

Old Vicarage School

ATTENDANCE POLICY

This policy applies to the whole school, including the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS). It is publicly available on the School website and, on request, from the School Office in an accessible format.

Information Sharing Category	Public Domain
Version	V4
Date Published	September 2026
Authorised by	Proprietors and Advisory Board
Review/Update Date	September 2027
Responsible Area	Head of School and Senior Leadership Team

Legal status and statutory framework

This policy is written for an independent school in England and has regard to the current legal and statutory-guidance framework, including:

- the Education (Independent School Standards) Regulations 2014, as amended, in particular Part 3 paragraphs 7 and 15 and Part 8 paragraph 34;
- the School Attendance (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2024;
- the Education Act 1996, including sections 7, 8 and 444;
- DfE Working together to improve school attendance, July 2026;
- DfE Children missing education: statutory guidance for local authorities and schools, September 2025;
- Keeping Children Safe in Education 2026 and Working Together to Safeguard Children 2026;
- the Equality Act 2010, including the duty to make reasonable adjustments for disabled pupils;
- the Children and Families Act 2014 and the current SEND Code of Practice, where applicable; and
- the Data Protection Act 2018 and UK GDPR.

Applies to

- all pupils registered at Old Vicarage School, including pupils below compulsory school age in the EYFS;
- the whole school, including school activities away from the premises and approved educational activities; and
- all teaching and support staff, the Head of School, Proprietors and volunteers where their role relates to attendance, welfare or safeguarding.

Related school documents

This policy should be read alongside the School's current Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy; Children Absent from Education / Children Missing Education procedures; Admissions Policy; SEND Policy; Behaviour Management Policy; First Aid and Administration of Medication Policy; Educational Visits and Off-site Activities Policy; Complaints Policy; and Data Protection / Privacy arrangements.

Availability, monitoring and review

- The policy is published on the School website, is available from the School Office and will be provided in an accessible format on request.
- The Head of School will keep the policy and its implementation under continuous review. The Proprietors will review attendance arrangements and the effectiveness of this policy at least annually and earlier where legislation, statutory guidance or school practice changes.
- When the policy is reviewed, the School will take account of relevant pupil and parent views and of attendance data, safeguarding information and inspection or local-authority feedback.

Approved/last reviewed: September 2026 Next review: September 2027

Matthew Adshead
Proprietor

Mrs Kerry Wise
Head of School / Senior Attendance Champion

Attendance Policy

Introduction and aims

- Old Vicarage School expects all registered pupils to attend every session for which they are expected to attend, to arrive on time and to remain at School for the full session, unless there is a lawful or authorised reason for absence.
- Regular attendance supports pupils' education, wellbeing, friendships and safeguarding. We aim to make School a happy, safe and rewarding place in which pupils want to attend and learn.
- Attendance is everyone's responsibility. The School will set high expectations while listening to pupils and families, identifying barriers early and providing proportionate support before absence becomes entrenched.
- A pupil being absent, particularly repeatedly or unexpectedly, can be an important safeguarding warning sign. Attendance procedures therefore operate alongside the School's Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy.

The role of parents and carers

Parents have a legal responsibility under section 7 of the Education Act 1996 to ensure that a child of compulsory school age receives an efficient, suitable full-time education, either by regular attendance at school or otherwise. Compulsory school age is defined by section 8 of that Act and ends on the last Friday in June in the school year in which the child turns 16.

Where a child of compulsory school age is registered at a school, the parent has an additional duty to secure the child's regular attendance. For pupils below compulsory school age, including younger EYFS pupils, the same statutory parental attendance offence does not apply, but regular attendance is expected for all sessions for which the pupil is registered or timetabled to attend.

