



Vita et Pax
PREPARATORY SCHOOL

Vita et Pax Preparatory School
Established 1936

Attendance Policy

Policy Originator	Head Teacher
Approved by	Governing Body
Date Approved	1 March 2026
Status	Statutory
Review Period	Annually (next: March 2027)
Senior Attendance Champion	Darren May (Head Teacher)
Attendance Officer	Maria Castro

1. Aims

Vita et Pax Preparatory School is committed to ensuring every pupil attends school regularly and punctually. Good attendance is essential for pupils to achieve their full potential, build friendships and develop the skills they need for life. This policy sets out our whole-school approach to promoting, monitoring and improving attendance.

- Set high expectations for the attendance and punctuality of all pupils.
- Promote the benefits of good attendance to pupils and parents.
- Reduce absence, including persistent absence (below 90%) and severe absence (below 50%).
- Ensure every pupil has access to the full-time education to which they are entitled.
- Act early to address patterns of absence before they become entrenched.
- Build strong relationships with families and provide support to overcome barriers.

2. Legislation and Guidance

This policy is based on:

- DfE statutory guidance: Working Together to Improve School Attendance (August 2024).
- The Education Act 1996 (Part 6) — parental duty to secure education.
- The Education (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2006 (as amended).
- The School Attendance (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2024.

- The Education (Penalty Notices) (England) (Amendment) Regulations 2024.
- Keeping Children Safe in Education (KCSIE) 2025.
- The Independent School Standards Regulations (ISSRs) 2014.
- The Equality Act 2010.
- DfE guidance: Mental Health Issues Affecting a Pupil's Attendance (2023).

3. Roles and Responsibilities

3.1 The Governing Body

- Sets high expectations for attendance across the school.
- Ensures the school fulfils its statutory duties on recording and reporting attendance.
- Reviews attendance data regularly and challenges where improvement is needed.
- Ensures adequate resources and training for attendance management.

3.2 The Head Teacher (Darren May) — Senior Attendance Champion

- Has overall responsibility for implementing this policy.
- Monitors school-level absence data and reports to governors.
- Authorises term-time absence in exceptional circumstances.
- Issues penalty notices where necessary, in liaison with the local authority.
- Communicates high expectations for attendance to parents and pupils.
- Notifies the local authority when a pupil's name is added to or deleted from the register outside standard transition times.
- Reports to the local authority where a pupil fails to attend regularly or has 10+ consecutive days of unauthorised absence.
- Works with parents of pupils with SEND/EHC plans to address attendance barriers.

3.3 Attendance Officer (Maria Castro)

- Monitors and analyses attendance data daily.
- Provides half-termly attendance reports to the Head Teacher and governors.
- Contacts parents on the first day of unexplained absence.
- Identifies pupils at risk of persistent or severe absence.
- Works with education welfare officers and external agencies.
- Maintains the attendance register and ensures correct coding.

3.4 Class Teachers

- Record attendance for morning and afternoon sessions using correct codes.
- Report concerns about a pupil's attendance or wellbeing to the Attendance Officer.
- Discuss attendance with pupils and parents at parents' evenings.

3.5 Parents

- Ensure their child attends school every day, on time.
- Contact the school before 9am on the first day of any absence, and each subsequent day.
- Provide more than one emergency contact number.

- Arrange medical/dental appointments outside school hours where possible.
- Request term-time absence in advance and only in exceptional circumstances.
- Engage with support offered by the school to improve attendance.

4. The School Day and Registration

- The school day starts at 8:45am and ends at 3:30pm.
- Pupils must arrive by 8:45am. The morning register is taken by 9:00am.
- The afternoon register is taken at 1:30pm.
- A pupil arriving after the register closes is marked as absent (unauthorised) for that session, using code U.

The attendance register is electronic. Every entry is retained for 6 years. Amendments record the original entry, the change, the reason, date and person who made it.

5. Authorised and Unauthorised Absence

5.1 Authorised absence includes:

- Illness (physical or mental health) — medical evidence may be requested after 5 days or where the school has genuine concern about authenticity.
- Medical/dental appointments (with advance notification; should be outside school hours where possible).
- Religious observance — a day exclusively set apart by the pupil's religious body.
- Traveller families — where travelling for occupational purposes with agreed arrangements.
- Exceptional circumstances — approved by the Head Teacher on a case-by-case basis.
- Regulated performance or employment abroad.
- Interviews, study leave, approved educational visits.

5.2 Unauthorised absence includes:

- Absence without explanation (code O, or N if reason not yet established).
- Holidays not approved by the Head Teacher (code G).
- Arriving after the register has closed (code U).
- Any absence where the school is not satisfied with the reason given.

