

Sophia **HIGH SCHOOL**

ATTENDANCE & CHILDREN ABSENT FROM EDUCATION POLICY

2026 - 2027

Ownership & Consultation	
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Version control	
Implementation date	September 2020
Reviewed and updated	September 2021
Reviewed and updated	September 2022
Reviewed and updated	September 2023
Reviewed and updated	August 2024
Reviewed and updated	August 2025
Reviewed and updated	September 2025
Reviewed and updated	April 2026
Reviewed and updated	August 2026
Review Date	August 2027

ATTENDANCE & CHILDREN ABSENT FROM EDUCATION POLICY

Policy statement

The school recognises that attendance is a key safeguarding and welfare indicator, and not solely an administrative or behavioural matter. Regular attendance supports children's safety, wellbeing and educational outcomes. The school maintains its Attendance Registers in accordance with Statutory Regulations, as amended from time to time. The school adheres to Statutory Guidance when dealing with Children Missing from Education. The school adopts a support-first, child-centred approach, working proactively with families, social workers, local authorities and other partners to identify and address barriers to attendance at the earliest opportunity. The school will work in a collaborative way with external agencies, in accordance with the principles of Working Together to Safeguard Children.

Purpose

The purpose of this policy is to outline the approach taken to:

- Recording information at the point a pupil is admitted to the school;
- Recording attendance information on a daily basis and lesson by lesson;
- Recording information at the point a pupil leaves the school; and
- Managing a situation when a pupil is deemed missing from education and informing councils where necessary.

1.0 Attendance

1.1 Introduction

It is important that staff, parents and pupils are familiar with this policy. Regular school attendance from an early age creates a culture about the importance of education and learning so that all can benefit equally, and supports children's wellbeing, safety and long-term outcomes. Missing learning time leaves children vulnerable to falling behind [ADD: and may indicate underlying needs or barriers to learning], and it is well-known that poor attendance leads to lower levels of achievement

The foundation for good attendance is a strong partnership between the school, parents and the child, with a shared responsibility to identify and address any barriers to attendance at an early stage

1.1a Attendance as a Safeguarding Indicator

The school recognises that poor attendance, including persistent or irregular absence, may be an early indicator of safeguarding concerns, including neglect, exploitation, mental health needs, or unmet family needs.

All staff must treat unexplained or declining attendance as a potential safeguarding concern and respond in line with the Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy.

Attendance concerns will be regularly reviewed alongside safeguarding information by the Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL).

1.2 The legal framework

Legislation specifies the legal responsibility of parent/carer(s) of statutory school age children to ensure they attend school. All children, regardless of their circumstances, are entitled to an efficient full-time education which is suitable to their age, ability, aptitude and any special educational needs; either by regular school attendance or education otherwise such as home education. The school recognises that attendance is a shared responsibility and will work proactively with families and other professionals to support attendance.

The same law requires the school to have an Admissions Register and an Attendance Register, and to place all children on both registers. Failure to do so is an offence. The Statutory Framework for the Early Years Foundation Stage (2014) requires a daily record of the names of the children being cared for on the premises and their hours of attendance.

1.3 Link between attendance and achievement

There is clear evidence of a link between poor attendance at school and low levels of achievement, as well as a strong link between truancy and antisocial behaviour.

1.4 Parent/carer(s) responsibilities

- Encourage regular and punctual attendance working in partnership with the school to support their child's attendance, being fully aware of their legal responsibilities.
- Ensure that the child in their care arrives punctually and is prepared for learning - with any resources needed to participate in the online lessons prepared and at hand.
- Provide clear reasons for any absence which ensures the school can code the absence properly and accurately to support the school in understanding and responding appropriately to the child's needs
- Contact the school on the first day of the child's absence as early as possible and preferably before the start of the school day by emailing attendance@sophiahigh.school
- Avoid making arrangements to remove children from school during term time.
- Respond helpfully and positively to any enquiry made by the school to ascertain the reason for any absence, including any safeguarding matter.

