Swiss Cottage School
Development & Research Centre

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Attendance Policy

Date policy reviewed:	**October 2025**
Person responsible:	**Assistant / Vice Principal**
Committee responsible:	**Provision & Wellbeing**
Display/availability:	**School Website**
Review:	**October 2026**

Swiss Cottage School Attendance Policy

School Context

At Swiss Cottage we recognise the clear link between consistent attendance and academic achievement and pupil wellbeing. The whole school community has a responsibility for promoting excellent attendance; parents, pupils, governors and all school staff. Regular attendance at school is a legal requirement.

Attendance rates for special schools are generally below those of mainstream schools because of the complex nature of some of our pupils' special needs. Unfortunately, some of our pupils are more prone to illness and hospitalisation. We will always work with families to support children to attend school, participate in school life or where appropriate access education at home, in hospital, hospice or specialist settings.

We also recognise the importance of close home-school partnerships in supporting our pupils' optimum attendance. Children who are not accessing school will be discussed at a fortnightly attendance meeting and where appropriate referrals should be made to multi-disciplinary colleagues, such as the Paediatric team for recurring illness or the Early Help Team or if the child known to social care the Children and Young people with Disabilities Team and Camden SEN. We understand that each child/young person and their situation and context must be handled individually and sensitively, however we also have robust expectations and systems in place to ensure that each pupils' attendance is optimized, and work in line with our statutory duties and with support from the Local Authority.

Purpose of Attendance Policy

This policy is written in accordance with the Government's information about how children must attend school: Working Together to Improve School Attendance. August 2024.
We have this policy so we can try to:

- Support children and their parents/carers to be at school every day and on time.
- Make sure all children can access school.
- Make sure that parents/carers know about the laws to do with attendance.

Why is Attendance Important?

1. Learning and Progress

We know from experience and from studies that regular absence and poor punctuality can have a negative effect on a child's learning and progress. When a pupil is absent or arrives late it disrupts teaching routines so may affect the learning not only of that pupil but also that of others in the same class.

Ensuring your child's regular attendance at school is your legal responsibility and permitting absence from school without a good reason creates an offence in law.

2. Safeguarding and Wellbeing

At Swiss Cottage School school, we believe every pupil should be able learn in an enjoyable and safe environment and be protected from harm. We respect and value all children and are committed to providing a caring, friendly, and safe environment for all our pupils so they can learn and participate in all school activities in a supportive and secure atmosphere.

Attending school regularly promotes the welfare and safety of children whilst they are not in the care of their parents/carers. Safeguarding is about offering early help and support to children and families and difficulties with attendance and lateness where these indicate that there is a barrier or that there are difficulties within the family. Poor or irregular attendance, persistent lateness, or children missing from education may be considered a safeguarding matter if this places your child at risk of harm.

Safeguarding the interests of each child is everyone's responsibility and within the context of this school; safeguarding and promoting the welfare and life opportunities for children encompass:

Attendance, Behaviour Management, Health and Safety, Access to the Curriculum and Anti- bullying, protecting children from abuse and neglect, online safety, radicalisation and extremism, awareness of Female Genital Mutilation (FGM) and Child Sexual Exploitation (CSE).

More information on safeguarding and the protection of children can be found in the schools Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy.

To allow us to safeguard the children in our care it is important that parents and carers provide the school with their current contact details and provide at least three other contact numbers in case of emergency.

It is also important for parents to let school know of any specific vulnerability in relation to their child or home circumstances. If you are uncertain about what would be considered a vulnerability, please email admin@swisscottage.camden.sch.uk. They will put you in touch with the relevant member of staff, which might include:

- Your child's class teacher / form tutor
- The Assistant Principal
- The Wellbeing Team

You can reach all of the above members of staff via the school admin email (admin@swisscottage.camden.sch.uk).

We will see advice on attendance concerns from the LA Attendance and Children Out of School Officer and where appropriate we will seek consent to refer to other support services that can help support pupils and their families to improve attendance.

