

Attendance Policy



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Staff member responsible for this policy:	Claire Holloway
Date shared with all staff:	September 2025
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Linked policies: Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy; Children Missing Education procedures; Positive Mental Health and Wellbeing Policy; SEND Policy; Restorative Behaviour Policy; Anti-Bullying Policy; Admissions Policy; Medical Needs Policy; EYFS Policy; Online Safety Policy.

1. Policy Statement

At St Olave's Prep School, excellent attendance is fundamental to children's academic progress, wellbeing and future life chances. Regular attendance enables children to benefit fully from the school's curriculum, friendships, routines, pastoral care and wider opportunities. We therefore promote strong attendance and punctuality as part of our wider culture of high expectations, care and partnership with families.

Attendance is also a safeguarding matter. Absence, lateness or irregular attendance may indicate wider concerns, including unmet need, anxiety, family difficulty, neglect, exploitation or other risks to a child's welfare. For this reason, attendance is monitored closely and concerns are considered alongside the school's safeguarding, wellbeing and pastoral systems.

The school recognises that some children may experience barriers to attendance, including illness, SEND, mental health needs, family circumstances or other vulnerabilities. Our approach is therefore both aspirational and compassionate. We work with families to understand barriers, provide support and take timely action where attendance gives cause for concern.

2. Legal and Regulatory Framework

This policy is written with regard to current statutory and regulatory requirements, including the Education Act 1996, the Education (Independent School Standards) Regulations 2014, the School Attendance (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2024, the Department for Education's statutory guidance *Working together to improve school attendance*, *Keeping Children Safe in Education 2025* and statutory guidance on children missing education. The ISI framework requires leaders to ensure that policies are compliant, understood and implemented consistently, and that admission and attendance registers are maintained in accordance with the relevant pupil registration regulations.

The school also has regard to the Equality Act 2010, the SEND Code of Practice and statutory safeguarding guidance when considering attendance concerns, particularly where absence may be linked to disability, additional need, mental health, medical need or vulnerability. This policy applies to all pupils, including EYFS, with statutory attendance duties applying to pupils of compulsory school age.

3. Aims

The purpose of this policy is to ensure that all children attend school regularly and punctually, that attendance records are accurate and compliant, and that any concerns are identified and addressed at the earliest opportunity. The policy also ensures that attendance is understood as part of the school's wider safeguarding, wellbeing and pastoral responsibilities.

Through this policy, the school aims to establish clear expectations for parents, pupils and staff; maintain effective systems for registration and first-day response; support families where barriers to attendance arise; and work appropriately with external agencies, including the local authority, where attendance concerns escalate.

4. Responsibilities

The Headteacher acts as the school's Senior Attendance Champion and has strategic responsibility for promoting excellent attendance, driving attendance improvement, ensuring compliance with statutory guidance and maintaining a culture in which attendance is understood as everyone's responsibility. The Senior Attendance Champion reports attendance trends and concerns to Trustees and ensures that attendance is considered alongside safeguarding, wellbeing and educational outcomes.

The Senior Attendance Lead oversees day-to-day attendance systems. This includes monitoring attendance and punctuality, identifying emerging patterns, liaising with families, coordinating support and escalating concerns where necessary. The Attendance Lead works closely with the Designated Safeguarding Lead, the SENDCo, class teachers and senior leaders to ensure that attendance concerns are considered in context.

The Designated Safeguarding Lead considers attendance concerns where there may be a safeguarding or welfare issue. This may include unexplained absence, patterns of absence, sudden deterioration in attendance, children missing education or concerns about a child's wellbeing. Where required, concerns are recorded on CPOMS and acted upon in line with the Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy.

Class teachers are responsible for completing registers accurately and promptly, noting patterns of lateness or absence, and raising concerns with the Senior Attendance Champion or DSL. All staff have a responsibility to understand that absence can be a sign of wider need or risk.

Parents and carers are responsible for ensuring that their child attends school every day and arrives punctually, unless there is a valid reason for absence. Parents must inform the school by 8.30am on each day of absence and provide a clear reason. Parents are expected to work in partnership with the school where attendance or punctuality concerns arise.

