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EXETER CATHEDRAL SCHOOL

Nursery | Pre-Prep | Prep

Attendance Policy

Last Reviewed: January 2026

Next Review: January 2027

Governor Oversight: Pastoral

AIMS OF THIS POLICY

Exeter Cathedral School is committed to meeting our obligations with regards to school attendance, including those laid out in the Department of Education's (DfE's) statutory guidance on Working Together to Improve School Attendance (applies from 19 August 2024), through our whole-school culture and ethos that values good attendance, including:

- Setting high expectations for the attendance and punctuality of all pupils
- Promoting good attendance and reducing absence, including persistent absence
- Reducing absence, including persistent and severe absence
- Ensuring every pupil has access to full-time education to which they are entitled
- Acting early to address patterns of absence
- Obligations under the Equality Act 2010
- The individual needs of pupils and their families who have specific barriers to attendance

The School will also support parents to perform their legal duty to ensure their children of compulsory school age attend regularly and will promote and support punctuality in attending lessons.

Definition of Compulsory School Age

A child must be in full-time education by the time they reach compulsory school age defined by the UK government as 31 December, 31 March or 31 August following the child's fifth birthday - whichever comes first (<https://www.gov.uk/schools-admissions/school-starting-age>). If the child's fifth birthday is on one of those dates, they reach compulsory school age on that date.

Most children start school full-time in the September after their fourth birthday with the child turning five years of age during their first academic year. If a parent or the school feels this is too early, and the child is not ready to start school, they may discuss this with the School, in line with the School's Admissions Policy.

LEGISLATION AND GUIDANCE

This policy is based on the DfE's statutory guidance on Working Together to Improve School Attendance (applies from 19 August 2024), and school attendance parental responsibility measures. The guidance is also based on the following legislation setting out the legal powers and duties that govern school attendance:

- Part 6 of [The Education Act 1996](#)
- Part 3 of [The Education Act 2002](#)
- Part 7 of [The Education and Inspections Act 2006](#)
- [The Education \(Pupil Registration\) \(England\) Regulations 2006](#) (and [2010, 2011, 2013, 2016](#) amendments)
- [The Education \(Penalty Notices\) \(England\) \(Amendment\) Regulations 2013](#)
- <https://www.gov.uk/schools-admissions/school-starting-age>
- Regulation 9 of the School Attendance (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2024 https://www.legislation.gov.uk/uksi/2024/208/pdfs/uksiem_20240208_en_001.pdf
- <https://www.legislation.gov.uk/uksi/2024/208/made>

It also refers to:

- [Keeping Children Safe in Education \(September 2024\)](#)
- [Mental health issues affecting a pupil's attendance: guidance for schools](#)

ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

Attendance, welfare and wellbeing of pupils/children at Exeter Cathedral School are everyone's responsibility in the School. It starts with the Governors, the Head, the Senior Leadership Team (SLT), the Attendance Champions who are on the SLT, and the Receptionists, but includes all school staff.

GOVERNORS

The Governors are expected to:

- Ensure the school has an admission register and an attendance register
- Recognise the importance of school attendance and promote it across the School's ethos
- Ensure the Head and school leaders fulfil expectations and statutory duties
- Regularly review (at least termly) attendance data, discuss, and challenge trends, and help school leaders focus improvement efforts on the individual pupils or cohorts who need it most
- Ensure school staff receive adequate training on attendance
- Hold the Head to account for the implementation of this policy

THE HEAD

The Head is responsible for:

- Implementation of this policy at the School
- Ensuring that the School has an admissions register and an attendance register.
- Ensures that the admissions register and the attendance register are kept electronically.
- Ensures that all pupils regardless of their age are placed on the admissions register and have their attendance recorded in the attendance register.
- Ensures that the admissions register records the specific personal details of every pupil/child in the school along with their starting date, information regarding parents, and details of the school last attended.
- Ensures that pupils are only deleted from the admissions register if a reason set out in regulation 9 of the School Attendance (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2024 applies including when a pupil registers at another school, the Governors/Head do not have reasonable grounds for the School to believe that the pupil will attend the school again, a parent of the pupil has told the school in writing that the pupil will no longer attend the school after a certain day and will receive education otherwise than at school (https://www.legislation.gov.uk/uksi/2024/208/pdfs/uksiem_20240208_en_001.pdf, <https://www.legislation.gov.uk/uksi/2024/208/made>).
- Overseeing school-level absence data and reporting it to the Governors.
- Supporting staff with monitoring the attendance of individual pupils/children
- Monitor the impact of any implemented attendance strategies

THE DESIGNATED SAFEGUARDING LEAD (DSL):

