



St Dunstan's, Cheam, C of E Primary School
Guided by God to love, trust, hope, serve and inspire the best in everyone.

Saint Dunstan's C of E School is a vibrant, inclusive and innovative learning community underpinned by our Christian values.

Attendance Policy	
Draft:	Sep 2025
Approved by:	Full governing board
Approved:	Dec 2025
Review:	Sep 2028

Policy Aims

At St. Dunstan's CoE Primary School, we believe
“Moments matter, attendance counts” (DFE 2024)

We believe:

- that the foundation of securing good attendance is children attending an inclusive school that is calm, orderly, safe, and provides a supportive environment where all pupils want to be, and are keen and ready to learn
- where attendance and absence are closely monitored and there are robust, effective systems in place to deal with attendance issues quickly and sensitively, schools are well equipped to keep children safe.
- that good attendance is essential if children are to take full advantage of all that school offers and gain the educational and social skills necessary for life.
- that the barriers to accessing education are wide and complex, both within and beyond the school gates, and that these can be specific to individual pupils and families.

We are committed to:

- achieving outstanding attendance by operating an attendance policy within which the governing body, staff, pupils and parents/carers can work together through a whole school culture and ethos that values good attendance

- building strong relationships with families to ensure pupils have the support in place to attend school
- promoting and monitoring regular attendance and punctuality
- intervening at an early stage to identify and rectify any problems which arise and to address any patterns of absence, in order to avoid educational disadvantage to any pupil.
- doing all we can to effectively use our knowledge and resources to support improvements in attendance and reducing absence for all.

Legal Responsibility

The law ([The Education Act 1996](#)) entitles every child of compulsory school age to an efficient, full-time education suitable to their age, aptitude, and any special educational need they may have. It is the **legal responsibility** of **every parent/carer** to make sure their child receives that education either by attendance at a school or by education otherwise than at a school.

We are also legally required to share information from our registers with the local authority.

This includes:

New Pupil and Deletion returns: notifying the local authority when a pupil's name is added to or deleted from the school admission register outside of standard transition times.

Attendance returns: providing the local authority with the names and addresses of all pupils of compulsory school age who fail 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).

Sickness returns: providing the local authority with the full name and address of all pupils of compulsory school age who have been recorded with code I (illness) and who the school has reasonable grounds to believe will miss 15 days consecutively or cumulatively because of sickness. Only one sickness return is required for a continuous period of sickness in a school year. This is to help the school and local authority to agree to any provision needed to ensure continuity of education for pupils who cannot attend because of health needs, in line with the statutory guidance on education for children with health needs who cannot attend school.

Roles and Responsibilities

Please see [here](#) a list of roles and responsibilities for all stakeholders.

The Headteacher, Amy Mann, is responsible for attendance with the support of the designated leader for attendance, Larisa Alikhan. The designated leader for attendance can be contacted on 020 8642 5463 or office@stdunstanscheam.co.uk.

Attendance Registers

We will keep an attendance register, and place all pupils onto this register. We will take our attendance register at the start of the first session of each school day and at the start of the second session. It will mark whether every pupil is:

Present (/)

Attending an approved off-site educational activity (B)
Absent (N)
Unable to attend due to exceptional circumstances (C)

Every half day absence from school has to be classified by the school (not by the parents), as either AUTHORISED or UNAUTHORISED using codes (see [here](#)) that correlate to the reason for absence.

This is why information about the cause of any absence is always required. Parents/Carers should therefore inform the school each day, ideally by 8:45am, if their child is unable to attend. **This can be done by using an [absence reporting form](#) which is also available on the school website or by leaving voicemail on the student absence line.** If a parent/carer has not contacted the school to inform of their child's absence by 8:45am, they will be contacted asking why their child is absent. If parents/carers wish to discuss anything related to attendance in the first instance they can contact Larisa Alikhan using the schools contact details available on the website.

If there are any absences that are not explained, parents/carers (and where appropriate foster carers and/or social workers/ youth offending team workers) would also be contacted to understand why and when the child will return.

Where absence is recorded as unexplained in the attendance register, the correct code should be inputted as soon as the reason is ascertained, but usually no later than 5 working days after the session.

