



Attendance policy

**Independent school standards
and statutory guidance**

Paragraphs 7, 15 and 34.

DfE's 'Working together to
improve school attendance'
(July 2026)

Last updated by senior leaders

September 2026

Last reviewed by advisory board

September 2026

Next review due

September 2027

Introduction

- At St. John's Prep. and Senior School, we expect all pupils to attend every day, when the school is in session, if they are fit and healthy enough to do so. We do all we can to encourage pupils to attend, and to put in place appropriate procedures. We believe that the most important factor in promoting good attendance is the development of positive attitudes towards education. To this end we strive to make our school a happy and rewarding experience for all pupils. We actively reward those pupils whose attendance is very good. We will also make the best provision we can for those pupils who, for whatever reason, are prevented from coming to school.
- Though encouraging school attendance is everybody's responsibility, our Senior Attendance Champion (SAC) is **Mr. David Brandon, Deputy Headteacher (dbrandon@stjohnsprepandsenior.co.uk)**
- Our SAC analyses and shares half-termly attendance data and leads on ensuring that school leaders implement this policy proactively and consistently.
- As attendance is crucial to effective learning and the continuity of learning experiences, at St. John's we place great emphasis on this in our communication with parents and carers.
- Information on lateness, illness and absence is given to parents in the prospectus. This highlights the importance of being at school on time and notifying school if their child is absent for any reason.
- At the pre-school induction meetings held each year for children about to enter the reception class, the importance of regular attendance is discussed and explained. This talk also includes parents and children arriving at school on time so that each child can be given the best possible start to each school day. Being picked up on time is also stressed, especially for young children who can be very upset if they are the only ones left.
- Pupils are also admitted to school at various times of the year, and into various year groups. All parents requesting a place are asked to make an appointment with the Principal or Headteacher. At this meeting the importance of regular attendance is always highlighted.
- We believe that pupils need to be in school for all sessions, so that they can make the best possible progress. Parents are asked to share any worries their child might have in school. Sometimes little things upset children, which means they become unhappy, and may not want to come to school. Parents need to be aware of this.
- Parents are reminded that they must arrange their family holidays within the school holidays, rather than in term time so that their child's education is not disrupted.

Support-first approach

- St. John's takes a **support-first approach** to attendance. Where attendance becomes a concern, we will work with the pupil and their parents/carers to understand the reasons and barriers affecting attendance and, where appropriate, put support and reasonable adjustments in place. We will monitor the effectiveness of support and review it with the pupil and family. Where voluntary support is not effective or is not engaged with, the school will work with the local authority and other relevant partners and may consider formal support or statutory intervention where appropriate.

Attendance registers and codes

- We pay regard to the Department for Education's latest statutory attendance guidance, [Working Together to Improve School Attendance \(July 2026\)](#), including use of the required attendance codes, which are not unnecessarily repeated in full in this policy. We take the attendance register at the start of each morning session and once during each afternoon session, at the same time for all registered pupils. The registers are kept open for no longer than 30 minutes. The register also indicates whether an absence was authorised or unauthorised.

Leave during term time

- St. John's does not grant any leave of absence during term time unless there are exceptional circumstances. Any request must be made directly to the Principal or Headteacher.

Common types of absence

- **Illness** (I code): In most cases a telephone call or a note from the parent informing the school that their child is ill will be acceptable. Parents may be asked to provide medical evidence where there are repeated illness absences.
- **Medical/dental appointments** (M code): Parents are advised where possible to make medical and dental appointments outside of the school day. Where this is not possible, pupils should attend school for part of the day. Parents should provide evidence of the appointment.
- **Other authorised circumstances** (C code): This relates to occasions where there is cause for absence due to exceptional circumstances, for example a family bereavement.

Authorised absence

- An absence is recorded using the appropriate attendance code when a pupil is not present for a session. Where the reason falls within a category of authorised absence, the appropriate authorised absence code will be used. Parents cannot themselves authorise an absence.
- We welcome messages informing us in advance of a pupil's absence, for example, if they have a booked medical appointment.

Unauthorised absence

- An absence is classified as unauthorised when a pupil is away from school without the permission of both the school and a parent. Therefore, the absence is unauthorised if a pupil is away from school without good reason, even with the support of a parent. For example, if a parent takes a child out of school for a day trip on their birthday or at the end of terms before a school holiday, this will be unauthorised.
- Parents are reminded that pupils' attendance to calendared whole-school events, such as sports events, concerts, trips and swimming galas, is compulsory. As attendance is not optional, absence from such events without an acceptable reason will be marked as unauthorised and followed up accordingly.

Long-term absence

- Where a pupil is unable to attend because of prolonged or significant illness, we will work with the pupil, parents and relevant professionals to support their return to school. Reasonable adjustments, pastoral support and, where appropriate, a phased return will be considered. Remote education will only be used as a last resort, where appropriate, and as part of a wider reintegration or support plan.

Procedure for lateness and unexpected absence ('same day calling')

1. Registration begins at 8.50am and the registers are submitted to the school offices by 9.00am, before the first teaching session of the day begins.
2. When a pupil is absent and the reason for absence is initially unknown, code N will be used. The correct absence code will be entered as soon as the reason is established and no later than five school days after the session. Where the reason cannot be established within five school days, the N code will be amended to O – absent in other or unknown circumstances.
3. Pupils arriving late to school must sign in to the relevant school office, where they will be marked as late (L code) if arriving before the registers formally close at 9.20am or, if arriving after 9.20am, as arrived in school after the registers have closed (U code).
4. After the registers have closed, colleagues in the relevant school office will triangulate those pupils marked absent with messages received from parents. If no message has been received, parents will be contacted by text message or telephone to ascertain why the pupil is not in school. Colleagues will then input the correct attendance code to the register.
5. If it is not possible to contact the parent, further attempts will be made, including to the pupil's emergency contacts if necessary.
6. Where we are unable to establish the reason for absence and have safeguarding concerns, appropriate safeguarding procedures will be followed, which may include contact with emergency contacts, a home visit and/or referral to relevant services.

