STUDENT ATTENDANCE AND PUNCTUALITY POLICY

This policy applies across the College at all age ranges including Early Years, Prep and Senior Schools.

St. Columba's College is conducted in the educational tradition of the Brothers of the Sacred Heart. As such, it nurtures a holistic environment which includes a commitment to academic excellence, religious values, friendly discipline, and personal attention.

Policy owner:	Deputy Heads (Senior Attendance Champions)
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Ratify by Governors:	ESP

Section 1: **Aims**
Section 2: **Roles and Responsibilities**
Section 3: **Absence Authorisation and Reporting Procedures**
Section 4: **Punctuality**
Section 5: **Monitoring and Review**

Appendix 1: **Admission Register**
Appendix 2: **Attendance Register**
Appendix 3: **Attendance Codes**

Section 1: Aims

For students to benefit fully from the educational opportunities provided by the College, they must maintain high levels of attendance and punctuality. Excellent attendance at school is key to good pupil progress and enjoyment of learning. The College recognises the importance of developing good patterns of attendance from the outset. This is an integral part of the College's ethos and culture. In building a culture of good school attendance, it recognises:

- the importance of good attendance, alongside good behaviour, as a central part of the school's vision, values, ethos, and day to day life;
- the interplay between attendance and wider school improvement efforts, building it into strategies on attainment, behaviour, bullying, SEN support, supporting students with medical conditions and/or disabilities, mental health issues, young carers, students with a social worker, safeguarding, wellbeing, and support for disadvantaged students;
- the importance of setting high expectations for the attendance and punctuality of all students and communicating these regularly and effectively to students and parents;
- that attendance is never "solved" and is a continuous process requiring revision and updating of messages, processes and strategies;
- children missing education can act as a vital warning sign to a range of safeguarding issues, including neglect, sexual abuse and child sexual and criminal exploitation.

St Columba's College takes a whole-school approach to maintaining excellent attendance and it is the joint responsibility of parents, pupils and all staff members to ensure that children are attending school as they should be. It endeavours to work with families to make sure that any problems or circumstances which may lead to poor attendance are given the right attention and appropriate support. 'The College expects every student to achieve attendance of at least 95% and works in partnership with families where attendance falls below this level to understand and remove the barriers behind it.

This policy pays regard to the following guidance documents: Working Together to Improve School Attendance (DfE, July 2026), Keeping Children Safe in Education (Sept 2026), and the DfE's Independent School Standards guidance (April 2026), Education (Independent School Standards) Regulations (2014), Education and Skills Act (2008), The Children Act (1989), as well as The Equality Act (2010). It is supported by policies on Safeguarding and Behaviour.

The aims of this policy are as follows:

- to develop and maintain a whole school culture that promotes the benefits of good attendance;
- to ensure, so far as possible, that every student in the College is able to benefit from and make their full contribution to the life of the College;
- to prioritise and where possible improve attendance and punctuality across the College;
- to reduce absence and set out the College's approach to the management of absence / non-attendance;
- to recognise the linkages between attendance / absence and student wellbeing, specifically ensuring a consistent whole school approach to safeguarding; and
- to help to promote a whole school culture of safety, equality and protection.

The Senior Attendance Champions for the College are the Deputy Head, Mrs Katie Marson for the Senior School (marson.k@stcolumbascollege.org) and Deputy Head of the Prep School, Mr Kevin Boland (boland.k@stcolumbascollege.org).

Section 2: Roles and Responsibilities

The Governors will:

- ensure that the importance of attendance is made clear by promoting the relevant school policies and guidance for parents and staff
- regularly review the school's attendance rules and ensure that all provisions are in place to allow school staff, parents and children to implement the rules effectively
- ensure that up-to-date guidelines are communicated to parents, children and staff
- ensure school leaders fulfil expectations and statutory duties, including:
  - making sure the school records attendance accurately in the register, and shares the required information with the DfE and local authority if necessary
  - making sure the school works effectively with local partners to help remove barriers to attendance, and keeps them informed regarding specific students, where appropriate
- review and discuss attendance data and trends at least termly and help school leaders focus improvement efforts on pupils/cohorts who need it most
- ensure that school leaders have the knowledge, skills and understanding to effectively implement government guidance, statutory duties and strategies to support good attendance
- ensure staff receive appropriate training on attendance so that they understand
  - the importance of good attendance
  - that absence is almost always a symptom of wider issues
  - the school's legal requirements for keeping registers
- oversee the school's strategies and procedures for tracking, following up on and improving attendance, including working with partners and keeping them informed regarding specific students, where appropriate

