



‘Improving the quality of family life’

Pupil Attendance Policy

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1. Aims

Our school aims to meet its obligations with regards to school attendance by:

- Promoting good attendance and reducing absence, including persistent absence
- Ensuring every pupil has access to full-time education to which they are entitled
- Acting early to address patterns of absence

We 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.

Snowflake believes that good attendance is vital for maximizing pupil attainment. We will work actively in partnership with Parents to maximize the attendance of every child.

As a specialist school for pupils with Autism and Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND), we recognise that attendance barriers may be linked to anxiety, sensory needs, communication differences, medical needs, transport difficulties, and Emotionally Based School Avoidance (EBSA). The school adopts a compassionate, individualised and therapeutic approach to attendance, aligned with ABA principles and the SEND Code of Practice.

We are committed to:

- Removing barriers to attendance through reasonable adjustments
- Using data-informed and behaviour-analytic (ABA) approaches to support attendance
- Working in partnership with families, therapists, and the Local Authority
- Supporting reintegration following absence through structured and individualised plans

2. Legislation and guidance

This policy meets the requirements of [working together to improve school attendance](#) from the Department for Education (DfE), and refers to the DfE's statutory guidance. This documents draws from the following legislation setting out the legal powers and duties that govern school attendance:

- [The Education Act 1996](#)
- [The Education Act 2002](#)
- [The Education and Inspections Act 2006](#)
- [The Education \(Pupil Registration\) \(England\) Regulations 2006](#)
- [The Education \(Pupil Registration\) \(England\) \(Amendment\) Regulations 2010](#)
- [The Education \(Pupil Registration\) \(England\) \(Amendment\) Regulations 2011](#)
- [The Education \(Pupil Registration\) \(England\) \(Amendment\) Regulations 2013](#)
- [The Education \(Pupil Registration\) \(England\) \(Amendment\) Regulations 2016](#)
- [The Education \(Penalty Notices\) \(England\) \(Amendment\) Regulations 2013](#)
- [Keeping Children Safe in Education 2025](#)

- SEND Code of Practice (2015)
- Children Missing Education (CME) Statutory Guidance
- Equality Act 2010 (Reasonable Adjustments)
- Independent School Standards Regulations (ISSR) Part 3 (Welfare, Health and Safety)

This policy also refers to the DfE's guidance on the [school census](#)

This policy complies with our funding agreement and articles of association.

3. School procedures

3.1 Attendance register

By law, all schools (except those where all pupils are boarders) are required to keep an attendance register, and all pupils must be placed on this register.

The attendance register will be taken at the start of the first session of each school day and once during the second session. Routine data is usually but not limited to pupils being:

- Present
- Attending an approved off-site educational activity
- Absent
- Unable to attend due to exceptional circumstances

Any amendment to the attendance register will include:

- 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

See appendix 1 for the DfE attendance codes.

Every entry in the attendance register will be preserved for 3 years after the date on which the entry was made.

Pupils must arrive in school by 09:00 on each school day.

The register for the first session will be taken at 09:00 and will be kept open until 09:30. The register for the second session will be taken at 13:00 and will be kept open until 13:30.

3.2 Unplanned absence

Parents must notify the school on the first day of an unplanned absence – for example, if their child is unable to attend due to ill health – by 09:00 or as soon as practically possible (see also section 6).

Please phone the school office if your child will not be attending school.

Absence due to illness will be authorised unless the school has a genuine concern about the authenticity of the illness.

If the authenticity of the illness is in doubt, the school may ask parents to provide 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 will be notified of this in advance.

3.3 Medical or dental appointments

Missing registration for a medical or dental appointment is counted as an authorised absence if advance notice has been given for these absences.

However, we encourage parents 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 amount of time necessary.

Please phone the school office to notify the school in advance of a medical or dental appointment.

Applications for other types of absence in term time must also be made in advance. Information relating to whether the school can authorise such absences can be found in section 4.

3.4 Lateness and punctuality

A pupil who arrives late but before the register has closed will be marked as late, using the appropriate code.

A pupil who arrives after the register has closed will be marked as absent, using the appropriate code.

3.5 Following up absence

The school will follow up any absences to ascertain the reason, ensure proper safeguarding action is taken where necessary, identify whether the absence is approved or not and identify the correct attendance code to use.

3.6 Reporting to parents

Attendance is reported to parents during the Annual Review and also in the End of Year Report.