Promoting Regular Attendance

Helping to create a pattern of regular attendance is everybody's responsibility - parents, pupils, and all members of school staff.
To help us all to focus on this we ensure that we provide a curriculum and provision that puts the physical and emotional wellbeing of pupils at the fore. We will also promote good attendance by committing to:

- Provide parents / carers with details on attendance procedures in the school newsletter.
- Report to parents twice annually on attendance and punctuality rates

The Law relating to attendance and safeguarding.

Section 7 of the Education Act 1996 states that:

the parent of every child of compulsory school age shall cause him / her to receive efficient full-time education suitable:
(a) to age, ability, and aptitude and

(b) to any special educational needs, he/ she may have either at school or otherwise

Compulsory School Age: A child is compulsory school age from the beginning of the next term after their 5th birthday until the last Friday of June in the academic year of their 16th birthday.

Section 175 of the Education Act 2002 places a duty on local authorities and governing bodies to have regard to guidance issued by the Secretary of State with regard to safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children and students under the age of 18.

This policy is written in relation to the following acts of Parliament and guidance relating to attendance:

- Education Act 1996
- The Education (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2006
- We will also take account of all new legislation and initiatives.
- Working together to improve school attendance.

Types of Absence

Every half-day absence from school must be classified by the school (not by the parents), as either AUTHORISED or UNAUTHORISED. This is why, information about the cause of any absence is always required, preferably in writing.

Authorised Absence

An authorised absence is where the school has either given permission in advance for the child to be absent or where an explanation offered is accepted as satisfactory justification for absence.

Absence may generally be authorised for the following reasons:

- Illness, medical appointments - appointments should always be made outside school times where possible.
- Unavoidable cause (which is expected to be an emergency and unavoidable)
- Days of religious observance
- Traveller child travelling for the purposes of parents' employment.

Unauthorised Absences

An unauthorised absence is where either no explanation has been given for the child's absence or where the explanation offered is not considered acceptable by the school.

This includes:

- Parents / Carers keeping children off school to assist with translation.
- Absences which have never been properly explained
- Children who arrive at school too late to get a late mark – See lateness section.
- Shopping, looking after other children or birthdays.
- Day trips and holidays in term time.

If an absence is recorded as unauthorised the school may refer this to the Local Authority's Attendance and Children Out of School. The Local Authority can use various sanctions to promote regular attendance such as issuing a penalty notice fine or initiate court proceedings. (Further information below)

Whilst any child may be off school because they are ill, it can sometimes be that they are reluctant to attend school. Any problems with regular attendance are best sorted out between the school, the parents/carers, and the child wherever possible. If your child is reluctant to attend, it is never better to cover up their absence or to give in to pressure to excuse them from attending. This gives the impression that attendance does not matter and usually makes things worse.

Persistent and Severely Absent pupils (PA and SA)

A pupil is a 'persistent absentee' if they miss 10% or more of their schooling across the school year for whatever reason.

A pupil is "severely absent" if they miss 50% or more of their sessions across the school year for whatever reason.

Absence at both these levels is causing considerable damage to any child's educational prospects and we need parent's fullest support and co-operation to tackle this.

We monitor all absence thoroughly. Any case that is seen to have reached the PA or SA thresholds or is at risk of moving towards that level, is considered alongside the individual context of the child (for example, if they have known health needs).

PA and SA pupils are tracked and monitored carefully through our pastoral support system via The Wellbeing Team, and we also combine this with academic support where absence affects attainment.

If your child has or is at risk of reaching the threshold for Persistent Absence or Severely Absent, you may be asked to provide evidence for any future absence. This may be medical evidence for illness which can be in the form of prescription, appointment cards, medicine packaging, hospital letter or a screen-print from the My GP app. Where we have concerns about your child's health, we may ask you to talk to the school nurse or for permission to contact their GP or other medical professionals for advice.

