

Importance of school attendance

Central to raising standards in education and ensuring all pupils can fulfil their potential is an assumption so widely understood that it is insufficiently stated – pupils need to attend school regularly to benefit from their education. Missing out on lessons leaves children vulnerable to falling behind. There is a strong correlation between children with poor attendance and those with low attainment in both primary and secondary school settings.

Children being absent from education for prolonged periods and/or on repeat occasions can act as a vital warning sign to a range of safeguarding issues including neglect, child sexual and child criminal exploitation.

St Christopher's Prep School & Nursery recognises its continuing responsibility to proactively manage and improve attendance. Head of Lower School, Lucy Jones, acts as the school's Attendance Lead.

St Christopher's Prep School & Nursery adheres to the following government guidance documents:

- [KCSIE \(2024\)](#)
- [Working together to improve school attendance \(August 2024\)](#)
- [Summary of responsibilities where a mental health issue is affecting attendance \(2024\)](#)
- [Children missing education \(August 2024\)](#)

The law on school attendance and right to a full-time education

UK law entitles every child of compulsory school age to an efficient, full-time education suitable to their age, aptitude, and any special educational need they may have. It is the legal responsibility of every parent to make sure their child receives that education either by attendance at a school or by education otherwise than at a school.

St Christopher's Prep School & Nursery recognises that for the most vulnerable pupils, regular attendance is also an important protective factor and the best opportunity for needs to be identified and support provided.

St Christopher's Prep School & Nursery parents must ensure their child attends every day that the school is open, except in a small number of allowable circumstances such as being too ill to attend or being given permission for an absence in advance from the school.

Absences

Requests for absence from school for whatever reason, must be notified to the School Office either by telephone or email. Wherever possible, planned absences should be requested with a week's notice. Absences due to illness should be reported by no later than 9am that morning. Absence due to significant family events and ceremonies such as weddings, graduations and funerals will normally

be authorised, although the school asks parents to keep this a single day for any given event. The school will also authorise pupils missing school for religious observance.

Family holidays are expected to coincide with the term dates that are published well in advance on the school website. Other requests, such as those linked to flight availability and general holidays do not fit into the clear guidelines from the DfE, and will not be authorised. Requests falling outside these boundaries will require authorisation from the Head, who will need to understand the context of the request.

Following an illness, a child should remain at home for an appropriate time if they are likely to be contagious. For diarrhoea and vomiting, we insist upon 48 hours at home (or with guardian). For other contagious illnesses, the School follows the guidelines from Public Health England:

[Public Health Guidelines](#)

Pupils will, on occasion, have to miss school for urgent medical or dental appointments. Having registered their attendance, if pupils then leave the School site to attend an appointment they must sign out at the School Office and sign back in upon their return.

Whole School Approach to Attendance

St Christopher's Prep School & Nursery aims to consistently promote the benefits of good attendance at school and make school a place pupils want to be. To manage and improve attendance effectively the School will:

- Build strong relationships and work jointly with families, listening to and understanding barriers to attendance and working in partnership with families to remove them.
- Develop and maintain a whole school culture that promotes the benefits of high attendance. Have a clear school attendance policy which all staff, pupils and parents understand.
- Regularly monitor and analyse attendance and absence data to identify pupils that require support with their attendance and put effective strategies in place.
- Share information and work collaboratively with other schools in the area, local authorities, and other partners where a pupil's absence is at risk of becoming persistent or severe.
- Be particularly mindful of pupils absent from school due to mental or physical ill health or their special educational needs and/or disabilities, and provide them with additional support.

Working together to improve attendance

Successfully treating the root causes of absence and removing barriers to attendance, at home, in school or more broadly requires St Christopher's Prep School & Nursery and local authority to work collaboratively in partnership with, not against families. All partners should work together to:

Expect

Aspire to high standards of attendance from all pupils and parents and build a culture where all can, and want to, be in school and ready to learn by prioritising attendance improvement across the school.

Monitor

Rigorously use attendance data to identify patterns of poor attendance (at individual and cohort level) as soon as possible so all parties can work together to resolve them before they become entrenched.

Listen and understand

When a pattern is spotted, discuss with pupils and parents to listen to and understand barriers to attendance and agree how all partners can work together to resolve them.