1.5 School responsibilities

- Promote good attendance and reduce absence by identifying and addressing barriers to attendance at the earliest opportunity, including persistent absence (deemed as attendance below 90%).
- Work to ensure every pupil has good attendance so s/he can access the education s/he is entitled to;
- Act early to address patterns of absence, including before attendance falls below 90%, using professional judgement and available data.
- Work in partnership with parents to support their child's attendance and address any barriers affecting engagement.
- Keep accurate and efficient records of attendance and registration at school, including attendance at all after school and before school activities.
- Hold half termly meetings with parents/carers when a student absence record falls below 90% discussing ways in which the school could further support the child/family.

- Work proactively with social workers and other professionals where a child has a social worker (including children in need, child protection plans, or looked-after children);
- Ensure that social workers are informed of unexplained absence, patterns of concern, or significant changes in attendance;
- Contribute to multi-agency plans where attendance is a concern;
- Consider attendance within all safeguarding and welfare discussions;
- Identify and respond to early signs of attendance decline before persistent absence thresholds are reached;
- Analyse attendance data for vulnerable groups (including pupils with a social worker, SEND, or other identified needs) to identify patterns and inequalities;
- Ensure that the voice of the child is considered when addressing attendance concerns;
- Work with the Virtual School Head where applicable to support children with a social worker or who are looked-after.

We achieve this in the following ways:

- Teachers must take a register for every lesson taught on the Athena Platform;
- Mark all children not present, taking account of absence notes;
- Parents emailed automatically at end of the day from Athena if there are two or more absences during the day;
- Monitor attendance and lateness and implement strategies informed by analysis of patterns, trends and individual circumstances for promoting improved awareness of attendance such as year groups or vulnerable children, as required, including the use of formal letters home;
- Report on patterns of attendance in Staff meetings with the Education Team to safeguard and promote the welfare of pupils;
- Specifically monitor any persistent absence (individual attendance below 90%); while also identifying and responding to early signs of declining attendance before this threshold is reached
- Proper use of the DfE national codes to record and monitor attendance and absence in a consistent way which complies with the regulations, including preservation of the entries on both the Admissions and Attendance Registers for a period of three years after it was made;
- Only the Director of Education, CAEO or a member of staff acting on their behalf can authorise absence;
- Close discussion with the Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL) to identify children causing concern, to consider attendance as part of safeguarding and welfare concerns including interviewing children and parents regarding any unsatisfactory attendance;
- Close liaison with the Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL) where there are concerns of children being missing from education – see Section 2 of this document;
- Implementing any agreed improvement strategies focused on support and early intervention such as referral to the local authority attendance services and/or children's social care in accordance with the Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy and Procedures; and
- Provide parent/carer(s) with the timings of the school day and the calendar via Google Classrooms and Athena and the school website and any other usual method such as the school newsletter, in advance.

- Go back and amend student attendance retrospectively if work has been completed and submitted where a student was absent from a lesson. Amend to student being “present”
- Seek to understand the underlying causes of absence, including mental health, SEND, family circumstances, bullying, or other barriers to attendance;
- Ensure that responses to absence are individualised and proportionate to the child’s needs

1.6 Good attendance

Our school considers good attendance to be that of 96% or above.

1.7 Late arrival

If a student arrives late for his lessons, it is recorded on the register. At the end of the day an email is automatically sent to the parents informing them of their child being late for the lesson. Attendance is recorded for each individual lesson or session in Athena.

1.8 Requests for absence from parent/carer(s)

Schools, not parents, authorise absence. Requests to the school for granting permission for leave of absence to a pupil during term time must be made in writing in advance directly to the Executive Principal. The Executive Principal is only able to authorise leave of absence where exceptional circumstances relate to the application. Authorised leave is unlikely to be granted for the purpose of a family holiday.

We ask that parents make contact with the school when a child is going to be absent for ill health reasons in order that the school can keep records updated and importantly, so that the school can be kept informed of their progress to full health and anticipated return date. If necessary, the school may ask for medical evidence of any illness. We expect any absence for illness to be evidenced by a note from the parent/carer(s) as soon as possible. Where absence occurs, the school will seek to understand the underlying reasons and provide appropriate support. An absence is classified as unauthorised if a child is away from school without the permission of the Executive Principal.

