



Attendance Policy

**Dolphin School Trust
inc. Noah's Ark Nurseries**

Reviewed by:	Lucy Price (Headteacher)
Last reviewed:	September 2026
Next review:	September 2027

Attendance Policy

1. Introduction

At Dolphin School, we believe that regular and punctual attendance is vital for pupils' academic success, personal growth, and well-being. In accordance with the Department for Education's statutory guidance, *Working Together to Improve School Attendance* (July 2026), the School is committed to promoting regular attendance as a whole-school priority.

This policy applies to all pupils, including Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) children in Nursery and Reception. At Dolphin School, we aim to ensure that every pupil has the opportunity to thrive by attending school consistently.

2. A Whole-School Approach to Attendance

Dolphin School is committed to fostering a culture where attendance is everyone's responsibility. All members of our school community—including pupils, parents, staff, and governors—play a role in promoting and maintaining high attendance standards.

- a. **Staff Responsibility:** All staff at Dolphin School, including teachers, support staff, and the leadership team, are responsible for promoting and ensuring regular attendance.
- b. **Communication:** Attendance is regularly highlighted in our newsletters, school assemblies, and parent communications, emphasising the importance of consistency and punctuality.

3. Attendance Expectations

- a. Pupils are expected to attend school every day during term time, arriving promptly for the start of the school day. The school day begins at 8:30 am, and dismissal times vary by year group, as outlined in the Family Handbook.
- b. Pupils are expected to maintain at least 95% attendance.
- c. Nursery pupils, though not of compulsory school age, are encouraged to attend regularly to establish good habits early.
- d. Parents are strongly discouraged from taking holidays during term time.
- e. Nursery and Reception Attendance: The School recognises that children below compulsory school age are not subject to the same statutory attendance requirements as older pupils. However, regular attendance at agreed sessions is strongly encouraged to support children's learning, development, wellbeing and sense of belonging.

Attendance will be recorded accurately for all registered pupils, including those in Nursery and Reception. Where a child below compulsory school age is not expected to attend a particular session, the appropriate attendance code will be used in accordance with statutory guidance. The School will work in partnership with parents to support positive attendance habits from the earliest years.

4. Absence Reporting

- a. **Illness or Unforeseen Absence:** Parents must notify the school by telephone or via the Parent Portal before 08:15 on the day of absence if their

child is unable to attend. If no notification is received, the school will contact the parents to confirm the child's safety.

- b. **Planned Absence:** Requests for medical appointments or other planned absences should be submitted in writing to the school office as far in advance as possible. Exceptional absence requests should be directed to the Headteacher for approval with as much notice as possible.
- c. **Authorised Absence:** Includes illness, unavoidable medical appointments, religious observances, and exceptional circumstances. Medical evidence will not routinely be required to authorise illness-related absence. Where the School has genuine and reasonable grounds to question the reason for absence, or where prolonged or repeated illness requires additional support, appropriate evidence may be requested. The School will consider a range of evidence and will not automatically require a GP letter or medical certificate.
- d. **Unauthorised Absence:** includes term-time holidays not approved by the Headteacher and absences for which no acceptable reason has been established. Such absences will be recorded using the appropriate national attendance code. Where concerns arise, the School will work with parents and, where appropriate, the local authority.

5. Early Intervention and Support

Dolphin School is dedicated to identifying and addressing attendance concerns early:

- a. **First-Day Response:** If a child is absent without explanation, the school will contact parents on the first day of absence.
- b. **Regular Monitoring:** Attendance data is reviewed half-termly to identify patterns of absenteeism.
- c. **Support for Families:** The School will identify emerging patterns of absence and engage with parents at an early stage, rather than waiting until attendance falls below 90%. Where concerns arise, staff will work with pupils and families to understand barriers to attendance and agree appropriate support. Particular consideration will be given to pupils with special educational needs or disabilities, physical or mental health needs, caring responsibilities, or other circumstances affecting their ability to attend regularly. Where appropriate, the School will work with external professionals and the local authority.
- d. **Pupils with SEND and The Harbour:** The School recognises that pupils with special educational needs and disabilities, including those attending The Harbour, may experience additional barriers to regular attendance. The School will work closely with parents, the SENDCo and relevant professionals to understand individual needs and agree appropriate support and reasonable adjustments.