Facilitate support

Remove barriers in school and help pupils and parents to access the support they need to overcome the barriers outside of school. This might include an early help or whole family plan where absence is a symptom of wider issues.

Formalise support

Where absence persists and voluntary support is not working or not being engaged with, partners should work together to explain the consequences clearly and ensure support is also in place to enable families to respond. Depending on the circumstances this may include formalising support through an attendance contract or education supervision order.

Enforce

Where all other avenues have been exhausted and support is not working or not being engaged with, enforce attendance through statutory intervention: a penalty notice in line with the National Framework or prosecution to protect the pupil's right to an education.

(Working Together to Improve Attendance 2024, p.10)

At St Christopher's Prep School & Nursery, we pursue these steps as follows:

1. **Expect** - The school recognises that children will occasionally fall ill and it is appropriate for them to be at home. However, children should be in school whenever well enough and we use a target of 96% attendance for all pupils across an academic year. This equates to no more than 1 day of school missed per half term. Attendance above 96% is considered 'good'.
2. **Monitor** - The School's Attendance Register is stored electronically on Engage. Form tutors use Engage to monitor the attendance of the pupils in their care and should raise patterns of concern as soon as they become evident (e.g. children frequently absent for minor illness; children frequently missing the same day each week). Otherwise, the Head of School or Head of Lower School or will regularly review attendance statistics across an entire section or the whole school.

- a. Where attendance drops below 90% across a whole term, this is considered 'poor attendance'. The form tutor will raise this with their Head of School who will consider the situation and write to the parents if the pattern of absence is concerning.
 - b. If attendance falls below 80% the Head of Lower School will pass their concern to the Head or Deputy Head who will arrange a meeting with parents to discuss any potential barriers which are preventing the child from more frequently attending school.
 - c. Attendance below 50% is considered persistent and severe absence and if attendance levels are approaching this threshold, it will be reported to the local authority.
3. **Listen and Understand** - The school recognises that there can be barriers in school and out of school that reduce attendance levels. A first meeting between the school and family will focus on understanding why attendance is low and considering what can be done, both at school and at home, to improve attendance.
Pupils with Special Educational Needs or Disabilities will have their attendance reviewed in this context, but the School believes that all its pupils should be aiming for the target attendance rate.
The School will exercise discretion in cases where a pupil has been absent for a recognised and verifiable medical reason (e.g. operation, recovery or significant illness due to a known medical condition or any other exceptional circumstance).
4. **Facilitate Support** - Efforts will be made to break down barriers to attendance by the school (and parents and pupil where appropriate), and targets set to move back towards acceptable levels. In particular by working together to address any in-school barriers to attendance. Where barriers are outside of the school's control, all partners should work together to support pupils and parents to access any support they may need voluntarily.
5. **Formalise Support** - Where voluntary support has not been effective and/or has not been engaged with all schools should work with the local authority to put formal support in place in the form of an attendance contract or an education supervision order.
6. **Enforce** - Unlike schools in the maintained sector, St Christopher's Prep School & Nursery does not issue penalty notices, but will instead work with the local authority if a pupil's attendance is persistently poor and support structures have not been effective. The School is required by law to report certain unauthorised absences to the Department for Education as detailed under '15 Attendance Register' in the regulations

Monitoring Attendance with School Attendance Support Team

The local authority is expected to have a School Attendance Support Team that works with St Christopher's Prep School & Nursery. In practice, this involves a termly meeting between the school attendance lead and the local authority's assigned Education Welfare Officer. The support offered

ATTENDANCE & REGISTRATION POLICY



includes communication and advice, targeting support meetings, multi-disciplinary support for families, legal intervention. ([Working together to improve school attendance p.33 paragraph 89](#))

Pupils Late to School

The School expects excellent levels of punctuality. Lateness is recorded, monitored and followed up. Any pupil arriving late to school needs to sign in at the School Office.

Form tutors are expected to monitor lateness and in the first instance to speak to the pupil to find out if there is a reason for their persistent lateness. If there is a concern, this should be passed to the Head of School who will make contact with parents. If the Form tutor or Head of School has any concerns about the welfare of a pupil, they should speak to the DSL or a Deputy DSL to report this.

If a pupil is persistently brought to school late, and has not responded to a meeting with the Head of School, the Head or Deputy Head will then follow this up with a meeting with parents.

