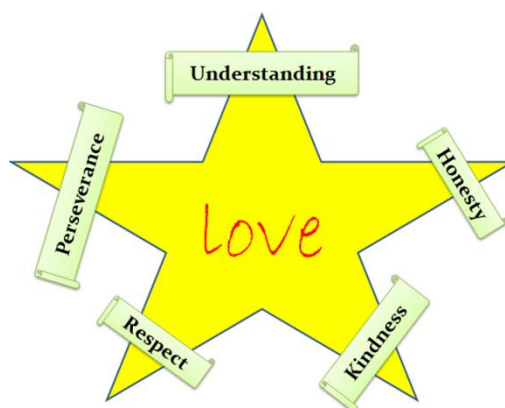




Attendance Policy

Adopted: Spring 2026

Next Review: Spring 2029



Together	in God's love	we will shine.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> We will provide a secure and happy learning environment where everyone is valued In partnership with the home, the Church and our local community, we will foster a lifelong love of learning We will become thoughtful, responsible citizens in the Global community 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> We believe that every child is an individual with equal rights to our care, time and attention We nurture and support each other on our journey of discovery, knowledge and faith We will create an environment in which everyone learns that he/she is made in the image of God 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> We will develop joyous learners with high self-esteem We will encourage a natural curiosity and excitement for learning Through creative, challenging and personalised teaching and learning, each child will achieve.

Nominated Members of Leadership Staff Responsible for the policy: Laura Kelsey

Designated Safeguarding Lead (s): Laura Kelsey (Headteacher)

Deputy Designated Safeguarding Lead (s): Martha Button, Dan Holmes, Clare Price

Named Governor with lead responsibility: Helen Arnold

1. Introduction and Background

At St. Mark's we recognise that positive behaviour and good attendance are essential in order to raise standards of pupil attainment and to give every child the best educational

experience possible. This policy is written with the above statement in mind and underpins our values driven ethos to:

- promote children's welfare and safeguarding
- ensure every pupil has access to the full-time education to which they are entitled
- ensure that pupils succeed whilst at school
- ensure that pupils have access to the widest possible range of opportunities at school, and when they leave school

For our children to gain the greatest benefit from their education it is vital that they attend regularly and be at school, on time, every day the school is open. **It is a rule that pupils must attend every day, unless there are exceptional circumstances. The Headteacher, not the parent, is the only person who can authorise the absence.**

Any absence affects the pattern of a child's schooling and regular absence will seriously affect their learning. Any pupil's absence or late arrival disrupts teaching routines and impacts negatively on the learning of others in the same class.

Ensuring a child's regular attendance at school is a parental responsibility and permitting absence from school without a good reason creates an offence in law and may result in prosecution. Where parents are separated, both parents have equal responsibility in law for their child's attendance at school. This policy seeks to ensure that all parties involved in the practicalities of school attendance are aware and informed that attendance matters in school. All are committed to the aims of "attendance matters". It details the responsibilities of individuals and groups involved and the procedures in place to promote and monitor pupil attendance.

Our policy aims to raise and maintain levels of attendance by:

- Promoting a positive and welcoming atmosphere in which pupils feel safe, secure and valued.
- Raising awareness of the importance of good attendance and punctuality
- Ensuring that attendance is monitored effectively and reasons for absences are recorded promptly and consistently.

The law entitles every child of compulsory school age to an efficient, full-time education suitable to their age, aptitude, and any special educational need they may have. It is the legal responsibility of every parent to make sure their child receives that education either by attendance at a school or by education otherwise than at a school. Where parents decide to have their child registered at school, they have an additional legal duty to ensure their child attends that school regularly. This means their child must attend every day that the school is open, except in a small number of allowable circumstances such as being too ill to attend or being given permission for an absence in advance from the school.

The DfE has produced guidance for maintained schools, academies, independent schools, and local authorities: *Working Together to Improve School Attendance*. Our Attendance Policy reflects the key principles of that guidance and it explains, in greater detail, much of the content of this policy.

