

Each day, discovery.



ELTHAM COLLEGE

Attendance Policy

Last reviewed: February 2026

Document Authors: JHM/SFM/ANT/ROW



Version Control Information

Reason For Amendment	Name	Date	Main changes
Annual Review	JHM	August 2025	Replace Ann Massey with Sami Michael, Deputy Head Pastoral Replace Richard Lock with Rachel Thompson, Head of Junior School Updated reference to KCSIE and 'Table of Codes' for recording absence
Relevant updates		February 2026	Updated to reflect rules regarding unauthorised abscondence from School premises.



Key School contacts

Senior Attendance Champion (SAC)	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Sami Michael - Deputy Head Pastoral (Senior School) – sfm@eltham-college.org.uk• Andrew Taylor - Deputy Head Pastoral (Junior School) – ant@eltham-college.org.uk
Key staff contacts	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Senior School office – absence@eltham-college.org.uk or 0208 857 6617• Junior School office – jsabsence@eltham-college.org.uk or 0208 619 2699• James Martin - Senior Deputy Head – jhm@eltham-college.org.uk• Rachel Thompson - Head of Junior School – rht@eltham-college.org.uk



1. Aims

- a) This is the attendance policy of Eltham College (the **School**).
- b) The School aspires to high levels of attendance from all pupils. Good attendance is essential for all pupils to get the most out of their school experience, including their attainment, well-being and wider life chances.
- c) The School aims to meet its obligations with regards to attendance by:
 - Ensuring a culture of good attendance is central to the School's ethos and culture
 - Working to reduce absence, including persistent absence and abscondence
 - Ensuring every pupil has access to full-time education
 - Acting early to address patterns of absence
 - Promoting punctuality in attending lessons
 - Working with the relevant Local Authority when there are attendance concerns
- d) Parents are responsible for ensuring that their children attend and stay at school in line with this policy, and their attention is drawn to section 6.C.iii of the Parent Contract on the implications if satisfactory levels of attendance are not achieved and maintained. It is the responsibility of the School to support attendance and to take seriously problems that may lead to non-attendance.
- e) The School recognises that continuity is a key part of a successful education. Very often, if a pupil misses a day, they do not understand fully the content of lessons the following day, further compounding the difficulties caused by absence.
- f) Maintaining an accurate attendance register is a key part of the School's safeguarding arrangements. This policy should be read in conjunction with the Safeguarding Policy, with particular reference to its procedures for *Children Who Are Absent From Education*.
- g) The School believes that in order to enable effective teaching and learning to take place, regular attendance is necessary. It seeks to enable this by:
 - developing and maintaining a whole school culture that promotes the benefits of high attendance
 - recording attendance during registration periods twice daily
 - recording attendance in every lesson in the Senior School
 - regularly checking reasons for absence with parents or guardians
 - supporting those who are having problems with attendance
 - supporting pupils in catching up work missed through absence
 - publishing term dates at least 12 months in advance
 - arranging peripatetic music lessons so that they have a minimal effect on timetabled lessons
 - ensuring children's attendance is visible to parents through Parent Portal and publishing attendance data on reports.



2. Regulatory Framework

a) This policy has been prepared to meet the School's responsibilities under the:

- Education (Independent School Standards) Regulations 2014;
- Education and Skills Act 2008;
- Children Act 1989
- Childcare Act 2006
- Sponsorship Duties (UKVI, July 2023)
- The School Attendance (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2024
- Equality Act 2010
- Data Protection Act 2018 and UK General Data Protection Regulation (UK GDPR)
- Keeping Children Safe in Education (September 2023)

b) This policy has regard to the following guidance and advice:

- [Working together to improve school attendance](#) (DfE, applies from 19 August 2024)
- [Summary table of responsibilities for school attendance](#) (DfE, applies from 19 August 2024)
- [Toolkit for schools: communicating with families to support attendance](#) (DfE, September 2023)
- [Guidance for parents on school attendance](#) (Office of the Children's Commissioner, September 2023)
- ['Is my child too ill for school?' guidance](#) (NHS, April 2024)
- [Keeping children safe in education 2025: part one information for all school and college staff](#) (DfE, September 2025)
- [School behaviour and attendance: parental responsibility measures](#) (DfE, May 2020)
- [Children missing education](#) (DfE, September 2016)
- [Supporting pupils with medical conditions at school](#) (DfE, August 2017)
- [Behaviour in schools: advice for headteachers and school staff](#) (DfE, February 2024)
- [Mental health and behaviour in schools](#) (DfE, November 2018)
- [Mental health issues affecting a pupil's attendance: guidance for schools](#) (DfE, February 2023)
- [Support for pupils where a mental health issue is affecting attendance](#) (DfE, February 2023)
- [Remote education guidance](#) (DfE, updated February 2023)
- [SEND Code of practice: 0 to 25 years](#) (DfE and Department of Health, May 2015)]

c) According to The Education (Independent School Standards) Regulations 2014, Regulation 3(15)
“The standard in this paragraph is met if the proprietor ensures that an admission and an attendance register is maintained in accordance with the Education (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2006.”

d) Every school is required by law to maintain two separate registers, an admissions register, known as the “School Roll” and an attendance register. School Inspectors are required to check both registers and assure themselves that the requirements of the regulations are being met.



- e) The Regulations covering school admission and attendance are very prescriptive, reflecting the importance that successive Governments have attached to ensuring that all children of compulsory school age attend school. Schools are required to ensure that an attendance register is taken twice a day, at the start of the morning session, and during the afternoon for all day pupils. The Regulations specify the contents of both registers and the manner in which they are operated and maintained.



3. Definitions and interpretation

- a) Where the following words or phrases are used in this policy:
- references to attendance include references to attendance for all or part of the timetabled school day.
 - references to the Proprietor are references to the Board of Governors.
 - references to a Parent means:
 - i) all natural parents, whether they are married or not;
 - ii) any person who has parental responsibility for a pupil; and
 - iii) any person who has day to day responsibility for a pupil (i.e. lives with and looks after a pupil).
- b) References to a pupil includes anyone who is receiving an education at the school except a person who is 19 or over for whom further education is being provided, or a person for whom part-time education suitable for people over compulsory school age is being provided.
- c) **SAC** means the School's Attendance Champion



4. Responsibility statement and allocation of tasks

- a) The Headmaster has overall responsibility for all matters which are the subject of this policy.
- b) The Headmaster recognises that improving attendance is a school leadership issue and has appointed a designated senior leader to have overall responsibility for championing and improving attendance in School, referred to in this policy as the SAC.
- c) To ensure the efficient discharge of its responsibilities under this policy, the Headmaster has allocated the following tasks:

Task	Allocated to	When / frequency of review
Keeping the policy up to date and compliant with the law and best practice	Senior Deputy Head and the SAC	As required, and at least annually
Monitoring the implementation of the policy	SAC	As required, and at least termly
Seeking input from interested groups (such as pupils, staff, parents) to consider improvements to the School's processes under the policy	SAC	As required, and at least annually
Formal annual review	Proprietor	Annually



5. The SAC

a) The SAC's responsibilities are:

- to set a clear vision for maintaining high levels of attendance in school
- to establish and maintain effective systems for tackling absence and make sure the systems are followed by all staff
- to regularly monitor and evaluate progress, including the efficacy of the school's strategies and processes;
- to have oversight of and analyse attendance data
- to communicate clear messages on the importance of attendance to pupils and parents.



6. Roles and Responsibilities

- a) The Governing Body: The Governing Body is responsible for monitoring whole School attendance statistics. It holds the Headmaster to account for the implementation of this policy.
- b) The Headmaster (with support from the SAC): The Headmaster is responsible for ensuring this policy is implemented consistently across the School. The Headmaster also authorises absence in exceptional circumstances.
- c) The Junior School/School Office administrative teams. They work to:
 - Monitor attendance data at School and individual pupil level
 - Update the attendance register following communication on absence/lateness from parents
 - Report attendance concerns to the relevant Head of Section/Section Head and the SAC (Senior School and Junior School)
 - Contact parents to query unexplained pupil absences
 - In liaison with the SAC, ensure staff are completing registers accurately
 - In liaison with the SAC, monitor particularly vulnerable children including but not limited to those in private fostering arrangements, school refusers, children with medical or learning needs and children in Local Authority Care.