Attendance Registers

- Maintain an attendance register for all pupils (Engage);
- Promote good attendance and reduce absence, including persistent absence;
- Ensure every pupil has access to full-time education to which they are entitled; and,
- Act early to address patterns of absence.

The attendance register is a legal document and must be completed at the start of the morning and again in the afternoon. Registers are legal records and St Christopher's Prep School & Nursery will preserve every entry in the attendance or admission register for 6 years from the date the data was entered.

Contents of Admission Register

The admission register must contain the personal details of every pupil in the school, along with the date of admission or re-admission to the school, information regarding parents and carers and details of the school last attended.

A pupil's name can only lawfully be deleted from the admission register if a reason set out in regulation 9 of the School Attendance (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2024 applies.

Amendments to the Admission Register and Attendance Register

As the attendance register is a record of the pupils present at the time it was taken, the register should only routinely be amended where the reason for absence cannot be established at the time it is taken and it is subsequently necessary to correct the entry.

Where amendments are made, St Christopher's Prep School & Nursery must ensure the register shows the original entry, the amended entry, the reason for the amendment, the date on which the amendment was made, and the name of the person who made the amendment.

Expected First Day of Attendance

Schools must enter pupils on the admission register and attendance register from the beginning of the first day on which the school has agreed, or been notified, that the pupil will attend the school. For most pupils the expected first day of attendance is the first day of the school year.

If a pupil fails to attend on the agreed or notified date, the school must establish the reason for the absence and mark the attendance register accordingly.

All schools must notify the local authority within five days of adding a pupil's name to the admission register and must provide the local authority with all the information held within the admission register about the pupil. This duty does not apply to pupils who are added to the admission register at the start of the school's youngest year – for example pupils who are registered at a secondary school at the start of Year 7 - unless the local authority also requests for such information to be provided.

Pupils Moving to a New Address and/or School

Where the parent of a pupil notifies the school that the pupil will live at another address, schools must record in the admission register: (a) the full name of the parent with whom the pupil will live, (b) the new address, and (c) the date from when it is expected the pupil will live at this address.

Where a parent notifies the school that the pupil is registered at another school or will be attending a different school, schools must record in the admission register: (a) the name of the other school, and (b) the date of when the pupil first attended, or is due to start attending, that school.

Children at Risk of Missing Education

Local authorities have a duty to put in place arrangements for identifying (as far as it is possible) those children of compulsory school age in their area who are not school registered or receiving suitable education otherwise than at a school. Local authorities should trace those children and ensure that they receive full-time education. All schools must notify the local authority when a pupil's name is to be deleted from the admission register under any of the grounds prescribed in regulation 8 of the Education (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2006 as amended, as soon as the ground for removal is met and no later than the time at which the pupil's name is removed from the register. This duty does not apply where the pupil's name is removed after they have completed the school's final year, unless the local authority requests for such information to be provided.

Where a school notifies a local authority that a pupil's name is to be deleted from the admission register, the school must provide the local authority with the following information:

- the full name of the pupil;
- the full name and address of any parent with whom the pupil lives;
- at least one telephone number of any parent with whom the pupil lives;
- the full name and address of the parent who the pupil is going to live with, and the date the pupil is expected to start living there, if applicable;
- the name of pupil's other or future school and the pupil's start date or expected start date there, if applicable; and
- the ground prescribed in regulation 9 of the school attendance regulations under which the pupil's name is to be deleted from the admission register.

- Present;
- Attending an approved educational activity;

All schools must agree with the relevant local authority, the regular interval that the school will inform the local authority of any pupil who fails to attend school regularly, or has been absent without the school's permission for a continuous period of 10 days or more.

Contents of Attendance Register

Particulars must be recorded for each child in the attendance register at the commencement of each morning session and once during each afternoon session: On each occasion they must record whether every pupil is:

- Present;
- Attending an approved educational activity;
- Absent; or,
- Unable to attend due to exceptional circumstances.

The school should follow up any absences to:

- Ascertain the reason;
- Ensure the proper safeguarding action is taken;
- Identify whether the absence is approved or not; and,
- Identify the correct code to use before entering it on to the school's electronic register, or management information system which is used to download data to the School Census.

