CHARLES DARWIN SCHOOL

Attendance Policy

2026/27

BE HERE. BE PART OF IT.

Policy owner	Senior Attendance Champion
Senior Attendance Champion	Mrs Louise Rees, Deputy Headteacher
Attendance Officer	Miss N Freeman
Attendance contact	01959 574043 (Option 1) | NFreeman@cds.lumero.org
Approved by	To be confirmed
Review date	September 2027, or earlier if statutory guidance changes

Status of this document
Draft updated for 2026/27. It is designed to replace the September 2024 policy once approved. It reflects the Department for Education statutory guidance Working Together to Improve School Attendance, updated 9 July 2026, and the School Attendance (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2024.

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1. Purpose and principles

Charles Darwin School is committed to ensuring that every pupil receives a full-time education and has the opportunity to thrive academically, socially and personally. Regular attendance is central to learning, belonging, wellbeing, safeguarding and future life chances.

Our approach is rooted in high expectations and strong relationships. Good attendance begins with school being a calm, safe, supportive place where pupils feel that they belong and want to attend. We recognise that some pupils find it harder than others to attend. Where barriers arise, we will listen, understand and work with pupils, parents and partners to remove or reduce them as early as possible.

Our attendance message
Be Here. Be Part of It. Every day in school matters. We will notice absence, talk with families early, offer support, agree clear plans where needed and use formal intervention when support is not appropriate, is unsuccessful or is not engaged with.

2. Legal framework, equality and expectations

This policy is informed by the Education Act 1996, the School Attendance (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2024, the Education (Penalty Notices) (England) Regulations 2007 as amended, and the Department for Education statutory guidance Working Together to Improve School Attendance (updated 9 July 2026). It should be read alongside the school's safeguarding, SEND, medical needs, behaviour and Children Missing Education arrangements.

Parents of children of compulsory school age have a legal duty to ensure that their child receives a suitable full-time education. Where a child is registered at Charles Darwin School, parents must ensure that they attend regularly except where a statutory reason for absence applies.

The school will apply this policy fairly and consistently while considering the individual needs of pupils and families, including pupils with SEND, medical conditions, mental health needs, pupils with a social worker and other vulnerable groups.

Equality and reasonable adjustments

In carrying out its attendance functions, the school will have due regard to its duties under the Equality Act 2010 and the Public Sector Equality Duty. This includes eliminating discrimination, advancing equality of opportunity and fostering good relations. Where a pupil has a disability, the school will consider and implement reasonable adjustments where required so that attendance expectations, support and intervention do not place the pupil at a substantial disadvantage.

3. Who to contact

Reporting absence or lateness	Miss N Freeman, Attendance Officer 01959 574043 – Option 1 NFreeman@cds.lumero.org
Day-to-day attendance queries	Miss N Freeman, Attendance Officer
More detailed pastoral support	Your child's Achievement Co-ordinator / pastoral team
Senior Attendance Champion	Mrs Louise Rees, Deputy Headteacher

4. Attendance and punctuality: what we expect

Pupils

- Attend school every day that they are expected to attend.
- Arrive on site by 8:15am and be ready for morning registration at 8:30am.
- Attend every lesson and registration period punctually.
- Speak to a trusted adult if something is making attendance or punctuality difficult.
- Catch up on learning missed through absence, with appropriate support from school.

Parents and carers

- Ensure their child attends every day the school is open unless a statutory reason applies.
- Ensure their child arrives on time and ready to learn.
- Notify the school as soon as possible on each day of unexpected absence and provide the reason.
- Keep the school informed where an absence is likely to continue.
- Book routine medical and dental appointments outside the school day wherever possible; where this is not possible, minimise time away from school.
- Request any leave of absence in advance and only in exceptional circumstances.
- Engage with the school and any support offered where attendance becomes a concern.

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Punctuality and registers

Morning registration is at 8:30am. Pupils arriving after registration has begun will be recorded as late. The morning register closes at 9:30am; arrival after the register has closed without an authorised reason is recorded as an unauthorised absence for that session. Afternoon registration is at 1:50pm. Repeated lateness will be followed up with pupils and parents and may lead to school sanctions and/or attendance intervention.