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/working-together-to-improve-school-attendance>

https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/1073616/Working_together_to_improve_school_attendance.pdf

2. Legislation and guidance

This policy meets the requirements of the [school attendance guidance](#) from the Department for Education (DfE), and refers to the DfE's statutory guidance on [school attendance parental responsibility measures](#). These documents are drawn from the following legislation/guidance setting out the legal powers and duties that govern school attendance:

- [The Education Act 1996](#)
- [The Education Act 2002](#)
- [The Education and Inspections Act 2006](#)
- [The Education \(Pupil Registration\) \(England\) Regulations 2006](#)
- [The Education \(Pupil Registration\) \(England\) \(Amendment\) Regulations 2010](#)
- [The Education \(Pupil Registration\) \(England\) \(Amendment\) Regulations 2011](#)
- [The Education \(Pupil Registration\) \(England\) \(Amendment\) Regulations 2013](#)
- [The Education \(Pupil Registration\) \(England\) \(Amendment\) Regulations 2016](#)
- [The Education \(Penalty Notices\) \(England\) \(Amendment\) Regulations 2013](#)
- file:///T:/Policies%20&%20Guidelines/Attendance%20Policy/School_attendance_guidance_May-2022_.pdf
- file:///T:/Policies%20&%20Guidelines/Attendance%20Policy/Summary_table_of_responsibilities_for_school_attendance.pdf
- file:///T:/Policies%20&%20Guidelines/Attendance%20Policy/Working_together_to_improve_school_attendance.pdf

This policy also refers to the DfE's guidance on the [school census](#), which explains the persistent absence threshold.

Parents of registered pupils have a legal duty under the Education Act 1996 (sec 444) to ensure that children of compulsory school age attend school on a regular and full-time basis. Permitting unauthorised absence from school is an offence and parents may be reported to the Education Authority if problems cannot be resolved by agreement.

All children, regardless of their circumstances, are entitled to a full time education that is suitable to their age, ability, aptitude and any special education needs they may have. Local Authorities have a duty to establish, as far as it is possible to do so, the identity of children of compulsory school age who are missing education in their area.

Attending school regularly and on time has a positive impact on learning, progress and therefore the best life chances for pupils. Research shows that attendance and punctuality are important factors in school success.

At St. Mark's we expect all children to achieve attendance that over 96%.

3. ST. MARK'S Attendance Partnership Expectations

We expect the following from all our pupils:-

- To attend school regularly
- To arrive on time and appropriately prepared for the day, having eaten breakfast or attended breakfast club
- To tell a member of staff about any problem or reason that may prevent them from attending school.

We expect the following from parents and carers:-

- To ensure their children attend school regularly and punctually
- To ensure contact is made with school, as soon as is reasonably practical, whenever their child is unable to attend
- To ensure that their children arrived in school well prepared for the school day, having eaten breakfast.

Parents and pupils can expect the following from School:-

- Early contact with parents when a pupil fails to attend school without providing good reason
- Regular, efficient and accurate recording of attendance
- Follow up support if needed

4. School procedures

4.1 Attendance register

By law, all schools (except those where all pupils are boarders) are required to keep an attendance register, and all pupils must be placed on this register.

The attendance register will be taken at the start of the first session of each school day and once during the second session. It will mark whether every pupil is:

- Present
- Attending an approved off-site educational activity
- Absent

- Unable to attend due to exceptional circumstances

Any amendment to the attendance register will include:

- The original entry
- The amended entry
- The reason for the amendment
- The date on which the amendment was made
- The name and position of the person who made the amendment

See appendix 1 for the DfE attendance codes.

Every entry in the attendance register will be preserved for 3 years after the date on which the entry was made.

4.2 Unplanned absence

Parents must notify the school on the first day of an unplanned absence – for example, if their child is unable to attend due to ill health – by 8am or as soon as practically possible via phoning the school or contacting via email/MyChildAtSchool (MCAS) (see also section 7).

Absence due to illness will be authorised unless the school has a genuine concern about the authenticity of the illness.

If the authenticity of the illness is in doubt, the school may ask parents to provide medical evidence, such as a doctor's note, prescription, appointment card or other appropriate form of evidence. We will not ask for medical evidence unnecessarily.

If the school is not satisfied about the authenticity of the illness, the absence will be recorded as unauthorised and parents will be notified of this in advance.

4.3 Medical or dental appointments

Missing registration for a medical or dental appointment is counted as an authorised absence; advance notice is required for authorising these absences.

However, we encourage parents to make medical and dental appointments out of school hours where possible. Where this is not possible, the pupil should be out of school for the minimum amount of time necessary.

Applications for other types of absence in term time must also be made in advance. Information relating to whether the school can authorise such absences can be found in section 4.