Punctuality

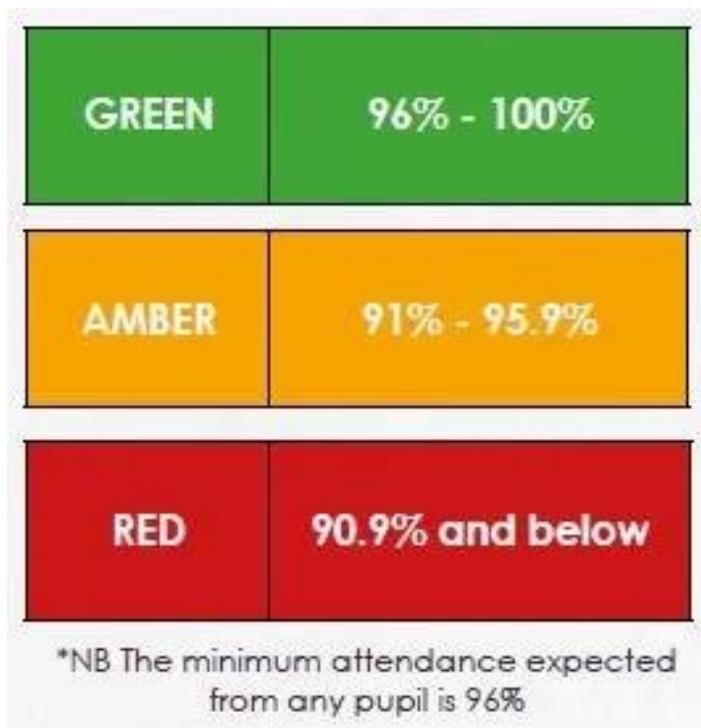
As well as good attendance, it is also important that your child arrives on time for school, as the start of the day establishes the learning activities for the day and ensures all children are settled and ready to learn. The school gates open at 8:35am.

A child is recorded as late if they arrive after 9am. If a child arrives after 9.30am they could be marked as having an unauthorised absence (DFE regulations). If a child is late they must go to the school office and sign in on the Inventory system. The Attendance Officer records this information on the register. reason. It is the legal responsibility of parents/carers to ensure their children attend school where they are on roll.

Expectations

All staff within the school aspire to high standards of attendance and punctuality. This is because we know that children who have an attendance level of 96% and above are far more likely to achieve than those with poor attendance. This is outlined in this policy and reminders will be sent out regularly as needed.

What do we mean by “good” attendance?



When will attendance be authorised?

Authorised absences are mornings or afternoons away from school for a good reason.

Absence from school due to a medical or dental appointment will be considered as an authorised absence and parents/carers are requested to provide written confirmation of these appointments. If appropriate the child should return to school after the appointment.

Please note parents/carers are encouraged and requested to make all medical appointments out of school hours.

Leave will not be granted for a child or parent/carer to travel abroad for medical purposes whether the treatment is ongoing or not - appointments should be made during the school holidays. It is also expected that if a child or parent/carer has a medical requirement and the family reside in the UK, medical treatment should be sought here.

Some other examples of when absence may be authorised are religious observance, sitting external examinations, fixed period or permanent exclusions or Traveller pupils travelling for occupational purposes.

When will attendance be unauthorised?

Unauthorised absences are those which the school does not consider reasonable and for which no 'permission' has been given. Unauthorised absences include (but not limited to):

- Parents keeping children off school unnecessarily
- Children absent due to siblings or parents/carers being ill
- Absences which have never been properly explained
- Birthday treats, shopping or day trips
- Holidays (unless there are exceptional circumstances and agreed by the headteacher)

Please note: It is very unlikely an absence will be granted for the purposes of a family holiday.

How will attendance be monitored?

Monitor	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Daily monitoring of the registers• Weekly monitoring of children falling below the acceptable threshold or at risk of falling below to ensure any concerns are dealt with promptly• Close monitoring of children where there are persistent absences and 2 weekly reviews• Monitor attendance and absence data half-termly, termly and yearly across the school and at an individual pupil level• The school will compare attendance data to the national average, and share this with the Governing Body.
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What happens if there are concerns about attendance?

Attendance is monitored in line with the school's attendance thresholds. Where a pupil's attendance falls into the amber band (91%–95.9%), a warning letter will be issued to parents/carers and the pupil's attendance will be closely monitored. If attendance does not improve, a meeting will be arranged with parents/carers to discuss concerns and agree support strategies. Where a pupil's attendance falls into the red band (90.9% and below), this will trigger more formal intervention, including referral to and involvement from the Local Authority, in line with statutory guidance.

