



Villa Real School
together we achieve

Attendance Policy 2026

Responsibility Jill Bowe

Date: May 2026

Signed and Adopted by the Governing Body:

Chair of Governors

Date: 01.06.26

Date to be reviewed: May 2027

Introduction

Villa Real School is committed to securing high levels of attendance for all pupils, recognising that **regular attendance is essential for safeguarding, wellbeing and educational achievement**. Attendance is a protective factor and a shared responsibility across school staff, families, governors, the local authority and partner agencies.

This policy reflects the expectations set out in *Working together to improve school attendance* and *Working Together to Safeguard Children*, and must be read alongside those documents.

Some pupils face additional or complex barriers to attendance. At all stages, the school will work **in partnership with pupils and parents/carers**, removing barriers early and using a **support-first approach**, escalating to formal or legal action only where necessary and proportionate.

Legal and Statutory Framework

This policy has due regard to:

- Education Act 1996
- Education Act 2002 (s.175)
- School Attendance (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2024
- Education (Penalty Notices) (England) (Amendment) Regulations 2024
- Working together to improve school attendance (DfE, 2024)
- Working Together to Safeguard Children (DfE, 2026)

Safeguarding and Attendance

Poor attendance, persistent absence or children missing education **may be indicators of safeguarding concerns**, including neglect, mental ill-health, exploitation or abuse.

Villa Real School recognises that:

- Attendance concerns will always be considered alongside safeguarding information.
- Information will be shared promptly with appropriate partners where there is concern for a child's welfare, in line with data protection law and statutory safeguarding guidance.
- Where absence becomes **persistent (below 90%) or severe (below 50%)**, concerns will be escalated through multi-agency processes where appropriate.

Roles and Responsibilities (Updated)

Governing Body

The Governing Body will:

- Promote a culture that values high attendance
- Ensure compliance with statutory guidance

- Annually review attendance data, trends and the effectiveness of this policy

Headteacher

The Headteacher will:

- Authorise leave of absence
- Ensure this policy is implemented consistently
- Ensure attendance processes are compliant with statutory requirements
- Maintain oversight of safeguarding links to attendance
- Lead attendance improvement across the school
- Ensure robust systems for monitoring, analysis and follow-up
- Coordinate support for pupils with emerging, persistent or severe absence
- Act as the key school link with the Local Authority Attendance Improvement Team and safeguarding partners

All Staff

All staff will:

- Promote the importance of attendance
- Accurately record attendance every session
- Raise concerns promptly where attendance may be a safeguarding issue

Parents/Carers

Parents/carers are expected to:

- Ensure their child attends school regularly and punctually
- Notify school of absence on the first day
- Engage with support offered by the school or partner agencies
- Request leave of absence only where exceptional circumstances apply

Expectations of Attendance

- Pupils are expected to attend **every session they are able to**.
- Registers open at **9:20am** and close at **9:50am**.
- Attendance is recorded in line with national attendance codes (Appendix 1).

Managing Absence

First Day of Absence

Parents/carers must contact the school on the first day of absence. Where no reason is provided, the school will make same-day contact to ensure safeguarding.

Medical Absence

Medical evidence will be requested **only where necessary**, particularly where absence is frequent or prolonged, in line with DfE guidance.

Leave of Absence in Term Time

Leave of absence will be granted **only in exceptional circumstances**, as defined in regulation 11 of the 2024 Regulations. Holidays will not normally be authorised.

Supporting Attendance – Graduated Response

The school uses a **graduated response**, aligned to national guidance:

1. **Universal support** – promotion, routines, early discussion
2. **Targeted support** – attendance meetings, short-term plans
3. **Formalised support** – attendance contracts, multi-agency involvement
4. **Enforcement** – penalty notices or prosecution only where support is ineffective or inappropriate

Persistent and Severe Absence

- **Persistent absence:** below 90% attendance
- **Severe absence:** 50% or below

In such cases:

- Multi-agency working will be prioritised
- Attendance agreements or statutory interventions may be considered
- Safeguarding thresholds will be applied where appropriate

Information Sharing

The school will share attendance information with:

- Durham Local Authority
- Social workers and safeguarding partners
- Other agencies where it is in the child's best interests

Information sharing will follow UK GDPR and the Data Protection Act 2018 and must **never be a barrier to safeguarding**.