3.7 Safeguarding and First Day Response

The school recognises that absence may indicate safeguarding concerns. In line with KCSIE 2025:

- First day calling is undertaken for all unexplained absences
- If no contact is made, additional contact attempts will be made using all emergency contacts
- The Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL) will be informed of any unexplained absence
- Where appropriate, welfare checks and/or home visits may be conducted
- The Local Authority will be notified where a child is missing education (CME)

Any unexplained absence of 10 consecutive school days will be reported to the Local Authority in accordance with statutory safeguarding duties.

4. Authorised and unauthorised absence

4.1 Granting approval for term-time absence

The Headteacher may not grant any leave of absence to pupils during term time unless they consider there to be 'exceptional circumstances'.

We define 'exceptional circumstances' as those which relate directly to the pupil outside of normal absence requests.

The school considers each application for term-time absence individually, taking into account the specific facts, circumstances and relevant context behind the request. A leave of absence is granted entirely at the headteacher's discretion.

Valid reasons for **authorised absence** include:

- Illness and medical/dental appointments – as explained in sections 3.2 and 3.3
- 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
- Traveller pupils travelling for occupational purposes – this covers Roma, English and Welsh Gypsies, Irish and Scottish Travellers, Showmen (fairground people) and Circus people, Bargees (occupational boat dwellers) and New Travellers. Absence may be authorised only when a Traveller family is known to be travelling for occupational purposes and has agreed this with the school but it is not known whether the pupil is
- attending educational provision

4.2 Legal sanctions

The school may refer cases of unauthorised absence to the Local Authority, who may consider issuing a penalty notice in line with local authority procedures.

If issued with a penalty notice, parents must pay £60 within 21 days or £120 within 28 days. The payment must be made directly to the local authority.

The decision on whether or not to issue a penalty notice ultimately rests with the headteacher, following the local authority's code of conduct for issuing penalty notices. This may take into account:

- A number of unauthorised absences occurring within a rolling academic year
- One-off instances of irregular attendance, such as holidays taken in term time without permission
- Where an excluded pupil is found in a public place during school hours without a justifiable reason

If the payment has not been made after 28 days, the local authority can decide whether to prosecute the parent or withdraw the notice

5. Strategies for promoting attendance

Snowflake and Parents work in partnership to maximize the child's attendance. Both Snowflake and Parents should raise any particular issues and work together to resolve them.

5.1 SEND, Autism and Attendance Barriers

As a specialist autism provision, the school recognises that attendance difficulties may be linked to:

- Sensory sensitivities
- Anxiety and school-based distress (EBSA)
- Communication needs
- Changes in routine
- Medical or therapeutic appointments
- Transport difficulties
- Behaviour that functions to avoid overwhelming environments

Attendance interventions will be individualised and may include:

- Graduated reintegration plans
- Flexible start times where appropriate
- Reduced timetables (Any reduced timetable will be time-limited, formally agreed with parents and the Local Authority (where applicable), and reviewed at least fortnightly, in line with DfE guidance.)
- Environmental and sensory adjustments
- Visual supports and structured transitions
- Positive reinforcement systems aligned with ABA principles

5.2 ABA-Informed Attendance Support

Where attendance concerns arise, the school may:

- Conduct a functional behaviour assessment (FBA) of attendance refusal
- Develop behaviour intervention plans (BIPs)
- Use positive reinforcement to increase school engagement
- Implement gradual exposure and desensitisation strategies
- Track attendance data behaviourally and analytically

All strategies will be ethical, child-centred, and aligned with the pupil's EHCP outcomes.

5.3 Reintegration Following Absence

Following prolonged absence, the school will implement a personalised reintegration plan which may include:

- Gradual return timetables
- Increased pastoral support
 - Therapeutic and sensory regulation strategies
- Behavioural support plans (ABA-informed)
- Regular review meetings with parents and professionals

Reintegration plans will be reviewed at least fortnightly.

6. Attendance monitoring

The attendance officer monitors pupil absence daily.

Parents are expected to call the school in the morning by 9:00am if their child is going to be absent due to ill health (see section 3.2).

Parents are requested to phone Snowflake School on the first day of absence by 09:00.

If a pupil's absence goes above two days, teachers will contact the parents to discuss the reasons for this.

If after contacting parents, a pupil's absence continues to rise, we will consider involving an education welfare officer.

The persistent absence threshold is 10%. If a pupil's individual overall absence rate is greater than or equal to 10%, the pupil will be classified as a persistent absentee.

Pupil-level absence data is collected each term and published at national and local authority level through the DfE's school absence national statistics releases. The underlying school-level absence data is published alongside the national statistics. We compare our attendance data to the national average, and share this with Trustees.

The Senior Leadership analysis data each half term and strategies are put in place to encourage attendance.