We will use our attendance data to identify patterns of poor attendance at both individual and for different groups within the school population. Once concerns have been identified we will work together with pupils, parents, and other services where appropriate to resolve the issue, understand and remove any barriers to attendance and work to resolve them before they become a more serious issue.

Absence Procedures for Families

If your child is absent, you must:

- Contact us as soon as possible on the first day of absence and give an expected return date. You need to call at least every second day thereafter to advise school of your child's progress.
- You can email admin@swisscottage.camden.sch.uk stating the reasons for absence or call 02076818080 where you can leave a message.

If your child is absent, we will:

- Telephone, text or email you on the first day of absence if we have not heard from you.
- Invite you in to discuss the situation with our Wellbeing Team or the Assistant Principal if absences persist.
- Consult with the Attendance and Children Out of School team if attendance moves below 95% and at least 10% or more of the absences are unauthorised.

The Role of The School Attendance Lead (SAO)

The School Attendance lead is Assistant Principal Gabbie Czifra, who oversees attendance systems and processes and is responsible for

- Monitoring and analysing attendance data
- Ensure attendance data is accurate and up to date.
- Benchmarking attendance data to identify areas of focus for improvement.
- Providing regular attendance reports to school staff and reporting concerns about attendance to the designated senior leader responsible for attendance and the headteacher
- Collaborating with school staff e.g., Wellbeing Team/ Assistant Principles/ Middle Leaders to tackle persistent absence and to follow up absences.

The role of Governors

There is a School Governor with responsibility for monitoring attendance and who is responsible for school attendance policies and issues. It is their role to be aware of general attendance issues and along with the whole Governing Board inform and oversee school attendance performance initiatives.

Reports and statistics and initiatives to improve school attendance will be shared and consulted on with the Governing Board and documented in Governor's meeting minutes (made available to all parents) and the Governors Annual Report.

- Recognise the importance of school attendance and promote it across the school's ethos and policies.
- Ensure school leaders fulfil expectations and statutory duties.
- Regularly review attendance data, discussing challenging trends, and helping school leaders focus efforts on the individual pupils or cohorts who need it most.
- Ensure school staff receive adequate training on attendance.
- Hold the Principal to account for the implementation of this policy.

The Principal's Role

The Principal will consider every request for leave on its individual merits. Ultimately the Principal will be the final arbiter of the authorisation of any leave.

The Principal oversees the collection and reporting of attendance data and the publication of statistics and reports on attendance to parents, pupils, governors and to Camden Council. Data used to target attendance improvement efforts to the pupils or pupil cohort who need it most. Data will also inform the annual review of school's attendance policy and practice.

The role of the Attendance Lead / senior leaders

The Attendance Lead will work with the headteacher to devise this Attendance Policy, reviewed at regular intervals, and based on school attendance data. They will also:

- Monitor weekly attendance patterns and trends along with the Wellbeing Team and identify whole school strategies and support for children who are missed school.
- Evaluate effectiveness of interventions and their impact on attendance levels.
- Be aware of those pupils the school is most concerned about for example looked after children, children subject to safeguarding procedures, Children with EHCPs or other vulnerable children.

- Consult with Attendance and Children Out of School / other services as appropriate.
- Attend Targeted Support Meetings where appropriate.
- Where there is a lack of engagement, holding more formal conversations with parents and raising the issue of the potential need for legal intervention.

The role of teachers and Class Leads

All class teachers / class leads (for example, Higher Level Teaching Assistants leading a session) have a responsibility in keeping an attendance register. This is a legal document and must be completed accurately. It is a legal requirement that the attendance register must be marked at the beginning of each morning and afternoon session. Absences are coded according to the information received from the parent of the child. The class read is responsible for ensuring that:

- The register is taken by **10.00am** every day and again in the afternoon **by 1.30pm**
- Use **appropriate code** or if unknown, leave blank
- Ensure you **record any known reason** for absence in comments box. Parents should inform you but you should follow up if not.
- Follow up unknown reasons for absence by contacting family and if unable, inform office team and log on MyConcern
- **Log on MyConcern if you have any concerns or notice any patterns that need investigating,** and follow up with DSLs verbally if urgent
- If there is a serious reason for absence e.g. hospital visit/ operation, ensure **the office know**. They will let senior leads know.
- Welcome back pupils after an absence, considering adapted provision to support their positive re-entry in to school.

