

Attendance and Punctuality Policy

Education is the food of youth, the delight of old age, the ornament of prosperity, the refuge and comfort of adversity, and the provocation to grace in the soul.

St Augustine

Diversity, Equality & Inclusivity Statement:

The commitment to diversity, equality, and inclusivity is at the heart of our values at Austin Friars. Equality means creating an environment where pupils have the chance to achieve their full potential, free from barriers, prejudice, and discrimination. Inclusion is about recognising that each pupil is unique and that their needs can be met in different ways. Diversity means recognising, respecting, and celebrating the added value that differences bring. Our unwavering dedication to our school values – Truth, Love and Unity - is how we fulfil our mission at Austin Friars. It is through our commitment to diversity, equality, and inclusivity that our pupils are empowered to be authentic and succeed.

Austin Friars is an equal opportunities employer and is committed to safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children and expects all staff and volunteers to share this commitment.

In order to maximise the benefits of the education at Austin Friars, arriving at school in a positive frame of mind is crucial. Maintaining the necessary continuity of attendance to achieve personal goals and being punctual to school and lessons, goes a long way to achieving this.

The aim of this policy is to outline expectations and inform of procedures related to absence and punctuality at school.

This policy has regard to the following guidance and advice;

- [Working Together to Improve Attendance \(August 2024\)](#);
- [Summary table of responsibilities for school attendance \(August 2024\)](#);
- [Keeping Children Safe in Education 2025](#)
- [Children Missing in Education, September 2025](#) and prepared to meet the School's statutory obligations and responsibilities to record absence and attendance under:
 - Education (Independent School Standards) Regulations 2014;
 - Education and Skills Act 2008;
 - The School Attendance (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2024;
 - Equality Act 2010; and
 - Data Protection Act 2018 and UK General Data Protection Regulation (UK GDPR)
- [section 7 of the Education Act 1996](#)

The Deputy Head (Pastoral) is the School Attendance Champion and has overall responsibility for the implementation of pupil registration and the monitoring of pupil attendance and can be contacted on claireholmes@austinfriars.co.uk.

At Austin Friars, we expect that all pupils will attend school every day, all day, that pupils will arrive punctually to school and arrive at lessons on time and that, where possible, routine appointments

such as dental and medical arrangements are made outside school hours (however, we do appreciate that this is not always possible).

We expect that parents will communicate with the School in a timely manner if there are any problems that might affect a child's attendance or punctuality. And should any issues arise with regard to attendance, that parents work with us, and any external agencies if appropriate, in an attempt to improve levels of attendance.

Time off from School is not allowed during the term except where there are mitigating circumstances. A request for absence in such cases must be sought from the Headmaster or the relevant Head of School. The academic term dates are published in advance in order to facilitate holiday travel arrangements. Convenient air flights during term time are not considered a reason for requesting to be absent from School.

Parents are asked to inform the School office by telephone, preferably before 8.30am if their child is absent.

Rarely do parents fail to contact the School, however, the parent of any pupil who has not registered by 9.30am (where the School has not been informed of the reason) will be contacted by Reception staff. Parents are then required to call **each day** that a pupil is absent due to illness.

Should a pupil have an **appointment** outside of School (for example with a doctor, dentist, etc.) **parents must provide an email (or letter) to their tutor and reception**, giving approximate times of collection from and return to School. The pupil should report to their School reception to complete the signing out book when they leave and again when they return.

Useful Contacts:

Senior School – Heads of School

Senior School Reception: 01228 528042

Head of Lower School – katherinequinn@austinfriars.co.uk

Head of Middle School – jeremytiffen@austinfriars.co.uk

Head of VI Form – stuartparry@austinfriars.co.uk

Office – office@austinfriars.co.uk

Junior School

Junior School Reception: 01228 550701

Head of Junior School – jonathonclark@austinfriars.co.uk

Office - office@austinfriars.co.uk

Any pupil who needs to go out of School for any reason other than a medical or dental appointment, must get permission from their Head of School and must complete the signing out book as above.

Any emails received by a Form Tutor requesting/advising of absences for any other reason, will be passed to the appropriate *Head of School* for authorisation.

If a pupil should verbally inform their tutor of an absence at very short notice, the tutor will inform Reception and Head of School via email. This will help when ringing home to parents; office staff will reiterate to parents that they must confirm the absence in writing.

If a pupil has completed a University visit form, the Form Tutor will inform reception staff of the absence.