The Head will:

- ensure the implementation of this policy
- decide when absences are authorised and not authorised
- communicate the school's high expectations for attendance and punctuality regularly to students and parents through all available channels

The School Attendance Champions will:

- set a clear vision for improving and maintaining good attendance
- develop and maintain a whole school culture that promotes the benefits of high attendance
- establish and maintain effective systems for tackling absence and make sure they are followed by all staff
- monitor and evaluate attendance data, identifying trends and any subsequent actions required.
- have a clear attendance policy which all leaders, staff, pupils and parents understand
- be proactive in their approach to promoting good attendance to pupils and their parents, which includes forming positive relationships with families
- ensure that the school's teaching and learning experiences encourage regular attendance and that pupils are taught the value of high attendance for their own progression and achievement
- on a termly basis update the Governing body with data regarding student attendance and provision
- ensure that staff are up to date with the school's attendance process, legislation and government guidance, and that staff are trained to recognise and deal with attendance issues

- ensure that the College is compliant with legislation and government guidance on attendance
- ensure that systems to record and report attendance data are in place and working effectively
- aim to develop and engage with multi-agency relationships to help with poor attendance and support families, included targeted intervention and support to students and families
- inform the local authority (and the local authority where the child is normally resident) of any pupil who has been absent without the school's permission for a continuous period of 10 school days or more.
- have in place appropriate safeguarding responses for pupils who are at risk of missing education, having regard to the statutory guidance Keeping Children Safe in Education
- notify the LA and provide all necessary information when a pupil's name is to be removed from the admission register or when a child's name is added to the admission register other than at the usual point of transition. (e.g. entering reception / Year 7 / Year 12) (in line with CME guidance).
- support students who are struggling with attendance and work with those students and parents to try to remove barriers to attendance by building strong and trusting relationships and working together to put the right support in place.
- 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. Adjustments will be considered before any other intervention and may include a time-limited phased return, adjustments to the timetable or the school environment, or additional pastoral support, recorded in writing, agreed with parents and reviewed at regular intervals.
- 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. Where a pupil has an education, health and care plan the school will communicate with the local authority where the pupil's attendance falls, or the school become aware of barriers to attendance that relate to the pupil's needs. Suitable strategies and support will also be considered for pupils with any social, emotional or mental health issue that is affecting their attendance
- investigate unexplained or unauthorised absences, including informing the local authority at 10 days for the latter, and considering measures for addressing unauthorised absence, including for safeguarding purposes.
- communicate with parents where absence is a concern and work together to improve it.
- make a sickness return to the local authority if a student is recorded in the attendance register as absent using the code I (unable to attend because of sickness) and there are reasonable grounds to believe that the pupil will have to miss 15 consecutive or cumulative school days or more for illness.
- recognise their wider reporting duties following deletions from the admission register, in accordance with the Education (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations, to help identify children who are missing education and/or otherwise at risk of harm.
- provide appropriate training for staff on attendance procedures, safeguarding related to attendance, and strategies for supporting students facing barriers to attendance. This training is logged and reported to Governors annually.

Heads of House/Key Stage Leads will:

- contact home if poor attendance and punctuality persist after tutor/class teacher's involvement
- meet parents to discuss concerns regarding attendance and/or punctuality and agreeing on a plan.
- support pupils who are returning to education following long term absence
- liaise with the SAC regarding any students of concern.
- refer to the DSL or a DDSL if there is a safeguarding concern.