4.4 Lateness and punctuality

A pupil who arrives late but before the register has closed will be marked as late, using the appropriate code.

Poor punctuality is not acceptable and can contribute to further absence. If a child misses the start of the day they miss work and do not spend time with their class teacher getting vital information and news for the day.

Late arriving pupils also disrupt lessons, can be embarrassing for the child and can also encourage further absence. Good time-keeping is a vital life skill which will help our children as they progress through their school life and out into the wider world.

A pupil who arrives after the register has closed will be marked as absent, using the appropriate code. If pupil continues to have ongoing punctuality issues a meeting will take place between the school based management and parents/carers. The register will be closed at 9.15 at St. Mark's. In line with current West Sussex policy, Fixed penalty notices can be issued to those persistently late after the register has closed (10 occasions within a 10 week period).

4.5 Following up absence

The school will follow up any absences by 10 a.m. on the first day of absence if not contacted by phone, email or MCAS to ascertain the reason, ensure proper safeguarding action is taken where necessary, identify whether the absence is approved or not and identify the correct attendance code to use.

4.6 Reporting to parents

The school will report to parents about their child's attendance annually in the written reports which have are sent home.

4.7 Understanding barriers to attendance

We can use outside agencies to help with this, such as the School Nurse, Mental Health and Emotional Wellbeing support services, a Child and Family Support Worker or the relevant Local Authority team/s. Where outside agencies are supporting the family, you may be invited to attend a Team Around the Family meeting (TAF) to consider what is working well and what needs to improve. An individualised early help plan will be agreed and subsequently reviewed.

Some pupils face greater barriers to attendance than their peers. These can include pupils who suffer from long-term medical conditions or who have special educational needs and disabilities, or other vulnerabilities.

High expectations of attendance remain however, we will work with families and pupils to support improved attendance whilst being mindful of the additional barriers faced. We can

discuss reasonable adjustments and additional support from external partners where appropriate.

5. Authorised and unauthorised absence

5.1 Granting approval for term-time absence

Headteachers may not grant any leave of absence to pupils during term time unless they consider there to be 'exceptional circumstances'.

Examples of any exceptional circumstances where leave may be granted during term time are as follows:

- If a parent is service personnel and is returning from a tour of duty abroad where it is evidenced the individual will not be in receipt of any leave in the near future that coincides with school holidays.
- Where an absence from school is recommended by a health professional as part of a parent or child's rehabilitation from a medical or emotional issue.
- The death or terminal illness of a close relative, only if Headteacher is satisfied that the circumstances are truly exceptional;
- Out of school programmes such as music, arts or sport operating at a high standard of achievement. Documentary evidence of this event will be required.
- Religious observance – The Education Act 1996 S444(3) (c), states “on any day exclusively set apart for religious observance by the religious body to which his/her parent belongs”;
- To attend a wedding or funeral of a close relative if the Headteacher is satisfied that the circumstances are truly exceptional; Leave should only be authorised for this purpose when a Headteacher is satisfied that there is a persuasive reason for holding the wedding during term time and there WILL be an onus on parents to show clear evidence that this absence is absolutely an exceptional circumstance. In difficult family situations the Headteacher may use his/her discretion in granting leave and each case should be addressed on its individual merits, taking into account the overall welfare of the child.

The school considers each application for term-time absence individually, taking into account the specific facts, circumstances and relevant context behind the request. A leave of absence is granted entirely at the headteacher's discretion.

Valid reasons for **authorised absence** include:

- Illness and medical/dental appointments – as explained in sections 3.2 and 3.3
- Religious observance – where the day is exclusively set apart for religious observance by the religious body to which the pupil's parents belong. If necessary, the school will seek advice from the parents' religious body to confirm whether the day is set apart

- Traveller pupils travelling for occupational purposes – this covers Roma, English and Welsh Gypsies, Irish and Scottish Travellers, Showmen (fairground people) and Circus people, Bargees (occupational boat dwellers) and New Travellers. Absence may be authorised only when a Traveller family is known to be travelling for occupational purposes and has agreed this with the school but it is not known whether the pupil is attending educational provision

5.2 Legal sanctions

Schools can fine parents for the unauthorised absence of their child from school, where the child is of compulsory school age.

If issued with a penalty notice, parents must pay £80 within 21 days or £160 within 28 days for the first offence. For the second offence (within 3 years) a flat fee of £160 if paid within 28 days. For the third offence onwards, prosecution under the Education Act 1996 is considered. The payment must be made directly to the local authority.