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

When our monitoring raises concerns about your child's attendance or punctuality, our aim is to listen, understand and support you to facilitate a positive change. Successfully treating the root causes of absence and removing barriers to attendance, at home, in school or more broadly requires schools and local partners to work collaboratively with families.

This includes phone calls, letters and meetings with parents/carers as appropriate to listen and understand causes of attendance concerns as well as identifying and facilitating any reasonable appropriate support to help improve attendance.

Where the initial stages of support and action taken do not have the desired effect, concerns and further support, if appropriate, will be formalised. This will usually take the form of a meeting and may include actions that are agreed in the form of an attendance contract.

If attendance doesn't improve then an early help referral may be made and/or a referral to the Educational Welfare Service. At every stage of the process the aim is to improve attendance by listening and understanding. However poor attendance won't be tolerated. If necessary and appropriate we will have to enforce attendance through the use of penalty notices.

Support for pupils not attending school regularly

The school understands that often when pupils are not attending school regularly, there may be complex and varied reasons that are acting as a barrier between that young person and their education.

The school is committed to working with parents/carers and professionals in a child centred way to support those pupils and their families, with the overall aim of helping that young person to engage with and access the education that they are entitled to. We utilise in-school staff who are skilled in areas of attendance, SEND and pastoral care, including our Family Support worker team to support children and families to overcome barriers to attending school. We also work in partnership with a range of external services to seek support to improve attendance such as the London Borough of Sutton attendance team, school nursing service and Early help services.

Children are sometimes reluctant to attend school. Any problems with regular attendance are best resolved between the school, the parents/carers and the child. If a child is reluctant to attend, it is never better to cover up their absence or to give in to pressure to excuse them from attending. This gives the impression that attendance does not matter, and may make things worse.

Children are sometimes reluctant to attend if friendships have broken down or if they feel there is an issue with something specific. In both of these scenarios, parents/carers are asked to contact their child's teacher to discuss the issues and find a solution to the matter that supports their child feeling happy and safe to return to school. **It would not be appropriate for a parent to prevent their child attending school or allow their absence whilst the issue is resolved. By informing the school you will be actively seeking to support the wellbeing of your child whilst it is being resolved.**

Emotionally Based School Avoidance

Emotionally Based School Avoidance (EBSA) is a broad umbrella term used to describe a group of children who are persistently absent and who have **severe difficulty** in attending school due to emotional factors, often resulting in prolonged absences from school.

Anxiety has also been identified as a key feature of EBSA. Although a certain level of anxiety is considered a normal and natural part of growing up, some children may experience heightened levels of anxiety which impact on their functioning and school experiences. **It is essential for parents of children who are experiencing anxiety; to bring them into school**, to help them understand that school is a safe place where difficulties can be resolved. Developing a pattern of absence for children experiencing anxiety about school, may reinforce an avoidance strategy to dealing with problems. Additionally, anxiety may be increased by imagining the possible outcomes rather than experiencing the actual less stressful one.

If the reason for a pupil's absence is linked to their wellbeing, the school will adopt a graduated approach and if appropriate implement a school support plan for attendance and wellbeing.

Assess - School will work with parents/carers and the young person to assess their needs and identify any specific circumstances that act as a trigger for any school based or related anxiety.

Plan - A trusted adult/s in school will work with the pupil and their parents/carers to build a school safety plan or a return to school plan which identifies desired outcomes and the key provisions that will be put into place to support the pupil within and beyond school.

Do - Reasonable provisions and support will be put into place as soon as possible. There may be a need to involve other professionals if appropriate.

Review - Regular reviews of the support plan, wellbeing and attendance will take place, usually at least every half term.

Holidays

There is no automatic entitlement in law to time off in term time to go on holiday. **Holidays should be taken during the school holiday periods and the School policy is that absence for holidays will not be authorised during term time, except for in extremely exceptional circumstances.** If parents take their child on holiday during term time, a Fixed Penalty Notice may be issued by the Local Authority.

If you feel you fit the criteria for exceptional circumstances in relation to your holiday, please contact the school office to request an Exceptional Leave Form or visit the school website to complete the form. It is important that you complete this form at least 2 weeks prior to the date of travel, attach any evidence i.e. tickets. The expected return date must be specified and adhered to. Absence after this date will be unauthorised.

