 50% or more of their education are likely to require more intensive support and may present increased safeguarding concerns.

Where appropriate, the School will work with the Local Authority and other agencies to provide additional or multi-disciplinary support.

12. St Christopher's Attendance Concern Threshold

The School aims for high attendance for all pupils.

As an internal monitoring threshold, the School will identify pupils whose attendance falls below **95%** as requiring further review.

This 95% figure is an internal School monitoring threshold and is not the national definition of persistent absence.

When attendance falls below 95%, the School will consider:

- the number of sessions missed;
- the reasons for absence;
- whether absence is authorised or unauthorised;
- patterns of absence;
- punctuality;
- medical or SEND circumstances;
- whether there are safeguarding concerns;

- whether attendance is improving or deteriorating.

Parents/carers may be contacted to discuss the attendance pattern and, where appropriate, agree supportive actions.

The School will use professional judgement and will not automatically escalate a case solely because attendance has fallen below 95%.

For example, a pupil experiencing a known significant illness may require a different approach from a pupil with unexplained or avoidable absence.

13. Support-First Approach

St Christopher's recognises that absence is often a symptom of wider difficulties.

Where attendance becomes a concern, the School will seek to understand the underlying barriers before considering formal enforcement, unless legal intervention is appropriate immediately.

The graduated approach will normally be:

Expect

Set clear expectations for good attendance and punctuality.

Monitor

Use attendance data to identify emerging concerns.

Listen and understand

Talk with the pupil and parents/carers to understand barriers.

Facilitate support

Put appropriate support in place and, where necessary, signpost or refer to external services.

Formalise support

Where appropriate, develop a formal attendance support plan or work with the Local Authority on an attendance contract.

Enforce

Where support has not worked, has not been engaged with, or is not appropriate, the School will work with the Local Authority to consider appropriate legal intervention.

This approach reflects the DfE's graduated expectations that attendance improvement should focus on understanding and removing barriers before enforcement wherever possible.

14. Attendance Support Plans

Where attendance remains a concern, the School may establish an Attendance Support Plan with the pupil and parents/carers.

This may include:

- identified barriers to attendance;
- agreed actions for the pupil;

- agreed actions for parents/carers;
- support to be provided by the School;
- involvement of external agencies where appropriate;
- attendance targets;
- review dates;
- consequences if attendance does not improve.

The impact of interventions will be monitored and reviewed regularly. If an intervention is not effective, the School will consider adjusting the approach or identifying alternative support.

15. Punctuality and Lateness

Punctuality is an important part of good attendance.

The School will monitor all late arrivals and identify patterns at an early stage.

A pupil who arrives after the start of the session but before the register closes will be recorded using the appropriate late code.

A pupil who arrives after the register has closed will normally be recorded as an unauthorised absence for that session unless another appropriate absence code applies.

The School's internal concern threshold for repeated lateness is three or more late arrivals within a week, although the Headteacher may intervene earlier where the pattern is significant.

Where repeated lateness is identified:

1. the School will communicate the concern to parents/carers;
2. the impact on learning and pupil wellbeing will be explained;
3. the School will seek to understand the reason for the lateness;
4. appropriate support or actions will be agreed;
5. attendance and punctuality will be reviewed.

Persistent lateness may contribute to the national threshold for legal attendance intervention where arrivals occur after the register has closed. The DfE guidance confirms that 10 sessions of unauthorised absence within a rolling 10-school-week period can include a combination of absence and late arrival after the register has closed.

16. Safeguarding and Children Missing Education

Attendance is an important safeguarding matter.

Unexplained or prolonged absence may indicate that a child is at risk of neglect, abuse, exploitation or other harm. The School will therefore consider attendance information alongside all other safeguarding information.

The School will act promptly where:

- a pupil is absent without explanation;
- contact with the family cannot be established;

- a pupil fails to return following an agreed period of absence;
- there are concerns about the pupil's whereabouts;
- there are concerns regarding the pupil's safety or welfare;
- absence becomes severe;
- the School has reason to believe that a child may be missing education.

Where safeguarding concerns arise, the Designated Safeguarding Lead will be consulted and the School will make referrals to Children's Services, the Local Authority or other agencies where appropriate.

Where a pupil is severely absent and all reasonable support has been provided but unauthorised absence continues, the School and Local Authority should consider whether this may constitute neglect and whether a children's social care assessment is required.

17. Off-Site Activities and Alternative Provision

Where pupils attend educational visits, sporting fixtures, residential trips or other approved educational activities away from the School site, appropriate registers will be maintained.

The appropriate national attendance code will be used for approved educational activities.

For off-site sport and fixtures, the PE teacher will maintain a register before pupils leave the School premises.

Paper or electronic copies of relevant registers will be taken on off-site visits where appropriate for safeguarding and emergency purposes.

Where alternative provision or other off-site education is arranged, the School will maintain appropriate oversight of attendance and communicate with the provider where necessary.

18. Other School Registers

Additional registers will be maintained for:

- Morning Care;
- After School Care;
- after-school clubs;
- off-site sporting fixtures;
- educational visits and residential trips;
- other activities where a separate register is required.

The School will ensure that attendance information can be reconciled with the main school attendance register and used for safeguarding and emergency evacuation purposes.

Each morning, the School Office will check the 'Not in School' report and ensure appropriate pupil information is available for emergency evacuation procedures.

19. Reporting to the Local Authority

As an independent school, St Christopher's is not required to participate in the DfE daily attendance data-sharing arrangements that apply to state-funded schools. However, the School will comply with all statutory requirements to provide information to the Local Authority and other agencies where required.

