Attendance Policy

Reviewed: August 2025
Due for Review: August 2026
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Contents

1. Introduction

All schools, including Castle Court, have a continuing responsibility to proactively manage and improve attendance across their school community. Attendance is the essential foundation to positive outcomes for all pupils including their safeguarding and welfare and should therefore be seen as everyone's responsibility in school. That starts with the senior 'Attendance Champion' on the school's leadership team (Mr Dunsford) but includes all school staff.

The 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 ensure their child attends that school regularly. This means their child must attend 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. The government expects no child to have attendance below 95% and any child with an attendance rate below 90% will be classed as 'persistently absent'.

This is essential for pupils to get the most out of their school experience, including their attainment, wellbeing, and wider life chances. The pupils with the highest attainment at the end of key stage 2 and key stage 4 have higher rates of attendance over the key stage compared to those with the lowest attainment. At KS2, pupils not meeting the expected standard in reading, writing and maths had an overall absence rate of 4.7%, compared to 3.5% among those meeting the expected standard. Moreover, the overall absence rate of pupils not meeting the expected standard was higher than among those meeting the higher standard (4.7% compared to 2.7%). At KS4, pupils not achieving grade 9 to 4 in English and maths had an overall absence rate of 8.8%, compared to 5.2% among those achieving grade 4. The overall absence rate of pupils not achieving grade 9 to 4 was over twice as high as those achieving grade 9 to 5 (8.8% compared to 3.7%). *(Working together to improve school attendance. Statutory guidance for maintained schools, academies, independent schools and local authorities. August 2024)*

2. Aims

This policy aims to show our commitment to meeting our obligations with regards to school attendance, including those laid out in the Department for Education's (DfE's) statutory guidance on working together to improve school attendance (applies from 19 August 2024), through our whole-school culture and ethos that values good attendance, including:

- Setting high expectations for the attendance and punctuality of all pupils

- Promoting good attendance and the benefits of good attendance

- Reducing absence, including persistent and severe absence

- Ensuring every pupil has access to the full-time education to which they are entitled

- Acting early to address patterns of absence

- Building strong relationships with families to make sure pupils have the support in place to attend school

We will also promote and support punctuality in attending lessons.

3. Legislation and guidance

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

- Part 6 of the Education Act 1996

- Part 3 of the Education Act 2002

- Part 7 of the Education and Inspections Act 2006

- The Education (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2006 (and 2010, 2011, 2013, and 2016 amendments)

- https://www.legislation.gov.uk/uksi/2006/1751/contentsThe Education (Penalty Notices) (England) (Amendment) Regulations 2013

 https://www.legislation.gov.uk/uksi/2013/757/regulation/2/madeIt also refers to:

- School census guidance

- Keeping Children Safe in Education

- Mental health issues affecting a pupil's attendance: guidance for schools

4. Roles and responsibilities

4.1 The governing board

The governing board is responsible for:

- Setting high expectations of all school leaders, staff, pupils and parents

- Making sure school leaders fulfil expectations and statutory duties, including:

  - Making sure the school records attendance accurately in the register, and shares the required information with the DfE and local authority

  - Making sure the school works effectively with local partners to help remove barriers to attendance, and keeps them informed regarding specific pupils, where appropriate

- Recognising and promoting the importance of school attendance across the school's policies and ethos

- Making sure the school's attendance management processes are delivered effectively, and that consistent support is provided for pupils who need it most by prioritising staff and resources

- Making sure the school has high aspirations for all pupils, but adapts processes and support to pupils' individual needs

- Regularly reviewing and challenging attendance data and helping school leaders focus improvement efforts on individual pupils or cohorts who need it most

- Working with school leaders to set goals or areas of focus for attendance and providing support and challenge

- Monitoring attendance figures for the whole school and repeatedly evaluating the effectiveness of the school's processes and improvement efforts to make sure they are meeting pupils needs

- Where the school is struggling with attendance, working with school leaders to develop a comprehensive action plan to improve attendance

