



# **Attendance Policy**

## **Castle Hill Primary School**

Adopted: September 2026

Approved: November 2026

Review date: September 2027

Designated Attendance Lead: Headteacher

## **1. Aims and principles**

At Castle Hill Primary School, regular attendance is central to belonging, learning and achievement. We want every pupil to feel safe, supported and able to attend school. Our whole-school approach is to expect, monitor, listen and understand, facilitate support, formalise support when necessary and use legal action only where appropriate.

Our school attendance ambition is 96% or higher overall. This is a school improvement target, not a statutory definition or an automatic trigger for enforcement. We encourage attendance at every possible session while recognising legitimate absences, disability-related barriers, medical needs and individual circumstances.

Persistent absence means missing 10% or more of possible sessions (attendance of 90% or less); severe absence means missing 50% or more of possible sessions (attendance of 50% or less). The school will intervene early, before these thresholds where patterns emerge.

Work with families respectfully, without blame, to identify and address barriers.

Use reliable attendance data to spot patterns by pupil, class and group, including disadvantaged pupils and pupils with SEND.

Make reasonable adjustments and coordinate pastoral, SEND, medical and safeguarding support.

Maintain accurate statutory registers and meet information-sharing duties.

Recognise good attendance, improved attendance and progress towards individual goals fairly.

## **2. Legislation and guidance**

This policy has been prepared with reference to the statutory Working together to improve school attendance guidance (DfE, updated 9 July 2026) and the School Attendance (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2024. Other relevant legislation includes the Education Act 1996 (including parental duties and section 19 provision), Education Act 2002, Education and Inspections Act 2006, Education (Penalty Notices) (England) (Amendment) Regulations 2024, Equality Act 2010, Children and Families Act 2014, and applicable safeguarding and data protection legislation.

It should be read alongside Keeping children safe in education 2026 (where applicable), Children missing education statutory guidance (2025), statutory guidance on supporting pupils with medical conditions, relevant SEND guidance and the local authority's current penalty notice code of conduct.

## **3. Roles and responsibilities**

### **3.1 Governing board**

Promote attendance through school strategy and culture; ensure statutory expectations are met. Scrutinise attendance trends, including persistent/severe absence, disadvantaged pupils, pupils with SEND and other vulnerable groups.

Monitor impact of intervention, staff training, equality and safeguarding practice; hold leaders to account.

Approve and periodically review this policy.

### **3.2 Headteacher**

Ensure the policy is implemented, registers and data returns are accurate and appropriate support is available.

Report attendance, risks and improvement outcomes to governors.

Decide applications for leave of absence in accordance with statutory grounds and consider formal measures where appropriate.

Ensure referrals and penalty notice requests comply with the local authority code and national framework.

### **3.3 Senior Attendance Champion**

The headteacher is the senior leader to champion attendance and oversees a whole-school strategy, analysis, early identification, targeted work with families, multi-agency coordination, staff training and evaluation. The school will publish how parents can contact the designated leader.

### **3.4 Attendance team / office**

The assistant headteacher, office manager and office assistant are identified as the attendance team. The attendance team monitor and analyse attendance, benchmark outcomes, produces reports for leaders, works with education welfare and early intervention services, and supports meetings with families. School office staff take daily absence calls, record the details on the school system and transfer calls to an SLT member where more detailed support is needed.

### **3.5 Class teachers and all school staff**

Class teachers accurately take and submit the morning and afternoon register using approved codes and report concerns about absence, punctuality or welfare promptly. All staff foster a welcoming, inclusive environment and follow safeguarding procedures.

### **3.6 Parents and carers**

Parents are expected to secure regular attendance for children of compulsory school age, make sure children arrive punctually, report absence before 9:00 am on the first and each subsequent day (or as otherwise agreed), provide the expected return date and up-to-date contact information, and work with school to address difficulties. We ask families to provide more than one emergency contact where possible and arrange appointments outside sessions where practicable.