Form tutors will:

- record attendance on a daily basis, using the correct codes and submit this information via SIMS/Edulink by the close of registration.
- monitor attendance and punctuality for their form group and liaise with the Head of House if they have concerns
- contact parents where students have been absent for 3+ days
- proactively monitor absence for patterns
- liaise with parents on how to support their child if absence falls or is low
- escalate to the Head of House if poor attendance persists
- refer to the Senior Attendance Champion if there are serious attendance concerns
- refer to the DSL/DDSL if there is a safeguarding concern

School Administrative Staff will:

- monitor the 'absence' email/Edulink and/or take calls from parents about absence on a day-to-day basis and record it on SIMS
- apply accurate codes for attendance and absence using the revised attendance codes as of September 2024
- produce key absence data as required
- raise any concerns regarding absences with the Senior Attendance Champions

All staff will:

- understand the importance of good attendance
- deal with lateness to lessons consistently and promptly
- take an accurate register on SIMS at the start of every lesson
- know who the Senior Attendance Champions are and contact them in the event of any concerns around student attendance

Parents and Carers will:

- engage with their children's education – support their learning and take an interest in what they have been doing at school, promote the value of a good education and the importance of regular school attendance at home
- support the College in ensuring their child attends school each day, including those which deviate from the normal timetable.
- work with the school where attendance is a concern, including helping facilitate their child's attendance at 'catch up' sessions
- encourage and support their children's aspirations
- ensure that their children arrive at school on time, appropriately dressed and with the necessary equipment
- follow the set school procedure for reporting the absence of their child from school and include an expected date for return

- do everything they can to prevent unnecessary school absences, such as, making medical and dental appointments outside school hours
- keep the College informed of any circumstances which may affect their child's attendance
- enforce a regular routine at home in terms of homework, bedtime, etc. so that the child is used to consistency and the school day becomes part of that routine. It is vital that the child receives the same message at home as they do at school about the importance of attendance
- not take their children out of school for holidays during term time.
- inform the school in advance of any proposed change of address for their child(ren) along with the name of the parent with whom the child shall live.

Pupils will:

- be aware of the school's attendance rules, and when and what they are required to attend.
- recognise the importance of good attendance and maintain as high a level of personal attendance as possible
- speak to their form tutor or another member of staff if they are experiencing difficulties at school or at home which may impact on their attendance
- attend lessons on time and ready to learn, with the appropriate learning tools requested and on time for the class.
- follow the correct set school procedure if they arrive late. Pupils are held responsible for their punctuality. This will help the school to monitor attendance and keep accurate records for the child's individual attendance, and is also vital for health and safety in the event of a school evacuation

Emotionally Based School Non-Attendance (EBSNA)

The school recognises that some pupils may experience barriers to attendance related to anxiety, emotional wellbeing, mental health needs, or unmet special educational needs and disabilities (SEND), which may result in Emotionally Based School Non-Attendance (EBSNA). The College will take a child-centred, supportive and non-punitive approach, seeking to understand the underlying causes of absence and working collaboratively with pupils, parents/carers, external agencies and the local authority to remove barriers to attendance. Early identification, regular communication, assessment of individual need, reasonable adjustments, and graduated support plans will be used to promote successful engagement with education. Where appropriate, attendance interventions will be integrated with pastoral, safeguarding, SEND and mental health support, with the aim of securing a sustainable return to full-time education while ensuring the pupil feels safe, valued and supported.

Section 3: Absence Authorisation and Reporting Procedures

Most absences are short-term, for good reasons and will generally be authorised by the school, for example sickness, unavoidable medical or dental appointments (preferably, these should be made after school or during holidays), days of religious observance, or exceptional family circumstances e.g. bereavement. Where a student's illness is prolonged, frequently recurring or complex, or where the College has genuine and reasonable doubt about the reason given, the College may ask parents for reasonable supporting evidence — for example an appointment card, prescription or hospital or clinic letter. The purpose of any such request is to help the College understand the student's health needs, plan appropriate support and any reasonable adjustments, and record the absence accurately. Requests will be proportionate and will not be made routinely, and the College will not normally ask parents to obtain a letter from a GP. Absence will be recorded as unauthorised only where the College is not satisfied, on the information available, that the reason given meets the criteria for authorisation.