- Making sure all staff receive adequate training on attendance as part of the regular continued professional development offer, so that staff understand:

  - The importance of good attendance

  - That absence is almost always a symptom of wider issues

  - The school's legal requirements for keeping registers

  - The school's strategies and procedures for tracking, following up on and improving attendance, including working with partners and keeping them informed regarding specific pupils, where appropriate

  - Making sure dedicated training is provided to staff with a specific attendance function in their role, including in interpreting and analysing attendance data

- Holding the Head to account for the implementation of this policy

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4.2 The Head

The Head is responsible for:

- The implementation of this policy at the school

- Monitoring school-level absence data and reporting it to governors

- Supporting staff with monitoring the attendance of individual pupils

- Monitoring the impact of any implemented attendance strategies

- Working with the parents of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) to develop specific support approaches for attendance for pupils with SEND, including where school transport is regularly being missed, and where pupils with SEND face in-school barriers

- Communicating with the local authority when a pupil with an education, health and care (EHC) plan has falling attendance, or where there are barriers to attendance that relate to the pupil's needs

- Communicating the school's high expectations for attendance and punctuality regularly to pupils and parents through all available channels.

4.3 The Senior Attendance Champion

The school's Senior Attendance Champion is responsible for:

- Leading, championing and improving attendance across the school

- Setting a clear vision for improving and maintaining good attendance

- Evaluating and monitoring expectations and processes

- Having a strong grasp of absence data and oversight of absence data analysis

- Regularly monitoring and evaluating progress in attendance

- Establishing and maintaining effective systems for tackling absence, and making sure they are followed by all staff

- Liaising with pupils, parents/carers and external agencies, where needed

- Building close and productive relationships with parents to discuss and tackle attendance issues

- Creating intervention or reintegration plans in partnership with pupils and their parents/carers

- Delivering targeted intervention and support to pupils and families

4.4 The Attendance Officer

The School Attendance Officer is responsible for:

- Monitoring and analysing attendance data (see section 8)
- Benchmarking attendance data to identify areas of focus for improvement
- Providing regular attendance reports to school staff and reporting concerns about attendance to the designated senior leader responsible for attendance, and the Head
- Working with education welfare officers to tackle persistent absence
- Advising the Head on matters of attendance, particularly unauthorised or persistent absence.

4.5 Form tutors and subject teachers

Form tutors in Years R-Year 4 are responsible for recording attendance for both morning and afternoon sessions daily, using the correct codes (see Appendix 1) on Edu Link, and submitting this information to the school office/medical centre in a timely manner.

All pupils are expected to arrive in school between 8:10am and 8:30am every day so that information can be disseminated by their form tutors, who also are asked to register them. Pupils in Years 5-8 then move to their first lesson of the day at 8:30am, where subject teachers are responsible for registering them too.

4.6 School Office Staff

School office staff will:

- Take calls from parents/carers and retrieve voicemail messages about absence on a day-to-day basis and record it on the school system
- Transfer calls from parents/carers to the Attendance Officer or Senior Attendance Champion where appropriate, in order to provide them with more detailed support on attendance

4.7 Parents

Parents are expected to:

- Make sure their child attends every day on time. Pupils are expected to be in school between 8:15am and 8:30am at the latest for registration. This is because, at Castle Court, our first lesson of the day begins at 8:30am.

- Call or email the school to report their child's absence before 8:20am on the day of the absence (and each subsequent day of absence) and advise when they are expected to return. If phoning, a voice message can be left (01202 694438). Emails can be sent to the school office (office@castlecourt.com). If emails are sent to the pupil's form tutor, these need to be cc'd in to the school office too.

- The Department for Education's statutory guidance on working together to improve school attendance (applies from 19 August 2024), states on P19 that a register cannot be open longer than 30 minutes. At Castle Court, our registers open at 8:20am and close at 8:50am. Children are asked to arrive in school by 8:30am, ready for the first lesson of the day. If a child arrives in school after 8:30am but before 8:50am they are marked as **L-Arrived late but before the register is closed.** This will **NOT** go down as being late in terms of that child's attendance percentage.