Elite sport absence or attendance at Music masterclasses or performance in dramatic productions are amazing opportunities for pupils. Attendance at these events is normally anticipated well in advance and the School would positively encourage attendance to enrich and develop individual talents. Parents/ organising bodies should inform the school of such events in a timely manner. Where appropriate academic support for extended absence will be provided. However, extensive and repeated absence may have a detrimental effect on academic progress and may require parents, pupils and school working together to arrive at an outcome which is of greatest benefit to the individual concerned.

Safeguarding repeat absences

In certain situations, there may be underlying issues or problems associated with repeat absences. It may be necessary for the Heads of School (who are all Deputy Designated Safeguarding Leads) or the Deputy Head Pastoral, who is the Designated Safeguarding Lead, to become involved to offer support and guidance. (see contacts above. Plus claireholmes@austinfriars.co.uk)

For timings of the School Day, please see – The School Day on the website [doc.pdf](#)

Procedure:

Where pupils do not meet the deadlines, we set for arriving at School on time for registration, this policy sets out the appropriate procedure. In some cases, there will be legitimate reasons for lateness e.g. a School bus arriving late; but in many others it is tardiness on the part of the pupils, many of whom may be dropped off on time by their parents, but they are not getting to registration as quickly as they should.

Definition of lateness

Tutor time in the morning, at **8:40am**, pupils are expected to be in their tutor room. After lunch, registration is from **1:30pm** in the Junior School and **2:05pm** in the Senior School.

At 9.00am when the register closes the following events will take place:

1. Office staff will update the online registration if any communication has been received from parents to let us know of illness etc.
2. Pupils who come in late, after the online register has been taken, must go to the front office to sign in. Office staff will then mark 'Late' on the online register. Failure to sign in by pupils will lead to an appropriate sanction (see later).
3. Office staff will contact parents of any pupil who is marked No Reason Yet Provided For Absence [N] on the online register and ascertain the reason for their absence. This will then be updated appropriately on the online register, providing a suitable explanation has been given.

4. It is the duty of the Form Tutor at the next available meeting with the pupil (probably the next registration at lunchtime) to ascertain the reason for the lateness of the pupil. It is the duty of the Form Tutor to be aware of pupils who are regularly late and report this to the Head of School.
5. The Heads of School check the online registration system regularly and pass on any concerns to the Deputy Head.

Sanctions in Senior School

- If a pupil has more than two L's in any two consecutive weeks, they will be placed in lunchtime detention by the Form Tutor.
- If a pupil fails to sign in and is found to be in School, lunchtime detention can be given. This person should also be sent to the Deputy Head who will warn the pupil of the Health and Safety implications of not being properly signed in.
- If the pattern of lateness continues, the tutor and/or Head of School should call the parents in and explain our concerns.
- If a pupil fails to sign in on 2 occasions (within a term), a Friday evening detention will be issued. Further failure to sign in could result in a Headmaster's detention. This will take place on the next available Saturday morning (normally from 10.00am to 1.00pm). HoS to feedback to SMT any repeat offenders at weekly meetings.
- It is possible that if a pupil refuses to address this issue of lateness, then further, even more serious, sanctions may be applied, such as a suspension.

Support for the pupil

Where there are mitigating circumstances and genuine difficulties associated with repeated lateness or absence, the school will offer help and support. The degree and level of support will be tailored to the individual, but may include the use of emotional support, sleep assessments and guidance, the use of a report/ punctuality card. Parents will be encouraged to help and support the pupil and the school in this endeavour.

Parents and School working together

Parents have a duty under [section 7 of the Education Act 1996](#) to ensure that their children of compulsory school age are receiving suitable full-time education.

It is invaluable that parents work with us to help set the standards we expect from our pupils. We expect parents to help and support us in stressing the importance of punctuality and good attendance.

Helping to promote punctuality:

- Developing a healthy sleep pattern. Unwinding before going to bed and having sufficient non screen time has shown to have a positive effect on promoting good sleep habits. Certainly,

for younger pupils, restricted access to a screen overnight can be helpful. Persistent sleep difficulties may require intervention and advice from the GP.