Listed here are some examples of types of absence that would not be authorised, however, this list is not exhaustive: looking after the house; looking after brothers and sisters or sick parents; birthdays; day trips. Equally, it is important that students and parents recognise the holistic value of days which differ from the normal timetable (Eisteddfod, Sports Day, end of term, EECA Days) and ensure that their child is in attendance on these days unless too ill to do so.

Parents are strongly urged to avoid booking family holidays during term time. The dates are published sufficiently far in advance for proper arrangements to be made. It is the College's policy not to allow holiday to be taken during the school term unless there are exceptional circumstances that have been approved by the Headmaster/Head of Prep in advance. Apart from this, leave in term time can only be given in exceptional circumstances.

Any absences not agreed according to the above criteria will be recorded as unauthorised and will appear as such on the school record of the student concerned.

Remote education is not an alternative to attendance and does not count as attendance. Where a student is well enough to learn but temporarily unable to attend, the College may provide remote education as a last resort, after reasonable adjustments and a phased return have been considered, and only as part of a time-limited, structured plan to return the student to school, agreed with parents and reviewed regularly. Students receiving remote education continue to be recorded as absent in the attendance register using the appropriate code. Remote education may also be used where the College is subject to a long-term closure which necessitates students being educated at home.

To record student absences, the Attendance Officer (Prep or Senior) must be telephoned as soon as possible and preferably before the school day starts on 01727 855185. There is a dedicated facility on the phone system to record absences. Alternatively, absences should be reported as soon as possible via Edulink, by selecting Absence on the front page once logged in. Absences which are not notified to the school will be followed up by the secretarial staff who will send a text message followed by a phone call/email that morning. This acts as a check. However, parents are requested to use Edulink for notification as this saves time.

All requested leave of absence in the Prep school is via the Head of Prep (link included in the Week Ahead). In the Senior School, requests for leave of absence for one day should be emailed to the Deputy Head. For leave of absence longer than for one day, requests must be addressed to the Headmaster for Senior School students.

If, for any reason, a student needs to leave the College campus during the school day, their parent must email their Form tutor and the Front Office in advance, to request the absence and give a reason. Students must then sign out at the front office. No student should leave the campus without permission from the nurse or a member of CLT, or prior notice given to the front office in the case of an appointment. During after-school activities, children are not allowed off-site without a member of staff.

Attendance is reported to parents in writing as part of termly reports and End of Year exam results. Parents can see their child's live attendance information on the Edulink app, and the College will contact parents directly if attendance patterns are causing concern.

Section 4: Punctuality

Punctuality is an extremely important life skill and the College's expectations are high in this regard. The morning register is taken at 8.25am and closes at 8.50am. The afternoon register is taken at 1.30pm in the Prep School and 2.05pm in the Senior School. Registers are taken at the same time for all students in each phase, including students on a part-time timetable, a phased return or any other individual arrangement. Concerns regarding punctuality, similarly to those regarding attendance, will be flagged to parents by the College. Students who are persistently late will be supported through targeted interventions, including meetings with parents and access to catch-up sessions, with clear consequences outlined for ongoing lateness. A student who arrives after 8.25am but before the register closes at 8.50am is recorded as late using code L and is counted as present. A student who arrives after the register has closed is recorded as an unauthorised absence for that session using code U, even though they are in school, unless the College accepts the reason for the late arrival as exceptional. Persistent lateness will be treated in the same way as persistent absence, with the barriers explored with the family and support agreed before any sanction is applied.