Exceptional Leave

Parents/carers can apply for exceptional leave for their child by completing an '[Exceptional Circumstances Absence Request Form](#)'. Applications under 'Exceptional circumstances' although considered on a case by case basis will normally be refused. The exceptional circumstance should be of unique and significant emotional, educational or spiritual value to the child which outweighs the loss of teaching time. Leave **should not** be taken until the school has confirmed it has been approved.

If you feel you fit the criteria for exceptional circumstances in relation to your holiday, please contact the school office to request an Exceptional Leave Form. It is important that you complete this form at least one month prior to the date of travel. The expected return date must be specified and adhered to. Absence after this date will be unauthorised.

When completing the form, parents must state why they consider it exceptional circumstances for their child to take time off school. Exceptional circumstances do not include:

- availability of cheap holidays;
- desired accommodation or flights;
- overlap with beginning or end of term
- Visiting family in the UK or abroad if it is not an emergency circumstance.

Exceptional Leave in term time will usually not be agreed by the Headteacher when:

- A child is just starting school, or at the beginning of the school year. This is very important as children need to settle into their new environment as quickly as possible.
- A child's attendance record already includes periods of unauthorised absence such as an authorised holiday.
- A child's attendance rate is already below 90% or will fall to or below that level as a result of taking exceptional leave.

- A child is in Year 6

My child is not well, can they attend school?

If you are unsure if your child is well enough to attend school on any given day, they should attend school and the office informed. In school, children are well looked-after and should there be any concerns about a child's health, parents will be called immediately.

Please see attached [here](#) some guidance to support you when considering whether your child should attend school.

Where the absence is longer than 5 days or there are doubts about the authenticity of the illness, the school will ask for medical evidence, such as a doctor's note, prescription, appointment card or other appropriate form of evidence. We will not ask for medical evidence unnecessarily. If the school is not satisfied about the authenticity of the illness, the absence will be recorded as unauthorised and parents/carers will be notified of this in advance.

Picking up at the end of the school day

Punctuality at the end of the school day is also vitally important. Please take note of the finishing times for each year group:

3:15pm - Reception and Years 1 & 2 (EYFS & KS1)

3:20pm - Years 3, 4, 5 and 6 (KS2)

Who can collect my child?

It is essential that your child knows on a day to day basis who will be collecting them from school, especially for younger children. Also, parents are in the playground to collect them; this ensures children's safety. Please keep your child and your child's teacher informed as to who will usually collect them from school.

Details of any person regularly collecting your child from school must be on your child's contact list, this can be updated by contacting the school office.

For Foundation Stage and KS1 (Nursery to Y2) children must be collected by a person who is over 18 and for KS2 (Year 3 to Year 6) children must be collected by a person who is over 16.

Children in Year 5 and Year 6 are allowed to walk home alone, although there may be times when we would want to discuss individual circumstances with you. Please note, we are unable to allow a child to leave the premises unaccompanied during the school day.

If this is an option you wish to choose for your child please contact the school office to complete an authorisation form.

When considering whether to allow your child to walk home alone, please take a look at [this](#) guidance from the NSPCC.

If a child has not been collected the school will make every effort to contact a parent/carer. The same applies for after school clubs. If contact has not been made **within a reasonable timeframe** we are required to notify Sutton Police and the Sutton Social Care Team.

Records are kept of parents or carers who are persistently late in collecting their children at the end of the school day, and the attendance administrator or a member of the Senior management or Senior Leadership team will request a meeting with parents or carers to resolve this situation.

How will we celebrate attendance and punctuality?

As part of our commitment to all children achieving high levels of achievement schools will implement celebration of good attendance through:

- By celebrating good and improved attendance via class awards and certificates
- Publishing class attendance and punctuality in school newsletter

Persistent Absence

A child becomes a 'persistent absentee' when they miss 10% or more schooling across the school year for any reason. Absence at this level is doing considerable damage to any child's educational prospects and we need parents' fullest support and cooperation to tackle this. We are committed to providing support to our children and families to help resolve any challenges faced.