If a child is absent from school for reasons other than illness, the class lead should arrange for home learning - these are jointly agreed and led by the teacher but supported by the MAST and the Wellbeing Team.

Role of Wellbeing Team

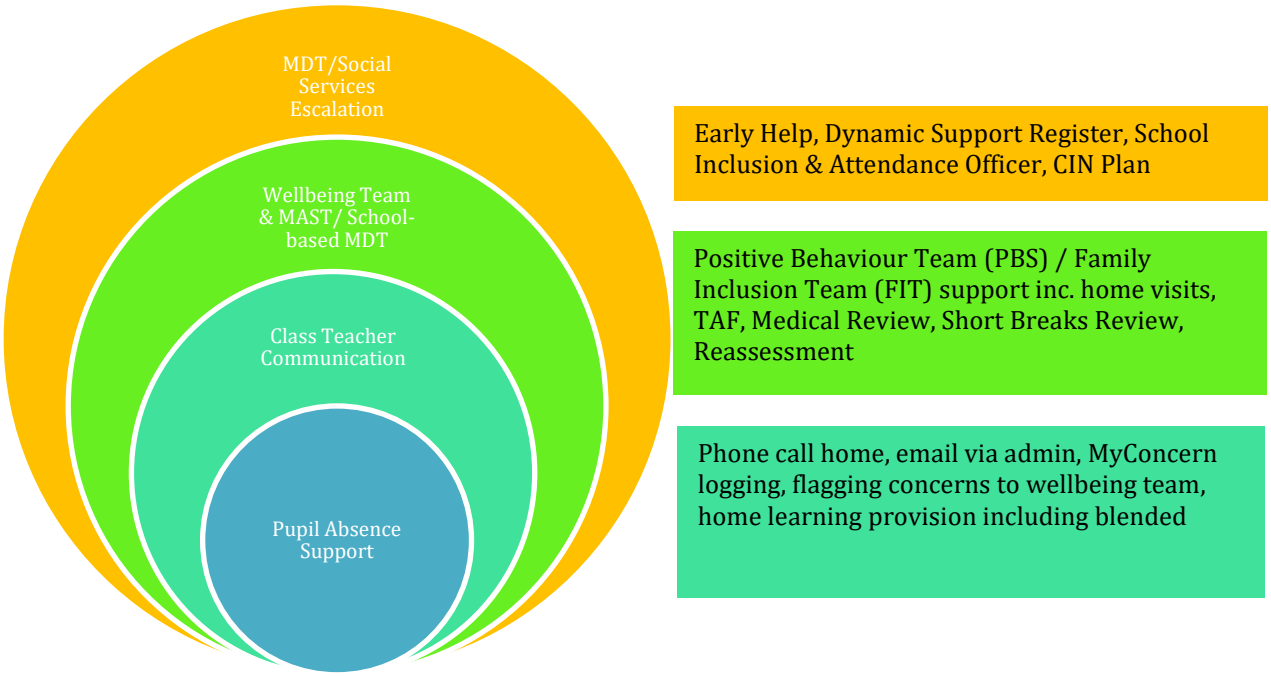
The Wellbeing Team (comprising our Family Inclusion Team and our Positive Behaviour Support Team) are responsible for additional attendance procedure, including having the responsibility:

- To monitor and track caseload of students.
- Is aware of those pupils the school is most concerned about for example looked after children, children subject to safeguarding procedures other vulnerable children.
- To follow up non-school attendance issues in line with attendance policy and to follow up issues logged on MyConcern
- To support with overcoming barriers (health, emotional, housing, travel etc.) to attendance

Whole school attendance is closely monitored on a daily basis and weekly cycle. This informs a weekly meeting with the school Wellbeing Team to plan supporting actions and referrals for internal or external support.

