



CAVENDISH
EDUCATION

Dovecote School

DC022 - Attendance Policy

Responsible Person	Assistant Head – Pastoral Lead
Approved By	Dovecote School Governance Body
Review Cycle	Annual
Last Review Date	11 August 2026
Next Review Date	11 August 2027

Dovecote School is owned and operated by Cavendish Education.

This policy is one of a series of school policies that, taken together, are designed to form a comprehensive statement of the school's aspiration to provide an outstanding education for each of its students and of the mechanisms and procedures in place to achieve this. Accordingly, this policy should be read alongside these policies. In particular it should be read in conjunction with the policies covering equality and diversity, Health and Safety, safeguarding and child protection.

All of these policies have been written, not simply to meet statutory and other requirements, but to enable and evidence the work that the whole school is undertaking to ensure the implementation of its core values.

While this current policy document may be referred to elsewhere in Dovecote School documentation, including particulars of employment, it is non-contractual.

In the school's policies, unless the specific context requires otherwise, the word "parent" is used in terms of Section 576 of the Education Act 1996, which states that a 'parent', in relation to a child or young person, includes any person who is not a biological parent but who has parental responsibility, or who has care of the child. Department for Education guidance 'Understanding and dealing with issues relating to parental responsibility' considers a 'parent' to include:

- all biological parents, whether they are married or not
- any person who, although not a biological parent, has parental responsibility for a child or young person - this could be an adoptive parent, a step-parent, guardian or other relative
- any person who, although not a biological parent and does not have parental responsibility, has care of a child or young person

A person typically has care of a child or young person if they are the person with whom the child lives, either full or part time and who looks after the child, irrespective of what their biological or legal relationship is with the child.

The school employs the services of the following consulting companies to ensure regulatory compliance and the implementation of best practice:

- WorkNest (HR & employment law)
- SchoolPro TLC (data protection)
- iAmCompliant (compliance management)

For the purposes of this policy, references to staff include employees, workers, agency personnel, volunteers and contractors where relevant.

Dovecote School is committed to safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children and young people and expects all staff, volunteers, pupils and visitors to share this commitment.

All outcomes generated by this document must take account of and seek to contribute to safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children and young people at Dovecote School.

The policy documents of Dovecote School are revised and published periodically in good faith. They are inevitably subject to revision. On occasions a significant revision, although promulgated in school separately, may have to take effect between the re-publication of a set of policy documents. Care should therefore be taken to ensure, by consultation with the Senior Leadership Team, that the details of any policy document are still effectively current at a particular moment.

Document Version Control Log

Version	Date	Description of changes and person/organisation responsible
2.0	11 August 2026	Annual review. Renumbered as DC022 and transferred to the Dovecote School master policy template. Existing Dovecote attendance procedures retained and updated for the July 2026 statutory attendance guidance, KCSIE 2026, current registration requirements, governance arrangements and specialist SEND/SEMH attendance practice. Dovecote School / Cavendish Education.

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Statement of Intent

Dovecote School believes that good attendance is essential to teaching, learning, wellbeing and preparation for adulthood. Students cannot achieve their full potential if they do not have regular access to education, relationships and the wider opportunities provided by school.

We recognise that barriers to attendance are often complex and that many Dovecote students have experienced disrupted education, SEND, anxiety, health needs or other barriers which can make attendance more difficult. Our approach is therefore relational, therapeutic, needs-led and rooted in safeguarding. We maintain high expectations while working with students, families, commissioning local authorities and other professionals to understand and remove barriers.

Dovecote takes a whole-school approach to attendance. Curriculum, safeguarding, behaviour, anti-bullying, SEND, therapeutic support, family work and preparation for adulthood all contribute to improving engagement and attendance.

Promoting the value and benefits of regular attendance and punctuality.

Ensuring equality, fairness and reasonable adjustments for disabled students.

Identifying patterns of absence early and responding with support before concerns escalate.

Working in partnership with students, parents/carers, local authorities and other agencies.

Ensuring unexplained or concerning absence is treated as a potential safeguarding matter.

Using attendance information intelligently to identify individuals and groups needing additional support.

Maintaining accurate admission and attendance registers in accordance with current requirements.

The school-level aspirational attendance target is 94%. This is interpreted alongside individual starting points, EHCP needs, health needs, agreed reintegration plans and personalised attendance trajectories. Individual targets must remain ambitious, appropriate and focused on increasing access to education.