- Leading, championing and improving attendance across the School
- Evaluating and monitoring expectations and processes
- Having a strong grasp of absence data and oversight of data analysis
- Devising specific strategies to address areas of poor attendance identified through data
- Oversees calls and meetings with parents to discuss attendance issues
- Delivering targeted intervention and support to pupils and families
- Working with education external agencies to tackle persistent absence
- Monitoring school-level absence data and reporting it to the Head

ADMISSIONS & MARKETING MANAGER:

- Ensures that the admissions register is kept electronically
- Ensures that the admissions register includes:
 - Confirmation that the parents have accepted the offer of a place and agreed the start date for their child.
 - The start date is recorded on the register
 - If a pupil fails to attend school on the agreed starting date, the school follows this up and establishes the reason for the absence. If the school are unable to locate the pupil/child, schools should notify the local authority
 - The pupil's name is entered/recorded on the register no later than on the first day they attend the school
 - The pupil's personal details of every pupils at the school are in the admissions register. The register **must** include the following information for every pupils:
 - Full name
 - Name the pupil uses at school
 - Sex
 - Full name and address of each of the pupil's parents
 - Which of the pupil's parents, if any, the pupil normally lives with
 - Two emergency contact numbers
 - Day, month and year of birth
 - Day, month and year of the pupil's starting day at the school
 - Name and address of the last school the pupil attended, if any

Where a parent of a pupil informs the School that the pupil will live at another address, whether in addition to or instead of the address at which the pupils currently lives, the School must ensure that the admissions register contains the address and the date when the pupils will start normally living there.

Management of Leavers

The School must ensure that the admissions register contains:

- The name of the other school
- The date when the pupil began or will begin attending that school

CLASS TEACHERS/FORM TUTORS:

The Class Teachers/Form Tutors are responsible for recording attendance daily, electronically, using the correct codes (see appendix 1) on the agreed School system. The Receptionists (overseen by the Receptionist and Database Manager) have responsibility for ensuring that daily attendance registers are taken and recorded, for pre-populating the attendance registers with any approved absences, and for following up on unexplained absences.

PARENTS:

Parents are expected to:

- Make sure their child attends every day on time

- Call the School or email Reception to report their child's absence before 08:30 on the day of the absence and each subsequent day of absence, and advise when they are expected to return
- For planned absences, the parent must complete an absence form which must be approved as authorised or unauthorised by the Deputy Head (pupils) or the Head of Pre-Prep
- Provide the School with more than 1 emergency contact numbers, particularly for when parents are not in the UK.
- Notify the School when parents will be away from the child's home, or when the child will be staying with friends/family, giving addresses and contact numbers in both circumstances
- Ensure that, where possible, appointments for their child are made outside of the School day

PUPILS:

Pupils are expected to:

- Attend school every day on time. The School uses 90% minimum attendance as a benchmark for attendance, and will maintain weekly, termly and annual data for all pupils/children.
- Attend every timetabled session on time.

MAINTENANCE OF THE ADMISSIONS REGISTER

The admissions register must be kept up to date. The School encourages parents to inform the School of any changes whenever they occur and must ensure the admissions register is amended promptly. Receptionist & Database Manager updates parents' details on the School's electronic management system when informed of changes by the parent(s).

The people responsible for attendance (the Attendance Champions) are the Head and Deputy Head (pupils) & DSL. Contact details: headmaster@exetercs.org, DSL via reception@exetercs.org, 01392 255298.

MONITORING ABSENCE

Reception (Pre-Prep and Prep) takes calls about absence and monitors absence emails from parents on a day-to-day basis, populating attendance registers accordingly. They can also transfer calls from parents to the Head or Deputy Head (pupils) & DSL and/or Head of Pre-Prep in order to provide them with more detailed support on attendance.

The School attendance champions have oversight of:

- Monitoring and analysing attendance data
- Benchmarking attendance data to identify areas of focus for improvement
- Providing regular attendance reports to school staff
- Reporting concerns about attendance to the Chair of the Governors' Pastoral Committee.

RECORDING ATTENDANCE

ATTENDANCE REGISTER

The School keeps an electronic attendance register and places all pupils onto this register.

Prep

The School takes an attendance register at the start of the day between 08h40 and 08h50 with Assembly/Form Time starting at 08h50. The first lesson starts at 09h15. A second register is taken between 13h35 and 14h10 (according to year-group) prior to the first afternoon lesson/session of each school day. See Appendix 1 for the attendance codes (August 2024).