Policy Review

This policy will be:

- Reviewed annually
- Updated earlier if statutory guidance changes
- Published on the school website and shared with parents/carers

This policy is to be reads alongside the following:

- Child Protection Policy
- Anti-Bullying Policy
- Behaviour Policy

APPENDIX 1

Villa Real Attendance Codes

| Code | Meaning | Type |
|-------------|---|------------------------|
| / \ | Present at the school / morning \ afternoon | Present Mark |
| B | Attending any other approved educational activity - Alternative Provision not arranged through the approved framework | Present Mark |
| D | Dual registered at another school - Attending Sheffield Inclusion Centre - Attending Alternative Provision at another school site - Chapel House / Becton Outreach / CAMHS Lodges - Hospital education - Education at a secure / residential site - Off-site direction / managed move | Present Mark |
| E | Suspended or permanently excluded and no alternative provision made | Authorised Absence |
| G | Holiday not granted by the school or Term Time Leave not granted by the school | Unauthorised Absence |
| I | Illness (not medical or dental appointment) | Authorised Absence |
| J1 | Leave of absence for the purpose of attending an interview for employment or for admission to another educational institution | Authorised Absence |
| K | Attending education provision arranged by the Local Authority - Home Tutoring - Approved Framework for Alternative Provision - Blended Learning | Present Mark |
| L | Late arrival before the registers have closed | Present Mark |
| M | Attended a medical appointment | Authorised Absence |
| N | Reason for absence not yet established | Unauthorised Mark |
| O | Absent in other or unknown circumstances | Unauthorised Absence |
| P | Participating in a sporting activity not school related. | Present Mark |
| Q | Unable to attend the school because of a lack of access arrangements (this is not related to transport. Please ask before using) | Not expected to attend |
| R | Religious Observance | Authorised Absence |
| S | Leave of absence for the purpose of studying for a public examination. Must be used sparingly with revision opportunities in school. | Authorised Absence |
| T | Parent travelling for occupational purposes, and the pupil has attended for at least 200 sessions in preceding 12 months. | Authorised Absence |
| U | Arrived in school after registration closed | Unauthorised Absence |

| | | |
|---|---|------------------------|
| V | Attending an Educational Trip or Visit | Present Mark |
| W | Attending Work Experience | Present Mark |
| X | Non-compulsory school age pupil not required to attend school | Not expected to attend |
| Z | Prospective or previous pupil not on admission register | Not expected to attend |
| The Y code: Unable to attend school because of unavoidable cause, is broken down into the following sub codes to provide better differentiation of the reason: | | |
| Y1 | Unable to attend due to transport normally provided not being available | Not expected to attend |
| Y2 | Unable to attend due to widespread disruption to travel | Not expected to attend |
| Y3 | Unable to attend due to part of the school premises being closed. For example, this may be due to damage or teacher strikes. | Not expected to attend |
| Y4 | Unable to attend due to the whole school site being unexpectedly closed. For example, extreme weather, damage, no hot water, or heating. | Not expected to attend |
| Y5 | Unable to attend as pupil is in criminal justice detention. For example, in police detention, remanded to youth detention, awaiting trial or sentencing, or detained under a sentence of detention. | Not expected to attend |
| Y6 | Unable to attend in accordance with public health guidance or law. contrary to or prohibited by any guidance relating to the incidence or transmission of infection or disease. | Not expected to attend |
| Y7 | Unable to attend because of any other unavoidable cause. For example, an emergency has prevented the pupil from attending. The unavoidable cause must be something that affects the pupil, not just the parent. | Not expected to attend |
| The C code: Authorised Absence is broken down into the following sub codes to provide better differentiation of the reason: | | |
| C | Leave of absence for exceptional circumstances. Where a leave of absence is granted, the school will determine the number of days a pupil can be absent from school. A leave of absence is granted entirely at the school's discretion. | Authorised Absence |
| C1 | Leave of absence for the purpose of participating in a regulated performance or undertaking regulated employment abroad. | Authorised Absence |
| C2 | Leave of absence for a compulsory school age pupil subject to a part-time timetable. | Authorised Absence |

APPENDIX 2

The school and all partners will work together to:

EXPECT

Aspire to high standards of attendance from all pupils and parents and build a culture where all can, and want to, be in school and ready to learn by prioritising attendance improvement across the school.



MONITOR

Rigorously use attendance data to identify patterns of poor attendance (at individual and cohort level) as soon as possible so all parties can work together to resolve them before they become entrenched.



LISTEN AND UNDERSTAND

When a pattern is spotted, discuss with pupils and parents to listen to understand barriers to attendance and agree how all partners can work together to resolve them.