The Attendance Lead is Rob Cooling. Parents/carers and staff should contact the school through reception@dovecoteschool.co.uk or directly to rcooling@dovecoteschool.co.uk with any attendance queries or concerns.

1. Legal Framework

This policy has due regard to relevant legislation and statutory guidance, including:

- Education Act 1996, including parental duties in relation to suitable education.
- Equality Act 2010.
- Children and Families Act 2014 and the SEND Code of Practice: 0 to 25 years.
- The School Attendance (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2024.
- DfE Working Together to Improve School Attendance, updated 9 July 2026.
- DfE Children Missing Education statutory guidance, updated September 2025.

- DfE Keeping Children Safe in Education 2026, for implementation from 1 September 2026.
- The Education (Independent School Standards) Regulations 2014 and current DfE independent school standards guidance.

Dovecote is an independent special school. The statutory attendance guidance applies to independent schools and is used alongside the school's contractual, safeguarding, SEND and commissioning arrangements.

2. Definitions

Term	Meaning
Absence	Failure to attend a required school session, including arrival after the attendance register has closed.
Authorised absence	An absence the school is permitted to authorise in accordance with the Attendance Regulations and relevant guidance.
Unauthorised absence	An absence not authorised by the school, including unexplained absence or leave not granted in advance.
Persistent absence (PA)	Absence of 10% or more of possible sessions, for any reason.
Severe absence	Absence of 50% or more of possible sessions.
Attendance support	Planned action with a student and family to identify and remove barriers and improve access to education.

3. Roles and Responsibilities

The Dovecote School Governance Body will:

- Approve this policy and provide strategic oversight of attendance.
- Review attendance information, patterns and the impact of support at appropriate intervals.
- Ensure attendance arrangements are consistent with safeguarding, equality and SEND duties.
- Provide challenge and support to school leaders where patterns of absence require improvement.

The Headteacher will:

- Have overall responsibility for the school's strategic approach to attendance and implementation of this policy.
- Ensure attendance expectations are communicated to students, parents/carers and staff.
- Ensure every student has access to suitable education and that barriers to attendance are addressed as early as possible.
- Ensure appropriate resources, training and multi-agency support are available.

The Attendance Lead will:

- Monitor attendance and punctuality and the impact of interventions.
- Analyse data and identify students or groups requiring support.
- Coordinate communication with students, families and local authority attendance teams.
- Maintain records of attendance support, plans and review outcomes.
- Ensure statutory notifications and register returns are made where required.

The DSL will ensure attendance is considered as part of safeguarding practice and that unexplained, repeated or concerning absence is escalated in line with DC008 Child Protection and Safeguarding Policy.

Staff will follow this policy, take registers accurately where designated, model good attendance and punctuality, and use their knowledge of students to identify welfare or safeguarding concerns.

Parents/carers are expected to provide accurate contact details, notify the school promptly of absence and reasons, work with the school to overcome barriers, and promote regular attendance.

Students are expected, according to age and need, to attend school and agreed activities, arrive punctually, engage with support and tell a trusted adult about barriers or worries affecting attendance.

4. Attendance Expectations

The school day starts at 9:00am. The morning register is taken by 9:30am and closes at 9:45am. The afternoon register is taken by 1:30pm and closes at 1:40pm. Students arriving before a register closes will be marked late; arrival after closure is recorded as absence for that session using the appropriate national code.

Students should attend every day and every timetabled lesson or agreed activity for which they are required, subject to individual arrangements such as authorised part-time timetables, health provision or alternative education recorded in accordance with statutory requirements.

5. Absence Procedures

Parents/carers should telephone the school before 9:00am on the first day of absence, giving the reason and expected duration. Where no explanation has been received by the close of the morning register, administrative staff will make first-day contact as soon as practicable.

The school will follow up absence to establish the reason, determine the correct attendance code, identify any welfare or safeguarding concerns, and consider whether support is required.

Medical evidence will not routinely be requested for ordinary illness. Evidence may be requested where there is genuine and reasonable doubt, where required to support provision, or where a pattern of absence requires a clearer understanding of need.

Where a student has been absent for four consecutive school days, or sooner where risk indicates, the school will consider enhanced contact and a welfare visit as part of the safeguarding response.

6. Attendance Register

Dovecote uses Arbor MIS system to maintain attendance records. Registers are taken at the start of the morning and afternoon sessions and use the national attendance codes prescribed by the School Attendance (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2024 and current DfE guidance.

