

# The Online School UK



## Attendance Policy 2026-2027

|                                  |                                                |
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| Date of This Review              | August 2026                                    |
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## 1. Introduction

At **The Online School UK**, we offer a flexible alternative to traditional schooling, particularly for families seeking tailored learning approaches, including those with additional needs.

Whilst we recognise that unforeseen circumstances may arise, regular attendance and active participation are key to student success, educational progress and wellbeing.

As an online school, the school recognises that attendance concerns may present differently from those in a traditional school environment. A pupil may be physically present at home but may not be attending their scheduled education, may disengage from online learning, or may become increasingly difficult to contact.

In line with statutory safeguarding and attendance expectations, the school monitors attendance and engagement to help ensure that pupils remain safe, receive suitable education and are appropriately supported.

The school recognises that **repeated, prolonged, persistent or unexplained absence may be an important indicator of safeguarding concerns** and will consider attendance information alongside other information about a child's welfare and circumstances.

Our aim is always to:

- Support families
- Identify concerns early
- Understand and address barriers to attendance
- Work collaboratively with pupils and families to improve attendance
- Promote positive attendance and engagement
- Identify pupils who may require additional support
- Recognise when attendance may indicate a safeguarding concern
- Escalate concerns proportionately where necessary to protect the child
- Work with relevant external agencies where appropriate

The school will not treat attendance concerns solely as an attendance-management issue where there are indicators that a child may be at risk of harm or may be missing from education.

## **Legal Framework**

This policy operates in accordance with applicable legislation and statutory guidance, including:

- **Keeping Children Safe in Education 2026 (KCSIE)**
- **Working Together to Improve School Attendance**
- **Children Missing Education: Statutory Guidance for Local Authorities and Schools**
- **Working Together to Safeguard Children 2026**
- **Children Act 1989 and 2004**
- Other applicable education, safeguarding and attendance legislation

The July 2026 **Working Together to Improve School Attendance** guidance is statutory guidance applying to independent schools and sets out expectations around attendance, support for pupils and families, persistent and severe absence, attendance registers and the respective roles of schools and local authorities.

**The Children Missing Education (CME)** guidance is also statutory guidance applying to independent schools. It sets out how schools and local authorities should work together to identify and support children missing education.

In line with KCSIE 2026 and related statutory guidance, this policy recognises that:

- Attendance can be an important safeguarding indicator
- Repeated or prolonged absence can indicate vulnerability
- Unexplainable and/or persistent absence may require safeguarding consideration
- Lack of engagement may indicate emerging vulnerability
- Early help should be considered where appropriate
- Barriers to attendance should be explored
- Attendance concerns should be considered alongside contextual safeguarding information
- Children missing education may be at increased risk of safeguarding harm
- Safeguarding concerns must not be delayed by attendance procedures
- Escalation should be proportionate to the individual circumstances and level of risk
- DSL oversight is required when attendance concerns may indicate a safeguarding concern

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## **2. Roles and Responsibilities**

Happiness Manager Assistants (HMAs)

HMA's are responsible for:

- Monitoring attendance regularly
- Identifying patterns of:
  - Low attendance
  - Repeated absence
  - Prolonged absence
  - Unexplained or unexplainable absence
  - Sudden changes in attendance
  - Significant changes in engagement
- Sending initial supportive check-in communications
- Recording communication attempts
- Gathering relevant information from families where appropriate
- Flagging emerging concerns to HMLs and, where appropriate, the DSL

HMA's must not delay safeguarding escalation because the usual number of attendance contacts has not yet been completed.

Their role focuses on **early identification, supportive engagement and accurate recording**.

### **Happiness Manager Leads (HMLs)**

HMLs are responsible for:

- Maintaining oversight of attendance within their year groups
- Supporting HMA's with:
  - Communication with families
  - Understanding barriers to attendance
  - Gathering relevant contextual information
  - Identifying patterns of concern
- Reviewing attendance information where concerns persist
- Considering whether concerns require escalation to the DSL
- Supporting Attendance Support Plans where appropriate

HMLs should consider attendance alongside relevant information already known about the pupil, including SEND, medical needs, wellbeing, safeguarding concerns and other contextual factors where appropriate and lawful.

