

The Charter School North Dulwich

ATTENDANCE GUIDANCE 2026

ATTENDANCE: WHY IT MATTERS

Encouraging regular school attendance is one of the most powerful ways you can prepare your child for success – both in school and in life. We believe our pupils are capable of amazing things and want them to have every opportunity to achieve this success.

Our aim is for all of our pupils to achieve 100% attendance, but we know that this is not always possible. Therefore, we would like to aim for every child to achieve at least 98% attendance – no matter their circumstances. Having 98% attendance is the equivalent to missing 9 whole school days a year, so this really should be a manageable target.

Ensuring excellent attendance requires partnership; you can help us to help your child by encouraging regular school attendance.

Going to school every day means:

- Lots of opportunities for learning new skills
- Developing a better understanding of themselves and the world
- Making friends and building lasting relationships
- Developing healthy life habits
- Feeling connected to the school community
- Taking part in exciting and memorable activities
- And having lots of fun!

All children aged between 5 and 16 are required by law to receive an education, and it is the duty of parents and carers to ensure that they are supported to do so.

Key facts:

- Research shows that children with higher attendance at school achieve better both in their exams and in later life.

- A two-week absence in term time, will automatically drop attendance to 95% and can have a severe impact on children who might not find learning easy.
- 90% attendance is the equivalent to one month off every school year.
- Children who have persistently poor attendance can suffer more commonly from friendship issues and find it harder to build lasting relationships.
- You can be fined and prosecuted if your child's attendance becomes a serious issue. You will be referred to the Southwark Education Inclusion Team (EIT), a team of Senior Education Welfare Officers and legal proceedings can and will be taken where necessary.

Absence from School

Children are required to attend school for 190 days each year. How does your child's attendance compare with this target? The table below indicates how just a few days absence can result in children missing a significant number of lessons. It has been proven that children who miss a lot of school achieve less.

Effects of Non-Attendance:

Attendance during School year	Equates to days absent	Which is approximately	Which means the number of lessons missed
94%	10 days	2 weeks	50 lessons
90%	19 days	4 weeks	100 lessons
85%	29 days	6 weeks	150 lessons
80%	38 days	8 weeks	200 lessons
75%	48 days	10 weeks	250 lessons
70%	57 days	11½ weeks	290 lessons
65%	67 days	13½ weeks	340 lessons

Late Arrival at School

When a child arrives late at school, they miss important events and activities like our daily tutor time, assembly, teacher instructions, introductions and key messages for the day. Children also feel embarrassed at having to enter the classroom late.

Our gates open at 8:15am where the Leadership Team meet our pupils. Our students are expected to arrive before 8.25am and join their tutor groups at roll call. Registers are taken promptly at 8:40am in the tutor rooms.

The table below indicates how frequent lateness can add up to a considerable amount of learning being lost. This can seriously disadvantage children and disrupt the learning of others. Please help children in your care to be punctual.

Effects of Late Arrival at School:

Minutes Late Per day	Equates to days of teaching lost in one year	Which means this number of lessons missed
5 Minutes	3½ days	17 lessons
10 minutes	7 days	35 lessons
15 Minutes	10½ days	52 lessons
20 Minutes	14 days	70 lessons
25 Minutes	21 days	104 lessons

PROMOTING GOOD ATTENDANCE & PUNCTUALITY

The aim at The Charter School North Dulwich is to have every child achieve 100% attendance throughout the year. We understand and recognise that children do miss school due to sickness and/or the occasional appointment.

In school we encourage everyone to do their very best and come to school every day and on time.

The Charter School North Dulwich:

- Promotes the importance of attendance and punctuality with our pupils through our learning, as well as during assemblies.
- Expects regular attendance and commitment to school activities. For example, if your child is going to be asked to represent the school in sporting fixtures or music performance they should attend regularly and on time.
- Tells you about your child's attendance during parents' meetings and through your child's mid-year reports.
- Works closely with parents/carers where a child's absence/punctuality is a cause for concern
- Supports our pupils to achieve excellent attendance and punctuality
- We support children and their families to return to school after a prolonged absence.