- Try to arrive at school in plenty of time, at least by 8:30, this helps with organisation before the school day begins and helps promote a more positive start to the day.
- Encourage pupils to be organised for school the night before, this can reduce the stress of getting ready for school in the morning.
- Organisation is key. Some pupils struggle with organising themselves, their prep and their books. Help is always on hand. Form tutors, the Learning Support Department and Heads of School should be able to offer advice/ give support if needed. Parents and/ or pupils should always speak to someone in school should there be repeated issues surrounding punctuality and/ or attendance.

Note: Please note that staff supervision on site cannot be guaranteed before 8am, therefore, no pupil should be on the School site prior to 8am.

Whole School Persistent Absence Procedure

Registers will be reviewed often throughout the terms and high attendance is expected. Should attendance fall to below 90% the following actions will be taken. The circumstances and individual needs of every pupil will be considered throughout the process, such as SEND and other barriers to attendance.

Action plan if attendance falls below 90%

- 1. Letter from Head of School (HoS) or Head of Junior School is sent home**
(suggested letter in appendix 1)



If no improvement over a half term

- 2. Letter from Deputy Head (Pastoral) or Head of Junior School**
(suggested letter in appendix 1)



Still no improvement over following half term

- 3. Parental Meeting with Deputy Head (Pastoral) or Head of Junior School**

- Discuss organisation
- Sleep Health
- Phone usage at night
- Need for Punctuality



Still no improvement over following half term

- 4. Early Help assessment with Cumberland Safeguarding Hub** (external support)

Response to unexplained Absence

1. Should a pupil be absent, and the parents are not responding to the calls (and ultimately emails) made by the office staff, the Head of School and DSL will be informed (in case there are likely to be any underlying child protection issues that need to be addressed). It may be necessary to escalate the matter to Cumberland Safeguarding Hub or the police (if the pupil is deemed to possibly be in immediate danger).

All contacts (including the emergency contacts) will be called on the first day of absence.

2. Should there still be no contact via the usual methods on the second day, the DSL should be kept abreast of the situation and will decide on the next steps to take, these may begin with a home visit and/ or using a wider network (normally of telephone contacts) to track down the whereabouts of the parents/ pupil.
3. If no contact has been made with parents at the start of the third day, Cumberland Safeguarding Hub will be contacted (if they haven't already).

Unauthorised Absence

Unauthorised absences refer to times when a pupil is absent from school without the school's permission or without a valid reason. These absences are marked as **unauthorised** in the school's attendance register. These include but is not limited to:

- Holiday taken during term time without authorisation
- Term-time travel abroad (e.g. for family events, weddings, or emergencies) without permission
- Truancy (pupil deliberately absent without parental knowledge or consent)
- Late arrival after the register has closed (U code)
- Parentally condoned absence without valid reason
- No reason provided for the absence (N code initially, changed to O if unexplained)
- Absence due to sibling being unwell
- Appointments not verified or without evidence
- Refusal to attend / School refusal without medical backing
- Religious observance without prior agreement (or for too many days)
- Pupil sent home for behaviour but not officially excluded
- Waiting for a school place (e.g. moved house but not yet on roll at new school)
- Parental misunderstanding or disagreement with school policy (e.g. not agreeing with curriculum content or school trips)

Reporting Unauthorised Absence to the Local Authority

The school is required to providing the local authority with the names and addresses of all pupils of compulsory school age who fail to attend school regularly or have been absent for a continuous period of 10 school days where their absence has been recorded *as unauthorised*.

The school is required to provide the local authority with the full name and address of all pupils of compulsory school age who have been recorded with illness and who the school has reasonable

grounds to believe will miss 15 days consecutively or cumulatively because of sickness. Only one sickness return is required for a continuous period of sickness in a school year.

Access and Inclusion – Children Missing from Education Officers

All schools must inform their Local Authority of children who start or leave the school mid-year. Schools must inform the Children Missing in Education team if they intend to remove a pupil from their admissions register and have not had confirmation of their attendance elsewhere (the CMIE team will confirm in writing that they have received the communication). Pupils can only be removed from the Admissions Register if they meet one of the prescribed grounds determined by the Department of Education. These include:

- Registered at another school.
- Subject to a school attendance order that has been changed or revoked.
- Taken out of school for home education.
- Moved too far away to travel to school.
- Has had more than 20 days unauthorised absence or not returned following an agreed leave of absence, and neither the school, nor the Local Authority can locate them.
- Have health problems that prevent their attendance before ceasing to be of compulsory school age or have died.
- Had a custodial sentence of over 4 months.
- Permanently excluded.