Pre-Prep

The School takes an attendance register at the start of the day between 08h50 and 09h00 with lessons starting at 09h00. A second register is taken between 13h00 and 14h00 (according to year-group) prior to the first afternoon lesson/session of each school day. See Appendix 1 for the attendance codes (August 2024)

Choristers

The Choristers' day begins at 08h10 when they are dropped off by parents/guardians at the Cathedral directly into the care of Cathedral staff. The School takes a register of Chorister attendance at this morning rehearsal at 08h40 (on paper) and communicates this list to the Receptionist & Database Manager who populates the School's attendance register accordingly.

Any amendment to the attendance register is accompanied by an indication of:

- The original entry
- The amended entry
- The reason for the amendment
- The date on which the amendment was made
- The name and position of the person who made the amendment

The School also records:

- For pupils of compulsory school age, whether the absence is authorised or not
- The nature of the activity if a pupil is attending an approved educational activity
- The nature of circumstances where a pupil is unable to attend due to exceptional circumstances

RETENTION OF RECORDS

The School keeps every entry on the attendance register for six years after the date on which the entry was made.

ABSENCE – COMMUNICATION WITH THE LOCAL AUTHORITY

The School will mark absence due to illness as authorised unless the School has a genuine concern about the authenticity of the illness.

Where the absence is longer than 5 consecutive school days or if the authenticity of the illness is in doubt, the School may ask the pupil's parent to provide medical evidence, such as a doctor's note, prescription, appointment card or other appropriate form of evidence. The School will not ask for medical evidence unnecessarily.

If the School is not satisfied about the authenticity of the illness, the absence will be recorded as unauthorised and parents will be notified of this in advance.

The School needs to provide Local Authorities with the name and address of pupils who miss 15 consecutive or cumulative days due to illness who may need additional support from the local authority to continue their education, as set out in the recently updated statutory guidance for local authorities Education for Children with health needs who cannot attend school.

PLANNED ABSENCE

Attending a medical or dental appointment will be counted as authorised if the pupil's parent notifies the School in advance of the appointment. However, the School encourages parents/carers to make medical and dental appointments out of school hours where possible. Where this is not possible, the pupil should be out of school for the minimum period of time necessary.

The pupil's parent must also apply for other types of term-time absence as far in advance as possible of the requested absence.

LATENESS AND PUNCTUALITY

The window for morning registration is 08h40–08h50 (Prep) and 08h50–09h00 (Pre-Prep).

A pupil who arrives late (Prep: after 08h50, Pre-Prep: after 09h00):

- Must report to Reception (Chantry or Hall House) before joining their class
- Before the register has closed (09h15) will be marked as late, using the appropriate code
- After the register has closed (09h15) will be marked as absent, using the appropriate code

The window for afternoon registration (which takes place at the start of the first lesson/activity after lunch) is 5 minutes. A pupil who arrives beyond this 5-minute window will be marked as late, using the appropriate code. After a further 5 minutes, a pupil is marked absent, using the appropriate code.

Pupils who are persistently late are reported to the Attendance Champions

FOLLOWING UP ABSENCE

Where any child the School expects to attend school does not attend, or stops attending, the School will:

- Follow up on their absence with their parent to ascertain the reason, which is done via the Receptionists (overseen by the Receptionist & Database Manager). If the School cannot reach any of the pupil's emergency contacts, the School may make a home visit or call the police for a welfare check. The DSL will be consulted.
- Identify whether the absence is approved or not
- Identify the correct attendance code to use and input it as soon as the reason for absence is ascertained – this will be no later than 5 working days after the session(s) for which the pupil was absent
- Call the parent on each day that the absence continues without explanation to ensure proper safeguarding action is taken where necessary. If absence continues, the school will consider involving an education welfare officer.

REPORTING TO PARENTS

The School will regularly inform parents about their child's attendance and absence levels via regular written reports. Attendance is reported on the termly academic reports published to parents in the form of the number of absences that term.

AUTHORISED AND UNAUTHORISED ABSENCE

APPROVAL FOR TERM-TIME ABSENCE

The School will only approve a leave of absence to pupils during term time if they consider there to be 'exceptional circumstances'. A leave of absence is granted at the Head's/Deputy Head (pupil)'s discretion and any requests for these must be made via the absence request form on the portal.

The School considers each application for term-time absence individually, taking into account the specific facts, circumstances and relevant context behind the request.

Valid reasons for authorised absence include:

- Illness and medical/dental appointments
- Religious observance – where the day is exclusively set apart for religious observance by the religious body to which the pupil's parents belong. If necessary, the school will seek advice from the parents' religious body to confirm whether the day is set apart
- Exceptional circumstances. The School is likely only to approve an exceptional circumstances absence request when there is clear pastoral or academic benefit.

