Attendance, Registration and Absence Policy Including Children missing in Education

(Reviewer: Caty Jacques, Lloyd Dannatt, October 2026)
Approved by SMT October 2026

Introduction

In order to facilitate teaching and learning, good attendance and punctuality is essential. Pupils cannot achieve their full potential if they do not regularly attend school, on time. This policy outlines procedures for managing attendance, punctuality as well as processes for managing pupils who are missing.

Legislation and Guidance (current version):

- The Education Acts 1996 and 2002
- The School Attendance (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2024
- Working together to improve school attendance 2026
- Children missing education
- Keeping children safe in education
- Working together to safeguard children
- Special educational needs and disability code of practice: 0 to 25 years
- Elective home education
- Alternative provision: statutory guidance for local authorities

This policy operates in conjunction with the Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy

1. Definitions

The following definitions apply for the purposes of this policy:

Absence:

- Arrival at school after the register has closed
- Not attending school for any reason

Authorised absence:

- An absence for sickness for which the school has granted leave
- Medical or dental appointments which unavoidably fall during school time, for which the school has granted leave
- Religious or cultural observances for which the school has granted leave
- An absence due to a family emergency for which the school has granted leave

Unauthorised absence:

- Parents keeping children off school unnecessarily or without reason
- Truancy before or during the school day
- Absences which have never been properly explained
- Arrival at school after the register has closed
- Absence due to leisure activities, looking after other children or birthdays
- Absence due to day trips and holidays in term-time which have not been agreed
- Leaving school for no reason during the day

Persistent absenteeism:

- Missing 10 percent or more of schooling across the year for any reason

Lateness

- Arrival at school after the beginning of the school day but before the register has closed

Roles and responsibilities

Staff are responsible for:

- Following this policy and ensuring children do so too.
- Ensuring this policy is implemented fairly and consistently.
- Modelling good attendance and punctuality behaviour.
- Using their professional judgement and knowledge of individual children to inform decisions as to whether any welfare concerns should be escalated.
- Where designated, taking the attendance register at the relevant times during the school day.
- Ensuring that the name the pupil uses at school is recorded on the register.

The attendance officer is responsible for informing the LA of any child being deleted from the admission and attendance register, see "Informing the Local Authority" below.

The Deputy Head of College acts as the College's Senior Attendance Champion:

- Setting a clear vision for improving and maintaining good attendance.
- Establishing and maintaining effective systems for tackling absence.
- Ensuring systems are followed by all staff and all staff have a strong grasp of absence data to focus the collective efforts of the school.
- Monitoring and evaluating progress regularly, including the efficacy of the school's strategies and processes.
- Holding formal conversations with parents, and pupils if age-appropriate, where engagement in support is proving challenging.

Children are responsible for:

- Attending their lessons and any agreed activities when at school.
- Arriving punctually to lessons when at school.

Parents are responsible for:

- The attendance and punctuality of their children at school.
- Providing accurate and up-to-date contact details.
- Providing the school with more than one emergency contact number.
- Updating the school if their details change.
- Promoting good attendance and punctuality with their children

Registration

Registration has two functions:

- So that an admission register is kept in accordance with the current Education (Pupil Registration) Regulations.
- It has a Health and Safety function, tracking pupils in order to provide accurate information in the event of a major incident.

All pupils will be registered at the beginning of each morning and afternoon session.

All pupils within each section of the College will be registered at a single designated point during the morning and afternoon registration session.

2. Prep School

Start and middle of the day

- Morning registration is between 8.10am and 8.30am in classrooms.
- Pupils arriving late to school (after 8.30am) should report to the school office to sign in.
- The register opens at 8.10am and closes at 8.40am
- Afternoon registration takes place after lesson 4 at the start of the afternoon break time at 1.55pm. Registers open at 1.40pm and close at 2.10pm
- The Prep School Office Secretary will compile a daily list of absentees and late pupils.
- Parents should contact the school if their child is ill or has a medical or dental appointment.
- Other absences can only be authorised by the Head of Section
- Pupils leaving school during the school day and returning to the school are required to sign in and out at the Prep Reception.
- In addition to being registered twice each day, all teachers are expected to keep a record of who is present in their lessons, and to notify Prep Reception if a pupil is not present and not on the absentee list.

At the end of the day

- Pupils in Reception, Y1 and Y2 are collected in person by their parents or guardian.
- All pupils in Yrs 3-6 must be signed out by their parent or guardian (or the driver if using the Bus service) when leaving school.