- If a child arrives after the close of the register at 8:50am they will be marked as **U-Arrived in school after registration.** If they are absent at 8:50am and no reason has been received from parents/guardians, they will be marked as **O-Absent in unknown circumstances.** The school will then seek to contact the parents to ascertain the reason for the child not being in school. The code on the register can thereafter be amended if required.

- Provide the school with more than one emergency contact number for their child

- Ensure that, where possible, appointments for their child are made outside of the school day

- Keep to any attendance contracts that they make with the school and/or local authority if appropriate

- Seek support, where necessary, for maintaining good attendance, by contacting Louise Pankhurst, who can be contacted via the school office

4.8 Pupils

Pupils are expected to:

- Attend school every day, on time

5. Recording attendance

5.1 Attendance register

We will keep an electronic attendance register and place all pupils onto this register.

We will take our attendance register at the start of the morning session each school day and for Years R-4 at the beginning of the afternoon sessions. Subject teachers in Years 5-8 are also responsible for registering attendance for every lesson taught throughout the school day. We will mark, using the appropriate national attendance and absence codes from the School Attendance (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2024, whether every pupil is:

- Present
- Attending an approved off-site educational activity
- Absent
- Unable to attend due to exceptional circumstances

Any amendment to the attendance register will include:

- The original entry
- The amended entry
- The reason for the amendment
- The date on which the amendment was made
- The name and position of the person who made the amendment

See Appendix 1 for the DfE attendance codes.

We will also record:

- Whether the absence is authorised or not
- The nature of the activity, where a pupil is attending an approved educational activity
- The nature of circumstances, where a pupil is unable to attend due to exceptional circumstances

We will keep every entry on the attendance register for 6 years after the date on which the entry was made.

The school day starts at 8:30am and ends at 4:15pm for Years 3-8 with Pre-Prep having an earlier finish.

Pupils must therefore arrive in school by 8:30am at the latest on each school day in order to begin their first lesson at 8:30am.

The registers for the first session will be taken at 8:35am. The register for the second session (for Years R-4) will be taken at 12:30pm. For years 5-8, it needs to be taken at the start of Period 7 at 1200.

In the morning, if a pupil has not arrived by the time their form tutor has completed the register, they will be marked as **N- Reason for absence not yet established.** If a child arrives in school after 8:30am but before 8:50am they are marked as **L-Arrived late but before the register is closed.** If a pupil arrives in school after registration has closed (8:50am) they will be marked with a **U-Arrived in school after registration.** If they are absent at 8:50am and no reason has been received from parents/guardians, they will be marked as O-absent in unknown circumstances.

5.2 Unplanned absence

The pupil's parent must notify the school of the reason for the absence on the first day of an unplanned absence before 8:30am or as soon as practically possible, by calling the school office, who can be contacted via phone on 01202 694438 or alternatively via email- office@castlecourt.com

When reporting a child absent, please briefly detail why they are unable to attend school e.g vomiting.

We will mark absence due to physical or mental illness as authorised, unless the school has a genuine concern about the authenticity of the illness.

Where the absence is longer than 5 days (10 sessions), or there are doubts about the authenticity of the illness, the school will ask for medical evidence, such as a doctor's note, prescription, appointment card or other appropriate form of evidence. We will not ask for medical evidence unnecessarily.

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

5.3 Planned absence

Attending a medical or dental appointment will be counted as authorised as long as the pupil's parent notifies the school in advance of the appointment and is able to provide evidence of the appointment.

Parents/carers must notify the school office via email (office@castlecourt.com) of any planned medical or dental appointments and attach evidence of the appointment where possible.

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

The pupil's parent must also apply for other types of term-time absence as far in advance as possible of the requested absence. Go to section 6 to find out which term-time absences the school can authorise.