Targeted cases are brought to weekly Multi Agency Support Teams (MAST) meetings to deploy multi-disciplinary support and intervention. Barriers to attendance are varied and can include broader socio-economic barriers such as housing conditions and means of transport; social, emotional and mental health such as emotionally-based school avoidance. Close contact with families to understand their contexts and tailor appropriate support packages is carefully and sensitively planned.

Attendance Support at Swiss Cottage



Legal sanctions and actions

The school will make every attempt to contact the parent or carer by telephone and in writing. In the first instance we would invite them to discuss the problem unless the absence relates to leave in term time without permission. Where all other avenues have been exhausted and support is not working or not being engaged with, attendance difficulties will be referred to the LA SEN Team.

What happens after a long absence?

The school is sensitive to the needs and circumstances of pupils returning after significant periods of absence and will support the smooth reintegration of pupils both academically and socially. In such circumstances the school will work with parents, carers and pupil towards an agreed reintegration plan which may include opportunities an adapted timetable, additional adult support and mentoring, along with an agreed review period.

Lateness

Poor punctuality is not acceptable. If your child misses the start of the day, they can miss work and do not spend time with their class teacher getting vital information / instructions and news for the day. Late arriving pupils can also disrupt lessons, and this can be embarrassing for the child. This can encourage absence.

How we manage lateness

The school day begins at 9.15am and ends at 3.30pm. As a Special School, we understand that some families will need to manage collection or drop off of children across different settings, so there is a 15 minute transition period that adjusts for this (drop off up until 9.30am is and collection from 3.15pm is acceptable).

However, all pupils are entitled to their full time education and any late or early collection outside of those times will only be considered under exceptional circumstances. If there is an ongoing issue, families should seek to get support through the LA Transport provision.

At **10 am** the registers will be closed. If your child arrives after that time, they will receive an unauthorised absence mark that shows them to be on site but **not** counted as a present for statistical / legal purposes.

If your child has a persistent late record, you will be asked to meet with the Assistant Principal to resolve the problem, but you can approach us at any time if you are having problems getting your child to school on time.

The school day ends at 3.30 pm. Where parents continually fail to make arrangements to pick up their children at the end of the school day the school may have to consider referring the matter to Social Services, Early Help and/or Camden's Multi-Agency Safeguarding Hub (MASH). It is a parent's responsibility to ensure that s/he collects their children from school on time every day.

Term dates and Requests for Leave

School term dates are published in advance and can be found on the school website. Staff training days (inset days) are included in the term dates schedule. Parents or carers will receive written notice of any changes in term dates.

If school think you have taken your child out for term time leave, we will write to you and ask you to explain why your child was not in school. If you can't give school a reason, then the absence may be recorded as unauthorised, and we may send your details to the Local Authority to consider the case.

The school is not able to authorize term time holidays. Current legislation states "the DfE does not consider a need or desire for a holiday or other absence for the purpose of leisure and recreation to be an exceptional circumstance."

Exceptional circumstances (*this means **rare, unavoidable, short***) will be looked at by the Principal, and families should email admin@swisscottage.camden.sch.uk with as much notice as possible, outlining the reasons for requesting leave.

If you request term time leave for any of these, they will **not** be allowed. We would send details to the Local Authority for a penalty notice/fine:

- Cheaper holidays/flights in the UK or abroad.
- Holidays that overlap the beginning or the end of term.
- Visiting family or friends who have different half term holiday dates.
- Family weddings for more than 1 day or visits to see family abroad.
- Relatives coming to visit.
- Extending the time off if a pupil has not come back to school after an agreed absence.

All applications for a leave of absence must be made in advance to the Principal. In deciding the school will consider the circumstances of each application individually. The Principal will be the final arbiter as to the authorisation of any leave.

Any period of leave taken without the agreement of the school, or more than that agreed, will be classed as unauthorised and may attract sanctions such as a Penalty Notice. Your child's school place may also be at risk.