3. Senior School

Registration is completed electronically in Houses in the morning before lessons (8.10am to 8.30am (registers close at 8.40am)) and during afternoon tutor period or in St John's House for the UVI (registers open at 1.40pm and close at 2.10pm). The registration is verified by the Tutor or member of House duty staff responsible for the registration session.

- The HoM or adult on duty will check that the registration is complete before leaving the House and get those students who are present to sign in if they have forgotten.
- Information concerning future absence or explaining absence should be noted by the HoM and the appropriate symbol inserted in the register.
- If pupils are present during registration but are going out of school anytime afterwards, the HoMs should mark it with the appropriate code ie: 'V' or 'P'. Lists of pupils on trips or matches are available on SOCS.
- If a pupil is marked as unknown reason for absence then a member of the team at the Lodge phones home. The outcome is recorded by the Lodge on the electronic register in iSAMS. (For pupils in St Johns, it is the HoM who follow up on the absence).
- The daily absence list is compiled and available via iSAMS.
- Late pupils (those arriving after morning registration) sign in at the Lodge and the reason for absence is updated on the register.
- Pupils leaving school during the school day and returning to the school are required to sign in and out at the Lodge.

- In addition to being registered in house twice each day, all teachers are expected to keep a record of who is present in their lessons, and to use the registration alert in iSAMS if a pupil is not present and not on the absentee list.

Evening Registration

Attendance and registration arrangements for boarders operate alongside the Boarding Handbook and the National Minimum Standards for Boarding Schools.

- The HoM or adult on duty will check that the registration is complete before leaving the House and get those students who are present to sign in if they have forgotten.
- Information concerning future absence or explaining absence should be noted by the HoM and the appropriate symbol inserted in the register.
- If pupils are present during registration but are going out of school anytime afterwards, the HoMs should mark it with the appropriate code ie: 'V' or 'P'. Lists of pupils on trips or matches are available on SOCS.
- If a pupil is marked as unknown reason for absence then a member of the team at the Lodge phones home. The outcome is recorded by the Lodge on the electronic register in iSAMS. (For pupils in St Johns, it is the HoM who follow up on the absence).
- The daily absence list is compiled and available via iSAMS.
- Late pupils (those arriving after morning registration) sign in at the Lodge and the reason for absence is updated on the register.
- Pupils leaving school during the school day and returning to the school are required to sign in and out at the Lodge.
- In addition to being registered in house twice each day, all teachers are expected to keep a record of who is present in their lessons, and to use the registration alert in iSAMS if a pupil is not present and not on the absentee list.

4. Registration Codes

The College will use the statutory attendance and absence codes prescribed by the Department for Education and the School Attendance (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations currently in force.

5. Attendance

At Hurst we expect all pupils to attend school every day, for the duration of the full school day. The legal duty on parents relates to children of compulsory school age. Parents must ensure their child attends school regularly, this means their child must attend every day that the school is open, except for a small number of allowable circumstances (for which permission must be given in advance) or they are too ill to attend. There is a strong link between attendance and attainment as well as wellbeing.

Monitoring Attendance Overview

The Senior Management Team will monitor attendance and will follow-up if attendance falls below certain thresholds. The senior attendance Champion (Deputy Head of the College) has overall responsibility for championing and improving attendance.

The Department for Education (DfE) expects every pupil attending school to maintain a minimum attendance level of 90%; any figure below this is deemed as persistent absence, which is a cause for

concern. Department for Education guidance states that where absence escalates and pupils miss 10% or more of school (equivalent to one day or more a fortnight across a full school year), schools are expected to sensitively consider the reasons for absence and put additional targeted support in place. Parents of pupils falling into this category are likely to be contacted by the School so that the reasons for frequent absence can be clarified and help and support provided.

Progression onto the next academic year is not guaranteed if a pupil's attendance falls below 80% in a particular academic year. The Head of Section, or another member of the SMT, will be in touch to signal this as early as possible in the academic year if this becomes a concern. Any such decisions will take into account individual circumstances, including SEND, medical and safeguarding considerations.

Severe absence: attendance of 50% or below over a sustained period.

In exceptional cases, where attendance is significantly below expected levels and there is evidence that this is adversely affecting educational progress, the College may review a pupil's readiness for progression. Decisions will be made individually, taking into account educational progress, medical evidence, SEND needs, safeguarding considerations and any other relevant circumstances.

Attendance data will be reviewed for vulnerable cohorts including pupils with a social worker, young carers, looked after and previously looked after children, and pupils experiencing mental or physical health difficulties.

Parents are not routinely required to provide medical evidence for short periods of illness. However, where illness absence is frequent, prolonged, repeated or causes concern, the College may request medical evidence to support decision-making and ensure appropriate support is provided.