### **Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL)**

he DSL is responsible for:

- Maintaining strategic oversight of attendance concerns which may indicate safeguarding risk
- Reviewing attendance concerns escalated beyond pastoral support
- Considering whether repeated, prolonged, persistent or unexplained absence may indicate safeguarding concerns
- Considering whether the child may be missing education
- Identifying families who may benefit from Early Help
- Supporting implementation of Attendance Support Plans (ASP)
- Liaising with the relevant Local Authority attendance/CME service where appropriate
- Liaising with Children's Social Care, police or other agencies where safeguarding concerns require this
- Considering whether a referral or information-sharing action is necessary
- Ensuring safeguarding concerns are recorded appropriately
- Ensuring decisions and the rationale for those decisions are recorded

The DSL will ensure attendance concerns are:

- Considered through a safeguarding lens
- Considered alongside other known safeguarding information
- Responded to proportionately
- Escalated where necessary to protect the pupil

The DSL will not rely solely on attendance percentages or predetermined periods of absence when deciding whether safeguarding action is required.

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### **3. Attendance Expectations**

Students at The Online School UK are expected to attend their scheduled lessons regularly and punctually in order to benefit fully from their education.

We understand that illness, family emergencies, pre-planned commitments and other exceptional circumstances may occasionally prevent attendance.

Parents/carers are encouraged to:

- Ensure their child attends scheduled education regularly
- Minimise avoidable absence
- Communicate absence in advance where possible
- Provide an explanation for absence
- Inform the school as soon as reasonably practicable where an absence is unexpected
- Work collaboratively with the school where attendance concerns arise
- Engage with support offered where appropriate

The school will seek to understand the reasons and barriers behind attendance difficulties rather than assuming that absence is the result of unwillingness to attend.

Where attendance concerns arise, the school will consider the individual circumstances of the pupil, including SEND, health, wellbeing, family circumstances and known safeguarding information where relevant.

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#### **4. Reporting Absence and Absence Monitoring**

Parents/carers should report absences:

- In advance where possible, or
- As soon as reasonably practicable after the absence begins.

This can be done by:

- Emailing the child's HMA team directly
- Emailing the school's designated attendance contact [effie@theonlineschool.uk](mailto:effie@theonlineschool.uk)
- Using the school account at [info@theonlineschool.uk](mailto:info@theonlineschool.uk)
- Using the parent message board

Where the school does not receive an explanation for absence, appropriate contact will be attempted.

The school will consider the circumstances of unexplained or unexplainable absence and whether further action is required.

#### **Missed Lessons**

Support is available through:

- Teachers
- The Happiness Manager Team
- Message boards
- Lesson recordings
- PowerPoints
- Knowledge Organisers
- Other available learning materials

However, access to lesson recordings or learning materials does not replace the importance of attending scheduled education.

Where a pupil is repeatedly relying on catch-up materials rather than attending scheduled education, this may form part of the school's assessment of attendance and engagement.

### **Lateness and Early Departure**

Students attending **less than 50% of a lesson** will be marked absent in accordance with the school's attendance recording procedures.

The school will ensure that its attendance recording methodology remains consistent with applicable attendance regulations and statutory attendance guidance.

Patterns of lateness or early departure may be considered alongside other attendance information where they indicate a broader concern about engagement or welfare.

### **Attendance Monitoring**

Attendance is automatically recorded and shared with parents/carers through daily and monthly reports. Attendance information is accessible through the Reports section of the child's Student Dashboard.

***The school encourages parents/carers to take an active role in monitoring their child's attendance.***

Attendance information may be used to identify:

- Emerging attendance difficulties
- Persistent absence
- Severe absence
- Sudden changes in attendance
- Repeated or prolonged absence
- Unexplained or unexplainable absence
- Potential safeguarding concerns

Attendance information will not be considered in isolation where safeguarding concerns are present.