If exceptional leave is agreed, you will receive written confirmation from the school. If you do not receive this confirmation **DO NOT** assume that permission has been granted. Only the headteacher can decide if they will grant exceptional leave – **no one else in school has permission to do so** and emailing a request for leave is not permission to take leave.

If leave has been granted and a child returns late outside of the agreed dates either before or after, the school will reserve the right to unauthorise the entire period of leave taken.

If parents have any comments, concerns, or complaints regarding the school attendance policy these can be addressed in writing to the Principal, or an appointment can be arranged for discussion with the Principal. If a parent believes the school can support or assist them in their child's school attendance, we would be happy to accommodate this.

Alternatively, parents or children may wish to contact the Local Authority Attendance and Children Out of School themselves to ask for help or information. They are independent of the school and will give impartial advice. Their telephone number is 0207 974 1653 or you can email acos@camden.gov.uk

Children Missing from Education

If you move from the area and your whereabouts are unknown, the school can legally remove your child from the roll after 20 school days of unauthorised absence. It is **vital that if you keep school informed of any change of details** and regularly update them if details change. Your child may be at risk of losing their school place if your whereabouts are not known.

It is also important that emergency contact information is kept up to date and that if you are leaving the area, you provide details of where and how you can be contacted. If you do not do this and the school is unable to trace your child, this would be treated as a **safeguarding matter.**

Help & Support

If you need help with attendance, it is important that you contact school about the issues as soon as possible. The quicker we know what the problem is, the quicker that we can work together to solve it and put a plan together which will meet your child's needs and ensure your child can benefit from all that school has to offer. Where needed we can also involve other services to make sure that your child and your family gets the right support, at the right time from the right people.

Summary

All school staff are committed to working with parents and pupils as the best way to ensure as high a level of attendance as possible and that every child's welfare and life opportunities are promoted.

Appendices

- Appendix 1 - Attendance Codes
- Appendix 2- Guide for parents
- Appendix 3 - Process for Monitoring Pupil Absence
- Appendix 4 - Absence letter
- Appendix 5 - Pupil Missing form Education/Guidance Procedures

APPENDIX 1 – Attendance Codes

Attendance & Absence Codes (Sept 2024)

If the pupil is present at the school their attendance is to be recorded by entering in the attendance register the code listed in the second column of Table 1 that corresponds to the circumstances as listed in the first column

Table 1

Attendance	*Code*
The session is a morning session and the pupil is present at the school when the attendance register begins to be taken.	/
The session is an afternoon session and the pupil is present at the school when the attendance register begins to be taken.	\
The pupil is absent from the school when the attendance register begins to be taken but attends before the taking of the register has ended.	L

If the pupil is absent from the school so that they can attend a place other than the school in any of the circumstances listed in the first column of Table 2 their attendance is to be recorded by entering in the attendance register the code listed in the corresponding entry in the second column.

Table 2

Attendance	*Code*
The pupil is attending a place, other than the school or another school at which they are a registered pupil, for educational provision arranged by a local authority under section 19(1) of the 1996 Act(**12**) or section 42(2) or 61(1) of the 2014 Act.	K
The pupil is attending a place, other than the school or another school at which they are a registered pupil, for an educational visit or trip arranged by or on behalf of the proprietor and supervised by a member of school staff.	V
The pupil is attending a place for an approved educational activity within paragraph (11) that is a sporting activity.	P
The pupil is attending a place for an approved educational activity within paragraph (11) that is work experience provided under arrangements made by a local authority or the proprietor as part of the pupil's education.	W
The pupil is attending a place for any other approved educational activity within paragraph (11).	B

If the pupil is absent and none of the circumstances listed in the first column of Table 2 applies their absence is to be recorded by entering in the attendance register the code listed in the second column of Table 3 that corresponds to the circumstances as listed in the first column.