5. Reporting and managing absence

Unexpected absence

Parents should contact the school as early as possible on every day of absence using 01959 574043 (Option 1) or NFreeman@cds.lumero.org, explaining the reason for absence and, where known, the expected date of return.

The school will decide whether an absence can be authorised in accordance with the attendance regulations. Notifying the school of an absence does not automatically mean that it will be authorised.

Illness and medical evidence

The school will not routinely request medical evidence for short-term illness. Where there are genuine and reasonable doubts about the authenticity of an illness, or where absence is frequent or prolonged and additional support may be needed, the school may ask for appropriate evidence. We will avoid unnecessary burdens on families and health services and will consider each case individually.

Medical appointments

Routine appointments should be made outside school hours wherever possible. Where an appointment must take place during the school day, pupils should normally attend school before and/or after the appointment. Parents may be asked to provide evidence of the appointment.

6. Day-to-day attendance processes

Charles Darwin School will maintain robust daily attendance processes. These include:

- Taking the statutory morning and afternoon registers and recording the appropriate national attendance or absence code.
- Following up unexplained absence promptly on the first day.
- Prioritising first-day contact and safeguarding checks for vulnerable pupils where appropriate.
- Holding more than one emergency contact number for each pupil wherever reasonably possible.
- Checking patterns of absence, lateness and lesson attendance and acting early when concerns emerge.
- Contacting parents regularly about attendance and absence, using clear and supportive communication.
- Escalating unexplained absence in line with safeguarding procedures where contact cannot be established or there are concerns for a pupil's welfare.

7. Supporting pupils and families

Our first response to emerging attendance concerns is to understand what is happening. We will work with pupils and parents, not simply communicate a percentage. Support will be proportionate to need and may

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include adjustments in school, pastoral support, mentoring, SEND or medical support, early help, family support, work with external professionals or a reintegration plan.

Our graduated approach is:

1. NOTICE – use attendance data and professional knowledge to identify concerns and patterns early.
2. TALK – contact the pupil and family, listen and understand the barriers to attendance.
3. SUPPORT – remove in-school barriers and help families access appropriate wider support.
4. PLAN – where absence persists, agree clear actions, timescales and review points; formalise support where appropriate.
5. FORMAL ACTION – where support is not appropriate, is unsuccessful or is not engaged with, work with the local authority and consider statutory intervention.

Pupils with SEND, medical or mental health needs

The school will maintain the same ambition for attendance while recognising that some pupils face additional barriers. We will work with pupils, parents and relevant professionals to consider reasonable adjustments, individual healthcare plans, EHCP provision and other appropriate support. A diagnosis is not required before school support can begin.

Reintegration after significant absence

Where a pupil returns after a significant period of absence, the school will consider an individual reintegration plan. This may include a named adult, phased support, academic catch-up, pastoral support, reasonable adjustments and regular review with the pupil and family.

8. Persistent and severe absence

A pupil is persistently absent when they miss 10% or more of possible sessions and severely absent when they miss 50% or more. The school will also identify pupils at risk of reaching these thresholds so that support can begin before absence becomes entrenched.

- Attendance data will be reviewed regularly at pupil, group, year and whole-school level.
- Pupils who are persistently or severely absent will receive targeted, individualised support and regular review.
- Severely absent pupils will be treated as a priority for joint working with the local authority and other relevant services.
- Where there are safeguarding concerns, the school will follow safeguarding procedures and work with children's social care and other statutory partners as appropriate.
- Where voluntary support does not lead to improvement, support may be formalised through an attendance contract or other statutory route.

9. Leave of absence and term-time holidays

Parents should not take pupils out of school during term time for holidays. The Headteacher may grant a leave of absence only where the circumstances are exceptional and an application has been made in advance. Each request will be considered individually in line with the School Attendance (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2024.

Where leave is not granted, or no application is made, the absence will be unauthorised. Unauthorised leave may contribute to the national threshold for consideration of a penalty notice.