1.9 Persistent absentees

The school will monitor attendance continuously and intervene early where there are signs of declining attendance, even where attendance remains above 90%. Persistent absentees are those pupils with attendance below 90% . The school will not rely solely on this threshold to initiate support. Hold half termly meetings with parents/carers and work collaboratively with them when a student absence record falls below 90% discussing ways in which the school could further support the child/family and address any identified barriers to attendance

1.10 Maintaining records and reporting to the authorities

The school’s Attendance Register is electronic and the drives are constantly backed up and kept by means of a our Digital Education Platform, Athena, Server and Cloud Storage.

1.10a Information Sharing and Multi-Agency Working

The school will share relevant attendance information with appropriate professionals, including social workers and local authority services, where there are concerns about a child's welfare or attendance.

This includes:

- unexplained absence;
- patterns of declining attendance;
- risk of persistent or severe absence;
- potential removal from roll.

Information sharing will be carried out in line with safeguarding and data protection requirements.

1.11 Monitoring and review arrangements

Attendance rates are reported regularly to the Executive Officer. This covers pupil attendance, as well as any patterns or trends of persistent absence from school. The Board of Directors, Executive Principal and DSL scrutinise Admissions and Attendance Registers for compliance and safeguarding purposes. A named senior leader will have strategic responsibility for attendance; Attendance will be reviewed in the context of safeguarding, wellbeing, and educational outcomes; Senior leaders will ensure effective multi-agency working is in place. Attendance of vulnerable groups (including pupils with a social worker, SEND, or other identified risks) will be monitored and analysed separately to identify patterns and ensure appropriate support.

Gary Webster (gary.webster@sophiahigh.school) will oversee attendance for all non-Alternative Provision pupils, while Nicki Pelletier (nicki.pelletier@sophiahigh.school) will oversee attendance for pupils in Alternative Provision.

The first line of response to non-attendance will be at classroom level, with teachers responsible for promptly flagging concerns to Form Tutors, who will then take appropriate action, including contacting parents/carers and discussing attendance with pupils during Form Time. Gary Webster and Nicki Pelletier will provide strategic oversight, monitoring attendance processes to ensure that responses at Form Tutor level are timely and effective, and will intervene where necessary, including where escalation to a higher-level meeting is required following initial Form Tutor engagement.

Katy Todd, as Designated Safeguarding Lead (katy.todd@sophiahigh.school), will intervene in cases where attendance concerns indicate potential safeguarding risks, including persistent absence, patterns of unexplained absence, or where a pupil's welfare may be compromised. The DSL will ensure that appropriate safeguarding procedures are followed, including referral to external agencies where required and coordination of multi-agency support. End-of-day attendance alerts will continue to operate in line with current procedures.

2.0 Children Absent from Education

2.1 Introduction

'Children missing education are children of compulsory school age who are not registered pupils at a school and are not receiving suitable education otherwise than at a school.' Children missing education are at significant risk of underachieving and this may indicate wider safeguarding concerns or unmet needs, being victims of harm, exploitation or radicalisation, and becoming NEET (not in education, employment or training) later in life.

2.2 Statutory guidance

Compulsory School Age

School admissions: School starting age - GOV.UK

Department for Education regulations state that:

"Your child must start full-time education once they reach compulsory school age. This is on 31 December, 31 March or 31 August following their fifth birthday - whichever comes first. If your child's fifth birthday is on one of those dates then they reach compulsory school age on that date. For example, if your child reaches compulsory school age on 31 March, they must start full-time education at the beginning of the next term (summer term that year)."

As our youngest learners start in Reception, these dates are important for accurate attendance records as the child progresses through the school.

The school will follow the statutory guidance 'Children Missing from Education', as amended:

Children missing education: statutory guidance for local authorities and schools - GOV.UK

Whenever a new student arrives at Sophia High School, a copy of the Absent from Education Policy from the Department of Education is emailed to them. The parents are advised if they left a school, that their previous school should be informed that they have left and the reasons why. It is the responsibility of this school to keep the council informed of their departure from their school. They should also inform their previous school that they have joined Sophia High, as well as their local council.

2.3 School requirements

Schools must enter pupils on the Admissions Register at the beginning of the first day on which the school has agreed, or been notified, that the pupil will attend the school. If a pupil fails to attend on the agreed or notified date, the school should undertake reasonable enquiries to establish the child's whereabouts and consider notifying the local authority at the earliest opportunity.