Parents and carers are expected to:

- ensure that their child attends regularly and arrives by 08:35 ready for registration and learning;
- notify the School Office as soon as possible, and normally before 09:15 on the first day of an unexpected absence, giving the pupil's name and the reason for absence;
- continue to update the School during a prolonged absence when requested;
- make routine medical and dental appointments outside school hours where reasonably possible, or ensure the pupil attends before and/or after the appointment;
- request any leave of absence in writing and in advance wherever possible;
- provide up-to-date home addresses, parental details and emergency contact information and notify the School promptly of changes; and
- work constructively with the School and relevant professionals where attendance is a concern.

The role of the School

The School will:

- maintain an electronic admission register and electronic attendance register in accordance with the School Attendance (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2024;
- record the attendance of every registered pupil, regardless of age, at the beginning of each morning session and once during each afternoon session;
- use the statutory national attendance and absence codes accurately and consistently;
- follow up unexpected and unexplained absence promptly and take safeguarding action whenever necessary;
- appoint a Senior Attendance Champion and ensure all staff understand their attendance responsibilities;
- work with pupils and families to understand and remove barriers to attendance, including making reasonable adjustments where required;
- monitor and analyse attendance and punctuality data and intervene early where patterns emerge;
- work with the local authority and other partners when additional, formal or multi-agency support is required; and
- make the statutory returns and notifications required by the 2024 Regulations and current Children Missing Education guidance.

Attendance leadership and contacts

Role	Named contact	Contact details
Senior Attendance Champion	Mrs Kerry Wise, Head of School	01332 557130 office@oldvicarageschool.co.uk
Day-to-day absence and attendance administration	School Office	01332 557130 office@oldvicarageschool.co.uk
Safeguarding concerns arising from attendance	Mr Richard Crook, Designated Safeguarding Lead	01332 557130 safeguarding@oldvicarageschool.co.uk

School day, registration and punctuality

The School gates open at 08:10. Class registration is at 08:35. The normal school day ends at 15:15 for Nursery and Reception and at 15:30 for Years 1 to 6. Optional supervised provision and clubs after these times do not extend the statutory school sessions for attendance purposes.

- The morning attendance register is taken at 08:35 and is treated as closed at 09:05. A pupil arriving after 08:35 but before the register closes will normally be recorded as late (code L). A pupil arriving after the register has closed will normally be recorded as absent for that session using code U unless another statutory code more accurately reflects the circumstances.
- The afternoon register is taken at the start of the afternoon teaching session, at the same time for all registered pupils. It remains open for no more than 30 minutes and closes 30 minutes after the scheduled start of that afternoon session.
- Persistent lateness will be monitored and discussed with the pupil and parents so that barriers can be understood and support or further action agreed.

Admission Register (the School Roll)

The School keeps the admission register electronically for every registered pupil. It contains the information required by regulation 8 of the School Attendance (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2024, including:

- the pupil's full name, the name used at School, sex, address and date of birth;
- the full name and address of each parent, which parent(s) the pupil normally lives with, and at least one emergency telephone number for each parent with whom the pupil normally lives;
- the pupil's starting date and the name and address of the last school attended, if any; and
- where applicable, details of a future/additional address, the date the pupil will begin living there, and details of another school the pupil is or will be attending.

Parents must inform the School promptly of changes. The School will update the admission register as soon as reasonably possible. Wherever reasonably possible, the School will hold additional emergency contact details, in line with its safeguarding arrangements.

Attendance Register

The attendance register is kept electronically for every registered pupil, including pupils below compulsory school age. On every occasion the register is taken, the School records whether the pupil is present and, if not, the reason using the appropriate national attendance or absence code in regulation 10 of the 2024 Regulations and current DfE guidance.

- For a pupil below compulsory school age who is not timetabled to attend a particular session, the appropriate non-compulsory-school-age code will be used.
- Where the reason for absence has not yet been established when the register closes, code N will be used temporarily. The School will make reasonable enquiries and amend the entry as soon as the reason is established and no later than five school days after the session. If the reason cannot be established within that period, the record will be amended to code O.
- Attendance at approved educational activities, visits, sporting activities, alternative provision or another school will be coded only where the relevant statutory criteria are met. The School will have arrangements to confirm attendance at off-site provision and will follow up unexpected non-attendance promptly.
- Remote education does not count as physical attendance at School for the attendance register. Where remote education is used, the pupil will still be recorded with the appropriate absence code.