Term-time holidays will not normally be authorised. The Head Teacher considers each request individually based on exceptional circumstances. A leave of absence will not be granted for protest activity during school hours.

6. Following Up Unexplained Absence

Where a pupil does not attend without explanation, the school will:

1. Contact the parent on the morning of the first day of absence.
2. If no contact is made with any emergency contact, consider a home visit or referral to the local authority.

3. Contact the parent each subsequent day the absence continues.
4. Identify the correct attendance code within 5 working days.
5. Where absence may indicate a safeguarding concern, report to the DSL immediately.
6. Consider referral to education welfare services for persistent unexplained absence.

7. Persistent and Severe Absence

Persistent absence is defined as missing 10% or more of school sessions. Severe absence is missing 50% or more. The school will:

- Use data to identify pupils at risk of persistent or severe absence early.
- Hold meetings with parents to understand barriers and agree an action plan.
- Offer support including pastoral care, external referrals and reasonable adjustments.
- Consider safeguarding implications (KCSIE 2025).
- Implement sanctions where support has been offered but not engaged with (see Section 9).
- Inform the local authority where a pupil with an EHC plan has falling attendance.

8. Supporting Pupils with Barriers to Attendance

8.1 Mental health

The school recognises that mental health difficulties can be a significant barrier to attendance. Where a pupil's absence is linked to mental health, the school will work sensitively with the family, consider reasonable adjustments (such as a phased return or part-time timetable), and make referrals to CAMHS or other appropriate services. The school follows DfE guidance on mental health and attendance.

8.2 Pupils with SEND

The school works with parents of pupils with SEND to develop specific attendance support plans, including addressing in-school barriers, transport issues and transition anxieties. Where a pupil has an EHC plan, the school informs the local authority if attendance falls or barriers arise related to the pupil's needs.

8.3 Returning after lengthy absence

A reintegration plan is put in place for any pupil returning after a lengthy or significant absence. This may include: a meeting with parents and the pupil before return, a phased timetable, additional pastoral support, catch-up work, and regular check-ins. The aim is to make the transition back to school as smooth as possible.

9. Sanctions — Penalty Notices

Where support has been offered but not engaged with, or where unauthorised absence meets the national threshold, the school may use sanctions:

Penalty notices

- The national threshold for considering a penalty notice is 10 sessions of unauthorised absence in a rolling period of 10 school weeks.
- First penalty notice: £80 if paid within 21 days, £160 within 28 days.
- Second penalty notice (same parent, same pupil): £160 within 28 days.
- A third penalty notice cannot be issued within 3 years of the first — alternative legal action is taken instead.
- The school consults with the local authority before issuing a penalty notice.
- The school considers Equality Act 2010 obligations before issuing.

Notices to improve

Before issuing a penalty notice, the school may issue a notice to improve giving the parent a final opportunity to engage with support. The notice includes the pupil's attendance record, support offered, an improvement period of 3-6 weeks, and a warning that a penalty notice may follow if attendance does not improve.

10. Attendance Monitoring and Data

- The Attendance Officer monitors daily absences and provides half-termly reports.
- Data is analysed at whole-school, year group, cohort and individual pupil level.
- The school benchmarks attendance against local, regional and national data.
- Data is shared with the DfE through the school census.
- Regular reports are provided to the governing body.
- The DSL and SENCo receive attendance data to identify potential safeguarding or SEND concerns.
- Data is used to evaluate the impact of interventions and inform future strategies.

11. Children Missing Education

The school is alert to the safeguarding risks of children missing education. In line with KCSIE 2025 and DfE guidance, the school will:

- Notify the local authority when a pupil's name is removed from the register at non-standard transition points.
- Report to the local authority any pupil who fails to attend for 10 consecutive school days without authorisation.
- Report where it believes a pupil will miss 15 days consecutively or cumulatively due to illness.
- Maintain accurate admissions and attendance registers at all times.

12. Attendance Codes

The school uses the DfE national attendance codes as set out in the School Attendance (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2024:

Code	Meaning
/\	Present (AM / PM)

Code	Meaning
L	Late arrival (before register closes)
B	Approved educational activity
V	Educational visit or trip
I	Illness
M	Medical / dental appointment
R	Religious observance
C	Exceptional circumstances
G	Holiday not granted
N	Reason not yet established
O	Unauthorised absence
U	Arrived after register closed
E	Suspended or excluded
#	Planned whole-school closure
Z	Prospective pupil not yet on roll

13. Related Policies

- Child Protection & Safeguarding Policy
- Behaviour & Discipline Policy
- SEND Policy
- Exclusions Policy
- Complaints Policy

Approved by: Governing Body of Vita et Pax Preparatory School

Date: 1 March 2026