Where a pupil's attendance falls below 95%, early intervention strategies will be implemented. Where attendance falls below 90% (persistent absence), an Attendance Support Plan will be developed in partnership with parents, therapists, and the Local Authority (where applicable).

For pupils with EHCPs, attendance will be reviewed in relation to:

- Identified needs
- Provision suitability
- Reasonable adjustments
- Transport arrangements
- Mental health and wellbeing

Multi-agency meetings may include:

- Local Authority SEND teams
- Educational Psychologists
- Speech and Language Therapists
- Occupational Therapists
- CAMHS (where appropriate)

6.1 Children Missing Education (CME)

The school will comply with statutory CME guidance and will:

- Inform the Local Authority of pupils removed from roll
- Notify the LA of pupils with 10 days of continuous unexplained absence
- Maintain accurate admission and attendance registers
- Work collaboratively with safeguarding agencies where a pupil's whereabouts are unknown

7. Roles and responsibilities

7.1 The board of trustees

The board of trustees is responsible for monitoring attendance figures for the whole school on at least a termly basis. It also holds the Head Teacher to account for the implementation of this policy.

The Head Teacher reports on attendance to Trustees each term in a written report. The Trustees have the opportunity to hold the head teacher to account at the, (at least), termly meeting

7.2 The headteacher

The headteacher is responsible for:

- The implementation of this policy at the school
- Monitoring school-level absence data and reporting it to Trustees
- Supporting staff with monitoring the attendance of individual pupils
- Monitoring the impact of any implemented attendance strategies
- Issuing fixed-penalty notices, where necessary, and/or authorising the Senior School's Attendance Champion to be able to do so
- Working with the parents/carers of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) to develop specific support approaches for attendance for pupils with SEND, including where school transport is regularly being missed, and where pupils with SEND face in-school barriers
- Communicating with the local authority when a pupil with an education, health and care (EHC) plan has falling attendance, or where there are barriers to attendance that relate to the pupil's needs

- Communicating the school’s high expectations for attendance and punctuality regularly to pupils and parents/carers through all available channels
- Sharing information from the school register with the local authority, including:
 - Notifying the local authority when a pupil’s name is added to or deleted from the school admission register outside of standard transition times
 - Providing the local authority with the details of pupils who fail to attend school regularly, or who have been marked with an unauthorised absence for a continuous period of 10 school days
 - Providing the local authority with the details of pupils who the school believes will miss 15 days consecutively or cumulatively because of sickness
- Ensuring attendance practices are inclusive and appropriate for pupils with autism and other SEND
- Overseeing attendance support plans and reintegration strategies
- Liaising with the DSL regarding safeguarding-linked absences

7.3 The Attendance Officer

The Attendance Officer (Head Teacher):

- Monitors attendance data at the school and individual pupil level
- Reports concerns about attendance to the Chair of Trustees
- Works with education welfare officers to tackle persistent absence
- Arranges calls and meetings with parents to discuss attendance issues
- Advises the Chair of Trustees when to issue fixed-penalty notices

7.4 The School’s Senior Attendance Champion

The Designated Lead (also known as the ‘senior attendance champion’) is responsible for:

- Leading, Championing and improving attendance across the school
- Setting a clear vision for improving and maintaining good attendance
- Evaluating and monitoring expectations and processes
- Having a strong grasp of absence data and oversight of absence data analysis
- Regularly monitoring and evaluating progress in attendance
- Establishing and maintaining effective systems for tackling absence, and making sure they are followed by all staff
- Liaising with pupils, parents/carers and external agencies, where needed

- Building close and productive relationships with parents/carers to discuss and tackle attendance issues
- Creating intervention or reintegration plans in partnership with pupils and their parents/carers
- Delivering targeted intervention and support to pupils and families

7.5 The School's Attendance Champion

The school senior attendance champion is responsible for:

- Monitoring and analysing attendance data (see section 7)
- Benchmarking attendance data to identify areas of focus for improvement
- Providing regular attendance reports to school staff and reporting concerns about attendance to the designated senior leader responsible for attendance, and the headteacher
- Working with education welfare officers to tackle persistent absence
- Advising the headteacher/Assistant Head teachers (authorised by the headteacher) when to issue fixed-penalty notices

7.6 Parents

Where this policy refers to a parent, it refers to the adult the school and/or local authority decides is most appropriate to work with, including:

- All natural parents, whether they are married or not
- All those who have parental responsibility for a child or young person
- Those who have day-to-day responsibility for the child (i.e. lives with and looks after them)

Parents are expected to:

- Make sure their child attends every day at 9am to 3pm
- Call the school to report their child's absence before 9am on the day of the absence and each subsequent day of absence, and advise when they are expected to return
- Provide the school with more than 1 emergency contact number for their child
- Ensure that, where possible, appointments for their child are made outside of the school day
- Keep to any attendance contracts that they make with the school and/or local authority
- Seek support, where necessary, for maintaining good attendance, by contacting SLG or the School's Senior Attendance Champion

Pupils are expected to:

- Attend school every day, on time

7.7 School Administrator

- The Administrator is responsible for recording attendance on a daily basis, using the correct codes.
- Take calls from parents/carers about absence on a day-to-day basis and record it on the school system
- Transfer calls from parents/carers to the SLG where appropriate, in order to provide them with more detailed support on attendance

7.8 Office staff

Office staff are expected to take calls from parents about absence and record it on the school system.

7.9 Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL)

The DSL is responsible for:

- Monitoring unexplained absences as a safeguarding concern
- Escalating concerns in line with safeguarding procedures
- Coordinating multi-agency responses where attendance is linked to welfare risks

8. Monitoring arrangements

This policy will be reviewed annually by the head. At every review, the policy will be shared with the board of trustees.

9. Links with other policies

This policy is linked to our child protection and safeguarding policy

10. Equality, Reasonable Adjustments and Inclusion

The school complies with the Equality Act 2010 and will make reasonable adjustments to support attendance for pupils with disabilities and autism. Attendance expectations will be balanced with pupils' health, wellbeing, and EHCP provisions.

Punitive approaches to attendance will not be used where absence is directly linked to a pupil's special educational needs or disability. Instead, supportive and therapeutic approaches will be prioritised.

Appendix 1: attendance codes

The following codes are examples taken from the DfE's guidance on school attendance.

| Code | Definition | Scenario |
|------|---|---|
| / | Present (am) | Pupil is present at morning registration |
| \ | Present (pm) | Pupil is present at afternoon registration |
| L | Late but arrived before the registration closed | Pupil arrives late before register has closed |
| B | Educated off-site (not dual registration) | Pupil is at a supervised off-site educational activity approved by the school |
| D | Dual registered | Pupil is attending a session at another setting where they are also registered |
| J | Interview | Pupil has an interview with a prospective employer/educational establishment |
| P | Approved Sporting activity | Pupil is participating in a supervised sporting activity approved by the school |
| V | Educational trip or visit | Pupil is on an educational visit/trip organised, or approved, by the school |
| W | Work experience (not work based training) | Pupil is on a work experience placement |

| Code | Definition | Scenario |
|---------------------------|--|--|
| Authorised absence | | |
| C | Other authorised circumstances (not covered by another appropriate code/description) | Pupil has been granted a leave of absence due to exceptional circumstances |

| | | |
|-----------------------------|---|---|
| E | Excluded but no alternative provision made | Pupil has been excluded but no alternative provision has been made |
| H | Authorised Family holiday | Pupil has been allowed to go on holiday due to exceptional circumstances |
| I | Illness | School has been notified that a pupil will be absent due to illness |
| M | Medical/dental appointment | Pupil is at a medical or dental appointment |
| R | Day set aside exclusively for religious observance | Pupil is taking part in a day of religious observance |
| S | Study leave | Year 11 pupil is on study leave during their public examinations |
| T | Traveler absence | Pupil from a Traveler community is travelling, as agreed with the school |
| Unauthorised absence | | |
| G | Family holiday (not agreed or in excess of agreement) | Pupil is on a holiday that was not approved by the school |
| N | No reason for the absence provided yet | Pupil is absent for an unknown reason (this code should be amended when the reason emerges, or replaced with code O if no reason for absence has been provided after a reasonable amount of time) |
| O | Other unauthorised (not covered by other codes or descriptions) | School is not satisfied with reason for pupil's absence |
| U | Late and arrived after the register closed | Pupil arrived at school after the register closed |

| Code | Definition | Scenario |
|-------------|-------------------|-----------------|
|-------------|-------------------|-----------------|

| | | |
|----------|--|--|
| X | Untimetabled sessions for non-compulsory school age pupils | Pupil of non-compulsory school age is not required to attend |
| Y | Partial and forced closure | School site is closed, there is disruption to travel as a result of a local/national emergency, or pupil is in custody |
| Z | Pupil not on roll yet | Register set up but pupil has not yet joined the school |
| # | School closed to all pupils | Whole or partial school closure due to half-term/bank holiday/INSET day |

Revision

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|----------------------------------|-------------|
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