### **3.7 Pupils**

Pupils are encouraged to attend punctually and tell a trusted adult about anything making attendance difficult. Their views will inform support plans, as appropriate for age and understanding.

## **4. Recording attendance and responding to absence**

### **4.1 Statutory registers**

The school keeps an electronic admission register and attendance register. The attendance register is taken at the beginning of the morning session and once during the afternoon session; a valid national code is recorded for each registered pupil for each session. Entries must be made accurately at the time the register is taken, not pre-populated for future sessions. Register amendments retain the original entry, replacement entry, reason, date and identity of the staff member making the change.

Attendance and admission register entries and required backups are preserved for six years. An electronic backup copy is made at least monthly. Statutory returns, including daily attendance data sharing where required, are completed through approved school systems. Pupils are removed from the registers only where a statutory ground applies and any required local-authority notifications are made.

## **4.2 School times and lateness**

The school gates are open until 8:50 am. Pupils arriving after 8:50 am enter via the main entrance. Pupils arriving before 9:00 am do not receive a late mark. Arrivals from 9:00 am until the morning register closes at 9:30 am are recorded with code L; arrivals after 9:30 am are recorded with code U for the morning session. The afternoon register is taken at the beginning of the afternoon session. The school will verify these established times against the current school day and MIS before final approval.

## **4.3 Reporting illness or unexpected absence**

Parents should inform the school before 9:00 am of the reason and anticipated duration, and keep school updated each subsequent day unless a different arrangement is agreed. Illness will normally be authorised using code I. The school will not routinely demand medical evidence; proportionate evidence may be sought where there is a genuine reason to question an explanation or to plan suitable support. Decisions will consider disability and medical circumstances. Medical or dental appointments during session time should normally use code M where appropriate, with attendance for the rest of the day where possible.

## **4.4 First-day contact, missing pupils and safeguarding**

If a pupil has an unexplained absence, the school will telephone the parent/carer on the morning of the first day to establish the reason. If contact is unsuccessful, staff will try the other emergency contacts, using telephone, text or email as appropriate. Where the absence remains unexplained, the school will contact the parent/carer on each subsequent day. The reason and appropriate code will be recorded promptly and temporary code N replaced within the statutory period. These checks take place independently of, and do not delay, any safeguarding response.

If parents/carers neither report the absence nor respond to the school's attempts to contact them, the school will send an unexplained-absence letter as part of its established process. Where contact cannot be made or the child is at risk, office or attendance staff will refer the case promptly to the designated safeguarding lead. The DSL will assess whether further contact, an SLT welfare/home visit or involvement of children's social care, police or the local authority is appropriate. SLT home visits may also be used to support pupils with significant attendance concerns, including previously identified pupils below 80%, with timing decided by welfare risk and individual circumstances rather than percentage alone.

## **4.5 Communication with families**

Every parent/carer will receive an emailed individual attendance report every month. Established report content includes the child's attendance percentage and number of days, comparison with their attendance a year earlier, Bolton and national attendance comparisons, and a graph tracking attendance week by week across the year, where data are available. The school will also contact families promptly whenever concerns arise rather than waiting for the monthly report, and an SLT

member will contact parents when attendance falls below 90% to discuss barriers and agree support. Communications will be supportive and accessible.

## **5. Authorised absence, leave and medical needs**

### **5.1 Decisions about absence**

Only the school can authorise absence. The correct statutory reason and code must be used. A request for leave should be submitted to the headteacher in advance wherever possible, setting out the circumstances and relevant evidence. Leave is considered individually and is only granted when an applicable statutory ground exists, including exceptional circumstances where relevant. There is no blanket requirement for previous attendance to exceed 95% and no automatic five-school-day maximum. Holidays are not normally regarded as exceptional circumstances.

Authorised absence can include genuine illness, appropriate medical/dental appointments, religious observance on a day set apart by the relevant religious body, statutory leave and other applicable circumstances. The school will use the relevant national code and not the obsolete H holiday code.

