



Attendance Policy

13 October 2026

About This Document

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1. Introduction

- 1.1. Regular and punctual school attendance is essential. Students need to attend school regularly to take full advantage of the educational opportunities available to them by law. The Vine Christian School fully recognises its responsibilities to ensure students are in school on time and, therefore, have access to learning for the maximum number of days and hours.
- 1.2. This policy applies to all students registered at the school. It will be published on the school's website, provided to parents/carers when a student joins the school, and brought to the attention of students, parents/carers and staff at the beginning of each school year and whenever it is updated.
- 1.3. This policy has been written with regard to the statutory guidance Working together to improve school attendance (DfE, July 2026), the School Attendance (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2024, Children missing education: statutory guidance for local authorities and schools (DfE, September 2025), Keeping Children Safe in Education 2026, the Education Act 1996, the Education Act 2002, the Education (Independent School Standards) Regulations 2014 and the Equality Act 2010. The attendance guidance and the student registration regulations apply to independent schools in England, subject to the distinctions stated in those documents.
- 1.4. Although parents/carers have the legal responsibility for ensuring their child's good attendance, the Headteacher and Governors and Trustees at our school, work together to ensure that all students are encouraged and supported to develop good attendance habits and maintain a whole school culture that promotes the benefits of high attendance. Procedures in this policy are followed to ensure this happens.
- 1.5. Children who are persistently late or absent soon fall behind in their learning. Children who are absent from school frequently develop large gaps in their learning, which will impact their progress and their ability to meet age-related learning expectations.
- 1.6. The person parents/carers should contact first about attendance on a daily basis is the school office.
- 1.7. For more detailed support on attendance, contact the Headteacher.

2. Aims and Objectives

- 2.1. This attendance policy ensures that all staff, Governors and Trustees in our school are fully aware of and transparent about the actions necessary to promote good attendance.
- 2.2. Through this policy, we aim to:
 - i. Improve students' achievement by ensuring high levels of attendance and punctuality.
 - ii. Set high expectations for the attendance and punctuality of all students while recognising that some students, including those with medical conditions, SEND or disabilities, may face additional barriers and may require support or reasonable adjustments.
 - iii. Create an ethos in which good attendance and punctuality are recognised as the norm and seen to be valued by the school.
 - iv. Raise awareness among parents, carers, and students of the importance of uninterrupted attendance and punctuality at every stage of a child's education.

- v. Ensure that our policy promotes good habits at an early age.
- vi. Build strong relationships with all our families, listen to and understand barriers to attendance and work with families to remove them.
- vii. Work in partnership with students, parents, carers, and staff so that all students realise their potential, unhindered by unnecessary absences.
- viii. Promote a positive and welcoming atmosphere in which students feel safe, secure, and valued, and encourage them to have a sense of responsibility.
- ix. Establish a pattern of monitoring attendance and ensure consistency in recognising achievement and dealing with difficulties.
- x. Recognise the key role of all staff, but especially Supervisors, in promoting good attendance.
- xi. Maintain and promote good attendance and punctuality through:
 - a) Raising awareness of attendance and punctuality issues among all staff, parents, carers, and students.
 - b) Ensuring that parents/carers have an understanding of the responsibility placed on them for making sure their child/ren attends regularly and punctually.
 - c) Equipping children with the life skills needed to take responsibility for good school attendance and punctuality appropriate to the child's age and development.
 - d) Maintaining effective communication with parents, carers, students, staff, Governors and Trustees on school attendance matters.
 - e) Developing and implementing procedures for identifying, reporting and reviewing cases of poor attendance and persistent lateness.
 - f) Supporting students who have been experiencing any difficulties at home or school which are preventing good attendance.
 - g) Developing and implementing procedures to follow up non-attendance at school.

3. Definitions

3.1. Authorised Absence

- i. An absence is recorded as authorised only where the reason for absence falls within an authorised category under the national attendance codes or where the school has granted leave of absence. A parent/carer explaining or requesting an absence does not, by itself, make the absence authorised.