Reducing illness

If your child is saying they do not feel well and you are unsure about whether it warrants a day off please send them to school. If they are truly ill we will ring you. When deciding whether or not your child is too ill to attend school, the NHS website has some great advice.

Ask yourself the following questions:

- Is my child well enough to do the activities of the school day?
- Does my child have a condition that could be passed on to other children or school staff?
- Would I take a day off work if I had this condition?

What can parents do?

- Having breakfast helps children stay alert at school.
- Help your child develop routines for homework/reading/bedtime.
- Encourage children to get their school bag ready the night before.
- Where possible, try to make sure that any medical/dental appointments are made for after school or during the school holidays. If they are during the school day, please show your appointment details (letter/email/card/text) to the Attendance Officer.
- Please don't take holidays in term time.
- If your child is ill, ring the school as soon as possible on the first day of absence.
- Talk positively about school and coming to school.

MEET OUR ATTENDANCE/PUNCTUALITY TEAM

If you have any questions at all about your child's attendance and/or punctuality, here is who you can ask:

- **The Attendance Officer** should be your first point of contact regarding any attendance query, and who you should be contacting if your child is not attending school by 8:45am. You can explain to them the reasons for your child's absence or lateness and they will note it down which is recorded within our registers. They may ask you questions to be really clear they are putting down the right thing. You will need to explain detail of any illness. Telling us your child is 'ill' is not enough information.
- **The Assistant Headteachers** lead on attendance for each key stage. They will invite you to meetings about attendance and you could ask to speak to them if you have

important information about your child's attendance.

- **Year Leaders** mostly works with families where the children are persistently absent (attendance less than 90%), because this is very serious.
- **Exception Term Time Absence** - If you want to request absence during term time or special leave then you must write to the Attendance Officer using our [Request for Exceptional Term Time Leave Form](#). The Attendance Officer will then refer this to the Headteacher as they are the only person who can allow families to miss school for this reason. Please remember the policy of the school, the local authority, the Trust and the Government is to say no to holidays during term time, even if it is a day or two before the beginning and end of a term.
- **Southwark Local Authority** - We work very closely with the Education Inclusion Team (EIT) that sits within Family Early Help. We refer cases where pupil attendance is extremely low – less than 90%. Southwark is the organisation that works with the school to issue fixed penalty notices where they are required, and to prepare cases for court.

PUNCTUALITY

Arriving late to school

Poor punctuality is not acceptable. If your child misses the start of the day they can miss learning and do not spend time with their tutor getting vital information and news for the day. Late arriving pupils also disrupt lessons which can be embarrassing for the child and can also encourage absence. Learning will not be stopped when late children arrive in the class as this is unfair on the children who are punctual to school.

It is the responsibility of all parents and carers to ensure that their child/ren are in school on time.

All times are taken from the digital clock in the school office.

8.15am: Gates open and pupils can go into their classrooms

8.30am: School gates are "closed", registers are taken – all pupils who are late, must now go to the front office.

8.30am – 9:00am: Children are registered as 'late'. Parents/Carers will have to provide the exact reason as to why they are late. This will be recorded on the register as code L. Code L does not contribute to the issue of penalty notices.

9:00am onwards: Children are registered as 'very late'. Parents/Carers will have to provide the exact reason as to why they are very late. This will be recorded on the register as code U. Code U **does** contribute to penalty notices as it is an unauthorised absence. It is very important to avoid code U by being on time for school every day.

ATTENDANCE

Every half-day absence from school has to be classified **by the school** as either **AUTHORISED** or **UNAUTHORISED**. This is why information about the cause of any absence is always required.

Authorised absences are morning or afternoons away from school for a good reason like illness (where a child is too ill to attend school, medical/dental appointments which unavoidably fall in school time, emergencies or other unavoidable cause).