Children are encouraged, in an age-appropriate way, to understand the importance of attending school regularly, arriving on time and seeking help from a trusted adult if something is making school difficult.

5. Registration and Attendance Records

The school maintains admission and attendance registers in accordance with statutory requirements. Attendance registers are taken twice daily, once at the beginning of the morning session and once during the afternoon session. At St Olave's, morning registration takes place at 8.40am and afternoon registration at 1.15pm. The morning register closes at 9.30am.

Attendance is recorded using the school's electronic management information system. Attendance and admission records are retained for a minimum of six years in accordance with the School Attendance (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2024. Staff use the appropriate statutory attendance codes in line with current Department for Education guidance. Attendance records are legal documents and must be accurate, timely and complete.

Exceptional circumstances codes will only be used where permitted by current statutory guidance. Where such codes are applied, the school will ensure that the rationale for the decision is recorded appropriately and retained in accordance with school record-keeping procedures.

Children arriving after the morning register has opened but before it closes are recorded as late. Children arriving after the register has closed are recorded as unauthorised absence for that session unless the school accepts the reason for late arrival as valid and applies the appropriate code in line with statutory guidance.

6. First-Day Response and Unexplained Absence

Parents must notify the school of absence by 8.30am on each day their child is absent. If no reason has been received, the school will contact parents promptly, normally by 9.30am, to establish the reason for absence and confirm that the child is safe.

Where contact cannot be established, the school will continue to make reasonable attempts to contact parents and emergency contacts. If there are safeguarding concerns, or if the absence is unusual or unexplained, the matter will be referred to the DSL. The school may consider a home visit, welfare check or referral to external agencies where appropriate.

This procedure is particularly important where a child is known to be vulnerable, has a safeguarding record, has SEND or medical needs, or where absence is part of a concerning pattern.

7. Authorised and Unauthorised Absence

Absence may only be authorised by the school. Parents may provide a reason for absence, but this does not automatically mean that the absence will be authorised.

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Authorised absence may include genuine illness, unavoidable medical or dental appointments, religious observance, exceptional family circumstances such as bereavement, or other circumstances accepted by the Headteacher in accordance with statutory guidance.

Unauthorised absence may include absence without explanation, absence where the reason provided is not accepted by the school, holidays in term time that have not been authorised, or arrival after the register has closed without a valid reason.

Medical and dental appointments should be made outside school hours wherever possible. Where this is not possible, children should attend school before or after the appointment unless there is a clear reason why this cannot happen.

8. Leave of Absence During Term Time

The Headteacher may not grant leave of absence during term time unless there are exceptional circumstances. Requests must be made in writing in advance and will be considered individually.

Family holidays during term time will not normally be authorised. In deciding whether exceptional circumstances exist, the Headteacher will consider the specific facts of the request, the child's attendance record, the timing of the absence, the impact on learning and any relevant safeguarding or welfare considerations.

Where leave is not authorised and the child is absent, the absence will be recorded as unauthorised. The school may seek advice from the local authority where unauthorised absence becomes a concern.

9. Attendance, Safeguarding and Children Missing Education

Attendance is monitored as part of the school's safeguarding culture. Staff understand that persistent absence, severe absence and unexplained absence can be indicators of wider safeguarding risk. KCSIE 2025 identifies children who are frequently missing or going missing from education, home or care as potentially vulnerable, and the school will respond accordingly.

The school follows statutory children missing education procedures. Where a child is absent without explanation for a prolonged period, or where there are concerns that a child may have left the area, moved school without notification or be receiving unsuitable education, the school will make reasonable enquiries and notify the local authority as required. Statutory guidance requires schools to make returns to the local authority when a pupil's name is added to or removed from the admission register outside standard transition points, and sets out specific requirements around deletion from roll and children missing education.