3.2. Only the school can authorise an absence. Parents/Carers do not have this authority, so not all absences supported by parents/carers will be classified as authorised.

3.3. Persistent absence means a student is absent for 10% or more of possible school sessions. Severe absence means a student is absent for 50% or more of possible school sessions. These thresholds are used to identify students who may need additional or intensified support; they do not replace consideration of the individual circumstances of each student.

4. Unauthorised Absence

- 4.1. An absence is classified as unauthorised when a child is away from school without the school's permission.
- 4.2. Therefore, a child's absence from school without good reason, even with the support of a parent/carer, is unauthorised.

5. Procedures

- 5.1. Our school will undertake to follow the following procedures to support good attendance:
 - i. To maintain appropriate registration processes using an electronic management system.
 - ii. To maintain appropriate attendance data.
 - iii. To communicate the attendance procedures and expectations to all staff, Governors and Trustees, parents, carers, and students.
 - iv. To have consistent and systematic daily records that detail any absences and lateness.
 - v. To follow up on absences and persistent lateness if parents/carers have yet to communicate with the school.
 - vi. To inform parents/carers what constitutes authorised and unauthorised absences.
 - vii. To discourage unnecessary absence through holidays taken during term time.
 - viii. To work with parents/carers to improve individual students' attendance and punctuality.
 - ix. To work with the local authority School Attendance Support Team, or equivalent local attendance service, and other relevant partners where absence is at risk of becoming persistent or severe, or where voluntary support has not been effective or engaged with.
 - x. To provide attendance and registration information to the local authority and/or the Department for Education where the school is legally required to do so. Independent schools are not required to submit daily attendance data to the Department for Education unless a separate legal requirement applies.
 - xi. To refer to the Educational Welfare Service any child whose attendance causes concern and where parents/carers have not responded to school initiatives to improve.
 - xii. To report attendance statistics to the DfE where requested.
 - xiii. All staff should be aware that they must raise any attendance or punctuality concerns with the Headteacher.
 - xiv. Attendance is also a safeguarding matter. Unexplained, repeated or prolonged absence can be a warning sign of neglect, abuse, exploitation or other harm. Any safeguarding concern arising from attendance or absence must be reported without delay to the DSL or Deputy DSL in accordance with the Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy.

6. Responsibilities

- 6.1. All school staff members are responsible for identifying trends in attendance and punctuality. The following includes a more specific list of individuals' responsibilities.
- 6.2. Teachers/Supervisors
 - i. Teachers/Supervisors are responsible for:
 - a) Keeping an overview of class and individual attendance, looking particularly for poor overall attendance, anomalies in attendance patterns, and/or unusual explanations for attendance offered by children and their parents/carers.
 - b) Informing the Headteacher where there are concerns and acting upon them.
 - c) Providing background information to support referrals.
 - d) Monitoring follow-up once actions have been taken to correct attendance concerns.
 - e) Emphasising to their class the importance of good attendance and promptness.
 - f) Following up absences with immediate requests for explanation, which should be noted inside the register.
 - g) Discussing attendance issues at parent consultation meetings where necessary.
- 6.3. Headteacher
 - i. The Headteacher is responsible for:
 - a) Overall monitoring of school attendance.
 - b) Trends in authorised and unauthorised absence.
 - c) Contacting families where concerns are raised about absence including arranging meetings to discuss attendance issues.
 - d) Monitoring individual attendance where concerns have been raised.
 - e) Providing reports and background information to inform discussion with the Governors and Trustees.
- 6.4. Administration Staff
 - i. Staff in the school office are responsible for:
 - a) Collating and recording registration and attendance information.
 - b) Taking and recording messages from parents/carers regarding absence.
 - c) Ensuring the Absence/Late register is completed.
 - d) Contacting parents/carers of absent children where no contact has been made.
 - e) Recording details of children who arrive late or go home.
 - f) Keeping an overview of class and individual attendance looking particularly for either poor overall attendance, anomalies in patterns of attendance and/or unusual explanations for attendance offered by children and their parents/carers and reporting concerns to the Headteacher.