10. National Framework for Penalty Notices and legal intervention

Charles Darwin School will work with Bromley Council in line with the National Framework for Penalty Notices. The national threshold is met when a pupil has 10 sessions of unauthorised absence within a rolling period of 10 school weeks. The sessions can be consecutive or non-consecutive and can include a combination of unauthorised absence and late arrival after the register has closed.

When the threshold is met, the school must consider whether a penalty notice is appropriate. A Notice to Improve may be used where support is appropriate. A Notice to Improve is not required in every case; for example, a penalty notice may be considered without one where support would not be appropriate, such as certain unauthorised term-time holidays.

Where support is not appropriate, is unsuccessful or is not engaged with, the school and local authority may consider a penalty notice, Education Supervision Order, prosecution or other legal intervention. Legal intervention is used in accordance with the statutory guidance and Bromley Council's code of conduct.

Important
The purpose of formal intervention is to protect a pupil's right to education and secure improved attendance. Where support is appropriate, the school will seek to understand barriers and offer support before or alongside formal action.

11. Attendance data, safeguarding, information sharing and record keeping

Attendance is a safeguarding matter. Absence can be an early indicator of neglect, exploitation, abuse, mental ill health, unmet SEND, family difficulty or other harm. The school will consider attendance alongside all other information known about a pupil.

- The school will use attendance data to identify individual pupils and cohorts requiring additional support.
- Attendance of pupils with a social worker, looked-after and previously looked-after pupils, pupils with SEND, pupils with medical needs and other vulnerable groups will be monitored closely.
- Unexplained absence of pupils with a social worker will be shared with the social worker where required.
- Children Missing Education procedures will be followed where relevant.
- Attendance and admission registers will be maintained electronically and retained/shared in accordance with statutory requirements.
- The school will share attendance information with the Department for Education and local authority as required.

Information sharing and statutory returns

The school will share attendance and admission information where required by law and where sharing is necessary and proportionate to safeguard or support a pupil. This includes new-pupil and deletion returns, attendance returns and sickness returns to the local authority, information required by the Secretary of State, and appropriate information with social workers, youth justice services, health professionals and other partners.

A sickness return will be made to the local authority where a pupil is recorded as absent because of sickness and the school has reasonable grounds to believe that the pupil will miss, or has missed, at least 15 school days because of illness, whether consecutively or cumulatively during the school year.

Registers, retention and confidentiality

Admission and attendance registers will be kept electronically in accordance with the School Attendance (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2024. Register entries will be preserved for six years from the date on which the entry was made, and required back-up copies will be retained in accordance with the statutory requirements. Attendance information is personal data and will be handled in accordance with data protection law, the Trust's retention arrangements and the school's published privacy notices.

12. Roles and responsibilities

Governing body / Trust

- Take an active role in attendance improvement and ensure school leaders fulfil statutory duties.
- Use appropriate school, Trust, local authority, regional and national comparators to identify patterns and priorities for improvement.
- Review attendance information regularly and provide appropriate support, challenge and scrutiny.
- Ensure attendance is prioritised within school culture and strategy.

Headteacher and Senior Attendance Champion

- Set and sustain a whole-school culture of high attendance.
- Ensure this policy and the school's attendance strategy are implemented consistently.
- Oversee the use of attendance data, targeted intervention and support.
- Ensure staff understand their responsibilities and receive appropriate training.
- Work with the local authority and wider partners where additional or formal support is required.
- Report attendance performance, patterns and priorities to governors and the Trust.

Attendance Officer

- Manage day-to-day attendance administration and first-day absence processes.
- Maintain accurate attendance records and follow up unexplained absence.
- Communicate with pupils, parents and pastoral staff about attendance and punctuality.
- Identify emerging patterns and provide information to relevant leaders and pastoral teams.
- Liaise with the Education Welfare service and other partners as directed.

Achievement Co-ordinators / pastoral staff

- Know the attendance of pupils in their year group or caseload and act early on emerging concerns.
- Work with pupils and families to understand barriers and agree appropriate support.
- Record, review and evaluate attendance interventions.
- Escalate concerns where support is not leading to improvement or safeguarding concerns arise.