Unauthorised absences are those which the school does not consider reasonable and for which no "leave" has been given. This type of absence can lead to the Local Authority using sanctions and/or legal proceedings.

What if I have been to the doctor or the dentist?

All medical and dental appointments should be made outside of school hours wherever possible, to prevent the disruption to a child's learning. To report a medical or dental appointment, please inform the school in advance by emailing attendance@charternorthdulwich.org.uk or reporting the future absence on ClassCharts, uploading medical evidence in either scenario. Please also remember to write a note in your child's planner to confirm the absence in order for the class teacher to release your child from their lesson. All students must sign in and out of School Reception for health and safety purposes.

In the case of an emergency **for your child**, you must bring with you evidence you're your child has been to a medical or dental appointment. This can be an appointment card, a prescription that has been issued on that day, or evidence that you called the surgery to speak to someone and take advice. If the school has seen the evidence then the absence will be recorded as code M. This is authorised. If there is no evidence then it will remain as code L or code U.

My child is unwell today – what should I do?

Everyone is unwell at times and needs to stay at home to get better. If your child is absent due to illness you must tell the school as soon as possible.

Years 7 – 11

- Before 8:45am call the Attendance Officer on 0207 346 6603 on the first day of absence, and then each day that your child is absent. It is important to do this **everyday** so we know where your child is. We will make a note on our registers of when we spoke to you and what you said.
- Or before 8:45m email attendance@charternorthdulwich.org.uk with your child's name and tutor group and the precise reason for absence.
- Or before 8:45am report the absence on ClassCharts.

Years 12 & 13

- Before 8:45am report the absence to the Sixth Form office by reporting on the ClassCharts app.

- Before 8:45am calling the sixth form office on 0207 346 6617
- Or before 8:45am email sixthform@charternorthdulwich.org.uk with your child's name and tutor group and the precise reason for absence.

All year groups

Visit the school in person, where you can speak to the Attendance Officer (Years 7 – 11) or the PA to the Sixth Form (Years 12 & 13) or a member of the Admin Team.

If your child is absent and we do not hear from you we will:

- We aim to contact you on the first day of absence. We may do this even if you have already called in and left a message if we require some clarity. We will note down on our registers the time we made, or tried to make, contact with you, and the reason you gave for absence.
- If we have still not been able to contact you we will send you an email requesting that you inform us of a reason for your child's absence.

If we are very concerned and worried about your child's attendance because it is low, we will:

- Invite you in to discuss the situation with the Year Leader;
- Refer the matter to the school's designated Education Welfare Officer if attendance moves below 90%.

What happens if only one of my children is ill but it means I can't bring the others to school?

The absences for those children who are not unwell is unauthorised. It will be recorded as code O. Code O will go towards a penalty notice (or court proceedings).

What happens if I am unwell, as a parent/carer, and I can't bring my child/ren in to school?

The absences for those children who are not unwell is unauthorised. It will be recorded as code O. Code O will go towards a penalty notice (or court proceedings).

Only the school can authorise the absence

Sometimes parents and carers believe that they can authorise their child's absence, but this is not the case. Only the school has the authority to do this. If your child is away from school due to a lot of illness, then the school may decide not to authorise the absence. If our attendance staff believe that this is a possibility in the near future for your child, they will get in touch with you to let you know and warn you, that in order to have any future absences authorised due to illness, the school will require medical evidence.

What is medical evidence?

Medical evidence is something that you could easily get if your child has been unwell. It is NOT asking your GP for a letter, it is NOT asking you to tell us all the details of your child's medical history. Here are some suggestions of what you can bring to us:

- An appointment card/slip that is from your surgery and the date on this matches a day your child was absent from school
- A copy of the prescription that has been issued – it must be in the name of the child who is absent and also cover the date/s of absence
- A record on your mobile telephone that you called your GP surgery to ask for advice. When you call, please ask for the name of the person that you spoke to. We will ask to see the number that you called, how long the phone call was for and the name of the person you spoke to.