7. Monitoring attendance data

- a) The School will undertake regular data analysis to identify and provide additional support to pupils or pupil cohorts that need it, and to look at historic and emerging patterns across the School and develop strategies to address them. Such analysis may include:
- monitoring and analysing weekly attendance patterns and trends and provide support in a targeted way to pupils and families
 - using this analysis to provide regular attendance reports to class teachers to facilitate discussions with pupils and to leaders (including the special educational needs coordinator and designated safeguarding lead)
 - conducting thorough analysis of termly, and full year data to identify patterns and trends
 - benchmarking attendance data at whole school, year group and cohort level to identify areas of focus for improvement
 - devising specific strategies to address areas of poor attendance identified through data
 - monitoring the impact of school-wide attendance efforts, including any specific strategies implemented
 - providing data and reports to the Headmaster and CEO to support the work.



8. Additional Needs

- a) The School expects all pupils to have good attendance at school. If, exceptionally, a pupil finds it harder than others to attend School, the School will work with that pupil and their parents to try to remove any barriers to attendance and working together to put appropriate support in place where possible. Ultimately, however, if good attendance levels cannot be achieved and maintained and it is assessed by the Headmaster that Eltham College is not the most appropriate place to continue to provide education for the pupil, the provisions at Section 6.C.iii of the Parent Contract may be enacted.
- b) The School will make reasonable adjustments where a pupil has a disability that puts them at a substantial disadvantage, in comparison with pupils without a disability, in relation to school attendance.
- c) It will also work with parents, and where appropriate with the local authority, to develop specific support approaches for attendance for pupils with special educational needs and disabilities e.g. ensuring the provision outlined in a pupil's education, health and care plan is accessed.
- d) Suitable strategies will also be considered for pupils with any social, emotional or mental health issue that is affecting their attendance.
- e) Where barriers are outside of the School's control, the School will work with parents and pupils to identify alternative sources of support or consider, where appropriate, making a referral for early help.
- f) The School will make a sickness return to the local authority if a pupil is recorded in the attendance register as absent using the national absence code I (unable to attend because of sickness) and there are reasonable grounds to believe that the pupil will have to miss 15 consecutive school days or more for illness or the pupil's total number of school days missed during the current school year because of illness (whether consecutive or cumulative) will reach or exceed 15 school days.



9. School Attendance Procedures

The school day: Senior School

- a) All students are required to be in school by 8.30am and should not arrive before 8.00am (unless they have supervised sports training). The normal school day ends at 3.50pm, with after-school activities beginning at 4.00pm and ending at 5.30pm. All students are expected to be off the School site by 6.00pm.
- b) Students are registered at the start of the day during morning registration with the form tutor and at the start of each lesson.
- c) It is the Form Tutor's responsibility to register pupils at 8.30am and the Subject Teacher's responsibility to register students at all other times.
- d) All students must be registered at the start of each lesson, either in class or with the teacher supervising a study session.

Students who arrive to school late must sign in at the School Office.

The school day: Junior School

- a) All pupils are required to be in school by 8.30am and should not arrive before 8.00am. The normal school day ends at 3.40pm. After school activities take place between 4.00pm and 5.30pm. All pupils are expected to be off the School site by 6.00pm.
- b) Pupils are registered at the start of the day during morning form time and during afternoon form time.
- c) It is the Form Teacher's responsibility to register pupils at 8.30am and class teachers register throughout the day.

Sixth Form – signing in and out

Sixth Form students may sign out after 2.05 pm if they do not have a timetabled lesson and permission to leave has been obtained in advance by parents.

Sixth Form students may leave the school site during the day but must sign in and out at the machine in the Sixth Form Centre or in the School Office. Failure to sign out at the machine or the School Office will fall under the definition of abscondence and could result in the imposition of a support measure or sanction. The application of any such measure will be at the discretion of the Headmaster.