Where a temporary part-time timetable is considered necessary in exceptional circumstances, this will be agreed with parents, clearly documented, regularly reviewed and supported by a plan to return to full-time attendance as soon as appropriate. Such arrangements will not be used to manage behaviour or as a substitute for appropriate SEND provision.

6. Leave of Absence

The School expects pupils to attend throughout term time and strongly discourages holidays during the school term.

Requests for leave of absence must be submitted in writing to the Headteacher as far in advance as reasonably possible. Each request will be considered individually,

taking account of the particular circumstances, supporting information and the pupil's educational needs.

Leave of absence will not be granted automatically for any category of request. Holidays taken for convenience or preference during term time will not normally be authorised.

Where leave is approved, the School will confirm the authorised dates. Absence taken without approval, or beyond the period authorised, will normally be recorded as unauthorised.

7. Persistent Absenteeism and Legal Intervention

The School defines persistent absence as attendance below 90%. Where absence is persistent or severe, the School will work with parents and relevant professionals to identify barriers and provide appropriate support. Where concerns remain unresolved, or where safeguarding concerns arise, the School will liaise with the relevant local authority in accordance with statutory responsibilities.

8. Promoting Punctuality

Punctuality is a key element of attendance:

The School day begins at 08:30.

Morning attendance registration takes place at 08:50.

Afternoon registration takes place at 12:30.

Pupils arriving after registration begins but before the register closes will be recorded as late (code L). Pupils arriving after the register has closed will be recorded using code U, unless another statutory attendance or absence code is appropriate.

Patterns of lateness will be monitored and discussed with parents, with support offered where appropriate.

9. Monitoring and Leadership Accountability

The leadership team, including governors, is committed to maintaining high attendance standards. The Designated Safeguarding Lead is the designated Attendance Champion, overseeing attendance data and promoting strategies to address issues. The Attendance Champion is responsible for overseeing the School's attendance strategy, ensuring effective daily attendance procedures and monitoring emerging concerns.

Attendance data will be reviewed weekly to identify individual pupils and groups requiring support, with more detailed analysis undertaken half-termly. Relevant findings will be shared with the Headteacher, SENDCo and governors as appropriate, and used to evaluate the effectiveness of attendance interventions.

The School will ensure that staff understand their responsibilities for recording, monitoring and following up absence.

This policy will be reviewed annually, taking into account any changes to statutory requirements or best practices. Dolphin School Trust's Attendance Policy takes account of the specific needs of certain pupils and pupil cohorts. This policy will be applied fairly and consistently, but in doing so the school will always consider the

individual needs of pupils and their families who have specific barriers to attendance. The School has clear regard to their obligations under the Equality Act 2010.

10. Partnership with Local Authorities

In accordance with statutory requirements, Dolphin School works closely with the local authority (Wandsworth Council) to share attendance data and address concerns about persistent absenteeism or children missing education.

11. Children Missing Education and Statutory Reporting

The School recognises that unexplained or prolonged absence may indicate a safeguarding concern. Staff will follow up unexplained absence promptly, make reasonable enquiries to establish a pupil's whereabouts and welfare, and escalate concerns to the Designated Safeguarding Lead where appropriate.

The School will maintain electronic admission and attendance registers in accordance with the School Attendance (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2024, using the prescribed attendance and absence codes.

The School will make statutory returns to the relevant local authority, including:

- **New pupil and deletion returns:** where required when a pupil is added to or removed from the admission register.
- **Attendance returns:** for pupils of compulsory school age who fail to attend regularly or have ten consecutive school days of unauthorised absence recorded under codes G, N, O or U, in accordance with the reporting frequency agreed with the local authority, which must be at least monthly.
- **Sickness returns:** where the School has reasonable grounds to believe that a pupil of compulsory school age will miss at least 15 school days, consecutively or cumulatively within the school year, due to illness.

The School will liaise with the local authority and relevant safeguarding agencies as appropriate, including where a child's whereabouts are unknown or there are concerns about their welfare. Safeguarding concerns will be escalated without waiting for statutory attendance reporting thresholds to be reached.

The School will comply with statutory requirements concerning the amendment, retention and security of admission and attendance records.

12. A Commitment to Excellence

At Dolphin School, we value every child's education and are committed to ensuring that all pupils have the opportunity to achieve their full potential through regular attendance. By working together with parents, staff, and external partners, we aim to create a culture of high attendance and success for every child.