Cumberland Children Missing from Education Team can be contacted directly on:
accessandinclusion@cumberland.gov.uk

Leaving the School

Where children leave the school or college (including in year transfers) the designated safeguarding lead should ensure their child protection file is transferred to the new school or college as soon as possible, and within 5 days for an in-year transfer or within the first 5 days of the start of a new term.

Accessibility

This policy should be easily accessible to leaders, staff, pupils, and parents, including being published on the school's website. It is sent to Parents with initial information when pupils join the school and reminded of it at the beginning of each school year and when it is updated. Any clarifications please contact the Attendance Champion.

Deputy Head and Head of Junior School
November 2025



Headmaster: Mr C J Hattam BA

Dear **[Parent(s)/Guardian(s) Names]**

Re: School Attendance - Below 90% -1

At Austin Friars, we are committed to nurturing the personal and academic development of every pupil. A key part of this is ensuring that all pupils attend school regularly and punctually.

We are writing to inform you that **[Child's First Name]**'s attendance has recently fallen below 90%, which places them in the category of 'Persistent Absence' according to national standards. We absolutely recognise that there are often legitimate reasons for absence, and we are here to support rather than judge.

Senior School

The government has produced data regarding attainment at Key Stage 4 (GCSEs) that highlights the significant risks posed by missed days:

- A student with **90% attendance** is absent from school for roughly **19 days** over the academic year—nearly four weeks of learning. When a student's attendance drops to this level, the percentage achieving strong passes (Grade 9–4) in both English and Maths decreases by approximately **11%**. This is a considerable disadvantage.
- The negative impact becomes catastrophic for students who miss **more than 10%** of school time. For these students, the percentage achieving Grade 9–4 in English and Maths plummets by **over 40%**. Missing school is directly linked to missing key concepts, homework, and preparation that cannot be easily caught up.

Source: [Government data on the link between absence and attainment at KS2 and KS4 \(via heath.org.uk\)](https://www.heath.org.uk)

Junior School

The government has produced data regarding attainment at Key Stage 2 (J4 level) that highlights the significant risks posed by missed days:

- Persistently absent pupils were less than half as likely to reach the expected level in reading, writing, and maths at the end of Key Stage 2.

Source: [Government data on the link between absence and attainment at KS2 and KS4 \(via heath.org.uk\)](https://www.heath.org.uk)

Under the new KCSIE 2025 (Keeping Children Safe in Education) legislation, schools have an increased duty to monitor attendance not just for academic progress but also for safeguarding and wellbeing purposes. As such, we are reaching out at this early stage to open a supportive dialogue.

We remain committed to ensuring **[Child's First Name]** flourishes in every aspect of their education. By working together, we can support their progress and wellbeing. As part of this partnership, we do expect to see an improvement in **[Child's First Name]**'s attendance over the coming weeks.

Thank you for your ongoing support.
Warm regards,

Head of School



Dear **[Parent(s)/Guardian(s)' Names]**

Re: Ongoing Concerns – Attendance Below 90% - 2

We hope this letter finds you well.

Further to our previous correspondence regarding **[Child's First Name]**'s attendance, we are writing again as their attendance has not yet improved and continues to remain below the national threshold of 90%, placing them in the category of Persistent Absence.

As outlined in our earlier letter, we fully appreciate that there can be valid reasons for absence, and our intention is always to work in a supportive and understanding manner. However, as attendance plays such a significant role in a pupil's academic progress and overall wellbeing, we do need to address the continued concern.

Under the revised KCSIE 2025 (Keeping Children Safe in Education) guidance, schools are expected to take proactive steps where attendance remains low, particularly in relation to safeguarding responsibilities and the impact on educational outcomes.

Our aim is to understand whether there are any barriers to attendance and how we can work with you to address them. We would welcome the opportunity to meet with you in person to discuss how we can help **[Child's First Name]** re-establish strong attendance habits.

Please contact **The Junior / Senior School Office 01228 550701/01228 528042** office@austinfriars.co.uk/juniorschoolreception@austinfriars.co.uk to arrange a convenient time for a conversation.

We remain committed to supporting **[Child's First Name]** and your family to ensure they can flourish in every aspect of their school life. We would appreciate your cooperation in prioritising this matter and look forward to working together to improve **[his/her/their]** attendance moving forward.

Thank you for your attention and continued support.

Warm regards,
Mr J Clark
or
Mrs C Holmes
Austin Friars