5.4 Lateness and punctuality

A pupil who arrives late:

- Before the register has closed (between 8:30am and 9:00am) will be marked as late, using the appropriate code
- After the register has closed (after 9:00am) will be marked as absent, using the appropriate code

If a child is regularly late to school they will be subject to attendance monitoring.

5.5 Following up unexplained absence

Where any pupil we expect to attend school does not attend, or stops attending, without reason, the school will:

- Call or email the pupil's parent on the morning of the first day of unexplained absence to ascertain the reason. If the school cannot reach any of the pupil's emergency contacts, the school may visit the pupils home address.
- Identify whether the absence is approved or not
- Identify the correct attendance code to use and input it as soon as the reason for absence is ascertained – this will be no later than 5 working days after the session(s) for which the pupil was absent
- Call or email the parent on each day that the absence continues without explanation, to make sure proper safeguarding action is taken where necessary. If absence continues, the school will consider involving an education welfare officer
- Where relevant, report the unexplained absence to the pupil's youth offending team officer
- Where appropriate, offer support to the pupil and/or their parents to improve attendance

- Identify whether the pupil needs support from wider partners, as quickly as possible, and make the necessary referrals
- Where support is not appropriate, not successful, or not engaged with the school may issue notice to improve, issue fixed penalty notice or take other legal intervention.

6. Authorised and unauthorised absence

6.1 Approval for term-time absence

The Head will allow pupils to be absent from the school site for certain educational activities, or to attend other schools or settings.

The Head will only grant a **leave of absence** to a pupil during term time if the request meets the specific circumstances set out in the 2024 school attendance regulations. These circumstances are:

- Taking part in a regulated performance, or regulated employment abroad
- Attending an approved sporting activity
- A temporary, time-limited part-time timetable
- Exceptional circumstances

A leave of absence is granted at the Head's discretion, including the length of time the pupil is authorised to be absent for.

We define 'exceptional circumstances' as significant or unavoidable, which means the event could not reasonably be scheduled at another time

Leave of absence will not be granted for a pupil to take part in protest activity during school hours.

As a leave of absence will only be granted in exceptional circumstances, it is unlikely a leave of absence will be granted for the purposes of a family holiday.

The school considers each application for term-time absence individually, taking into account the specific facts, circumstances and relevant background context behind the request.

Any request should be submitted as soon as it is anticipated and, where possible, at least 4 weeks before the absence, via email to the Head (head@castlecourt.com) The Head may require evidence to support any request for leave of absence.

Other valid reasons for **authorised absence** include (but are not limited to):

- Illness (including mental-health illness) and medical/dental appointments (see sections 4.2 and 4.3 for more detail)

- Religious observance – where the day is exclusively set apart for religious observance by the religious body to which the pupil's parent(s) belong(s). If necessary, the school will seek advice from the parent's religious body to confirm whether the day is set apart

- Parent(s) travelling for occupational purposes – this covers Roma, English and Welsh gypsies, Irish and Scottish travellers, showmen (fairground people) and circus people, bargees (occupational boat dwellers) and new travellers. Absence may be authorised only when a traveller family is known to be travelling for occupational purposes and has agreed this with the school, but it is not known whether the pupil is attending educational provision

- If the pupil is currently suspended or excluded from school (and no alternative provision has been made)

Other reasons the school may allow a pupil to be absent from the school site, which are not classified as absences, include (but are not limited to):

- Attending an offsite approved educational activity, sporting activity or visit or trip arranged by the school

- Attending another school at which the pupil is also registered (dual registration)

- Attending provision arranged by the local authority

- If there is any other unavoidable cause for the pupil not to attend school, such as disruption to travel caused by an emergency, a lack of access arrangements, or because the school premises are closed

7. Supporting pupils who are absent or returning to school

7.1 Pupils absent due to complex barriers to attendance

Where there are complex barriers to a pupil's attendance the school will work with the local authority and other external partners to overcome these.

7.2 Pupils absent due to mental or physical ill health or SEND

Where a pupil has an education health and care (EHC) plan and their attendance falls, or the school becomes aware of barriers to attendance that related to the pupil's needs, the school will inform the local authority.