Absence due to illness: Senior School



- d) If a student misses school due to illness, the parent or guardian must email absence@eltham-college.org.uk and the pupil's Form Tutor before 8.30am and every day of absence or phone the School Office on 0208 857 6617. If the School has not heard from a parent or guardian, we will always try to telephone or send an email requesting contact to ensure the student is safe and to verify his or her whereabouts.
- e) It is important that parents make contact with the School each day their child is absent in order that we can keep our records updated, and importantly, so that we can keep abreast of his or her progress to full health and anticipated return date.
- f) No matter what the cause of absence, pupils are urged to catch up on missed lessons when they are well enough to return to school. Teachers will make every effort to help the pupil to catch up if they ask for help. Class work and homework can usually be found on Microsoft Teams and/or Show My Homework. In the event of prolonged absence for medical reasons the school will make every effort to send set work to the pupil, normally via Microsoft Teams or Show My Homework, but additional 'hard copy' material cannot be guaranteed. Teachers are not expected to set bespoke or additional work for pupils who are absent. There is no online teaching provision for absent pupils.

Absence due to illness: Junior School

- g) If a pupil misses school due to illness, the parent or carer must phone the Junior School Office on 0208 619 2699 or email the Junior School Office jsabsence@eltham-college.org.uk and the pupil's Form Teacher before 8.30am on the first morning of absence. If the School has not heard from a parent or guardian, we will telephone to ensure the pupil is safe and to verify their whereabouts.

Late arrival – Senior and Junior School

- h) By 8.45am each day, all pupils will be marked present, late (with number of minutes indicated) or absent. It is therefore essential that if a pupil arrives late after this time, they sign in at the Junior School Office or the Senior School Office so our systems remain fully updated in case an evacuation of the School is necessary and in order that we know exactly where every pupil is at all times.
- i) Our systems are again updated by 10.00am when we compile a final registration for the morning. At this point, if parents have not contacted the School by telephone or email, a list will be generated of pupils who are not present, and this will prompt the School Office to endeavour to contact parents or guardians.

Leaving school early (during the school day)

- j) Pupils are not normally allowed to leave the site during the school day, with the following exceptions:



- Sixth Form students may leave after 2.05pm registration if they have unsupervised study periods during periods 8-10 but must sign-out before leaving the premises.
- k) Year 12 and 13 students may leave the School during the break and lunch period, if they have earned the privilege to do so.
- l) If a pupil has to leave the School during the day for illness or if a parent or guardian is collecting the pupil for a medical appointment, he or she is required to sign out at the Junior School Office or Senior School Office.
- m) Pupils are not permitted to sign themselves out for appointments or illness without approval from the Form Tutor or Form Teacher or other appropriate member of staff.

Abscondence

- n) To abscond is to leave the School's premises without permission. Students may abscond for different reasons such as the feeling of not wanting to be in classes or studies, or to self-regulate.
- o) The School recognises the importance of and correlation between sustained high-level attendance and a student's preparedness to perform to their best ability. Good attendance is key to prolonged progress, developed relationships and attainment in line with their potential.
- p) The School also recognises the dangers that arise from unauthorised abscondence: it places a student in a high-risk and vulnerable position, making them susceptible to events that could impact their health, safety and safeguarding. The School has a duty of care to ensure that its students are safe and takes matters of student safety extremely seriously.
- q) Abscondence will not be tolerated and falls below the standard of behaviour expected of students attending the School. Students who feel the need to leave the School's premises in circumstances that have not been pre-authorized should notify their Form Teacher or class teacher.
- r) In all circumstances where a student leaves the School's premises, they should sign out at the machine in the Sixth Form Centre or the School Office. This is imperative as it allows the School to:
 - a. Keep up to date records of attendance
 - b. Monitor the safety of students; and
 - c. Ensure all staff and students are accounted for in the event of an emergency.
- s) Failure to abide by the terms of this policy would result in sanctions being applied to students, the nature of which is at the ultimate discretion of the Headteacher.
- t) If a student is found to be absconding from the School, contact will be made with their parents/guardians to raise relevant concerns and identify the reason(s) for the behaviour. The School expects parents/guardians to notify them immediately if they become aware that their child is planning to abscond.



- u) Parents/guardians are responsible for ensuring their child's attendance at the School does not fall below the required standard and should make every effort to encourage them to remain on school grounds during the school day. Their attention is again drawn to section 6.C.iii of the Parent Contract on the implications if satisfactory levels of attendance are not achieved and maintained.