Register security, amendment and retention

- A back-up copy of each electronic admission and attendance register is made at least once a month, in electronic or printed form.
- If an entry is amended, the register will retain the original entry, the amended entry, the reason for amendment, the date of amendment and the name of the person making the amendment.
- Every admission and attendance register entry is retained for six years from the day on which it was made. Each statutory back-up copy is retained for six years after the end of the school year to which it relates.

Day-to-day absence procedure

If a pupil is absent unexpectedly

- The class teacher completes the register accurately and promptly. The School Office identifies unexplained absence and checks any messages already received.
- If no satisfactory explanation has been received, the School will contact the parent/carer during the morning of the first day of absence. The School may begin contact before 09:15 where necessary.
- If contact cannot be made, further reasonable attempts will be made using the emergency contacts held by the School. The School will not wait for a numerical attendance threshold before escalating a welfare or safeguarding concern.
- Where there is concern about the pupil's safety, whereabouts or welfare, the matter will be referred immediately to the DSL or Deputy DSL. Action may include further contact attempts, liaison with children's social care or the local authority, a welfare visit where appropriate, and/or contacting the police in an emergency.
- All relevant actions and decisions will be recorded.

Authorised and unauthorised absence

Only the School can determine which attendance or absence code applies. A parent cannot authorise an absence simply by notifying or agreeing to it. The School will code each session according to the circumstances and the statutory criteria.

Authorised absence: an absence recorded using a statutory code classified as authorised, for example illness, a permitted religious observance, an unavoidable medical/dental appointment, a leave of absence granted by the School, or another circumstance for which an authorised code applies.

Unauthorised absence: an absence where no authorised code applies, including an absence without permission, a holiday or other leave which was not granted, an unexplained absence after enquiries have been completed, or arrival after the register closes without another authorised reason.

Illness, medical and dental appointments

- Parents should notify the School of illness on the first day of absence and provide updates when requested. The School will record illness using the appropriate code where satisfied that the pupil is unable to attend because of illness.
- The School will not operate a blanket requirement for medical evidence for ordinary illness. Evidence may be requested in a minority of cases where it is reasonably necessary to understand complex, long-term or recurring health needs, to identify appropriate support, or where there is a genuine need to clarify the reason for absence.
- Routine medical and dental appointments should be arranged outside school hours where reasonably possible. Where an appointment cannot be arranged outside school hours, pupils should attend School before and/or after the appointment where practicable.
- Where there are reasonable grounds to believe a pupil of compulsory school age will miss, or has missed, 15 school days because of illness, consecutively or cumulatively in the current school year, the School will make the required sickness return to the local authority as soon as possible and work with the family and relevant agencies to support continuity of education and reintegration.

Requests for leave of absence

The School expects pupils to be present for all scheduled sessions. A request for leave should be made in writing to the Head of School in advance wherever possible and should explain the reason and requested dates. Each request will be considered individually, taking account of the specific facts, circumstances and relevant background context.

The School follows the DfE expectation that leave of absence is restricted to the circumstances recognised in current attendance guidance and to other genuinely exceptional circumstances. Where leave is granted, the School will determine the period of leave and use the appropriate statutory code.

Family holidays and leisure travel during term time

There is no entitlement to take a pupil out of School for a family holiday during term time. The DfE does not generally consider a holiday or other absence for leisure or recreation to be an exceptional circumstance. Parents should therefore arrange holidays during School holidays. Any request will nevertheless be considered on its individual facts; there is no blanket policy of automatically granting leave for any particular event or circumstance. Where leave is not granted and the pupil is absent for a holiday, the absence will be recorded as unauthorised using the appropriate code.