Form tutors and teaching staff

- Take accurate registers promptly.
- Promote the importance of attendance, punctuality and belonging.
- Notice patterns and raise concerns through the school's agreed systems.
- Welcome pupils back positively following absence and support reintegration into learning.

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Designated Teacher for looked-after and previously looked-after pupils

The Designated Teacher will monitor and review the attendance of looked-after and previously looked-after pupils; work with the local authority Virtual School Head, social workers and carers as appropriate; ensure Personal Education Plans support good attendance; and help staff understand the specific attendance needs of this cohort.

Training

All staff will receive appropriate attendance guidance as part of induction and at regular intervals thereafter. Staff with specific attendance responsibilities will receive more detailed training appropriate to their role, including the law and register requirements, working with families and external partners, safeguarding, and the interpretation and use of attendance data. The school will maintain appropriate records of attendance training.

13. Recognition, culture and communication

Attendance will have a high profile across the school. The school will communicate regularly with pupils and parents about why attendance matters, using clear, accessible and supportive language. We will celebrate strong attendance and, importantly, recognise meaningful improvement.

Recognition systems will be designed and reviewed so that they are fair, inclusive and do not disadvantage pupils whose absence is linked to disability, medical needs or other circumstances requiring individual consideration. Detailed pupil-facing recognition schemes, including Attendance Champions, may be published separately and updated during the year without requiring a policy revision.

14. Alternative provision, remote education and part-time timetables

Alternative provision

Where Charles Darwin School arranges alternative provision for a pupil, the school remains responsible for safeguarding and for assuring itself that the provision is suitable. Attendance arrangements will be clear, monitored and recorded using the appropriate statutory codes.

Remote education

In limited circumstances the school may provide remote education for a pupil who is well enough to learn but unable to attend the school site. Remote education does not change the pupil's attendance status: the pupil will still be recorded as absent using the appropriate national code. Where remote education forms part of a reintegration plan, it will be time-limited, regularly reviewed and used alongside support aimed at returning the pupil to in-person education as soon as appropriate.

Part-time timetables

All pupils of compulsory school age are entitled to a full-time education. A temporary part-time timetable will only be used in very exceptional circumstances where it is in a pupil's best interests and forms part of a clear support or reintegration plan. It will not be used to manage behaviour. It will be time-limited, regularly reviewed with the pupil and parents, and increased towards full-time education as quickly as is appropriate.

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15. Publication, monitoring, governance and review

Publication and accessibility

The current policy will be published in the dedicated Attendance section of the school website. Parents and carers will be provided with, or directed to, the policy when their child joins the school and reminded of it at the start of each academic year and whenever substantive changes are made. A hard copy will be available on request and the school will make the policy available in an accessible format where reasonably required.

The school will monitor attendance and absence regularly, including patterns for key pupil groups, persistent absence, severe absence, lateness, unauthorised absence and the impact of interventions. Attendance will be reviewed through school leadership, pastoral and governance structures.

The school and Trust will use appropriate comparators, including school, Trust, local authority, regional and national data, to identify patterns, strengths and areas for improvement. Governors and the Trust will use this information to provide support, challenge and scrutiny and to monitor the impact of attendance strategies.

This policy will be reviewed at least annually and sooner where statutory guidance, legislation or school procedures change. The current policy and parent-friendly attendance information will be published in the dedicated Attendance section of the school website.

Appendix A: Attendance response pathway

1. NOTICE	Attendance, lateness or a pattern of absence is identified early.
2. TALK	We contact the pupil and family, listen and seek to understand the barrier.
3. SUPPORT	We remove in-school barriers and coordinate practical or wider support.
4. PLAN	Where absence persists, we agree clear actions, timescales and review; support may be formalised.
5. FORMAL ACTION	Where support is not appropriate, unsuccessful or not engaged with, we work with the local authority and consider statutory intervention.

Parent-facing information
The school's dedicated Attendance website section and parent guide should explain these arrangements in shorter, accessible language, including how to report absence, who to contact for help, illness and appointments, punctuality, term-time leave, support and formal intervention.

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