



ENGLISH MARTYRS CATHOLIC PRIMARY SCHOOL

ATTENDANCE POLICY

Date of Approval	28th January 2025
Date of Next Review	28th January 2026
Review led by	Headteacher
Approved by	FGB
This Policy should be read in conjunction with the following policies:	Child Protection Policy
Notes	Updated by Headteacher (August 2024) to reflect 'Working together to improve school attendance' guidance (DfE, published Feb. 2024).



School Mission Statement

Our Mission statement demonstrates our commitment to inclusion at English Martyrs school:

To accept each individual as they are and to enable them to develop their full potential within a Christ-centred, worshipping community in a spirit of love, happiness and understanding

'A Learning Community in Christ'

Contents

1. Aims..... 2

2. Legislation and guidance 3

3. School procedures 3

4. Authorised and unauthorised absence..... 6

5. Strategies for promoting attendance 8

6. Attendance monitoring 9

7. Roles and responsibilities 10

8. Monitoring arrangements 12

Appendix 1: attendance codes 10

1. Aims

Education is a statutory right for children. Without high standards of attendance and punctuality at school, children do not receive the education that they are entitled to which impacts not only on their day-to-day ability to grow and develop, but ultimately reduces their life chances. At English Martyrs we always aim to:

- Ensure that every pupil has access to the full-time education to which they are entitled
- Promote and support high levels of attendance and punctuality
- Act early to address patterns of absence
- Communicate effectively with families regarding pupils’ attendance and well-being
- Take into consideration the vulnerability of some pupils and the ways in which this might contribute to absence
- Build strong relationships with families to ensure pupils have the support in place to attend school

In additional to our legal obligations of promoting good attendance, we are also guided by our Mission Statement in all that we do at English Martyrs. Good attendance is key to our children feeling happy and understood, and that it is also central to our aim of enabling every child to achieve their potential. We aim to be a ‘learning community in Christ’, and regular attendance is a prerequisite for our children to build and maintain a sense of belonging to our school community. We believe that, whilst the barriers to accessing education can be wide and complex, it is everyone’s responsibility to improve attendance.

2. Legislation and guidance

- This policy meets the requirements of the [Working Together to Improve School Attendance \(2024\)](#) guidance from the Department for Education (DfE), and refers to the DfE's statutory guidance on [school attendance parental responsibility measures](#). These documents are drawn from the following legislation setting out the legal powers and duties that govern school attendance:
 - [The Education Act 1996](#)
 - [The Education Act 2002](#)
 - [The Education and Inspections Act 2006](#)
 - [The Education \(Pupil Registration\) \(England\) Regulations 2006 \(and 2010, 2011, 2013, 2016 amendments\)](#)
 - [The Education \(Penalty Notices\) \(England\) \(Amendment\) Regulations 2013](#)

This policy also refers to the DfE's guidance on the [school census](#), which explains the persistent absence threshold. Other relevant DfE guidance and publications that relate to this policy or have informed this policy includes:

- [School behaviour and attendance: parental responsibility measures](#)
- [Children missing education](#)
- [Keeping children safe in education](#)
- [School attendance: Guide for maintained schools, academies, independent schools and local authorities](#)
- [Improving school attendance: support for schools and local authorities](#)

3. School procedures

3.1 Attendance register

By law, all schools (except those where all pupils are boarders) are required to keep an attendance register, and all pupils must be placed on this register. It must contain the personal details of every pupil in the school, along with the date of admission or readmission to the school, information regarding parents and carers and details of the school last attended.

The attendance register will be taken at the start of the first session of each school day and once during the afternoon session. It will record whether every pupil is:

- Present
- Attending an approved off-site educational activity
- Absent
- 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. (See appendix 1 for DfE attendance codes.)

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

Every entry in the attendance register will be preserved for 3 years after the date on which the entry was made.

3.2 Timings at English Martyrs

At English Martyrs, the school gate opens at 8.40 a.m. and pupils must arrive in school by 8.50 a.m. on each school day. Children who come into school through the gate will be marked as 'Present' in the register (/).