10. Requests for absence

Requesting absence: Senior School

- a) Any request for planned appointments or events that will result in missing less than a full day of school should be made by the parent/guardian in writing via email sent to the student's Form Tutor and the absence email address: absence@eltham-college.org.uk
- b) Any request for planned appointments or events that will result in missing one day of school should be made by the parent/guardian in writing via email sent to the student's Head of Year with the absence email copied in.
- c) The Head of Section or Deputy Head Pastoral must approve of any absence of more than a full day. In instances of prolonged absence from school, please correspond with the Senior Deputy Head.

Requesting absence: Junior School

- d) Any request for planned appointments or events that will result in missing less than a full day of school should be made by the parent/carer in writing via email sent to the pupil's Form Teacher and the Junior School Office.
- e) The Head of Junior School is responsible for approving any absence of a full school day or more.



11. Authorised and non-authorised absence

- a) The Government has confirmed that schools, not parents, authorise absence. The main areas where the School will authorise absence are given below:
- Illness. Where the School accepts that a pupil is ill, we will authorise the absence but can request parents to provide medical evidence to support illness.
 - Appointments. Dental and medical appointments are authorised absences but, where possible, such appointments should be made out of school hours.
 - Religious observance. The School is proud of its cultural diversity and, although holy days are taken into consideration in the setting of the School term dates, we recognise that families of different faiths have days of observance that fall within term time. This is balanced against the need for consistency in the education of pupils and, where possible, parents are encouraged to consider ways of observing faith holidays that do not affect school attendance. Each request for absence on the grounds of faith will be considered on an individual basis and must be submitted to the Deputy Head Pastoral, or Head of Junior School.
 - Exceptional circumstances/unavoidable causes. Authorised absence can be granted for compassionate reasons such as a serious family illness or bereavement.
- b) Requests for leave of absence on compassionate grounds or in exceptional circumstances should be made in writing in advance of the proposed absence when possible, to the appropriate member of staff as detailed above. Absence in exceptional circumstances does not ordinarily include the following:
- Birthdays
 - Holidays
 - Festivals
 - Days out as a special treat
 - Other family celebrations
- c) Parents can send urgent messages to their children via the Senior School Office or the Junior School Office during the school day. Parents should not be sending text messages or telephoning pupils' mobile phones during the school day as pupils are not permitted to use these. Parents should not request that their child is removed from timetabled lessons or activities to meet with them during the school day, unless such meetings are required by social services or court order. These should be arranged in advance through the third party and the Head of Junior School or Deputy Head Pastoral (Senior School). This excludes meetings between School Staff, children and parents, which are arranged by the School.

Holidays. The Regulations state that time off for family holidays is not a right. Parents do not have the right to take a child out of school during term time. By law parents must ask prior permission for their child to miss school. The Regulations do not allow the School to give retrospective approval. No parent can demand leave of absence for the purposes of a holiday as a right.

- d) The Senior Deputy Head or the Head of Junior School is only able to authorise leave of absence in exceptional circumstances. If the Senior Deputy Head or Head of Junior School grants a leave request, it is for them to determine the length of time that the pupil can be away from school.



Authorised leave for the purpose of a family holiday would only be considered in the most exceptional circumstances. Parents could face prosecution if they take their child(ren) out of school without permission and may also result in the pupil's place at the School being withdrawn in line with the provisions of the Parent Contract.



12. Attendance monitoring and record-keeping

- a) Heads of Year and Heads of Section are responsible for monitoring pupil attendance and will contact parents if they feel there is a matter of concern, such as frequent absence.
- b) Eltham College expects attendance by pupils to be good and above the minimum standards set by the Department for Education (DfE). The School will engage with parents/guardians if their child's attendance drops below the standards expected at Eltham College.
- c) Given the above, and the provisions in the Parent Contract, it is not expected that any pupil would have poor attendance levels such that statutory provisions are triggered. If, exceptionally, a pupil's attendance does trigger such intervention, the School will contact the appropriate Attendance, Inclusion and Participation Service from the child's local authority.
- d) Local authorities have a legal responsibility to identify children of compulsory school age who are not in education. Schools may therefore receive an enquiry about whether they are educating a specific child. The School will alert their local authority after a pupil of compulsory school age has:
 - Been absent without authority for 10 consecutive school days, or
 - Failed to attend school regularly, or
 - Been removed from the school without the school being informed formally, in writing, or
 - If there is a safeguarding concern (including Children Missing Education) about the pupil in question.
- e) Truancy, abscondence or unauthorised lateness in the School will also not be tolerated and would result in sanctions as outlined in the School's Sanctions and Support Policy. Should attendance at School fall below expected levels despite engagement with the pupil and their parents to improve attendance levels, the Headmaster may review whether the pupil's continued education at the School is tenable in line with the Parent Contract.
- f) Any student studying at the School on a visa sponsored by the School will have their attendance monitored particularly closely. We recognise our obligation to report to UK Visa & Immigration a sponsored student who misses 10 expected contact points without a verified reason. For the purposes of this policy, we use both morning and afternoon registration points as expected contact points within any one school day and therefore reporting would ordinarily occur after 5 school days of unexplained absence.
- g) Eltham College is a relatively open site and thus it would be easy for a Senior School pupil to disregard school rules and leave the site without permission. If a Senior School pupil's non-presence in a lesson or activity suggests that this may have taken place, staff will:
 - Inform the DSL and School Office.
 - Checks will be undertaken to try and ascertain whether the pupil is on site. Locations to be considered include: Foxbury Medical Centre, Music rooms, London Marathon Pavilion, Toilets, Sports Fields.