All absences are monitored thoroughly. Any child that is seen to have reached the persistent absence threshold, or is at risk of moving towards it is seen as a priority and parents will be informed of this. All persistent absence cases are routinely made known to the Educational Welfare Officer. S/he may contact you and may request a home visit.

Any problems with regular attendance are best resolved between the school, the parents and the child. If a child is reluctant to attend, it is important that parents inform the school immediately so we can provide appropriate support.

How can I improve my child's attendance myself?

- Value every day of school learning for your child and understand one day from school does make a difference
- Not booking family holidays during term time
- Making medical appointments, where possible outside school hours
- Praise and reward good attendance at home.
- Establish good morning routines to help you arrive at school on time and avoid a late mark.
- If you are having problems getting your child to school, please reach out to your child's class teacher or the senior leader designated for attendance as soon as possible so we can help before it becomes a routine.

Child Absent From Education

If parents do not provide information about a child's absence and the school cannot make contact with them within 20 school days, then a child is considered to be a **Child Absent From Education**. This means the local authority has a legal duty to carry out investigations, which will include liaising with Children's Services, the Police and other agencies, to try to locate a missing child/children.

Changing Schools

It is important that if families decide to send the child/children in their care to a different school they inform St. Dunstan's School staff as soon as possible and complete a pupil leaver form which can be obtained from the school office. A pupil will not be removed from the school roll until the following information has been received and investigated:

- The date the pupil will be leaving this school and starting the next;
- The address of the new school;
- The new home address, if it is known.

The pupil's school records will then be sent on to the new school as soon as possible. If a parent / carer appears to have removed their child from school or the child has completely stopped attending without providing the above information, the family will be referred to the Education Welfare Officer.

Penalty Notices

Penalty notices are fines imposed on parents. They are an alternative to the prosecution of parents for failing to ensure that their child of compulsory school age regularly attends the school where they are registered or at a place where alternative provision is provided.

Penalty notices can be used where the pupil's absence has not been authorised by the school. A penalty notice may be issued to each parent of each child liable for the offence or offences

Penalty Notices apply to pupils of statutory school age, may be issued because:

- Your child has persistent unauthorised absences from school
- Your child is persistently late at school after the registers have closed
- Taking unauthorised holidays in term time
- Unauthorised absence from alternative education provision

The local authority is responsible for administering the process. This means the London Borough of Sutton issues the notices, as requested by the head teacher, on behalf of the schools located in the borough boundary.

Penalty Notice Fines will be considered by schools when the threshold of consecutive 10 sessions (5 consecutive days) of unauthorised absence (together or separate occasions) is met within 10 school week period – this means it can span weeks, school terms and academic years.

Please note: If in an individual case the local authority (or other authorised officer) believes a penalty notice would be appropriate if a non-attendance trend is identified, they retain the discretion to issue one before the threshold is met.

Who will be fined?

The education-related provisions of the Anti-Social Behaviour Act 2003 apply to all parents who fall within the definition set out in Section 576 of the Education 1996. This defines 'parent' as:

- (i) all natural parents, whether they are married or not;
- (ii) any person who, although they are not a natural parent, has parental responsibility (as defined in the Children Act 1989) for a child or young person;
- (iii) any person who, although not a natural parent, has care of a child or young person.

Having care of a child or young person means that a person with whom the child lives and who looks after the child, irrespective of what their relationship is with the child, is considered to be a parent in education law.

What is the cost?

First Offences:

The first penalty notice issued to a parent in respect of a particular pupil will be charged at £160 if paid within 28 days. This will be reduced to £80 if paid within 21 days.

Second Offences (within 3 years):

A second penalty notice issued to the same parent in respect of the same pupil is charged at a flat rate of £160 if paid within 28 days.

Any Further Offence (within 3 years):

A Third Penalty Notice cannot be issued to the same parent in respect of the same child within 3 years of the date of issue of the first. If the threshold is met for a third or subsequent times within 3 years, alternative legal intervention will be taken, this may include cases being presented straight to a Magistrates' Court.

This policy was created inline with the statutory government guidance [Working together to improve school attendance.](#)

It is also supported by [EEF research](#) where it was found that the interventions that show promise take a holistic approach in understanding pupils and their specific needs, and which address the specific barriers to attendance that have been identified. For example, one programme found to have a positive impact on attendance used several different approaches depending on the needs of pupils, including a team to monitor and track attendance, parental communication, and motivation systems.