The gate closes at 8.50 a.m. and children who arrive after this time for the morning session will need to enter the school through the office. A 'Pupil Signing In' slip will need to be completed and will be marked as Late (L). (See Section 3.4)

The register is kept open for latecomers until 9.20 a.m. At 9.20 a.m. the register for the morning session closes. Pupils arriving after this time will be marked as 'Arrival after Registration' (U), which is within the category of unauthorised absence.

The register for the second session of the day opens at 12.55 a.m. Pupils who are in the school between 12.55 p.m. and 1.05 p.m. are marked as present (\), pupils who arrive at school between 1.05 p.m. and 1.35 p.m. are marked as Late (L). Registers close for the afternoon session at 1.35 p.m. and pupils arriving after this time will be marked as 'Arrival after Registration' (U), which is within the category of unauthorised absence.

3.2 Unplanned absence

Parents must notify the school on the first day of an unplanned absence – for example, if their child is unable to attend due to ill health – by 9.30 a.m. or as soon as practically possible (see also section 6). Parents may notify the office through leaving a message on the school phone number (pressing 1 to report the absence of their child) or by emailing the office on office@englishmartyrs.school. Absence due to illness will be authorised unless the school has a genuine concern about the authenticity of the illness.

If the authenticity of the illness is in doubt, the school may ask parents to provide 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.

3.3 Medical or dental appointments

Missing registration for a medical or dental appointment is counted as an authorised absence; advance notice is required for authorising these absences.

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 parents can notify the school of a medical or dental appointment in advance through contacting the school office via phone or emailing the office office@englishmartyrs.school.

Applications for other types of absence in term time must also be made in advance. Information relating to whether the school can authorise such absences can be found in section 4.

3.4 Lateness and punctuality

A pupil who arrives late but before the register has closed will be marked as late, using the appropriate code. A pupil who arrives after the register has closed will be marked as absent, using the appropriate code.

Parents bringing their child to school late need to record that they have arrived at school on a Pupil Signing In slip. This enables the school to have notification that a child has arrived, so that registers can be updated, and also to monitor the reasons for lateness and the number of minutes late. This information is entered into the school information management system to enable the school to monitor punctuality. This information is used in the regular meetings held between the office staff and the Headteacher to monitor attendance and punctuality. If it is identified that there are individuals / families with issues around punctuality, they will be written to in the first instance to draw their attention to the fact that there is a need for punctuality to improve, and to offer support as necessary. We hope that this would rectify any issues, but would invite parents to meet with the Senior Leadership Team if there is not an improvement. In line with our duty to safeguard children, we also ask parents to complete a Pupil Late Pick Up slip if parents are more than ten minutes late to pick up their child.

3.5 Following up absence

The school will follow up any absences to ascertain the reason, ensure proper safeguarding action is taken where necessary, identify whether the absence is approved or not and identify the correct attendance code to use.

If there is an unexplained absence and no reason has been given by 9.30 a.m., we will contact the parents / carers as soon as practicably possible, but will always endeavour to do this by 10 a.m. As part of our safeguarding practice, if we are unable to make contact with parents / carers by 10.30 a.m., we will then call the child / children's other named contacts in an attempt to establish where they are. If contact cannot be made, this will be discussed by the Senior Leadership Team and, if deemed in the interests of the child, a member of the Senior Leadership Team accompanied by another member of staff may visit the home to try to establish the child's whereabouts and safety. This is in line with the school's duty to safeguard children.

If contact cannot be made, a letter of concern will be sent to the parents / carers by the end of the second day, asking them to contact the school to explain why their child has not attended.

A second letter of concern will be sent to the parent / carer if absence has not been explained within a week.

The school may choose to contact the Multi-Agency Safeguarding Hub team at any point if there are concerns for the child's well-being, or the Pupil Entitlement: Investigation team for further advice and support. A 101 Police Welfare check will be requested where advised.