- g) Sending out standard letters regarding attendance.

6.5. Parents/Carers

- i. Parents/Carers are responsible for:
 - a) Ensuring that their child attends school regularly and punctually unless prevented from doing so by illness or attendance at a medical appointment.
 - b) Contacting the school office on the first morning of absence.
 - c) Informing the school in advance, where possible, of any medical or dental appointments in school time and providing enough information for the school to record the absence accurately. The school will not routinely require medical evidence but may request reasonable evidence where there is genuine and reasonable doubt about the reason for absence, or where prolonged or repeated illness means further information is needed to understand and support the student's needs.
 - d) Informing the school in advance of any medical appointments in school time.
 - e) Reasonable evidence of a medical or dental appointment should be provided where requested by the school in accordance with the approach above.
 - f) Making requests for authorised absence in term time, only if absolutely necessary as these are not automatically authorised.
 - g) Talking to the school as soon as possible about any child's reluctance to come so that problems can be quickly identified and dealt with.

7. School Opening Hours

- 7.1. The school doors are opened in the morning at 8:30am and closed at 8:45am. This time is sufficient for all students to come into the school.
- 7.2. The school doors are opened in the afternoon at 3:30pm and closed at 4pm. This time is sufficient for all students to leave the school.

8. Registration

- 8.1. The school keeps both an Admissions Register and Attendance Registers.
- 8.2. The admission register records the information required by the School Attendance (Student Registration) (England) Regulations 2024, including specified student and parent details, the student's starting day and information about the school previously attended. It must be kept electronically in accordance with the 2024 Regulations and Chapter 7 of Working together to improve school attendance (July 2026).
- 8.3. A student's name can only lawfully be deleted from the register if a reason set out in Regulation 9 of the School Attendance (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2024 applies.
- 8.4. All students (regardless of their age) must be placed on the Admission Register and have their attendance recorded in the attendance register.

- 8.5. The school will make the statutory returns to the local authority required by regulation 13 of the 2024 Regulations. This includes a New Student Return within 5 days of adding a student's name to the admission register, except where the statutory exception for students joining at the standard entry point applies, and a Deletion Return when a student's name is deleted, subject to the exceptions in regulation 13. The required information will be provided with each return. Where a student does not attend on the agreed starting day and the school is unable to establish the reason or locate the student, the local authority will be notified.
- 8.6. All students, regardless of age, must be entered on the admission register. Except where all students at the school are boarders, the school must also keep an electronic attendance register and record attendance for all registered students.
- 8.7. The attendance register must be taken at the beginning of each morning session and once during each afternoon session, at the same time for all registered students. The register must remain open for no longer than 30 minutes in each session.
- 8.8. The attendance register must be kept electronically in accordance with the 2024 Regulations and Chapter 8 of Working together to improve school attendance (July 2026).
- 8.9. The school cannot delete a student's name from the attendance register unless they have a reason (as set out in regulation 9) to delete the student's name from the Admissions Register; the student's name must be deleted from both registers at the same time.
- 8.10. Each Teacher/Supervisor is responsible for ensuring that the register is completed accurately at the school's set registration times. The morning register will be taken at 8:30am and close at 8:45am; the afternoon register will be taken at 1:30pm and close at 2pm. On each occasion the appropriate national attendance or absence code must be recorded for every student.
 - i. Present
 - ii. Absent
 - iii. Attending an approved educational activity as defined in regulation 6(4) or
 - iv. Unable to attend due to exceptional circumstances as defined in regulation 6(5)
- 8.11. Schools must record whether or not the absence of a student of compulsory school age is authorised. There is no requirement for schools to record whether the absence of students not of compulsory school age is authorised or not, but where possible, schools should use the national attendance and absence codes to help them monitor their attendance and form good attendance habits.
- 8.12. Schools must record the nature of the activity where a student of compulsory school age is attending an approved educational activity and the nature of the circumstances where a student is unable to attend due to exceptional circumstances.
- 8.13. Attendance and absence codes will be used in accordance with regulation 10 of the School Attendance (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2024 and Chapter 8 of Working together to improve school attendance (July 2026). See Appendix 1.
- 8.14. Attendance registers are legal records, and all schools must preserve entry in the attendance or admission register for six (6) years from the date the data was entered.