The School will notify the Local Authority in accordance with statutory requirements, including where:

- a pupil is added to or removed from the admission register outside normal admission/transition arrangements;
- a pupil leaves the School and the next school or educational provision is not known;
- a pupil moves school at a non-standard time;
- a pupil is withdrawn for elective home education;
- a pupil is believed to be missing education;
- a pupil's circumstances require a Children Missing Education referral;
- a sickness return is required;
- a pupil is permanently excluded, where applicable;
- attendance or safeguarding concerns require Local Authority involvement.

The School will also cooperate with the Local Authority where attendance support, safeguarding intervention or legal intervention is required.

20. Legal Intervention

The School's primary approach is supportive and preventative.

Where voluntary support has not been successful, has not been engaged with, or is not appropriate in the circumstances, the School will work with the Local Authority to consider formal attendance support and, where appropriate, legal intervention.

Possible interventions include:

- an attendance contract;
- an Education Supervision Order;
- a Notice to Improve;
- a penalty notice where legally applicable;
- attendance prosecution as a last resort.

The DfE guidance makes clear that attendance legal intervention should be considered on an individual, case-by-case basis and that support should normally be provided before enforcement where appropriate.

As an independent school, St Christopher's does **not** have access to the National Framework for issuing penalty notices in the same way as state-funded schools. Penalty notices under the National Framework are not applicable to independent schools. Where appropriate, the School will liaise with the Local Authority regarding other available legal interventions.

21. National Threshold for Penalty Notices

For completeness, the national framework provides a threshold of **10 sessions of unauthorised absence within a rolling period of 10 school weeks** for consideration of a penalty notice in state-funded schools.

This may comprise any combination of unauthorised absence, including term-time holiday absence and late arrival after the register has closed.

Where the National Framework applies, penalty notices are considered on an individual basis rather than issued automatically.

The current framework provides for:

- a first penalty notice of £160, reduced to £80 if paid within 21 days;
- a second penalty notice within three years of £160;
- no third penalty notice to the same parent for the same child within the three-year period, with alternative legal action considered instead.

A Notice to Improve may be used as a final opportunity to engage with support where appropriate. Where used, the improvement period should normally be between three and six weeks.

These arrangements are included for clarity but do not alter the position that St Christopher's is an independent school and therefore does not issue penalty notices under the National Framework.

22. Attendance Support

The school's Senior Leadership Team oversee attendance matters in the school.

They will

- champion good attendance across the School;
- ensure that attendance systems are effective;
- monitor attendance data;
- identify pupils and cohorts requiring support;
- work with the Headteacher, School Office, Form Teachers and SEN Lead;
- liaise with parents/carers;
- work with the Designated Safeguarding Lead where appropriate;
- liaise with the Local Authority and other agencies where required;
- monitor the effectiveness of attendance interventions;
- report attendance trends and concerns to the Headteacher and Governance Board.

Attendance is a whole-school responsibility and is not solely the responsibility of the Senior Leadership Team. All teaching and non-teaching staff are expected to understand the importance of attendance and follow the School's procedures.

23. Promoting Positive Attendance

St Christopher's aims to develop a positive whole-school culture in which pupils understand the importance and benefits of attending school regularly.

The School will:

- communicate high expectations for attendance and punctuality;
- explain the relationship between attendance, learning and wellbeing;
- celebrate positive attendance and improvements where appropriate;
- ensure recognition systems are fair and non-discriminatory;
- provide pastoral support where barriers arise;
- work positively with parents/carers;
- promote the School as a safe, welcoming and supportive environment;
- address bullying, behaviour, SEND and wellbeing concerns which may affect attendance.

The School will avoid approaches which could disadvantage pupils because of disability, medical needs or other individual circumstances.

Attendance will be promoted through assemblies, newsletters, parent communications, registration periods and wider school life.

24. Governance and Oversight

The Governance Board has an important role in ensuring that attendance remains a strategic priority.

The Headteacher will provide the Governance Board with appropriate attendance information, including:

- whole-school attendance;
- persistent and severe absence;
- attendance trends;
- punctuality;
- significant attendance concerns;
- relevant pupil cohorts;
- safeguarding concerns linked to attendance;
- the effectiveness of attendance interventions.

Governors will provide appropriate challenge and support to ensure that the School's attendance arrangements remain effective.

The School will regularly review its attendance systems and policy to ensure they remain consistent with statutory requirements and effective practice.

25. Record Keeping

Attendance and admission registers are legal records.

The School will maintain attendance and admission registers electronically in accordance with statutory requirements.

Attendance records, supporting evidence and relevant correspondence will be retained securely and in accordance with applicable statutory requirements and the School's data retention arrangements.

Attendance records will be made available to authorised persons, including the Local Authority, where there is a statutory basis for requesting them.

The School will ensure that records are accurate, complete and capable of demonstrating the actions taken to promote attendance and address concerns.

26. Equality and Individual Circumstances

St Christopher's is committed to applying this policy fairly and consistently.

The School will take account of individual circumstances and its duties under the Equality Act 2010, including the requirement to make reasonable adjustments for disabled pupils where applicable.

The School recognises that some pupils and families may experience specific barriers to attendance and will seek to ensure that its attendance procedures do not unlawfully discriminate against any pupil.

The School will consider the individual needs of pupils when determining support, intervention and escalation.

27. Review of Policy

This policy will be reviewed annually by the Headteacher and Attendance Champion, or sooner where there are changes to legislation, statutory guidance or School procedures.

The School will consider the views of pupils and parents/carers where appropriate when reviewing its attendance approach.

The policy will be published on the School website and made available to parents/carers and staff.

The School will ensure that parents/carers are reminded of the attendance expectations at the beginning of each academic year and when significant changes are made to the policy.