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## **5. Interaction**

Students are encouraged but not required to use microphones or cameras to verbally interact unless specific arrangements have been agreed.

Parents/carers are able to select whether interaction is expected when enrolling their child, subject to the school's educational and safeguarding requirements.

Our online engagement data is gathered through a range of communication methods within the classroom.

These are currently broken down as follows:

- 80% – polls
- 10% – private chat messages
- 10% – public chat messages

Camera and microphone usage are not measured as part of our interaction percentage.

Poll participation is weighted most heavily because the school considers this to be a useful indicator of understanding and engagement with lesson content.

### **Attendance and Engagement**

Online engagement data may be considered alongside attendance information where there are concerns about a pupil's participation in education.

However:

**Online interaction data does not, by itself, determine whether a pupil is present or absent and must not be used as a substitute for the school's attendance recording process.**

A sudden or significant reduction in online engagement may nevertheless be an indicator that requires further consideration, particularly where it occurs alongside:

- Increased absence
- Repeated missed lessons
- Communication difficulties
- Changes in behaviour
- Known vulnerabilities
- Safeguarding concerns

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## **6. Safeguarding Thresholds**

Attendance concerns may move from pastoral support to safeguarding consideration where, for example:

- Absence is repeated or prolonged
- Absence is persistent
- Absence is unexplained or unexplainable
- There is a sudden and significant change in attendance
- There is a sudden withdrawal from education or online engagement
- Communication with the family cannot be established
- The school cannot establish the child's whereabouts
- The circumstances suggest the child may no longer be receiving suitable education
- There are known safeguarding vulnerabilities
- There are concerns about neglect, abuse or exploitation
- There are concerns about domestic abuse
- There are concerns about serious violence or criminal/sexual exploitation
- There are concerns about the child's mental health or wellbeing
- There are concerns relating to SEND or unmet additional needs
- Other contextual information indicates a potential risk of harm

The current version of KCSIE and attendance guidance recognise that repeated, prolonged and persistent absence can be a warning sign of safeguarding concerns. The school will therefore consider attendance information alongside wider safeguarding information.

Thresholds:

| Level                                 | Indicators                                                                                                                      | Response                                                                                                             |
|---------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <b>Pastoral Concern</b>               | Occasional absence, lateness or low engagement with an identifiable explanation                                                 | HMA monitoring, supportive communication and barrier identification                                                  |
| <b>Emerging Attendance Concern</b>    | Repeated absence, declining attendance or emerging pattern of disengagement                                                     | HML oversight, contextual information gathering and supporting DSL with an Attendance Support Plan where appropriate |
| <b>Potential Safeguarding Concern</b> | Persistent/prolonged/unexplainable absence, inability to establish contact, sudden withdrawal, or other safeguarding indicators | DSL review and safeguarding assessment                                                                               |

|                                    |                                                                                                                                                                                   |                                                                                                        |
|------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <b>CME Concern</b>                 | Concerns that the pupil may no longer be receiving suitable education, their whereabouts cannot be established, or they may otherwise meet the circumstances requiring CME action | DSL/senior leadership review and consideration of Local Authority CME procedures                       |
| <b>Immediate Safeguarding Risk</b> | Information indicating immediate risk of significant harm or serious safeguarding concern                                                                                         | Immediate safeguarding action and referral to appropriate emergency/statutory agencies where necessary |

***While consistent 0% attendance is of the biggest concern to us, as it indicates a Child Missing in Education (CME), persistent and/or unexplained absences accumulating to below 40% each week consistently will also be treated as a safeguarding concern, if communication cannot be established. This does not apply to one off weeks where communication has been established, where we have been informed of prior absence i.e. appointments or illness.***

***Please note: 40% is the chosen figure used by The Online School UK but as shown below will not be used solely to make considerations for safeguarding escalation.***

## **Important**

The school does not use a fixed number of missed lessons, weeks, emails or attendance percentage as a prerequisite for safeguarding escalation.