Section 5: Monitoring and Review

Attendance and punctuality are monitored regularly by the Attendance Champions as well as Form Tutors, Key Stage Leads, Heads of House, the College Leadership Team, and the Governors. The Attendance Champions will, in conjunction with colleagues, review attendance and punctuality for all students each term and liaise with parents where there are concerns. The College will actively promote the importance of attendance, aiming for 95%+ for all pupils. Attendance data is analysed at whole-school, year group and individual level, and separately for students with SEND, students with an EHC plan, young carers, students with a social worker, disadvantaged students and students with medical or mental health needs, so that patterns and barriers specific to those groups are identified early. The College will engage students in discussions about attendance and punctuality to understand barriers and co-develop solutions, reflecting our commitment to student wellbeing and community. In cases of persistent (below 90%) or severe (below 50%) absence, additional measures are likely to be taken by the College, involving the parents and where appropriate wider support services and/or the Local Authority, to support improved attendance.

Appendix 1 – Admission Register

In accordance with the requirements of the School Attendance (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2024 the College will:

- maintain an admission register of all students (of both compulsory and non-compulsory school age) admitted to the College (also known as the school roll);
- inform the local authority of any student who is going to be added to or deleted from the College's admission register at non-standard transition points.

The admission register must be kept electronically, and a back-up copy of the register is made at least once a month in the form of an electronic or printed copy.

The College must ensure that every entry in the admission register is preserved for six years beginning with the day on which the entry was made; and every back-up copy of the register is preserved for six years after the end of the school year that it relates to.

The admissions register contains specific personal details of every student in the College, including their date of admission, information regarding parents and carers and details of the school they last attended.

A student's name can only be deleted from the admission register for a reason set out in regulation 9 of the School Attendance (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2024. When any of the situations set out in regulation 9 occurs, the student's name must be deleted.

Where the College notifies the local authority that the student's name is to be deleted from the admission register, the following information is provided:

- the full name of the student;
- the address of the student;
- the full name and address of any parent the student normally lives with;
- at least one telephone number of any parent with whom the student lives or can be contacted in an emergency;
- the name of the student's other or future school and student's start date or expected start date there, if applicable;
- the ground (prescribed in regulation 9) under which the student's name is to be deleted from the admission register

The reports to the local authority are completed by the Data Manager at the request of the Headmaster and the School Attendance Champions are made aware of all changes.

Appendix 2 - Attendance Register

The College records and monitors the attendance of all students (both of compulsory and non-compulsory school age) in accordance with the School Attendance (Pupil Registration) (England) (Regulations) 2024.

The College uses the appropriate national attendance and absence codes system to enable it to record and monitor attendance and absence in a consistent way which complies with regulation 10 of the Attendance Regulations.

The attendance register is kept electronically on SIMS, which is the College's statutory register of record. Edulink is used by parents to report and view absence, and entries are transferred to SIMS by the Attendance Officer. Every entry in the attendance register is preserved for three years from the end of the school year to which it relates.

The College is required by law to take attendance registers twice daily - once at the start of the morning session and once during the afternoon session. On each occasion it will be recorded whether every student is:

- physically present in school when the attendance register begins to be taken; or
- absent from the school when the attendance register begins to be taken but attends before the taking of the register has ended; or
- attending a place other than the school; or
- absent.

The circumstances in which a student may be recorded as attending a place, other than the school, can include:

- attending educational provision arranged by a local authority;
- for an educational visit or trip arranged by or on behalf of the school and supervised by a member of school staff;
- attending a place for an approved educational activity that is a sporting activity;
- attending an approved educational activity that is work experience provided under arrangements made by the school as part of the student's education;
- attending a place for any other approved educational activity.

Recording Absence

Absence will be recorded in accordance with the national absence codes set out in regulation 10 of the School Attendance (Pupil Registration) (England) (Regulations) 2024 and statutory guidance Working Together To Improve School Attendance relating to:

- leaves of absence;
- other authorised reasons;
- unable to attend school because of unavoidable cause;
- unauthorised absence.

Appendix 3 – Attendance Codes

The following codes are taken from the DfE's guidance on school attendance.