- If pupils still cannot be located, the DSL will agree action to be taken with the Head of Section, which will in the first instance involve contacting the parents. If the parents cannot locate their child, and all other means of locating the child have been exhausted, the DSL will recommend that the family contact the police or may do so on the parents' behalf.

- h) In the Junior School, should a member of staff find that they are unable to account for a child's whereabouts, all relevant staff will check the immediate area which will include the Junior School Office, toilets, classrooms, pavilion and the playground. In addition, School CCTV would be checked to identify if the child has left the school site. If after 10 minutes the child has not been located, police and parents should be called.

- i) Any Junior School child who has not been collected at the end of the day will be taken to the Junior School Office and parents/carers will be contacted. If the child has not been collected from After School Care by 6.00pm parents/carers are called. If parents/carers or alternative named contacts, who have been given permission by parents/carers to collect, cannot be reached after one hour then Children's Services will be called, and their advice will be followed.

Attendance registration system

- j) The School uses iSAMS, an electronic pupil information management system, which enables the School to record, report and monitor pupil attendance and absence. The attendance register is backed up in the form of an electronic copy, at least once a month and records are retained for three years after the end of the school year in question.

- k) As schools in membership of the Independent Schools Council (ISC) take part in that organisation's annual census of pupils, staff and expenditure etc. From January 2009 it has been mandatory to include pupil ethnic monitoring data using the same methodology as the maintained sector. The registers use the following attendance codes (in accordance with the guidance Working Together to Improve Attendance (May 2022):



Table of codes

Code	Reason
\	Present AM
/	Present PM
A	In the medical centre
B	Attending any other approved educational activity
C	Other Authorised Circumstances
C1	Leave of absence for the purpose of participating in a regulated performance or undertaking regulated employment abroad
C2	Leave or absence for a compulsory school age pupil subject to a part - time timetable.
D	Dual Registration
E	Excluded
F	Extended Family Holiday (Agreed)
G	Family Holiday (NOT agreed)
H	Family Holiday (Agreed)
I	Illness
J1	Interview (Educational or employment)
K	Attending education provision arrange by local authority
L	Late (before registration is closed)
M	Medical Appointment
N	No reason yet provided for absence
O	Unauthorised Absence
P	Approved Sporting Activity
Q	Unable to attend school because of a lack of access arrangements
Q1	Sitting an exam
R	Religious Observation
S	Study Leave
T	Parent travelling for occupational purposes and the pupil is travelling with them.
U	Late (after registration is closed. 9am)
V	Educational Visit or Trip
W	Work Experience
X	Non-Compulsory school age pupil
Y1	Unable to attend due to transport normally provided not being available
Y2	Unable to attend due to widespread disruption (Local, national, international emergency)
Y3	Unable to attend due to part of the school premises being closed.
Y4	Unable to attend due to whole school being closed (Adverse weather).
Y5	Unable to attend as pupil is in criminal justice detention
Y6	Unable to attend in accordance with public health guidance law (Pupil is well but has been advised to isolate to stop spread of infection).
Y7	Unable to attend because of any other unavoidable cause. (Emergency that effects the pupil, not the parent)
Z	Pupil not yet on Roll