- 8.15. Where amendments are made, all school must ensure the registers show the original entry, the amended entry, the reason for the amendment, the date on which the amendment was made, and the name of the person who made the amendment.
- 8.16. As the attendance register records the student's presence at the time it was taken, it should only routinely be amended where the reason for the absence cannot be established at the time it is taken and it is subsequently necessary to correct the entry.
- 8.17. Independent schools are not required to submit daily attendance data to the Department for Education. This does not remove the school's duties to maintain accurate registers or to provide information and returns required by law to the local authority or Secretary of State.

9. Lateness

- 9.1. Any students entering the school after 8:45am will be marked as late in the attendance record. Records are kept of those students who are late before the register is closed; this is documented on the attendance register for each student (Attendance code L).
- 9.2. Any child who arrives for school after the register has closed and the school is not satisfied that the reason for lateness is an authorised absence will be marked as having an unauthorised absence for the morning. (Attendance code U).
- 9.3. Children who have attended a dentist or doctor's appointment and subsequently come to school late will have the absence recorded as a medical absence (Attendance M).
- 9.4. Children who are persistently late miss a significant amount of learning.
- 9.5. Where there have been persistent incidents of lateness, parents/carers will receive a letter advising them of the concerns, and the school will provide opportunities for parent/carers to seek support and advice to address these issues.
- 9.6. The register closing time will be the same every session and will be no more than 30 minutes after the register begins to be taken. A student arriving after the register has closed will be recorded using the appropriate absence code, including code U where the applicable conditions are met.

10. Absence

- 10.1. Parents/carers should contact the school on the first day of their child's absence. When parents/carers notify the school of their child's absence, it is important that they provide the school with any details of the reason for their absence.
- 10.2. All absences are recorded on the register as either authorised or unauthorised. It is important that we receive accurate information from parents/carers with reasons for the child's absence. This information is used to determine whether the absence is authorised and unauthorised. The Headteacher is responsible for determining whether absences are authorised or unauthorised.
- 10.3. Where we have not received reasons for a child's absence, we will send a letter requesting that the parents/carers complete these details. If this letter is not completed and returned by the specified date, then the absence will be recorded as an unauthorised absence (Attendance Code O).

- 10.4. The school will regularly monitor and analyse attendance and absence data to identify students or cohorts that require support with their attendance and implement effective strategies.

11. First Day Contact

- 11.1. If a child is absent from school and we have not received any verbal or written communication from the parent/carer, we initiate a first-day contact process. Office staff check all of the registers on a daily basis to identify those students who are absent. There are occasions when we are unaware of why they child is absent, and we will contact the parent/carer to check the reasons for the child's absence.

12. Illness

- 12.1. Where illness absence is prolonged or recurring, the school will work with the student, parents/carers and relevant professionals to understand barriers to attendance and put appropriate support or reasonable adjustments in place. Remote education should not be used routinely as a substitute for attendance and, where used, should be a last resort and normally form part of a plan to support reintegration into school.
- 12.2. The school will not operate a blanket requirement for medical evidence for illness absence. In most cases, a parent/carer's notification that a child is too ill to attend will be sufficient. Reasonable evidence may be requested where there is genuine and reasonable doubt about the authenticity of the illness, or where prolonged or repeated illness makes further information necessary to understand the student's needs, consider reasonable adjustments or record the absence accurately.