Choristers

In considering a request for absence from a Chorister, the School will consider whether granting leave of absence

from the School day is likely to impact negatively on the Cathedral responsibilities held by that chorister. Whilst the School and Cathedral are separate institutions with separate jurisdictions, the School wishes to support the Cathedral in promoting the importance of chorister attendance.

STRATEGIES FOR PROMOTING ATTENDANCE

Good attendance and punctuality (as well as significant improvements) are acknowledged by the School. There is clear communication to parents setting out the expectations for attendance.

SUPPORTING PUPILS WHO ARE ABSENT OR RETURNING TO SCHOOL AND PUPILS ABSENT DUE TO COMPLEX BARRIERS TO ATTENDANCE

The School will:

- Work with families/external agencies to alleviate barriers and/or create bespoke timetables for re-entry to school after prolonged absence

PUPILS ABSENT DUE TO MENTAL OR PHYSICAL ILL HEALTH or SEND

The School will:

- Work with families/external agencies to alleviate barriers and/or create bespoke timetables for re-entry to school after prolonged absence
- Where a pupil has an Education Health and Care (EHC) plan and their attendance falls, or the school becomes aware of barriers to attendance that related to the pupil's needs, the school will inform the local authority

PUPILS RETURNING TO SCHOOL AFTER A LENGTHY OR UNAVOIDABLE PERIOD OF ABSENCE

The School will:

- Work closely with families/external agencies to ensure a smooth transition back to school. Strategies that may be employed, but not limited to, are: modified timetable and wellbeing support strategies.

MONITORING ATTENDANCE

The School will:

- monitor attendance and absence data, weekly, termly and yearly across the school and at an individual pupil level
- identify whether or not there are particular groups of children whose absences may be a cause for concern
- look at historic and emerging patterns of attendance and absence, and then develop strategies to address these patterns.

REDUCING PERSISTENT AND SEVERE ABSENCE

Persistent absence is where a pupil misses ten consecutive days of school or a total of 15 days of school in any academic year. In these cases, the parents will be informed and an action plan agreed to support the pupil's/child's improved attendance.

The School will:

- meet with the parents of pupils who the school considers to be vulnerable, or are persistently or severely absent, to discuss attendance and engagement at school
- provide access to wider support services to remove the barriers to attendance

PENALTY NOTICES

Penalty notices can be used by schools with the exception of independent schools (p56, Working Together to Improve School Attendance (applies from 19 August 2024). There is flexibility in how local authorities work with independent schools to better suit the needs of different local independent schools (p7).

APPENDIX 1: Attendance Codes (Effective August 2024)

CODES TO USE WHEN A PUPIL IS PRESENT:	
Codes entered by the teacher taking registration	
/	present during morning registration (Prep: 08h40 – 08h50) (Pre-Prep: 08h50 – 09h00)
\	present during afternoon registration
L	arrived after the register has started but before it has closed (Prep: arrived after 08h50 but before 09h15) (Pre-Prep: arrived after 09h00 but before 09h15)
Codes entered by Receptionists (overseen by the Receptionist & Database Manager)	
K	attending provision arranged by the local authority
P	Sporting activity with prior agreement from school (does not include Games lessons)
V	educational visit or trip
W	work experience
B	educated off site and taster days and do not fit K, V, P or W codes

CODES TO USE WHEN A PUPIL IS ABSENT:	
Codes entered by Receptionists (overseen by the Receptionist & Database Manager)	
Authorised Absences (absences are authorised by the Deputy Head (pupils) or the Head of Pre-Prep or the Head)	
C	exceptional circumstances
C1	in a regulated performance/undertaking regulated employment abroad
C2	absent due to part-time timetable
D	dual registered
E	suspended or permanently excluded
I	illness (not medical or dental appointments)
J1	job/school/college interview
M	medical or dental appointment
Q	unable to attend because of a lack of access arrangements
R	religious observance (only 1 day allowed, any more coded as C if agreed)
S	study leave
T	parent travelling for occupational purposes
X	non-compulsory school age pupil not required to attend school
Y1	unable to attend due to transport provided not being available
Y2	unable to attend due to widespread transport disruption
Y3	unable to attend due to part of the school premises being closed
Y4	unable to attend due to whole school closure
Y5	unable to attend as pupil is in criminal justice detention

Y6	unable to attend in accordance with public health guidance or law
Y7	unable to attend due to other avoidable cause (must affect the pupil NOT the parent)
Unauthorised Absence	
G	holiday (not agreed)
N	reason for absence not yet established (must be corrected within 5 days)
O	absent in other or unknown circumstances
U	late after register has closed
Z	pupil not yet on register
#	planned whole school closure (e.g. holidays, insets and polling station days)