Equality, SEND, disability and health-related barriers

The School sets high attendance expectations for all pupils but will apply this policy fairly, proportionately and with regard to individual circumstances. Absence can be a symptom of wider needs, and attendance concerns will not be considered in isolation from safeguarding, SEND, disability, medical conditions, mental health, bullying, pastoral needs or family circumstances.

- The School will listen to the pupil and family, identify barriers, agree appropriate in-school support and review whether it is effective.
- Where a pupil is disabled, the School will consider and make reasonable adjustments as required by section 20 of the Equality Act 2010.
- Where a pupil has SEND, the School will consider whether additional support or adjustments are needed and, where applicable, whether provision in an Education, Health and Care Plan is being accessed.
- Where external support is needed, the School will work with parents and appropriate professionals, including health services, the local authority, children's social care or other agencies.
- Pupils will not be sanctioned simply because absence arises from illness, disability, SEND or another circumstance outside their control. Any response to deliberate truancy or persistent lateness will be considered under the Behaviour Management Policy, with safeguarding and reasonable-adjustment duties taken into account.

Temporary part-time timetables

All pupils 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 pupil's best interests and is necessary to meet individual needs. It will not be used to manage behaviour.

- The arrangement will be agreed with the parent with whom the pupil normally lives and, where appropriate, with the pupil.
- It will form part of a wider support, health-care or reintegration plan, with clear attendance expectations, regular review dates and a proposed end date so that it lasts for the shortest period necessary.
- Where the pupil has a social worker, the School will keep that professional informed and involved. Where the pupil has an EHC plan, the School will discuss the arrangement with the local authority.

- The attendance register will continue to be taken at the same time for the pupil as for all other pupils and the appropriate statutory codes, normally C2 or X depending on the circumstances, will be used.

Long-term or recurrent absence and reintegration

Where a pupil is absent for a prolonged period or has recurrent absence, the School will work with the pupil, parents and relevant professionals to maintain education and wellbeing, remove barriers and support a successful return. This may include appropriately adapted work, pastoral contact, a phased return, reasonable adjustments and liaison with the local authority or health services. Remote education, where used, will be a last resort and part of a wider reintegration plan; it does not change the attendance code that applies.

Persistent and severe absence

The School will intervene before absence becomes entrenched. It uses the current DfE definitions for monitoring and support:

- Persistent absence: a pupil misses 10% or more of school. The School will put targeted support in place, agree actions with the pupil and family and involve wider services where needed.
- Severe absence: a pupil misses 50% or more of school. These pupils are a priority for intensive and, where necessary, multi-agency support. The School will work with the local authority and other relevant partners to agree an action plan.
- Where severe or repeated unauthorised absence raises a concern about neglect, exploitation or another risk of harm, the DSL will act under the Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy and will consider children's social care involvement without delay.

Graduated attendance support

When attendance gives cause for concern, the School will use a support-first, graduated approach. Depending on the circumstances, this may include:

- early discussion with the pupil and parents to understand the reason and agree practical actions;
- a written attendance support plan with clear responsibilities and review dates;
- pastoral, SEND, health or family support and reasonable adjustments;
- referral to or joint work with local-authority attendance services, early/family help, health, social care or other agencies;
- regular review of whether the support is improving attendance and adjustment of the plan where it is not; and
- where voluntary support has not been effective or engaged with, working with the local authority to consider lawful formal or legal intervention.

Formal and legal intervention

Old Vicarage School is an independent school. The National Framework for Penalty Notices for school absence, including the associated Notice to Improve process, does not apply to independent schools, and the School does not issue penalty notices under that framework.

If a pupil of compulsory school age fails to attend regularly, a parent may commit an offence under section 444 of the Education Act 1996, subject to the statutory requirements and defences. The decision to prosecute rests with the local authority. Where support has not resolved the issue, the School may refer the case to the relevant local authority and will cooperate with any lawful intervention the authority considers appropriate, which may include a local-authority attendance contract, an Education Supervision Order, prosecution and/or statutory children's social care involvement where safeguarding concerns exist.