Table 3

Absence	*Code*
The pupil is absent with leave for the purpose of participating in a regulated performance or undertaking regulated employment abroad.	C1
The pupil is absent with leave for the purpose of attending a medical or dental appointment.	M
The pupil is absent with leave for the purpose of attending an interview for employment or for admission to another educational institution.	J1
The pupil is absent with leave for the purpose of studying for a public examination.	S
The pupil is not of compulsory school age and is absent with leave because their timetable does not require them to attend.	X
The pupil is of compulsory school age and is absent with leave because, in accordance with an agreement between a parent who they normally live with and the proprietor that the pupil should temporarily be educated on a part-time basis, their timetable does not require them to attend.	C2
The pupil is absent with leave for the purpose of attending another school at which they are a registered pupil.	D
The pupil is absent with leave for any other purpose.	C
The pupil is a mobile child, their parent is travelling in the course of their trade or business and the pupil is travelling with that parent.	T
The day is exclusively set apart for religious observance by the religious body to which a parent of the pupil belongs.	R
The pupil is unable to attend because of sickness.	I
The pupil is unable to attend because of a lack of access arrangements for them within paragraph (12) or (13).	Q
The pupil is unable to attend because the school is not within walking distance of the pupil's home and the transport to and from school that is normally provided for the pupil by the proprietor or a local authority is not available.	Y1
The pupil is unable to attend because of widespread disruption to travel caused by a local, national or international emergency.	Y2
Part of the school premises is unavoidably out of use and the pupil is one of those who the proprietor thinks cannot practicably be accommodated in those parts of the premises that remain in use.	Y3
The pupil is unable to attend because they are in criminal justice detention within paragraph (14).	Y5
The pupil's travel to or attendance at the school would be— (a)contrary to any guidance relating to the incidence or transmission of infection or disease published by the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care or any body or authority exercising equivalent functions in relation to Scotland, Wales or Northern Ireland; or	Y6

Absence	*Code*
(b)prohibited by any enactment relating to the incidence or transmission of infection or disease or any instrument made under such an enactment.	
The pupil is excluded from the school for any other reason.	E
The pupil is unable to attend because of any other unavoidable cause	Y7
The pupil is absent without leave for the purpose of a holiday.	G
The circumstances of the pupil's absence have not yet been established.	N
None of the other rows of this table applies, or this code is required to be used by paragraphs (7) and (9)(b).	O

APPENDIX 2 – Guide for Parents/Carers

1	**When does my child need to be in school?** *School opens for pupils at 9.15am. Your child should arrive in school between 9.15am-9.30am*
2	**Does the school need letters explaining my child's absence or will a phone call do?** *We would expect a parent to telephone or email the school on the first day of absence. If you do not contact us, we will try to contact you. This will be followed up with an email or a letter requesting this information if we are unable to contact you.* *If we do not receive an explanation, or if the explanation is unsatisfactory, we will not authorize the absence.*
3	**What reasons will the school accept for absences?** *Illness* *Specialists or emergency medical appointments* *Religious observance* *Family bereavement* *Term time absences for families with exceptional circumstances (see question 6)* *Except in the case of illness, you should ask for permission for your child to miss school well in advance, giving full details.*
4	**What is intolerable?** *The school will not authorize absence for day trips, visiting relatives, shopping or birthdays – unless in exceptional circumstances.*
5	**Will the school contact me if my child is absent?** *The school will try to contact you, if we have not heard from you. This is to ensure your child's safety as well as their regular school attendance. If we are concerned about aspects of your child's attendance or punctuality we will contact you to discuss the best way forward.*
6	**Can we take term time absences?** *If, in exceptional circumstances, you need to request permission for your child to not be in school during term time, you should write a letter to the Principal stating the reason why. The Principal has the right to refuse permission having given consideration to: your child's age, the time of year, overall attendance pattern of your child and the circumstances given.*
7	**My child is reluctant to come to school. What should I do?** *Contact the school to discuss any concerns or worries. It is important that we identify the reason for your child's reluctance to attend school and work together to find best way forward.*