FACILITATE SUPPORT

Remove barriers in school and help pupils and parents to access the support they need to overcome the barriers outside of school. This might include an early help or whole family plan where absence is a symptom of wider issues.



FORMALISE SUPPORT

Where absence persists and voluntary support is not working or not being engaged with, partners should work together to explain the consequences clearly and ensure support is also in place to enable families to respond. Depending on the circumstances this may include formalising support through a parenting contract or education supervision order.



ENFORCE

Where all other avenues have been exhausted and support is not working or not being engaged with, enforce attendance through statutory intervention or prosecution to protect the pupil's right to an education.

Expect

We all want the best for pupils and therefore aspire to have the highest attendance possible for each individual to allow them to access the education on offer to them in a culture they feel safe, part of the community and where they want to be.

Monitor

Attendance is monitored weekly by the Deputy Head. Where concerns start to be raised, the class teacher or Key Stage Lead will contact home first. If more support is needed, the Deputy Head will invite the family in for an attendance meeting.

Listening to and understanding barriers to attendance

As a school, we want to work with families to support you in ensuring your child has good attendance. Meetings can be carried out in person, virtually or at the home to support individual circumstances. Please tell your child's teacher in the first instance if you have any worries or need any help.

Facilitate support

Pupils who have below 90% are considered to be persistent absentees. At VRS we understand that, due to the medical and social needs of our pupils, they can have a lot of medical appointments. If a pupils attendance drops below 80%, a letter will be sent out with a copy of the attendance record. This may be followed up by phone calls and an invitation to a meeting to discuss how we can improve attendance.

If a pupil's attendance drops below 50% they are considered severely absent. In this case families will be referred to further external support, and as a team we will look to support the family further.

Formalise support

Where families fail to engage in support, this support may be formalised through an attendance contract. This would include involvement through the Local Authority Attendance Improvement Team.

Enforce

Where attendance continues to be a concern, referral may be made for statutory intervention or prosecution to protect the pupils right to an education.

APPENDIX 3

If your child needs time off school

Does your child have a health related appointment that cannot be changed?

Send proof of appointment - paper or electronic. This will be retained unless otherwise requested.

Medical absence with proof will be authorised.

Is your child too ill to attend school?

Telephone school between 8.30 and 9.00

School will decide if absence is authorised or unauthorised. If the pupil has a high absence rate this will be unauthorised.

IS there another reason to request absence from school?

Put the request for absence in writing, including dates and reasons, to the Head Teacher for a decision.

Is this a holiday?

Yes

Holidays will not be authorised and will be referred to the Local Authority Attendance Team.

No

School will decide if absence is authorised or unauthorised. If the pupil has a high absence rate this will be unauthorised.

APPENDIX 4

Attendance Key Contacts

Please find the details of those with overall responsibility for attendance, attendance support and attendance improvement within our school below.

| Name | Role | Contact details |
|--|--|-----------------|
| Jill Bowe | Senior Attendance Champion /Head Teacher | 01207 503651 |
| Natalie Fitzpatrick Angela Doogan Alan Granton | Deputy Head, EYFS/ KS1 Lead KS2 Lead (temp) KS3 Lead | |
| Pam Monaghan | Governor with responsibility for attendance | |
| | | |

If a pupil is going to be absent from school the person who should be informed is: **Zoe Tamworth, Attendance Officer 01207 503651**

If a pupil, parent or family is having difficulty with attending school and requires advice, help or support then they can contact:

| Name | Role/ type of help | Contact details |
|---------------------|--------------------------------------|-----------------|
| Natalie Fitzpatrick | Deputy Head | 01207 503651 |
| Alex Morris | SENCo – support with provision | |
| Damien Dimmick | Assistant Head – Parental Engagement | |

Help and Support

Where help or support is needed with attendance the sooner school know about this, the quicker people can work together to support with this. Where needed this can involve other services to make sure that pupils and their families get the right support, at the right time from the right people.

Children Missing from Education

If pupils whereabouts are not known following enquiries schools can legally remove pupils from the admission register (the school roll) after 20 school days of unauthorised absence. It is **vital that parents keep school informed of any change of details** and regularly update them if details change. Pupils place in schools are at risk if whereabouts are not known. Children Missing from Education must be reported to the Local Authority and the matter may be treat as a safeguarding issue.

Important Links:

- Working together to improve school attendance (DfE, 2024) - [LINK](#)
- Working Together to Safeguard Children (DfE, 2026) - [LINK](#)