Safeguarding and absence from education

Attendance and safeguarding are closely linked. Staff must remain alert to changes in attendance, lateness and patterns of absence as possible indicators of abuse, neglect, exploitation, mental-health difficulty or other welfare concerns. Any safeguarding concern must be reported to the DSL immediately; staff must not wait for a pupil to reach a persistent-absence threshold.

For statutory purposes, a child missing education (CME) is a child of compulsory school age who is not a registered pupil at a school and is not receiving suitable education otherwise than at school. A pupil who remains on the School's roll is not technically CME merely because they are persistently or severely absent, but unexplained or repeated absence can be a vital safeguarding warning sign and will be followed up accordingly.

Reporting attendance and registration information to the local authority

The School will make the returns required by regulation 13 of the School Attendance (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2024 to the local authority for the area in which the School is situated and will cooperate with the pupil's home local authority where current Children Missing Education guidance requires it. Statutory returns include:

- New Pupil Returns: where required, within five days of adding a pupil to the admission register, providing the prescribed admission-register information;
- Deletion Returns: when a pupil's name is deleted from the admission register in circumstances for which a return is required;
- Attendance Returns: the names and addresses of pupils of compulsory school age who fail to attend regularly or who have been continuously absent for at least ten school days with absence recorded using one or more of the unauthorised codes G, N, O and/or U, at the frequency agreed with the local authority and no less frequently than monthly; and
- Sickness Returns: the full name and address of a pupil of compulsory school age where there are reasonable grounds to believe that code-I sickness absence will reach at least 15 school days, consecutively or cumulatively, during the current school year.

The School will also provide other attendance or registration information lawfully requested by the local authority where necessary for the authority to carry out its education functions.

Pupils leaving the School and deletion from the admission register

A pupil's name will be deleted from the admission register only where a ground in regulation 9 of the School Attendance (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2024 is fully met. The School will not retrospectively delete a pupil from either register.

- Where a pupil is transferring to another school, the School will seek the destination school and expected start date, complete the required transfer and statutory-return processes, and retain the pupil on roll until the legal deletion requirements are met.
- Where a parent notifies the School in writing that the child will receive education otherwise than at school, the School will follow regulation 9 and current elective-home-education / CME requirements and will notify the local authority as required.
- Where a child's whereabouts or destination are unclear, the School will make rapid and effective reasonable enquiries with the local authority and relevant partners, record those enquiries and follow the statutory CME process. Safeguarding concerns will be referred to the DSL immediately.
- The School will not remove a pupil's name from the register merely because of poor attendance or because the pupil has not been located; the relevant legal ground and all associated conditions must be satisfied first.

Responsibilities

Head of School / Senior Attendance Champion: has overall responsibility for championing attendance, ensuring effective systems are in place, analysing attendance information, coordinating support and liaising with the local authority and other agencies as required.

School Office: maintains day-to-day attendance administration, receives absence notifications, monitors unexplained absence, supports statutory returns and keeps contact information up to date.

Class Teachers: take the register accurately and promptly, reinforce expectations, notice emerging patterns and raise attendance concerns with the Senior Attendance Champion. Any safeguarding concern must also be reported to the DSL without delay.

Designated Safeguarding Lead: leads the safeguarding response where attendance information indicates a risk to a child and liaises with children's social care and other safeguarding partners as appropriate.

Proprietors and Advisory Board: provide oversight and challenge. They receive regular attendance information, assure themselves that statutory registers and returns are compliant, monitor persistent/severe absence and vulnerable cohorts, and review the effectiveness of the School's attendance arrangements.