Where pupils are unable to attend school for an extended period, remote education may in extreme circumstances be provided. Such provision is intended as a temporary measure and will normally form part of a wider reintegration plan aimed at supporting a return to full-time education on site.

All requests for leave of absence will be considered individually on their merits and in light of the pupil's individual circumstances. The College will not operate blanket policies under which leave is automatically granted.

Monitoring Attendance Procedure

Weekly. A report will run every week to look at attendance over the previous two-week period. Relevant staff, typically HoMs and Tutors (Seniors) and Tutors (Prep) will be informed of any pupils with an attendance below a particular threshold, typically 70% and under for the previous two-week period. They will be asked to confirm any known reasons for the absence. These reasons will be discussed in the attendance meeting and action decided.

Half termly. A report will run on the Wednesday evening two full weeks before the end of a half term to review the Year to date attendance.
HoM and Tutors (Seniors) and Tutors (Prep) will be informed of any pupils with an attendance of less than 90% for the academic year to date.

They will be asked to confirm any known reasons for the absence. These reasons will be discussed in the weekly attendance meeting and action decided. For most pupils this may be advisory contact home from the Head of Section.
If a pupil's attendance continues to be a concern after advisory contact home has been made, parents will be invited in to school for a meeting to discuss the issue and ensure appropriate support is offered and a plan put in place.

Informing the Local Authority
In line with Government requirements, the school will notify the Local Authority when deleting a pupil from the register and in accordance with statutory regulations.
This includes where a pupil:

- has been continuously absent for 20 school days and reasonable enquiries have failed to establish their whereabouts
- has failed to return from a leave of absence within the agreed period
- has ceased to attend and no longer resides at a known address
- has not taken up a place after admission
- has been permanently excluded
- is being educated otherwise than at school (e.g. elective home education)

The College will make reasonable enquiries before removing a pupil from roll and will work with the Local Authority where a pupil may be missing education.

6. Missing Pupil Procedure

Procedure in the Prep School including EYFS.

Any member of staff who becomes aware that a pupil is unaccounted for should contact Prep School Reception and they will try to locate the pupil by doing the following:

- Check with the teacher of the class where the pupil should now be
- Contact Medical Centre.
- Check activity lists including music, LAMDA or LS lessons.
- Check all lists of trips out of school.

If the pupil is still found to be missing they will contact a member of the SMT who will oversee the following:

- Instigate a brief search of general areas e.g. toilets, changing rooms, playground, library, including CCTV.
- Contact staff who might previously have taught or tutored the pupil that day.

If the pupil is still found to be missing the member of the SMT will:

- Endeavour to make notes of specific actions taken and timings.
- Instigate a thorough search of the whole site including use of CCTV and an audit of the door access system.
- Email all staff with the name of the pupil, date and time the pupil was first noted as missing, asking if they have been seen
- If the site search fails, and any other process above, parents will be informed and a search of local roads will be made on foot, or by car, by available staff and parents, as appropriate.
- As soon as it becomes obvious the child is missing, on the Head's command the police should be contacted via 999 in an emergency or 101 for non-emergency situations.

- Police will require details such as age, address, height, distinguishing features and clothing. A photograph should also be provided.

Procedure in the Senior School

Any member of staff who becomes concerned that a pupil is unaccounted for should contact the Lodge (daytime) or HoM (outside working day) and they will try to locate the pupil by doing the following:

- Check with the teacher of the class where the pupil should now be
- Contact Medical Centre.
- Check activity lists including music, LAMDA or LS lessons.
- Check all lists of trips out of school.

If the pupil is still found to be missing they will contact a member of the SMT who will oversee the following:

- Instigate a brief search of general areas e.g. toilets, changing rooms, outside areas, House, library, including CCTV.
- Contact staff who might previously have taught or tutored the pupil that day.

The DSL or deputy DSL must be informed immediately when a pupil cannot be located following initial enquiries.

If the pupil is still found to be missing the member of the SMT will:

- Endeavour to make notes of specific actions taken and timings.
- Instigate a thorough search of the whole site including use of CCTV and an audit of the door access system.
- Email all staff with the name of the pupil, date and time of first noted, asking if they have been seen
- If the site search fails, and any other process above, parents will be informed and a search of local roads will be made on foot, or by car, by available staff and parents, as appropriate.
- As soon as it becomes obvious the child is missing, on the Head's command the police should be contacted via 999 in an emergency or 101 for non-emergency situations.
- Police will require details such as age, address, height, distinguishing features and clothing. A photograph should also be provided.