3.6 Reporting to parents

Parents will receive a summary of their child's attendance and punctuality yearly, within an annual report. Where there are concerns about attendance or punctuality, additional reports will be shared with the parents/ carers.

4. Authorised and unauthorised absence

4.1 Granting approval for term-time absence

Headteachers may not grant any leave of absence to pupils during term time unless they consider there to be 'exceptional circumstances'.

The guidance developed by the National Union for Head Teachers (NAHT) suggests that 'exceptional circumstances' for an absence is a situation that is rare, significant, unavoidable and short. These are the criteria against which requests for absence are judged against to determine whether they are 'exceptional'.

The school considers each application for term-time absence individually, taking into account the specific facts, circumstances and relevant context behind the request. A leave of absence is granted entirely at the headteacher's discretion.

Valid reasons for **authorised absence** include:

- Illness and medical/dental appointments – as explained in sections 3.2 and 3.3

- Religious observance – where the day is exclusively set apart for religious observance by the religious body to which the pupil’s parents belong. If necessary, the school will seek advice from the parents’ religious body to confirm whether the day is set apart
- Mobile pupils travelling with their parent(s) for occupational purposes. Absence may be authorised only when a mobile 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
- Attending events that further develop a gift or talent that the child has, for example, if the child were to be part of a national or county sporting team and has been selected to compete
- Where a parent is in the Armed Forces and operational tours abroad or afloat have prevented the family taking holiday outside of term time. The decision whether to authorize such absences rests solely with the headteacher.

Examples of absence that will not be authorised are:

- Taking holiday during term-time because it is cheaper to do it this way and otherwise a holiday could not be afforded¹
- Birthday treats
- Shopping trips
- Visiting relatives
- Attending family weddings (each will be considered on an individual basis, but to be authorized it will need to be shown that this is an ‘exceptional circumstance’ i.e. that a wedding in term time was unavoidable and that there this is for a member of the immediate family)
- Requests for absence during times when the child needs to be undertaking Statutory Assessment Tasks

4.2 Legal sanctions

Schools can refer to the local authority for parents to receive legal sanctions for the unauthorised absence of their child from school, where the child is of compulsory school age.

In line with the Code of Conduct for West Sussex if a child accrues 10 or more unauthorised absences in a 10 school week period a Fixed Penalty Notice (FPN) may be issued to parents. Unauthorised absence includes; unauthorised holidays in term time, late arrival at school after registers close, and other absences which have not been agreed with / authorised by the school and / or where the school is not satisfied with the reasons given for absence.

¹ Where a request is made for a holiday that lasts for eight sessions and the decision is made not to authorise it, parents will be informed that if the child is reported absent due to illness either immediately before or after the holiday absence, this time will not be authorised unless medical evidence of illness is provided.

These are indicated on the attendance register. FPNs can also be used when a pupil who has been excluded is noted as being in a public place during school hours. There are occasions when a FPN can be issued outside of these parameters and if this were to occur the parent would be notified.

FPNs are issued per parent, per child and are an alternative to prosecution. This gives the parent an opportunity to discharge their criminal liability by paying a fine of £160, which must be paid within 28 days. If the FPN is paid within 21 days, the fine is reduced to £80.² The payment must be made directly to the local authority.

When FPNs are not paid within 28 days, the local authority will consider prosecuting for the original non-attendance, not for the non-payment of the FPN. Further information about legal action that can be taken can be found on GOV.UK. Alternatively, the local authority may transfer the case to an investigating officer.

Should the period of unauthorised absence for a holiday in term time be 15 days or more, a FPN may not be deemed suitable. Instead the matter may be brought directly before the court.

The decision on whether or not to issue a penalty notice ultimately rests with the Headteacher.

There is an escalation process with regard to FPNs. Where a parent has already received two FPNs in a three-year period, the offer of a further FPN for non-attendance will not be available. Instead, the matter will either be allocated to an Investigating Officer or referred to the Magistrates' court. If the absence is related to holidays in term time, the case is likely to go before the Magistrates' court. FPNs issued prior to changes in statutory guidance (August 2024) will not count to the escalation period.