- We actively discourage late arrival, are alert to and regularly analyse patterns of late arrival and always seek explanation from parents as to why their child is late to school.
- We do not operate a blanket requirement for medical evidence. Where there is genuine and reasonable doubt about the reason for absence, or where absence is prolonged or repeatedly related to illness, we may request reasonable evidence.

Truancy

- Truancy is not tolerated and as such is exceptionally rare. If there should ever be a concern that a pupil might be truanting then immediate action is taken by the relevant senior leader, usually the Principal or Headteacher, who will contact the parents in the first instance. Incidents of internal truancy are followed up by the relevant senior leader under the school's behaviour policy.

Repeated absence and lateness to school

- Leaders and class/form teachers are jointly responsible for monitoring the attendance of pupils in their class.

Leaders regularly review attendance and punctuality rates on an individual pupil level. These are formally reviewed at leadership team meetings and the following actions are typically taken when attendance rates fall below 95% and/or the pupil is regularly late for school.

These thresholds are internal monitoring and support triggers and are not intended to operate as rigid thresholds. We may intervene earlier where attendance patterns, punctuality, individual circumstances, safeguarding concerns or identified barriers indicate that additional support is required.

1. If a pupil has attendance falling to between 91% and 94% and/or is regularly late to school, then the class/form teacher contacts the parent concerned to have an informal discussion about this in the first instance. The teacher registers their concern on our online system and leaders will monitor the pupil's attendance and/or punctuality with the class/form teacher.
 2. If attendance falls further to between 85% and 90% and/or the punctuality problem persists, the family will receive a warning letter asking them to attend a meeting with a leader and the class/form teacher.
 3. If attendance falls below 85% and/or punctuality is persistently poor and/or there is an urgent concern, the relevant senior leader, usually the Principal or Headteacher, will follow up the matter with the pupil, their parents and relevant leaders, including the designated safeguarding lead (DSL). In the most extreme cases, the Education Welfare Support Service will be informed.
- *If there is a longer-term general worry about the attendance of a particular pupil that may relate to worries or problems in school that might make the pupil not want to attend, these will be discussed with the class/form teacher and leaders, including the designated safeguarding lead as appropriate, in order for the*

appropriate supportive action to be taken. Where barriers to attendance relate to SEND, disability, mental or physical ill health or other individual needs, the school will consider appropriate reasonable adjustments and additional support. These may include pastoral support, adjustments to routines or the school environment, phased reintegration or other appropriate measures.

Uncollected pupil procedure for pupils who do not travel independently to and from school (for early years children please see separate early years policy)

In the event of a pupil not being collected at the end of the school day, the following steps are taken:

1. The responsible teacher/leader will check if a message has been received by the office and if not, will telephone the pupil's parents or emergency contacts.
2. In the unlikely event of no contact being made with parents or emergency contacts, the member of staff will defer to a senior leader on site, who will assume responsibility for the pupil's care if they continue not to be collected.
3. If the pupil's parents or emergency contacts have not been contacted by the evening, the senior leader will inform the DSL, Principal, and finally, as a last resort, social care services and/or the police, to agree a plan. The pupil will be supervised by a senior leader until a suitable plan is enacted, such as being escorted home or collected by an emergency contact, social care worker or the police.

International students in the sixth form

- The same high standards of attendance apply to pupils and students of all ages, including international students in the sixth form. The same attendance codes, absence follow-up processes and expectations apply to all pupils and students.

Young carers

- We are mindful of pupils who are young carers, recognising that caring responsibilities at home can create barriers to regular attendance. Where this is identified, the school will work with the pupil and family to understand the circumstances and consider appropriate support and reasonable adjustments, involving relevant services where appropriate.

Monitoring and reviewing attendance and absence

- Attendance data is analysed at whole-school, individual pupil and relevant cohort level to identify patterns, trends and groups who may require additional support. This includes consideration of pupils with SEND and/or health needs, young carers, pupils with a social worker and other cohorts where attendance may be affected by particular barriers.

The role of the local authority

- Parents are expected to work with St. John's collaboratively in order to resolve any attendance and/or punctuality problems.
- If, however, difficulties cannot be resolved in this way, we may work with the local authority to put formal support in place, in particular if absence is severe.
- As an independent school, St. John's does not issue penalty notices. Where statutory legal intervention is considered necessary, the school will work with the local authority in accordance with the statutory attendance framework and applicable local arrangements. However, though not all aspects of legal intervention are open to independent schools, the local authority has legal powers to prosecute families if their child/ren fail to attend school regularly; following conviction, this could include making the case to the court for a community or parenting order.

Referrals to the local authority

- As per the latest guidance, we notify the local authority on a monthly basis of the following: a) any pupils who have been added to or deleted from the admission register outside of standard transition times; b) any pupils of compulsory school age who have failed to attend school regularly or have been absent for a continuous period of ten school days where their absence has been recorded with one or more of the codes statistically classified as unauthorised (G, N, O, and/or U); c) any pupils of compulsory school age who have been recorded with code I (illness) and who have missed, or the school has reasonable grounds to believe will miss, 15 days consecutively or cumulatively because of sickness.