Clarification

A "missing pupil" refers to a pupil whose whereabouts during the school day are unknown. A "child missing education" refers to a child of compulsory school age who is not receiving suitable education and whose whereabouts may be unknown.

7. Children Missing in Education

A child absent from school is not necessarily a Child Missing Education (CME). However, unexplained absence may be an indicator that a child is at risk of abuse, neglect, exploitation or other safeguarding concerns. It may also highlight the fact that the family may need additional support of some kind. The College will respond promptly to unexplained absence in accordance with its Attendance, Registration and Safeguarding procedures.

This policy should be read in conjunction with the Safeguarding Policy

This policy has regard to Keeping Children Safe in Education and the WSCP's guidance: School attendance, behaviour and performance https://www.westsussex.gov.uk/education-children-and-families/schools-and-colleges/school-attendance-behaviour-and-performance/

This policy applies to all pupils at the College, both Day pupils and Boarders.

8. Policy and Procedure

The College will carry out daily registration and absences will be dealt with in accordance with the College's Registration and Absence Policy.

If there is a repeated pattern of absence, the reason for absence is unclear or unexplained or a member of staff has concerns about the nature of a pupil's absence, the Designated Safeguarding Lead should be consulted. The DSL, in conjunction with the HOM, HOY or class teacher, will assess the child's vulnerability and decide on the best course of action for that child. This may involve completing a West Sussex Missing in Education Report Form or a call to the Children Missing Education Officer (0330 222 8397), for advice. All unexplained absence will be followed up. Absence of 10 school days or more, or any shorter period giving rise to safeguarding concerns, will be subject to formal review and may result in referral to appropriate agencies.

9. Recognition and Response

The College recognises that children missing education can be an indicator of abuse, neglect, child criminal exploitation, child sexual exploitation, county lines involvement, radicalisation, forced marriage, female genital mutilation, mental health concerns or other safeguarding risks.

From the first day that a child does not attend school and there is no explanation or authorisation of the absence, the following steps should be taken:

- A staff member will contact parents and seek to establish the child's whereabouts and welfare.
- The outcome of the contact should be assessed and, if there are any safeguarding concerns, the DSL should be contacted. Decisions and actions will be recorded in accordance with the College's Safeguarding Policy
- In the following circumstances, a referral to children's social care and/or the police should always be made promptly:
  a) The child may be the victim of a crime
  b) The child may be the subject of a Child Protection Plan
  c) The child may be the subject of s47 enquiries
  d) The child is a looked-after child or previously looked-after child

e) There is a known person posing a risk to children in the household or in contact with the household
f) There is a history of the family moving frequently
g) There are serious issues of attendance (especially if this is contrary to an agreed plan)

The answers to further questions could assist a judgement whether or not to inform children's social care and the police:

- In which age range is the child?
- Is this very sudden and unexpected behaviour?
- Have there been any past concerns about the child associating with significantly older young people or adults?
- Was there any significant incident prior to the child's unexplained absence?
- Has the child **been a victim of bullying?**
- Are there health reasons to believe that the child is at risk? E.g.:
    - Does the child need essential medication or health care?
- Was the child noted to be depressed prior to the child's unexplained absence?
- Are there religious or cultural reasons to believe that the child is at risk? E.g.
    - Rites of passage, female genital mutilation or forced marriage planned for the child?
- Has the child got a disability and/or special educational needs?
- Have there been past concerns about this child and family which together with the sudden disappearance are worrying? E.g.:
    - Is there any known history of drug or alcohol dependency within the family?
    - Is there any known history of domestic violence?
    - Is there concern about the parent/carer's ability to protect the child from harm?

10. Children missing from education but not missing from home

The length of time that a child remains out of school could, of itself, be an alerting factor of risk of harm to the child. A judgement as to timeliness is required in respect of the referral to the Local Authority Children Missing Education Team and any other relevant agency, as appropriate.
This timeliness should be on a case-by-case basis and always within 2 weeks. The College should make referrals to the police and Local Authority Children's Social Care accordingly if a situation is not resolved within 10 days. In term time, leave absence of up to 10 school days can be authorised by the Deputy Head of College, at which point a return date is set. In these cases, the timeline for enquiries starts from when the child does not attend school on the expected return date, not from the day the extended leave started.

11. Notifications and Actions for Children Missing from Education

If the answers to any of the points set out in the previous section indicate that there are concerns about the child's safety, then a referral should be made to the Integrated Front Door and/or the Police on day one.

Where a pupil leaves the College and their next school or educational provision is not known, the College will notify the Local Authority Children Missing Education Team and share relevant information in accordance with statutory guidance and data protection requirements.