5. Strategies for promoting attendance

At English Martyrs, we believe that the most powerful strategy to promote good attendance is to ensure that – as per our Mission Statement – our school operates 'in a spirit of love, happiness and understanding'. When children are happy at school, they will want to attend.

We also work with parents to support regular attendance through, for example, communicating to new parents about the importance of regular attendance, promoting it within our Prospectus and mentioning it within our newsletter. We are aware that there are some children with medical issues for whom regular attendance is not achievable, and therefore, to prevent disability discrimination, we have chosen not to give out attendance awards in assemblies. -We work with our parents to support regular attendance by communicating early if we see that issues are arising. We will always offer support where we can to ensure punctuality and regular attendance, and will also acknowledge when positive improvements have been made.

² These amounts apply from the 19th August 2024 and are an increase on the previous rates of £120 and £60 respectively.

6. Attendance monitoring

The school will:

- Monitor attendance and absence data half-termly, termly and yearly across the school. There will be monitoring of 'groups' of pupils to identify potential areas for support and improvement, and also at an individual pupil level
- Identify whether or not there are particular groups of children whose absences may be a cause for concern

Pupil-level absence data will be collected each term and published at national and local authority level through the DfE's school absence national statistics releases. The underlying school-level absence data is published alongside the national statistics. The school will compare attendance data to the national average, and share this with the governing board.

6.1 Analysing attendance

The school will:

- Analyse attendance and absence data regularly to identify pupils or cohorts that need additional support with their attendance, and use this analysis to provide targeted support to these pupils and their families
- Look at historic and emerging patterns of attendance and absence, and then develop strategies to address these patterns

6.2 Using data to improve attendance

The school will follow the guidance set out in the 'Summary table of school responsibilities for school attendance' guidance (2024). This includes:

- Providing regular attendance reports to school leaders, to facilitate discussions with pupils and families
- Using data to monitor and evaluate the impact of any interventions put in place in order to modify them and inform future strategies
-

The headteacher will be the School Attendance Champion, taking on responsibility for championing and improving attendance.

6.3 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.

The school will:

- Use attendance data to find patterns and trends of persistent and severe absence
- Work with identified pupils and families to understand and address the reasons for absence, including any in-school barriers to attendance

- Provide access to wider support services to remove the barriers to attendance (with the School Attendance Champion acting as lead practitioner where attendance is the only issue and / or the threshold for formal early help is not yet met.
- Respond to lack of engagement from families by holding more formal conversation with parents, being clear about the potential need for legal intervention in the future.
- Engage with the local authority on legal intervention where support is not working
- Where there are safeguarding concerns, intensify support through a referral to statutory children's social care
- Work with other schools in the local area, such as schools previously attended and the schools of any siblings
- Agree a joint approach for all severely absent pupils with the local authority.
- Work with other schools in the local area, such as schools previously attended and the schools of any siblings

Where pupils with poor attendance have medical conditions or SEND, the school will:

- Maintain the same ambition for attendance and work with pupils and parents to maximise attendance
- Ensure that pastoral support is in place where applicable by, for example, putting in additional support and adjustments such as an individual healthcare plan and ensuring that the provision in the pupil's ECHP is accessed.
- Consider additional support from wider services and external partners, making timely referrals.

These actions may be delegated to the SENDCo, but will be overseen by the Senior Attendance Champion.

7. Roles and responsibilities

7.1 The governing body

The governing body is responsible for:

- Promoting the importance of school attendance across the school's policies and ethos
- Making sure school leaders fulfil expectations and statutory duties
- Regularly reviewing and challenging attendance data
- Monitoring attendance figures for the whole school
- Making sure staff receive adequate training on attendance
- Holding the headteacher to account for the implementation of this policy

7.2 The headteacher

The headteacher, as Senior Attendance Champion, is responsible for:

- 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
- Issuing fixed-penalty notices, where necessary
- Leading attendance across the school
- Ensuring that expectations of parents around attendance are clearly communicated
- Offering a clear vision for attendance improvement
- Evaluating and monitoring expectations and processes
- Having an oversight of data analysis
- Devising specific strategies to address areas of poor attendance identified through data
- Arranging calls and meetings with parents to discuss attendance issues
- Delivering targeted intervention and support to pupils and families

7.3 The attendance officer

The school attendance officer is responsible for:

- Monitoring and analysing attendance data (see section 7)
- 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 headteacher
- Working with education welfare officers to tackle persistent absence
- Advising the headteacher when to issue fixed-penalty notices

The attendance officer is Theresa Bevans and can be contacted via email at office@englishmartyrs.school or by phone on 01903 502868.

7.4 Class teachers

Class teachers are responsible for recording attendance on a daily basis, using the correct codes, and submitting this information to the school office. Attendance is recorded on BromCom when the registers are taken by staff members, but on paper if supply staff are being used so that we can ensure our attendance records are accurate.

7.5 Office staff

We have a phone option for parents to call in and report absences. Office staff are expected to check this in the morning, and also take calls from parents about absence and record it on the school system. They will also check the office email to check that all messages about absence have been received. Where appropriate, they will transfer calls from parents to a member of the Senior Leadership Team in order to provide them with more detailed support on attendance.

8. Monitoring arrangements

This policy will be reviewed every two years by the Headteacher. At every review, the policy will be shared with the governing board.

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
K	Attending educational provision arranged by the local authority	Pupil is attending a place, other than school, at which they are a registered pupil, for educational provision arranged by the local authority.
B	Off-site educational activity	Pupil is at a supervised off-site educational activity approved by the school
D	Dual registered	Pupil is attending a session at another setting where they are also registered

J	Interview	Pupil has an interview with a prospective employer/educational establishment
P	Sporting activity	Pupil is participating in a supervised sporting activity approved by the school
V	Educational trip or visit	Pupil is on an educational visit/trip organised, or approved, by the school

C	Leave of absence for exceptional circumstances	Pupil has been granted a discretionary leave of absence in exceptional circumstances.
C1	Authorised leave of absence for the purpose of participating in a regulated performance	Pupil has been granted a leave of absence to undertake employment (paid or unpaid) during school hours.
C2	Authorised absence due to part-time timetable.	Pupil is on a part-time timetable to meet their individual needs.
E	Suspended / Excluded	Pupil has been suspended or excluded but no alternative provision has been made
H	Authorised holiday	Pupil has been allowed to go on holiday due to exceptional circumstances
I	Illness (not medical or dental appointments)	School has been notified that a pupil will be absent due to illness
J1	Attending another educational institution with a view to being admitted to it.	Pupil is attending another school with a view to being admitted to it.
M	Medical/dental appointment	Pupil is at a medical or dental appointment Agreement should have been sought from the school in advance.
R	Religious observance	Pupil is taking part in a day of religious observance

T	Parent travelling for occupational reasons	Pupil is a mobile child; they and their parent (s) are travelling in the course of their trade or business, as agreed with the school
Y	Unable to attend because of transport reasons	See 'Working together to improve school attendance for the definitions of codes Y1 – Y7.

Unauthorised absence		
G	Unauthorised holiday	Pupil is on a holiday that was not approved by the school / where the parent did not apply in advance or the child was kept away longer than agreed.
N	Reason not provided	Pupil is absent for an unknown reason (this code should be amended when the reason is established, or replaced with code O if no reason for absence has been provided after a reasonable amount of time)
O	Unauthorised absence	School is not satisfied with reason for pupil's absence / no reason for absence is established.
U	Arrival after registration	Pupil arrived at school after the register closed

Code	Definition	Scenario
X	Not required to be in school	Pupil of non-compulsory school age is not required to attend
Y	Unable to attend due to exceptional circumstances	School site is closed, there is disruption to travel as a result of a local/national emergency, or pupil is in custody
Z	Pupil not on admission register	Register set up but pupil has not yet joined the school
#	Planned whole school closure	Whole school closure due to half term / bank holiday / INSET day