Schools must monitor pupils' attendance through their daily register. Schools should agree with their local authority the intervals at which they will inform local authorities of the details of pupils who fail to attend regularly, or have missed ten school days or more without permission. Schools should monitor attendance closely and address poor or irregular attendance. It is important that pupils' poor attendance is referred to the local authority.

A pupil can be removed from the Admissions Register when:

- They have been continuously absent for at least 20 school days, and
- The absence is unauthorised, or they have not returned after an authorised absence, and
- The school and local authority have made reasonable enquiries but cannot establish the child's whereabouts

This only applies if the school does not have reasonable grounds to believe that the pupil is unable to attend because of sickness or unavoidable cause.

When a child has left Sophia High School, the parent needs to inform the school where the child is going. Sophia High will advise the parent to inform the local council. Sophia High will also check with the local authority that this has been done.

2.4 Safeguarding

The school has a safeguarding duty in respect of its pupils and recognises that children absent from education are at heightened risk of harm.

Absence from education will be treated as a potential safeguarding concern, and appropriate enquiries and referrals will be made promptly.

Where there are safeguarding concerns about any child, the school will always follow its Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy, including reporting to the local authority and working with other agencies as appropriate.

Annex – Attendance Guidance for Parents

Introduction

Regular school attendance from an early age creates a culture about the importance of education and learning so that all can benefit equally. Missing learning time leaves children vulnerable to falling behind and it is well-known that poor attendance leads to lower levels of achievement. The foundation for good attendance is a strong partnership between the school, parents and the child, beginning from the early years.

The legal framework

Legislation in the UK specifies the legal responsibility of parent/carer(s) of statutory school age children to ensure they attend school.

The same law requires the school to have an Admissions Register and an Attendance Register, and to place all children on both registers. Failure to do so is an offence.

Link between attendance and achievement

There is clear evidence of a link between poor attendance at school and low levels of achievement:

- Of pupils who miss more than 50% of school, only 3% manage to achieve five A* to Cs including English and Maths;
- Of pupils who miss between 10% and 20% of school, only 35% manage to achieve five A* to C GCSEs including English and Maths; and
- Of pupils who miss less than 5% of school, 73% achieve five A* to Cs including English and Maths.

Parent/carer(s) responsibilities

- Encourage regular and punctual attendance, being fully aware of their legal responsibilities.
- Ensure that the child in their care arrives punctually and is prepared for learning.
- Provide clear reasons for any absence which ensures the school can code the absence properly and accurately.

Attendance and Children Absent from Education Policy

- Contact the school on the first day of the child's absence as early as possible and preferably before the start of the school day to provide a reason for absence
- Avoid making arrangements to remove children from school during term time.
- Respond helpfully and positively to any enquiry made by the school to ascertain the reason for any absence, including any safeguarding matter.

School responsibilities

- Promote good attendance and reduce absence.

- Work to ensure every pupil has good attendance so s/he can access the education s/he is entitled to.
- Act early to address patterns of absence.
- Encourage parents to ensure their child attends all learning opportunities regularly and punctually.
- Keep accurate and efficient records of attendance and registration at school, including attendance at all after school and before school activities.
- Ensure that recorded lessons and catch up resources are available on the Google Classroom for absent students each day and follow up with families to ensure work is completed.

Supervision of Breakout Rooms and Collaborative Online Learning

Breakout rooms are used throughout the school to support confidential or private spaces for discussion. Students are encouraged to use these spaces to allow them time to 'cool down' and speak to the teacher to gain understanding on any current stressful situation. These are a significant tool to ensure students remain in lessons, and feel comfortable join lessons afterwards with a 'fresh start'.

Breakout rooms are an integral part of the school's delivery model, enabling paired and small-group collaborative work in line with the pedagogy of the Online Learning Policy. The school's approach to safeguarding within breakout rooms follows the principles of Keeping Children Safe in Education: supervision that is reasonable, proportionate and appropriate to the setting, rather than continuous surveillance of every pupil interaction — the same standard that applies to group work, corridors and shared spaces in a physical school.