The school will ensure that codes are used according to their statutory meaning. Particular care will be taken with codes relating to part-time timetables, off-site education, local-authority-arranged provision, illness, medical appointments, authorised leave, inability to attend and unauthorised absence.

Attendance-register entries will be preserved for six years. Dovecote will provide attendance information to the DfE, local authority or other authorised body where required. As an independent school, Dovecote is not required to submit daily attendance data to the Department solely by virtue of the 2026 attendance guidance, but will comply with any applicable data-sharing requirement or agreed local arrangement.

7. Leave of Absence and Authorisation

Requests for leave should be made to the Headteacher in advance using the school's leave of absence request form. Leave during term time will only be granted where the Headteacher considers there are exceptional circumstances and will be limited to the period necessary.

Each request will be considered individually, taking account of the student's needs, attendance, education, safeguarding, EHCP and any relevant family circumstances. Leave cannot be authorised retrospectively.

Parents/carers should arrange routine medical and dental appointments outside school hours where reasonably possible. Where this is not possible, only the time reasonably necessary for the appointment should be missed.

Absence for religious observance will be considered in accordance with the Attendance Regulations. Gypsy, Roma and Traveller absence for occupational travel will be considered using the relevant statutory code and criteria.

8. SEND- and Health-Related Absence

Dovecote recognises that students with SEND, disabilities, physical health needs and mental health needs may experience additional barriers to attendance. Attendance support will be personalised and will not penalise a student for needs the school has a duty to understand and accommodate.

- Use reasonable adjustments and provision identified in EHCPs and individual plans.

- Work with families, commissioning local authorities, health professionals and other agencies.
- Use phased returns, temporary adjustments or time-limited part-time timetables only where appropriate, agreed, regularly reviewed and recorded correctly.
- Consider quiet spaces, altered transitions, relational support, Thrive interventions and tailored curriculum access.
- Ensure reduced timetables are not used as informal exclusion or a long-term substitute for suitable full-time education.

Where a student is likely to be unable to attend school for 15 school days or more, whether consecutive or cumulative, because of health needs, the school will work promptly with the relevant local authority regarding its duty to arrange suitable education and will support continuity and reintegration.

Where mental health or attendance concerns are also safeguarding concerns, staff must inform the DSL without delay and follow DC008.

9. Exceptional Circumstances

Where a student cannot attend because of an unavoidable cause, disruption to travel, unavailable transport, closure or another circumstance covered by the national attendance codes, Dovecote will use the appropriate code and keep sufficient evidence of the reason.

10. Truancy and Students Missing During the School Day

Any unexplained absence from lessons or the school site will be treated as a safeguarding matter first. A student must not leave the premises during the school day without permission and the required sign-out arrangements.

If a student is believed to be missing, staff will immediately inform the Headteacher/DSL, check likely locations and attendance information, maintain supervision of other students, contact parents/carers and involve the police without delay where the circumstances or risk require it. The previous fixed 15-minute wait is not used as an absolute rule; response is risk-based.

Once the student is safe, the school will record and review the incident, consider safeguarding and behaviour needs, and amend risk management or support plans where necessary.

11. Attendance Support and Intervention

Dovecote will intervene early and use evidence-informed, individualised support. The Attendance Lead, supported by SLT, SENCO, DSL and Family/Inclusion/Wellbeing staff as appropriate, will identify barriers, agree actions and review progress.

- Regular student and family contact.
- Attendance review meetings and personalised attendance plans.
- Thrive, pastoral, therapeutic or SEND assessment and support.
- Curriculum or timetable adjustments where appropriate and lawful.
- Support with transport, transitions, bullying, anxiety or relationships.

- Multi-agency work with local authorities, social care, health and other services.
- Formal attendance support processes where voluntary support has not been sufficient.

12. Working with Parents and Carers

The school will cultivate respectful, trusting relationships with families and communicate clearly about attendance, barriers, progress and support. Dovecote will offer support before punitive approaches wherever appropriate, while recognising that parents retain legal responsibilities for the education of children of compulsory school age.

Where barriers arise from school experience, such as bullying, anxiety, unmet SEND or curriculum access, the school will address those barriers through the relevant policy and support process. Where barriers sit outside school, Dovecote will help families engage with appropriate services.

13. Persistent and Severe Absence

Persistent absence is absence of 10% or more of possible sessions. Severe absence is absence of 50% or more. Dovecote will pay particular attention to students with SEND, mental health or anxiety needs, children in need, looked-after children, young carers, pupils facing bullying or discrimination and other students whose circumstances increase vulnerability.