13. Part-Time Timetables

- 13.1. All students of compulsory school age are entitled to a full-time education. A temporary part-time timetable will therefore be used only in very exceptional circumstances where it is in the student's best interests and is necessary to meet individual needs. It must not be used to manage behaviour.
- 13.2. Any temporary part-time timetable must be agreed with the parent/carer with whom the student normally lives, form part of a wider support, health care or reintegration plan, include clear review dates and a proposed end date, and remain in place for the shortest time necessary. The student and parents/carers should be involved in reviews. Where the student has a social worker, the social worker will be kept informed; where the student has an EHC plan, the school will liaise with the local authority. Code C2 will be used where applicable.

14. Parental/Carers Request for Absence From School For Holiday

- 14.1. Parents/carers should plan holidays and leisure activities around school holidays. The DfE does not generally consider a need or desire for a holiday or other leisure or recreational absence to be an exceptional circumstance.
- 14.2. The school expects requests for leave of absence to be made in advance by the parent/carer with whom the student normally lives. Each request will be considered individually on its merits and in

the light of the student's circumstances. Although independent schools are not required to follow every provision of regulation 11 governing leave of absence, current DfE guidance expects all schools to restrict leave to the specific circumstances identified in that guidance and not to operate blanket policies that automatically grant leave. Where leave is granted, the school will determine the period authorised and will use the appropriate national attendance code.

15. Addressing Attendance Concerns

- 15.1. The school sets high expectations for attendance and punctuality for every student. Attendance concerns will be considered in context and will not be judged by a single percentage threshold alone.
- 15.2. It is important for children to establish good attendance habits early in their school careers. The Headteacher, along with the Governors and Trustees, are responsible for supporting good attendance and identifying and addressing attendance concerns promptly.
- 15.3. Where attendance concerns arise, the school will work with the student and parents/carers to understand the barriers to attendance and agree appropriate support. Support will increase where absence intensifies. Where absence is at risk of becoming persistent or severe, or where voluntary support has not been successful or engaged with, the school will work with the local authority School Attendance Support Team and other relevant services. Where there are safeguarding concerns, the DSL or Deputy DSL will be involved without delay and children's social care, or other agencies may be contacted as appropriate.

16. Children Missing Education

- 16.1. The school will follow Children missing education: statutory guidance for local authorities and schools (September 2025). A student's name will not be removed from the admission register unless one of the statutory grounds in regulation 9 of the 2024 Regulations applies and any required enquiries, notifications and local authority involvement have taken place. Where a student's whereabouts is unknown, the school will work promptly with the local authority and will not remove the student from roll simply because attendance has ceased.

17. Persistent And Severe Absence

- 17.1. The school will use attendance data to identify emerging patterns early, including at individual student and cohort level. It will pay particular attention to students with SEND or disabilities, students with a social worker, looked-after or previously looked-after students, young carers and other groups facing additional barriers. Support will be reviewed and intensified where absence persists. Severe absence, below 50% attendance, will be treated as a priority and any safeguarding implications considered immediately.
- 17.2. The school will recognise that young carers' responsibilities can affect attendance, attainment, behaviour and wellbeing, and will seek early support where needed. For children with a social worker, the school will work with other relevant professionals, where appropriate, to support attendance and educational outcomes.

18. Legal Intervention

- 18.1. Where support is not appropriate, has not been successful or has not been engaged with, the school will work with the local authority to consider formal attendance support or legal intervention available under the Education Act 1996 and other applicable legislation. Independent schools should follow the local authority's attendance procedures and local code of conduct where a penalty notice or other legal intervention is being considered. The national penalty-notice threshold is mandatory for state-funded schools; it should not be presented as a separate statutory duty on independent schools unless the local authority's arrangements require its use in the case concerned.

19. Monitoring Attendance

- 19.1. The Vine Christian School is responsible for ensuring that all attendance data is accurately recorded in the registers. Staff regularly meet to discuss all attendance concerns and appropriate actions are taken following these meetings, such as letters sent to parent/carers or meetings arranged to discuss attendance concerns with parent/carers.
- 19.2. Attendance data will be analysed regularly, including weekly patterns and trends and periodic cohort analysis, so that support can be targeted early. The school will review this policy as necessary in response to changing barriers to attendance and will seek the views of students and parents/carers when reviewing its approach.