The school will comply with all statutory reporting requirements relating to attendance and children missing education. This includes notifying the local authority where a pupil has been absent for ten consecutive school days without authorisation, where a pupil has accumulated fifteen days of illness absence and referral is required under local procedures, and when a

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pupil's name is added to or deleted from the admission register in circumstances specified by current regulations and guidance.

The school will not remove a child from roll unless a lawful ground for deletion applies and the appropriate checks, notifications and safeguarding considerations have been completed.

10. Monitoring and Early Intervention

Attendance is monitored regularly so that concerns are identified early. The Attendance Lead reviews attendance and punctuality patterns, including repeated lateness, recurring days of absence, declining attendance, unexplained absence and patterns affecting particular groups.

Where attendance falls to 95% or below, the school will normally make early contact with parents to discuss the pattern and identify any barriers. Where attendance falls to 90% or below, the child is considered persistently absent and the school will usually arrange a formal meeting with parents and agree an attendance support plan. Where attendance falls to 50% or below, the child is considered severely absent and the school will seek urgent, intensive support, which may include local authority involvement and safeguarding consideration.

Thresholds are used to guide timely action but do not prevent the school from intervening earlier where there are concerns.

11. Graduated Support

The school uses a graduated approach to attendance concerns. Initial concerns may be addressed through informal discussion with parents, monitoring and practical support. If concerns continue, the Attendance Lead will work with the family to identify barriers and agree strategies. This may include adjustments to routines, pastoral support, SEND review, wellbeing intervention or liaison with medical professionals where appropriate.

Where attendance does not improve, a formal attendance meeting may be arranged and an individual attendance plan agreed. This plan will set out expectations, support, review dates and responsibilities. If concerns persist, or if there are safeguarding concerns, the school may involve external agencies, including the local authority, Early Help, health professionals or children's social care.

The school's approach is supportive, but it is also clear that regular school attendance is a legal expectation for children of compulsory school age.

12. Pupils with Medical Needs, SEND or Mental Health Needs

The school recognises that attendance difficulties may be linked to medical needs, SEND, anxiety, emotionally based school avoidance or other wellbeing concerns. In such cases, the

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school will work sensitively with parents and, where appropriate, external professionals to understand the barriers and provide proportionate support.

Support may include a pastoral plan, reasonable adjustments, phased reintegration after absence, SEND review, wellbeing support or liaison with health services. Part-time timetables will only be used in exceptional circumstances, for the shortest time necessary, and as part of a clear plan with regular review.

Where medical evidence is required, the school will act reasonably and proportionately, taking account of the child's needs and the pattern of absence.

13. Punctuality

Punctuality is an important part of attendance. Arriving late can be unsettling for children and can affect learning, routines and confidence. The school monitors punctuality carefully and will contact parents where lateness becomes frequent or concerning.

Repeated lateness may trigger the same graduated response as absence, particularly where it affects learning or raises safeguarding concerns.

14. Working with Parents

The school seeks to work constructively with parents and recognises that attendance concerns are often best resolved through early, open and supportive communication. Parents are encouraged to speak to the school as soon as difficulties arise, so that support can be put in place before patterns become entrenched.

At the same time, the school maintains high expectations. Children benefit from consistent routines and regular attendance, and parents are expected to support the school in ensuring that children attend punctually and regularly.

15. Attendance Data, Analysis and Governance

Attendance data is reviewed regularly by school leaders. This includes whole-school trends, individual concerns, persistent absence, severe absence, punctuality and patterns for vulnerable groups, including children with SEND or known safeguarding concerns.

The Headteacher reports relevant attendance information to Trustees. This enables the Board to maintain oversight of attendance, safeguarding and compliance and to hold leaders appropriately to account.

16. Linked Policies

This policy should be read alongside the school's Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy, Children Missing Education procedures, Positive Mental Health and Wellbeing Policy, SEND

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Policy, Medical Needs Policy, Restorative Behaviour Policy, Anti-Bullying Policy, Admissions Policy, EYFS Policy and Online Safety Policy.

17. Review

This policy will be reviewed annually, or sooner if statutory guidance changes or school procedures require amendment.

Approved by: Headteacher and Board of Trustees