The following controls apply whenever breakout rooms are in use: ·

The class teacher retains host control of the whole session at all times, remains present in the lesson throughout, and moves between breakout rooms on an unannounced basis, as a teacher would circulate between groups in a physical classroom.

The class teacher retains the ability to recall all students immediately to the main classroom where this is necessary for safeguarding, behaviour management or teaching purposes.

Where safeguarding, behaviour or welfare concerns arise, staff may close breakout rooms immediately, return students to the main classroom and take any further action necessary in accordance with the school's Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy and Behaviour Policy.

Breakout groups are kept deliberately small, consistent with the school's small-group model.

- Every pupil retains an immediate exit at all times: any pupil may leave a breakout room and return to the main room, or leave the lesson entirely, at any moment. Pupils learn from home, with a parent or carer contactable as set out in the Online Learning Policy.
- All pupils are taught, and sign an age-appropriate Digital Safety Agreement committing to, the expectation that they report immediately to an adult anything that makes them uncomfortable, in a breakout room or anywhere else online. The school's behaviour and anti-bullying expectations apply in breakout rooms exactly as they do in the main classroom and in a physical school.

- Concerns raised about conduct in breakout rooms — by a pupil, parent or member of staff — are followed up promptly under the school's Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy and Behaviour Policy, and grouping arrangements may be adjusted while any concern is looked into.
- Structured weekly parent contact provides a regular, reliable route through which concerns about peer interactions are surfaced and acted upon.

The school keeps its arrangements for breakout rooms and collaborative learning under continuous review as part of its safeguarding risk assessment, annual policy review cycle and in response to emerging safeguarding risks, technological developments and updates to statutory guidance.

Late arrival

If your child arrives late for any lesson they will be marked as 'late' in our electronic register, Athena. Students entering the lesson 5 minutes after the start are logged as late. Leaving a lesson early is also recorded and reported.

Requests for absence from parent/carer(s)

Schools, not parents, authorise absence. Requests to the school for granting permission for leave of absence to a pupil during term time must be made in writing in advance directly to the executive Principal. The CEO only is able to authorise leave of absence where exceptional circumstances relate to the application. Authorised leave is unlikely to be granted for the purpose of a family holiday.

We ask that parents make contact with the school when a child is going to be absent for ill health reasons in order that the school can keep records updated and importantly, so that the school can be kept informed of their progress to full health and anticipated return date. If necessary, the school may ask for medical evidence of any illness. We expect any absence for illness to be evidenced by a note from the parent/carer(s) as soon as possible.

An absence is classified as unauthorised if a child is away from school without the permission of the Executive Principal in advance.

Good attendance

Our school considers good attendance to be 95% or above. The school will contact the parent/carer(s) if there are attendance concerns. If attendance does not improve, the school will contact the local authority in accordance with local authority procedures.

Attendance Codes:

Core Attendance Codes (2025/26)

- Present: / (AM), \ (PM).
- Present Approved Education Activity:
B (Educated off-site/alternative provision),
P (Participating in supervised sporting activity),
V (Educational visit),
D (Dual registered).

Authorised Absence:

- I: Illness (not medical/dental).
- M: Medical/Dental appointments.

- C: Other authorised circumstances (e.g., agreed family leave).
- H: Family Holiday (agreed) - *Note: This code has been largely phased out or heavily restricted in recent updates.*
- E: Excluded (no alternative provision made).
- R: Religious observance.
- T: Traveller absence.

Unauthorised Absence:

- G: Holiday (not agreed) or in excess of agreement.
- U: Late (after registration closed).
- O: Other unauthorised absence.
- N: Reason not yet provided.

Administrative/Exceptional Circumstances (Y Codes):

- Y1: Non-available transport.
- Y2: Widespread travel disruption.
- Y3: Part of school premises closed.
- Y4: Whole school's unexpected closure.
- Y5: Criminal justice detention.
- Y6: Public health guidance/law.
- Y7: Other exceptional circumstances (e.g., unavoidable causes).

Key Changes & Trends:

- Code H Removal: Many schools are removing the simple 'H' code to reduce discretionary holiday absences, relying on stricter 'C' code approvals.
- New Code Q: Used for lack of access arrangements.