If the school has authorized the absence due to illness, it will appear as code I on your child's attendance record. Code I means "illness".

If the school has not authorised the absence it will appear as a code O on your child's attendance record. Code O means 'reason provided for absence but the school has chosen not to authorise'.

What if I want to go on holiday during term time?

This is absolutely not acceptable. **The Charter School North Dulwich will not authorise any absence due to a family going on holiday.** We feel there is nothing more important than your child's education and with 170 days of holiday and weekends, this is plenty of time to go on holiday without missing school.

This includes arriving early to pick up your child on the last day of term because early travel arrangements have been made. Please do not do this because the absence will be unauthorised.

Here are some of the reasons parents/carers have given recently for their child's absence, **all of which were unauthorised (code G).** Code G will go towards a fixed penalty notice of £120 per child.

- *This is the only time I/my partner/my family can take leave for a holiday together.*
- *It is too expensive to go on holiday during school holidays*
- *(Relative/friend) has booked a trip for us and didn't realize what the term dates were*
- *We've booked a flight/ferry/house from Friday afternoon because we want to avoid the traffic*
- *Our tickets were on standby and we were bumped off the flight (please do not book standby tickets)*

- *I want to take my child to see (XXXXXXX), it is an important educational/cultural experience*
- *We are (insert nationality) and it is important that they experience the culture of their country*
- *I have to go on a business trip and there is no-one else to look after my child*
- *I have an appointment and there is no one else to pick up the children until 5:30pm*
- *We have to go back to (insert name of the country) to see our elderly relatives because they are ill and frail*

Absences around a holiday period

We have had a number of families who have gone away during a school holiday saying their relatives are ill and on the due date for return to school, have either not come back or have called to say something else has happened and they don't know when they will be returning. If we do not hear from you and you do not return on time, we will report your child to the local authority as a child missing education. If it has not been possible to return on time you will need evidence to prove why, but you are risking a fixed penalty notice of £120 per child.

We monitor very closely and it is **always** noted when a child is ill just before or just after a holiday period. If we suspect that you have gone on holiday you risk being issued with a penalty notice (£120 per child) We are very thorough in our checking, we will phone parents and carers and will expect to be able to get hold of you. We may also come to visit your home address.

Asking for exceptional term time leave. What is exceptional term time leave?

This is when you need to take your child/ren out of school during term time because you cannot avoid it. An example of this is a religious observance.

Religious observance (code R)

The Charter School North Dulwich recognises that there may be times where children of different faiths observe religious festivals that fall outside of school holidays and weekends, and will consider authorising absence for these times. This covers important events in the calendars of the six main world religions, such as Eid or

Orthodox Christmas or Easter. We expect parents to be aware of these dates, well in advance. If it is authorised, the headteacher will decide how many days. The first day is always a code R. If more days are authorised, it will be a code C.

External educational opportunities (code C)

Some of our children take additional classes or study additional skills outside of their time at school. This is something we greatly encourage at The Charter School North Dulwich. If time is needed to sit an exam for these activities, or appear in a public performance then this is considered to be special leave. Evidence of the date and time of the exam/trial, or a performance license, in the case of appearing in a public performance, will be needed in order to authorise.

Induction days taster days/interviews/examinations for secondary/6th form college or university (code J or code B)

These are most likely to happen during the autumn term, the beginning of the spring term, and towards the end of the summer term. Evidence of being registered for an exam and being invited for interview/induction, must be provided in order to authorise. Code J is specifically for interviews and code B is for everything else

Other reasons for requesting exceptional term time leave may include:

- Immediate family member's bereavement, crisis, serious illness or funeral
- Wedding of immediate family member
- Medical appointments for half a day or longer

Applying for exceptional term time leave

For all of these circumstances (above) parents and carers should request the leave in the normal way by completing an Exceptional Term Time Leave request in advance (download the PDF [here](#) or collect from school office).

If you believe you have a very good reason to take your child out of school during term time, and it has not been listed, then please follow the same process.