The appropriate response will depend on:

- The individual circumstances
- The nature and seriousness of the concern
- The child's known vulnerabilities
- The information available to the school
- Whether the child's whereabouts are known
- Whether suitable education is being received
- Whether communication with the family is possible
- Whether there is an immediate risk of harm

***Where there is an immediate safeguarding concern, the DSL or another appropriate member of staff will take action without waiting for the normal attendance-support process to be completed.***

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## 7. Support and Escalation Procedures

### Early Help

The Online School UK is committed to providing support before concerns escalate wherever this is appropriate.

Where attendance patterns suggest emerging difficulty, families may be offered an **Attendance Support Plan (ASP)** led by the DSL or an appropriate member of the school team.

This may include:

- Identifying barriers to attendance
- Understanding the child's circumstances
- Considering SEND or medical needs
- Considering wellbeing
- Considering family circumstances
- Agreeing realistic actions
- Adjusting expectations where appropriate
- Providing appropriate learning support
- Collaborative planning with families
- Setting review dates
- Monitoring progress

Support may be requested by families **at any stage** of the attendance process.

Where Early Help is appropriate, the school may work with relevant services in accordance with local arrangements.

### Escalation Procedure

Where attendance concerns arise, the following represents The Online School UK's **usual supportive process**.

It is not a safeguarding threshold and **must not delay safeguarding action** where the circumstances indicate that earlier intervention is necessary.

#### Stage 1 – Initial Check-In

The HMA will make a supportive contact with the family where:

- A pattern of low attendance emerges
- Absence is unexplained

- There is a noticeable change in attendance
- There is a concern about engagement

The HMA will seek to understand whether there is a barrier to attendance.

## **Stage 2 – Continued Monitoring and Support**

Where concerns continue, the HML will review:

- Attendance patterns
- Previous communication
- Relevant contextual information
- Any barriers identified
- Whether further support is appropriate

An Attendance Support Plan may be considered.

## **Stage 3 – DSL Involvement**

The DSL will become involved where:

- Concerns persist;
- safeguarding indicators are present;
- contact cannot be established;
- the child's whereabouts become unclear;
- there is a sudden withdrawal from education;
- the pupil is known to be vulnerable; or
- the circumstances otherwise indicate a potential safeguarding concern.

The DSL will determine the appropriate safeguarding and attendance response.

## **Stage 4 – External Agency Involvement**

Where appropriate, the school may liaise with or refer to:

- The relevant Local Authority Attendance Team
- The Local Authority Children Missing Education Team
- Children's Social Care
- Police
- Early Help services
- Health services

- Other relevant safeguarding or education agencies

The school will follow the relevant Local Authority procedures.

## **Important**

**The school does not require five communications to have been made before an external referral can be considered.**

Where circumstances justify earlier action, a referral or consultation may take place immediately if it constitutes a safeguarding concern.

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## **8. Children Missing in Education (CME)**

The Online School UK recognises its responsibility to identify and respond appropriately where there are concerns that a child may be **missing education**.

Children Missing in Education (CME) are children of compulsory school age who are not registered at a school or otherwise receiving suitable education in a setting that is suitable for their age, ability, aptitude and any special educational needs.

The statutory CME guidance applies to independent schools as well as local authorities and sets out expectations for schools and local authorities to work together to identify and support children missing education.

The school recognises that CME can be a warning sign of safeguarding concerns, including neglect and abuse.

### **Identifying Potential CME**

As an online school, the school will consider whether a pupil may be at risk of becoming or may already be a child missing education where there are concerns such as:

- Sustained absence from scheduled education
- Repeated absence without satisfactory explanation
- The school being unable to establish contact with the family
- The school being unable to establish the child's whereabouts
- A child apparently withdrawing from education

- Information suggesting the child has moved address
- Information suggesting the child has moved abroad
- Information suggesting the child may have transferred to another education provider
- The school receiving information that the child is no longer receiving suitable education
- Parents/carers indicating that they intend to withdraw the child without confirming suitable alternative education
- The child disappearing from the school's education programme without an appropriate explanation

The school will not assume that a pupil is receiving education elsewhere simply because this is stated by a parent/carer. Where appropriate, the school will seek sufficient information to establish what education the child is receiving.