School Attendance codes – descriptions and meanings 2026

CODE	DESCRIPTION	MEANING	SCENARIO
/	Present (AM)	Present	Student is present at morning registration
****	Present (PM)	Present	Student is present at afternoon registration
L	Late (before registers closed)	Present	Student arrives late before register has closed
B	Educated off site (NOT Dual registration)	Approved educational activity	Student is attending a place for an approved educational activity that is not a sporting activity or work experience
K	LA arranged provision at a place other than a school	Approved educational activity	Student is attending a place other than a school at which they are registered, for educational provision arranged by the local authority
P	Approved sporting activity	Approved educational activity	Student is participating in a supervised sporting activity approved by the school
V	Educational visit or trip	Approved educational activity	Student is on an educational visit / trip organised or approved by the school
W	Work experience	Approved educational activity	Student is on an approved work experience placement
C	Absent with leave (not covered by another appropriate code/description)	Authorised absence	Student has been granted a leave of absence due to exceptional circumstances
C1	Absent due to participating in a regulated performance or regulated employment abroad	Authorised absence	Student is undertaking employment (paid or unpaid) during school hours, approved by the school
C2	Part-time timetable	Authorised absence	Student is not in school due to having a part-time timetable
E	Excluded (no alternative provision made)	Authorised absence	Student has been suspended or excluded from school and no alternative provision has been made
I	Illness (NOT medical or dental etc. appointments)	Authorised absence	Student is unable to attend due to illness (either related to physical or mental health)
J1	Interview	Authorised absence	Student has an interview with a prospective employer / educational establishment
M	Medical/Dental appointments	Authorised absence	Student is at a medical or dental appointment
R	Religious observance	Authorised absence	Student is taking part in a day of religious observance

S	Study leave	Authorised absence	Student has been granted leave of absence to study for a public examination
T	Traveller absence	Authorised absence	Student from a Traveller community is travelling for occupational purposes and is registered at another school
G	Family holiday (NOT agreed or days in excess of agreement)	Unauthorised absence	Student is absent for the purpose of a holiday, not approved by the school
N	No reason yet provided for absence	Unauthorised absence	Reason for absence has not been established before the register closes
O	Unauthorised absence (not covered by any other code/description)	Unauthorised absence	No reason for absence has been established, or the school isn't satisfied that the reason given would be recorded using one of the codes for authorised absence
U	Late (after registers closed)	Unauthorised absence	Student has arrived late, after the register has closed but before the end of session
D	Dual registration (i.e. student attending another establishment)	Not counted in possible attendances	Student is attending a session at another setting where they are also registered.
Q	Lack of transport or boarding access arrangements arranged by LA	Not counted in possible attendances	Student is unable to attend school because the local authority has failed to make access arrangements to enable attendance at school
X	Untimetabled sessions for non-compulsory school-age students	Not counted in possible attendances	Student of non-compulsory school age is not required to attend the session (for example a Nursery or Reception child attending part-time)
Y1	Transport normally provided by LA or school not available	Not counted in possible attendances	Student is unable to attend because school is not within walking distance of their home and the transport normally provided is not available
Y2	Widespread disruption to travel due to local, national or international emergency	Not counted in possible attendances	Student is unable to attend because of widespread disruption to travel caused by a local, national or international emergency
Y3	School partially closed	Not counted in possible attendances	Student is unable to attend because they cannot practically be accommodated in the part of the premises that remains open
Y4	Whole school site unexpectedly closed	Not counted in possible attendances	Every student absent as the school is closed unexpectedly (e.g. due to adverse weather)
Y5	Student in criminal justice detention	Not counted in possible attendances	Student is unable to attend as they are: • In police detention • Remanded to youth detention, awaiting trial or sentencing, or • Detained under a sentence of detention

Y6	Travel or attendance contrary to public health guidance or law on transmission of disease	Not counted in possible attendances	Student's travel to or attendance at the school would be prohibited under public health guidance or law
Y7	Unable to attend due to unavoidable cause	Not counted in possible attendances	To be used where an unavoidable cause is not covered by the other codes
Z	student not yet on roll	Not counted in possible attendances	Student has not joined school yet but has been registered
#	School closed to students (planned closure)	Not counted in possible attendances	Planned whole-school closures that are known and planned in advance, including school holidays