APPENDIX 1

ATTENDANCE CODES

See chapter 8 of Working together to improve school attendance (DfE, July 2026) and the School Attendance (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2024 for the full definitions and requirements for each code.

Code	Meaning	Type
/ \	Present at the school / morning \ afternoon	Present Mark
B	Attending any other approved educational activity - Alternative Provision not arranged through the approved framework	Present Mark
C	Authorised Circumstance (see next page for breakdown)	Authorised Absence
D	Dual registered at another school - Attending Alternative Provision at another school site - Hospital education - Education at a secure / residential site - Off-site direction / managed move	Present Mark
E	Suspended or permanently excluded and no alternative provision made	Authorised Absence
G	Holiday not granted by the school or Term Time Leave not granted by the school	Unauthorised Absence
I	Illness (not medical or dental appointment)	Authorised Absence
J1	Leave of absence for the purpose of attending an interview for employment or for admission to another educational institution	Authorised Absence
K	Attending education provision arranged by the Local Authority - Home Tutoring - Approved Framework for Alternative Provision - Blended Learning	Present Mark
L	Late arrival before the registers have closed	Present Mark
M	Attended a medical appointment	Authorised Absence
N	Reason for absence not yet established	Unauthorised Mark
O	Absent in other or unknown circumstances	Unauthorised Absence
P	Participating in a sporting activity	Present Mark
Q	Unable to attend the school because of a lack of access arrangements	Not expected to attend
R	Religious Observance	Authorised Absence
S	Leave of absence for the purpose of studying for a public examination. Must be used sparingly with revision opportunities in school.	Authorised Absence
T	Parent travelling for occupational purposes, and the pupil has attended for at least 200 sessions in preceding 12 months.	Authorised Absence
U	Arrived in school after registration closed	Unauthorised Absence

V	Attending an Educational Trip or Visit	Present Mark
W	Attending Work Experience	Present Mark
X	Non-compulsory school age pupil not required to attend school	Not expected to attend
Y	Unable to attend school because of unavoidable cause (see next page for breakdown)	Not expected to attend
Z	Prospective or previous pupil not on admission register	Not expected to attend

Code	Meaning	Type
The Y code: Unable to attend school because of unavoidable cause, is broken down into the following sub codes to provide better differentiation of the reason:		
Y1	Unable to attend due to transport normally provided not being available	Not expected to attend
Y2	Unable to attend due to widespread disruption to travel	Not expected to attend
Y3	Unable to attend due to part of the school premises being closed. For example, this may be due to damage or teacher strikes.	Not expected to attend
Y4	Unable to attend due to the whole school site being unexpectedly closed. For example, extreme weather, damage, no hot water, or heating.	Not expected to attend
Y5	Unable to attend as pupil is in criminal justice detention. For example, in police detention, remanded to youth detention, awaiting trial or sentencing, or detained under a sentence of detention.	Not expected to attend
Y6	Unable to attend in accordance with public health guidance or law. contrary to or prohibited by any guidance relating to the incidence or transmission of infection or disease.	Not expected to attend
Y7	Unable to attend because of any other unavoidable cause. For example, an emergency has prevented the pupil from attending. The unavoidable cause must be something that affects the pupil, not just the parent.	Not expected to attend
The C code: Authorised Absence is broken down into the following sub codes to provide better differentiation of the reason:		
C	Leave of absence for exceptional circumstances. Where a leave of absence is granted, the school will determine the number of days a pupil can be absent from school. A leave of absence is granted entirely at the school's discretion.	Authorised Absence
C1	Leave of absence for the purpose of participating in a regulated performance or undertaking regulated employment abroad.	Authorised Absence
C2	Leave of absence for a compulsory school age pupil subject to a part-time timetable.	Authorised Absence