### **CME Safeguarding Considerations**

Where CME concerns arise, the school will consider:

- The child's whereabouts
- Whether suitable education is being received
- The reason for absence
- Whether contact with parents/carers is possible
- The child's known vulnerabilities
- Any existing safeguarding concerns
- SEND or medical needs
- Family circumstances
- Any information suggesting neglect, abuse, exploitation or other harm
- Whether the child may have moved to another area
- Whether the child may have left the country
- Whether another education provider has accepted responsibility for the child's education

CME concerns will be considered alongside safeguarding information and will be escalated to the DSL where appropriate.

### **CME Action**

Where a potential CME concern is identified, The Online School UK will:

1. Review the attendance and engagement information.
2. Review the information already held about the pupil.
3. Attempt to establish contact with the parent/carer.
4. Seek to establish the child's whereabouts where necessary.

5. Seek to establish whether the child is receiving suitable education.
6. Consider whether immediate safeguarding action is required.
7. Consult the DSL where safeguarding concerns exist.
8. Contact the relevant Local Authority CME/attendance service where appropriate.
9. Make safeguarding referrals where required.
10. Record actions, decisions and the rationale for those decisions.

The school will follow the relevant Local Authority CME procedures and statutory guidance.

The school will **not delay safeguarding action while attempting to complete routine attendance contacts** where there is a concern that the child may be at risk of harm.

### **Change of Education Provider / Withdrawal**

Where a parent/carer informs the school that their child is leaving The Online School UK, the school will seek appropriate information regarding the child's next educational arrangement where required. ***This will be done by the Business Manager when completing their final invoice.***

Where applicable, the school will follow statutory requirements relating to the admission register, removal from roll, notification of the Local Authority and information-sharing.

Where the school is unable to establish what education the child will receive following withdrawal, this will be considered in accordance with CME procedures and safeguarding requirements.

***The Online School UK will not simply assume that a child is receiving suitable education elsewhere without appropriate information.***

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## **7. Record Keeping**

In line with safeguarding and attendance requirements:

- Attendance concerns will be documented
- Communication attempts will be recorded
- Explanations for absence will be recorded where appropriate
- Relevant contextual information will be recorded
- Attendance Support Plans will be documented
- Escalation decisions will be recorded
- External referrals and consultations will be recorded
- CME concerns and actions will be recorded
- Outcomes will be recorded

Where attendance concerns are considered from a safeguarding perspective, records should include, where appropriate:

- The concern identified
- Relevant contextual information
- Actions taken
- People/agencies contacted
- Decisions made
- The rationale for decisions
- The outcome
- Any further action required

***Records will be maintained securely through The Online School UK's internal safeguarding panel and accompanying documentation.***

Information will only be shared with those who have a legitimate need to receive it and in accordance with safeguarding, information-sharing and data-protection requirements.

Where a pupil has a social worker or is otherwise known to children's social care, attendance information will be shared with relevant professionals where appropriate and lawful. Persistent or unexplained absence may be particularly relevant to safeguarding oversight.

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## **8. Commitment to Families**

Our priority at The Online School UK is always:

- Student wellbeing
- Family support
- Early intervention
- Educational progress
- Safeguarding
- Removing barriers to attendance

The school recognises that attendance difficulties can arise for many reasons.

We will seek to understand the circumstances behind attendance difficulties and work collaboratively with families wherever possible.

External escalation may be necessary where:

- Communication cannot be established
- Attendance concerns remain unresolved
- Suitable education cannot be established
- A child may be missing education

- There are safeguarding concerns
- Support is not engaged with or is not effective
- The level of risk requires statutory intervention

External escalation will be **proportionate to the circumstances and level of risk**.

Where there is an immediate safeguarding concern, the school will act without delay.

# ATTENDANCE SAFEGUARDING FLOW CHART

## The Online School UK