### **5.2 SEND, disability, mental health and medical conditions**

The school will seek to understand and reduce barriers to attendance for pupils with SEND, disabilities, ongoing health conditions and emotional or mental health difficulties. Staff will listen to pupils and parents, work with the SENCO and relevant professionals, make reasonable adjustments where required by the Equality Act, and consider individual healthcare plans, early help or other coordinated support as appropriate.

Part-time timetables will only be used exceptionally in a pupil's best interests, with parental agreement, a clearly recorded rationale, a time-limited review plan and a clear ambition to return to suitable full-time education. They must not be used as a disciplinary sanction or as a substitute for appropriate special educational provision. Relevant sessions must be accurately coded, including C2 only when its legal conditions apply.

### **5.3 Off-site education and alternative provision**

Where pupils attend alternative provision or other approved off-site activities, school remains responsible for safeguarding and must establish robust attendance confirmation arrangements with providers. Codes B, K, P, V or D are used only when their detailed statutory conditions are met. Remote education is not counted as physical attendance for statutory register purposes.

## **6. Promoting and supporting attendance**

- Castle Hill present its established weekly attendance cup and certificate for the class with the highest attendance at Celebration Assembly.
- Mr Renwick's Raves take place on Friday afternoons for pupils who have achieved 100% attendance that week (every morning and afternoon session attended).
- Children who achieve 100% attendance across a half-term receive a certificate. These established rewards will be supplemented by recognition for improved attendance, punctuality and progress towards individual attendance goals, with appropriate inclusion and equality safeguards. The school will not encourage attendance when children are

medically unfit or disadvantage pupils because of disability-related absence or necessary medical treatment.

The school will communicate expectations, welcome pupils after absence, offer practical support to families, work with local agencies and help address barriers such as anxieties, transition difficulties, transport or wider family circumstances.

## **7. Monitoring and graduated response**

### **7.1 Analysis and evaluation**

The attendance team monitors each pupil's attendance daily and produces monthly attendance summaries for all pupils. Staff analyse emerging individual and cohort patterns, including absence among disadvantaged pupils and pupils with SEND, and compare school outcomes with available Bolton and national data. Leaders evaluate the impact of attendance interventions and report trends and outcomes to governors. Attendance information also informs meetings with pupils and families.

### **7.2 Graduated intervention**

Staff follow the support-led graduated response in Appendix 2 and intervene early where patterns emerge. When a pupil's attendance falls below 90%, a member of SLT will contact the parents/carers to discuss barriers and plan support. For ongoing illness-related concerns, the school may seek support from the school nurse and agree a health care/attendance support plan with the family as appropriate. SLT home visits and referrals to Bolton Council's Early Intervention Service or other partners will be considered where helpful, proportionate and consistent with safeguarding needs. Persistent or severe absence will prompt more intensive coordinated review, and formal measures will be considered only where appropriate.

### **7.3 Formal legal intervention and penalty notices**

Where support has not worked, has not been engaged with, or is not appropriate (for example, most unauthorised term-time holidays), the school will consider the most appropriate next step in line with the national framework and Bolton Council's published Code of Conduct for Education Fixed Penalty Notices. Bolton Council makes penalty notice decisions in consultation with the school. Any action must take account of individual circumstances, Equality Act responsibilities, support already offered and the likely effectiveness of formal intervention.

The national threshold for considering a penalty notice is 10 sessions of unauthorised absence within a rolling 10-school-week period, which may span terms or school years. Relevant sessions may be accumulated from unauthorised holidays, other unauthorised absence and late arrival after the register closes. This is a threshold for consideration, not an automatic fine. A first notice for the same parent and child is £80 if paid within 21 days, rising to £160 if paid within 28 days. A second notice within a rolling three-year period is £160, payable within 28 days. A third notice for the same parent and child cannot be issued within that period; the local authority considers other action, potentially prosecution. Penalties apply per liable parent and per child; payment is made to the council and cannot be made by instalments.