Attendance codes

/ present morning session;

\ present afternoon session

B attending any other approved educational activity (Not Sporting Activity OR Works Experience);

C leave of absence for exceptional circumstance;

C1 leave of Absence for the purpose of participating in a regulated performance (or employment paid or unpaid);

C2 leave of absence for a compulsory school age pupil subject to a part-time timetable;

D dual registered - attending other establishment;

E suspended or permanently excluded;

F extended family holiday (agreed);

ATTENDANCE & REGISTRATION POLICY



G family holiday (not agreed);

I illness;

J1 authorised absence (for the purpose of attending an interview for employment or for admission to another educational institution);

K Attending education provision arranged by the Local Authority;

L late (before registers close);

M medical/dental appointments;

N no reason yet provided for absence;

O unauthorised absence;

P approved sporting activity;

Q unable to attend the school because of access arrangements;

R religious observance;

S study Leave;

T parent travelling for occupational purposes

U late (after registers have closed);

V educational visit/trip;

W work experience

X non-compulsory school age pupil not required to attend school

Y1 unable to attend due to transport normally provided not being available;

Y2 unable to attend due to widespread disruption to travel;

Y3 unable to attend due to part of the school premises being closed;

Y4 unable to attend due to whole school being closed;

Y5 unable to attend due as pupil is in criminal justice detention;

Y6 absent in accordance with public health guidance or Law;

Y7 unable to attend because of other unavoidable Cause

Z prospective pupil not on admission register;

planned whole school closure.

ATTENDANCE & REGISTRATION POLICY



Register Procedures

Staff use Engage to mark the registers.

For compliance reasons, staff must mark the registers every morning and afternoon without fail.

Morning Register is taken between:

8:40am - 8:50am for Prep Reception - Year 6. Register closes at 8:55pm. Pupils arriving after the register has been taken but before the register closes at will be marked as Late Unauthorised by the School Administrator. Pupils not seen by the teacher will be marked as 'Select'.

9:00am – 9:20am for Nursery. Register closes at 9:20am. Pupils arriving after the register has been taken but before the register closes will be marked as Late Unauthorised. Pupils not seen by the teacher will be marked as 'Select.'

The Afternoon Register is taken between at 1.15pm for the Lower School (Nursery – Prep 2) It is taken at 2pm by Upper School (Prep 3-6).

School Trips

If a pupil will be attending a school trip that morning, instead of 'Present' being marked on the morning register, the register should be marked with 'educational visit/trip' indicating they are present and will be attending a school trip that morning. If the trip is not due to return before the afternoon, this will also apply to the afternoon register at that time. A paper register for the trip should be taken prior to the trip leaving and marked clearly, with a copy handed to the School Office.

If a trip will be leaving after lunch, mark them as 'Present' in the morning and then use the Trip Register to mark them as 'Educational trip/visit' after lunch when the trip is leaving.

If a trip arrives back prior to the afternoon Register being taken, pupils will be marked as present in the register. Reception to enter 'Educational trip/visit' if not back by registration.

The trip leader is expected to leave a paper copy of the trip register with Reception just prior to departure and to note any pupils who have not turned up, but were expected on the trip.

Fixtures

Enter Present at morning registration and do not change. Keep list for fire purposes – do not change registration entry. Enter 'Approved sporting fixture' in the afternoon if still off site.

Use of paper register

Should Engage be inaccessible at the time of the register being taken, the staff member must use the paper register and this must be handed in to Reception as soon as possible. The School Administrator will enter the register onto Engage when it is back up and running again.

Pupils marked as 'N'

Pupils cannot be left on the register marked as 'Select'. Once the registers have been closed in the morning, every effort must be made to ascertain whether the pupils marked 'Select' are in school and if not, contact the parents.

Early Morning Unplanned Medical Appointment

If a pupil is marked as Select and is then brought to Reception by their parents following an unplanned medical appointment, the pupil should not sign in but should be remarked as Late Unauthorised by Reception with a note made that they were at a medical appointment.

Pupils on site early morning for Breakfast Club

Pupils who are on site early morning for Breakfast club or any other early morning activity, need to be registered and the paper copy passed to Reception by 8:30am.

Printing of the fire register

Should there be an emergency evacuation of the building the Reception staff will print the register and take it to the muster point. In addition the visitor book and signing out book should be taken.

Appendix 1 – Effective School Attendance Improvement and Management

Effective school attendance improvement and management