8. Attendance monitoring

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

Specific attendance data will be shared with the DfE on request.

The school will benchmark its attendance data at whole school, year group and cohort level against local, regional, and national levels, to identify areas of focus for improvement, and share this with the governing board.

8.1 Analysing attendance

The school will:

- Analyse attendance and absence data regularly to identify pupils, groups or cohorts that need additional support with their attendance, and

- Identify pupils whose absences may be a cause for concern, especially those who demonstrate patterns of persistent or severe absence

- Conduct thorough analysis of half-termly, termly, and full-year data to identify patterns and trends

- Look at historic and emerging patterns of attendance and absence, and then develop strategies to address these patterns

8.2 Using data to improve attendance

The school will:

- Develop targeted actions to address patterns of absence (of all severities) of individual pupils, groups or cohorts that it has identified via data analysis

- Provide targeted support to the pupils it has identified whose absences may be a cause for concern, especially those who demonstrate patterns of persistent or severed absence, and their families (see section 7.3 below)

- Provide regular attendance reports to class teachers, to facilitate discussions with pupils and families, and to the governing board and school leaders (including special educational needs co-ordinators, designated safeguarding leads and pupil premium lead)

- Use data to monitor and evaluate the impact of any interventions put in place in order to modify them and inform future strategies

- 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, including keeping them informed regarding specific pupils, where appropriate

8.3 Reducing persistent and severe absence

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

Below are the steps the school will take in looking to address and improve poor attendance.

These include:

- Rigorously monitoring attendance data to identify patterns of poor attendance (at individual and cohort level).
- Engaging with parents to raise initial attendance concerns. Listening carefully and trying to understand the barriers to attendance (from both the child and parents' perspective) before agreeing on steps to take to try to resolve them.
- Agreeing a review period in which it is hoped attendance will improve (recommended 20 days)
- Logging details of the initial concerns raised.

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

- Providing access to Dorset Council's Family Help Team or Targeted Youth Work Team to support with improving attendance and removing any barriers to it.

- Inviting parents to come to an Attendance meeting where absence persists. Here there will discussion of ongoing concerns, formalising of support through an attendance contract and explanation of the consequences of, and sanctions for, continued persistent and severe absence.
- Recording of all communications with parents and the interventions attempted so far. Agreeing of another review period (recommended review period is 20 school days but the school should monitor at least weekly)
- Providing information about the child at a targeted support meeting with the Local Authority Inclusion Lead to seek their advice.
- Where there is still no improvement following the Attendance Meeting, arranging an Inclusion Panel (usually held at school) including the following attendees: school staff, Inclusion Lead, parents, child or young person, other professionals if relevant. Agreeing of another review period.

8.4   Attendance monitoring for Nursery aged children.

Establishing good habits of attendance from the outset will help to ensure that children have 100% attendance when reaching the compulsory school age.

While there are no legal obligations for children to attend an Early Years setting, once a child is registered with the school nursery, their attendance will be recorded and monitored as per the school's Attendance Policy and the EYFS Framework. This is to ensure that children are safe, healthy and able to thrive. We recognise that some children will attend multiple settings or attend part-time, these attendance patterns will be taken into consideration when monitoring attendance. Parents are asked to notify the Nursery Manager and the School office of any absences.

If a child is not of statutory school age and goes missing from education without notice, then the school will act to establish the location of the child and satisfy itself that there are no safeguarding concerns.

If after making enquiries the location of the child cannot be verified, then the school will consider if the child is vulnerable or at risk of harm. If this is believed to be the case, then the school will make a referral directly to Children's Services.

Sanctions

Where all other avenues have been exhausted and support is not working or not being engaged with, the school will consider sanctions in line with the National Framework. This is to protect the child or young person's right to an education.

Where there are safeguarding concerns, and an Education Supervision Order is not appropriate or has not been successful the case should be considered for s.17 or s.47 statutory social care involvement.