For persistent or severe absence, the school will intensify support, seek to understand wider causes, coordinate agencies and keep the effectiveness of provision under frequent review. Continued severe absence may indicate neglect or other safeguarding harm and must be considered with the DSL in line with KCSIE 2026.

14. Legal Intervention

Dovecote's priority is engagement, safeguarding and support. Where attendance support has not worked, has not been engaged with or is not appropriate, the school will work with the local authority to consider formal attendance interventions available under current law and the local code of conduct.

The national threshold for considering a penalty notice is 10 sessions of unauthorised absence in a rolling period of 10 school weeks. Reaching the threshold does not mean a notice must automatically be issued; the circumstances, support already offered and the most appropriate route must be considered. Any penalty notice is issued in accordance with the local authority code and national framework.

Where legal intervention is contemplated, Dovecote will ensure SEND, disability, safeguarding and health factors have been properly considered and that reasonable support has been offered.

15. Monitoring and Analysing Attendance

Attendance will be reviewed at least weekly for emerging concerns and analysed at half-termly, termly and annual points. Analysis will consider individual students, cohorts, key

stages, SEND, looked-after status, disadvantage, patterns of codes, days/lessons, punctuality, persistent/severe absence and barriers to attendance.

The Headteacher and Attendance Lead will report relevant attendance themes and the impact of support to the Dovecote School Governance Body. Benchmarking data will be used carefully in the context of Dovecote's specialist cohort and individual starting points.

16. Staff Training

Staff will receive attendance training appropriate to their role through induction and ongoing CPD. Training will include register accuracy, early identification of barriers, SEND and health needs, multi-agency support, and the safeguarding significance of unexplained or worsening absence.

17. Deletion from the Admission Register

A student's name will only be deleted from the admission register on a ground permitted by regulation 9 of the School Attendance (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2024. Dovecote will not remove a student from roll for convenience, because of poor attendance, or as a means of informal exclusion.

Required returns will be made to the local authority, and the admission and attendance registers will remain an accurate contemporaneous record. Deletions will not be backdated.

18. Monitoring and Review

This policy will be reviewed annually by the Headteacher and Attendance Lead and approved by the Dovecote School Governance Body. It will be reviewed sooner if legislation, statutory guidance, school arrangements or significant attendance/safeguarding themes change. The next scheduled review date is 11 August 2027.

19. Links with Other Policies

- DC003 Admissions Policy
- DC008 Child Protection and Safeguarding Policy
- DC009 Complaints Policy and Procedures
- DC013 Exclusion Policy
- DC017 Behaviour (Building Positive Relationships) Policy
- DC025 Anti-Bullying Policy
- DC031 SEN Policy
- DC054 Supporting Pupils with Medical Conditions Policy
- DC070 Children Missing Education Policy

Appendix A - Attendance Monitoring Procedures

Attendance picture	Dovecote response
Attendance is secure or improving	Recognise success, continue routine monitoring and maintain open communication.
Early concern / emerging pattern	Student conversation, family contact, check barriers, review SEND/health/transport/bullying and agree early support.
Persistent absence (10% or more)	Formal attendance review, personalised attendance plan, multi-disciplinary involvement as needed, frequent review and local-authority liaison.
Severe absence (50% or more)	Senior leadership and DSL oversight, intensive multi-agency support, safeguarding review and coordinated plan with commissioning LA and other services.

These thresholds guide the level of response but do not replace professional judgement. Dovecote may intervene earlier where a student's history, vulnerability or safeguarding risk indicates this is necessary.

Appendix B - Attendance Reporting Structure

Frequency	Review / reporting
Daily	First-day response to unexplained absence; safeguarding escalation as required.
Weekly	Attendance Lead reviews students causing concern and the effectiveness of current actions.
Half-termly	SLT reviews patterns, persistent/severe absence, cohorts and intervention impact.
Termly	Governance receives attendance assurance and key themes, including safeguarding/SEND implications.
Annually	Policy, target, trends and whole-school attendance strategy reviewed.

Appendix C - Leave of Absence Request Form

Requests should be submitted at least two weeks in advance wherever practicable. Leave can only be authorised in advance and only where the Headteacher considers there are exceptional circumstances.

Information required	Parent/carers response
Student name	
Dates requested (from / to)	
Reason for request and exceptional circumstances	

Supporting information attached (if applicable)	
Parent/carer name	
Signature and date	
Headteacher decision and dates authorised	
Attendance code / office action	