Monitoring, analysis and evaluation

- The Senior Attendance Champion, DSL and relevant members of the Senior Leadership Team review absence and lateness regularly, including a weekly review of individual concerns.
- The School analyses attendance at whole-school, year-group, cohort and individual level, including authorised and unauthorised absence, punctuality, persistent and severe absence and relevant vulnerable groups. Data is reviewed at least half-termly, termly and across the full school year, with more frequent analysis where concerns arise.
- Where meaningful comparator data is available, the School will benchmark attendance against appropriate local, regional, national or similar-school information and use the findings to identify priorities.
- The impact of attendance interventions will be reviewed. Where support is not working, the School will seek to understand why and adjust the approach rather than simply repeat ineffective action.
- The Proprietors will receive attendance information at appropriate intervals and will challenge leaders where patterns, statutory compliance or the effectiveness of support require further action.

Promoting good attendance

The School promotes attendance through a positive, safe and supportive school culture; clear communication with pupils and parents; early help with barriers; engaging teaching and pastoral care; and regular reinforcement of the benefits of being in School. Where attendance or improvement is recognised or celebrated, this will be done sensitively and without disadvantaging pupils whose absence is linked to disability, ill health, SEND, religious observance or other circumstances outside their control.

Staff training

Attendance responsibilities are included in staff induction and ongoing professional development. Staff with designated attendance responsibilities receive role-appropriate training and updates so that they understand current registration requirements, the School's procedures, safeguarding links, data analysis and routes to wider support.

Information sharing, confidentiality and data protection

Attendance and registration information is personal data and will be processed, stored and shared in accordance with the School's data-protection arrangements, UK GDPR and the Data Protection Act 2018. Information will be shared lawfully and proportionately with the local authority, safeguarding partners, other schools and relevant agencies where required or where necessary to support a pupil's education, attendance, welfare or safeguarding. Data-protection concerns will not be allowed to prevent necessary safeguarding information sharing.

Concerns and complaints

Parents who have a concern about an attendance code, attendance support, a leave-of-absence decision or the operation of this policy should first contact the Senior Attendance Champion through the School Office. Where a concern cannot be resolved informally, the School's Complaints Policy is available.

Appendix 1: Statutory register and local-authority compliance checklist

Requirement	School standard	Review evidence
Admission and attendance registers	Electronic; all registered pupils included regardless of age.	Register audit / MIS records
Register back-up	At least monthly.	Back-up log / system evidence
Register amendments	Original and amended entry, reason, date and person retained.	MIS audit trail
Retention	Entries: 6 years from entry. Back-ups: 6 years after the school year concerned.	Retention schedule / archived data
Morning/afternoon registration	Morning at 08:35; afternoon at start of afternoon session; same time for all pupils.	Timetable / register timestamps
Register closing	Morning 09:05; afternoon 30 minutes after scheduled afternoon-session start.	MIS settings / staff practice
Unexplained absence	First-day follow-up; code N corrected within 5 school days or changed to code O.	Contact log / register audit
New-pupil returns	Within 5 days where regulation 13 requires a return.	Local-authority return record
Deletion returns	Made whenever regulation 13 requires one; no retrospective deletion.	Local-authority return / leaver file
Attendance returns	Regular non-attendance / 10 continuous school days of G, N, O and/or U; frequency agreed with LA, at least monthly.	LA return log
Sickness returns	Code-I illness expected to reach 15 school days, consecutive or cumulative.	LA return / health-support record
CME / safeguarding	Reasonable enquiries recorded; DSL escalation where welfare concern; LA cooperation.	CME records / safeguarding file

Appendix 2: Key external references

Source	Relevance
Education (Independent School Standards) Regulations 2014, as amended	Current independent-school standards, including paragraph 15 on admission and attendance registers.
School Attendance (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2024	Core statutory rules for electronic registers, required contents, codes, deletion, returns, back-ups and retention.
DfE Working together to improve school attendance - July 2026	Current statutory guidance applying to independent schools.
DfE Children missing education: statutory guidance for local authorities and schools - September 2025	Statutory CME guidance for proprietors and schools.
Keeping Children Safe in Education 2026	Current safeguarding guidance in force from 1 September 2026.
DfE Independent school standards guidance - April 2026	Current DfE guidance on the Independent School Standards.