9. Monitoring arrangements

This policy will be reviewed as guidance from the local authority and/or DfE is updated, and as a minimum every 2 years by the designated senior leader responsible for attendance, the policy will be approved by the full governing board.

10. Links with other policies

This policy links to the following policies:

- Child protection and safeguarding policy
- Behaviour policy

Appendix 1: attendance codes

The following codes are taken from the DfE's [guidance on school attendance](#).

Code	Definition	Scenario
/	Present (am)	Pupil is present at morning registration
****	Present (pm)	Pupil is present at afternoon registration
L	Late arrival	Pupil arrives late before register has closed
Attending a place other than the school		
K	Attending education provision arranged by the local authority	Pupil is attending a place other than a school at which they are registered, for educational provision arranged by the local authority
V	Attending an educational visit or trip	Pupil is on an educational visit/trip organised or approved by the school
P	Participating in a sporting activity	Pupil is participating in a supervised sporting activity approved by the school
W	Attending work experience	Pupil is on an approved work experience placement
B	Attending any other approved educational activity	Pupil is attending a place for an approved educational activity that is not a sporting activity or work experience
D	Dual registered	Pupil is attending a session at another setting where they are also registered
Absent – leave of absence		

C1	Participating in a regulated performance or undertaking regulated employment abroad	Pupil is undertaking employment (paid or unpaid) during school hours, approved by the school
M	Medical/dental appointment	Pupil is at a medical or dental appointment
J1	Interview	Pupil has an interview with a prospective employer/educational establishment
S	Study leave	Pupil has been granted leave of absence to study for a public examination
X	Not required to be in school	Pupil of non-compulsory school age is not required to attend
C2	Part-time timetable	Pupil is not in school due to having a part-time timetable
C	Exceptional circumstances	Pupil has been granted a leave of absence due to exceptional circumstances
Absent – other authorised reasons		
T	Parent travelling for occupational purposes	Pupil is a 'mobile child' who is travelling with their parent(s) who are travelling for occupational purposes
R	Religious observance	Pupil is taking part in a day of religious observance
I	Illness (not medical or dental appointment)	Pupil is unable to attend due to illness (either related to physical or mental health)
E	Suspended or excluded	Pupil has been suspended or excluded from school and no alternative provision has been made

	Absent – unable to attend school because of unavoidable cause	
Q	Lack of access arrangements	Pupil is unable to attend school because the local authority has failed to make access arrangements to enable attendance at school
Y1	Transport not available	Pupil is unable to attend because school is not within walking distance of their home and the transport normally provided is not available
Y2	Widespread disruption to travel	Pupil is unable to attend because of widespread disruption to travel caused by a local, national or international emergency
Y3	Part of school premises closed	Pupil is unable to attend because they cannot practicably be accommodated in the part of the premises that remains open
Y4	Whole school site unexpectedly closed	Every pupil absent as the school is closed unexpectedly (e.g. due to adverse weather)
Y5	Criminal justice detention	Pupil is unable to attend as they are: • In police detention • Remanded to youth detention, awaiting trial or sentencing, or • Detained under a sentence of detention
Y6	Public health guidance or law	Pupil's travel to or attendance at the school would be prohibited under public health guidance or law
Y7	Any other unavoidable cause	To be used where an unavoidable cause is not covered by the other codes
	Absent – unauthorised absence	

G	Holiday not granted by the school	Pupil is absent for the purpose of a holiday, not approved by the school
N	Reason for absence not yet established	Reason for absence has not been established before the register closes
O	Absent in other or unknown circumstances	No reason for absence has been established, or the school isn't satisfied that the reason given would be recorded using one of the codes for authorised absence
U	Arrived in school after registration closed	Pupil has arrived late, after the register has closed but before the end of session
Administrative codes		
Z	Prospective pupil not on admission register	Pupil has not joined school yet but has been registered
#	Planned whole-school closure	Whole-school closures that are known and planned in advance, including school holidays