## **7.4 Bolton Council procedures**

The school works with Bolton Council's Early Intervention Service and, where appropriate, other agencies to resolve barriers to attendance. Families should normally be offered timely support, with clear records of contacts, meetings, reasonable adjustments, plans and reviews. This approach does not prevent appropriate legal action where support is unsuitable, unsuccessful or not engaged with.

When the national threshold is met and support is appropriate but has not succeeded or been engaged with, the school should usually issue a Notice to Improve in accordance with Bolton Council's code. The notice will explain the attendance record, parental legal responsibilities, support already offered and still available, required improvements, the review period and the circumstances in which a penalty notice may follow. Bolton's code refers to an improvement period of between three and six weeks in one provision and an expected period of up to three weeks in another; the school will confirm the applicable period and template with the council before issuing a notice. A Notice to Improve is not generally required for unauthorised term-time holidays where support is not appropriate.

The decision whether to request a notice will be made case by case. The school will submit accurate attendance evidence and records of support and engagement as required by Bolton Council. Bolton Council's Child Employment and Enforcement Officer makes the decision to issue a penalty notice in consultation with the school. If a penalty notice remains unpaid after 28 days, the council considers proceedings for the original alleged offence; prosecution is not described by this policy as automatic.

Parents can seek early attendance support through school or Bolton Council's Early Intervention Service, The Base, Marsden Road, Bolton BL1 2PF (telephone 01204 334450). Information on children missing education may be shared with the local authority where required by statutory and safeguarding procedures. The school will not disclose unnecessary pupil or family details.

## **8. Monitoring, approval and review**

The headteacher and Senior Attendance Champion will review implementation throughout the year. Governors will review and approve the policy annually and sooner if legislation or statutory guidance changes. This draft is proposed for approval in November 2026 and next scheduled review September 2027. The school will check its local authority procedures before final approval.

## **9. Linked school policies**

Child protection and safeguarding; Children Missing Education procedures; SEND information report and policy; supporting pupils with medical conditions; behaviour; equality and accessibility; data protection; suspension and permanent exclusion; and complaints.

## Appendix 1. National attendance and absence codes (England, 2026)

Use the correct code only where all statutory conditions are met. This is a concise operational summary; detailed definitions and required additional information are in DfE Working together to improve school attendance, chapter 8, and the 2024 Registration Regulations.

| Code | Brief meaning                                                                       |
|------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| /    | Present: morning session                                                            |
| \    | Present: afternoon session                                                          |
| L    | Arrived after the start of register but before it closed                            |
| B    | Approved supervised off-site educational activity (not otherwise coded)             |
| D    | Dual registered; attending the other school for that session                        |
| K    | Attending local-authority-arranged educational provision (qualifying circumstances) |
| P    | Approved supervised sporting activity                                               |
| V    | Approved educational visit or trip                                                  |
| W    | Work experience                                                                     |
| C    | Leave for other qualifying exceptional circumstances                                |
| C1   | Leave for regulated performance or employment abroad (qualifying licence/exemption) |
| C2   | Leave for compulsory-school-age pupil on an agreed temporary part-time timetable    |
| E    | Suspended or permanently excluded with no alternative provision                     |
| I    | Illness (not a medical or dental appointment)                                       |
| J1   | Interview for employment or admission to another educational institution            |
| M    | Medical/dental appointment                                                          |
| R    | Religious observance                                                                |
| S    | Study leave for public examination (where applicable)                               |
| T    | Mobile child travelling for parent's trade or business (qualifying conditions)      |
| G    | Unauthorised holiday                                                                |
| N    | Reason for absence not yet established (temporary)                                  |
| O    | Absent without authorisation / no other code                                        |

|    |                                                                                   |
|----|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
|    | applies                                                                           |
| U  | Arrived after register closed                                                     |
| Q  | Unable to attend because required local-authority access arrangements are lacking |
| X  | Non-compulsory school-age pupil not required to attend                            |
| Y1 | Normal school/LA transport unavailable                                            |
| Y2 | Widespread emergency travel disruption                                            |
| Y3 | Part of school premises closed                                                    |
| Y4 | Whole school premises unexpectedly closed                                         |
| Y5 | Criminal justice detention                                                        |
| Y6 | Public-health guidance or legislation prevents attendance                         |
| Y7 | Other unavoidable cause (exceptional conditions)                                  |
| Z  | Prospective pupil not yet on admission register                                   |
| #  | Planned whole or partial school closure / non-school day                          |



## Appendix 2. Castle Hill graduated attendance response

| Stage                                                | School response                                                                                                                                                                             | Record/review                                                                                |
|------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Universal: all pupils                                | Twice-daily registration; daily monitoring; weekly class attendance cup and certificate; Friday Mr Renwick's Raves and half-termly 100% certificates; inclusive recognition of improvement. | Daily checks; monthly emailed family report; half-termly monitoring summary.                 |
| Early concern: any concerning trend                  | First-morning phone call for unexplained absence; repeat contact each unexplained day; send letter if family does not report or respond; listen and agree early support.                    | Record calls, texts, emails and letters; assess safeguarding risk and escalate where needed. |
| Targeted support: sustained absence or emerging risk | Attendance meeting and agreed plan; pastoral, SENCO, healthcare or early help input as needed; clarify responsible lead.                                                                    | Written action plan and regularly reviewed outcomes.                                         |
| Persistent absence: misses $\geq 10\%$ of sessions   | SLT contacts family when attendance falls below 90%; review attendance barriers, support plan, school nurse/health plan where appropriate, and Bolton Early Intervention Service.           | Frequent monitoring; governor-level summary.                                                 |
| Severe absence: misses $\geq 50\%$ of sessions       | Priority individualised reintegration and multi-agency action, safeguarding assessment and local-authority partnership.                                                                     | Frequent case review with named accountability.                                              |
| Enforcement where appropriate                        | Assess whether support is unsuitable, not engaged with or unsuccessful; consider local-authority code and statutory notice requirements; consider reasonable adjustments.                   | Document proportionality, evidence, decision and parent communication.                       |

At all stages: if safeguarding concerns arise, escalate immediately regardless of attendance percentage. Children below compulsory school age still benefit from early supportive engagement, but compulsory attendance enforcement rules differ.

### **Appendix 3. Before governors approve: operational confirmations**

Confirm name and title of the single designated Senior Attendance Champion, named governor and attendance-team roles.

Insert school attendance telephone/email, current office hours and exact start/close times for both registers.

Ensure staff use Bolton Council's published penalty notice Code of Conduct and referral arrangements, including recording the rationale, support offered and equality considerations; obtain confirmation of any changes before approval.

Monthly emailed attendance reports to every family are established Castle Hill practice, including attendance percentages and days, comparison with the previous year and Bolton/national figures, and weekly tracking graphs where available; see section 4.5.

Confirm electronic MIS backup/retention and children missing education reporting procedures meet local arrangements.

Update linked policy names, school website contact details and published information.

### **Key authoritative sources**

DfE, Working together to improve school attendance (updated 9 July 2026):

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/working-together-to-improve-school-attendance>

The School Attendance (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2024:

<https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukxi/2024/208/contents>

DfE, School census 2026–27 attendance codes: <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/complete-the-school-census/find-a-school-census-code>

DfE, Children missing education (updated September 2025):

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/children-missing-education>

GOV.UK, Legal action to enforce school attendance: <https://www.gov.uk/school-attendance-absence/legal-action-to-enforce-school-attendance>

Bolton Council, Code of Conduct for Education Fixed Penalty Notices (from 19 August 2024):

<https://www.bolton.gov.uk/downloads/file/1958/code-of-conduct-penalty-noticesotices>

Bolton Council, parent penalty notice information:

<https://www.bolton.gov.uk/downloads/file/163/penalty-notice>

Bolton Council, school attendance and Early Intervention Service:

<https://www.bolton.gov.uk/attendance-behaviour/truancy?doc>