Penalty Notices may be issued where there have been at least 10 sessions of unauthorised absence during the previous 10 school weeks. Parents must have been issued with a Legal Action Warning Letter with accompanying Legal fact sheet and given opportunities to inform the school of any factors impacting on their ability to ensure their child attends school regularly.

The decision on whether or not to issue a penalty notice ultimately rests with the Headteacher, following the local authority's code of conduct for issuing penalty notices. This may take into account:

- A number of unauthorised absences occurring within a rolling academic year
- One-off instances of irregular attendance, such as holidays taken in term time without permission
- Where an excluded pupil is found in a public place fixed penalty notices may also be issued where parents allow their child to be present in a public place during school hours without reasonable justification during the first 5 days of a fixed period or permanent exclusion. The parents must have been notified by the school at the time of the exclusion the days that the child must not be present in a public place.

If the payment has not been made after 28 days, the local authority can decide whether to prosecute the parent or withdraw the notice.

6. Strategies for promoting attendance

We place great emphasis on the need to talk about attendance rather than absenteeism. This is a subtle, but important, distinction focusing attention on the positive behaviours which we encourage at St. Mark's.

7. Attendance monitoring

The attendance officer monitors pupil absence on a daily/weekly/ and monthly basis.

Parents are expected to call the school in the morning if their child is going to be absent due to ill health (see section 4.2). Parents are expected to call the school each day a child is ill.

If a pupil's absence goes above 5 days we will contact the parents to discuss the reasons for this.

If after contacting parents a pupil's absence continue to rise, we will consider involving an education welfare officer.

The persistent absence threshold is 10%. If a pupil's individual overall absence rate is greater than or equal to 10%, the pupil will be classified as a persistent absentee.

Pupil-level absence data is collected each term and published at national and local authority level through the DfE's school absence national statistics releases. The underlying school-level absence data is published alongside the national statistics. We compare our attendance data to the national average, and share this with governors.

The school collects and stores attendance data, and it is used for internal purposes such as to track the attendance of individual pupils, identify whether or not there are particular groups of children whose absences may be a cause for concern, and monitor and evaluate those children identified as being in need of intervention and support.

8. Roles and responsibilities

Below is a link from the DfE summarising the roles and responsibilities relating to attendance

[https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/1073619/Summary table of responsibilities for school attendance.pdf](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/1073619/Summary_table_of_responsibilities_for_school_attendance.pdf)

8.1 The governing board

The governing board is responsible for monitoring attendance figures for the whole school on at least a termly basis. It also holds the Headteacher to account for the implementation of this policy.

8.2 The Headteacher

The Headteacher is responsible for ensuring this policy is implemented consistently across the school, and for monitoring school-level absence data and reporting it to governors. The Headteacher also supports other staff in monitoring the attendance of individual pupils and issues fixed-penalty notices, where necessary.

8.3 The attendance team (School Secretary/Class Teacher/Leadership team)

The attendance team:

- Monitors attendance data at the school and individual pupil level

- Reports concerns about attendance to the Headteacher
- Works with education welfare officers to tackle persistent absence
- Arranges calls and meetings with parents to discuss attendance issues
- Advises the Headteacher when to issue fixed-penalty notices

8.4 Class teachers

Class teachers are responsible for recording attendance on a daily basis, using the correct codes, and submitting this information to the school office.

8.5 Office/reception staff

Office/reception staff are expected to take calls from parents about absence and record it on the school system.

9. Flexi-Schooling

9.1 Agreement over a flexi schooling arrangement is something for schools and parents to reach between them. Any decisions in this regard should be made with the needs of the child at the centre of the decision making and school and the parents should be working together in the best interest of the child.

9.2 The 1996 Education Act states that the parent/carer of every child of compulsory school age shall cause him or her to receive efficient full-time education suitable to his or her age, ability and aptitude, and to any special educational needs he or she may have, either by regular attendance at school or otherwise.

9.3 Some parents/carers may decide to provide a suitable education by educating their children at home, rather than seeking to enroll their child at a school. This is known as Home Schooling or Elective Home Education and is where the parent/carer takes full responsibility for the education of the child.

9.4 Flexi-schooling is not the same as Elective Home Education. Parents/carers who request flexible attendance are asking for a pattern of provision which will involve both attendance at school as well as times when the child will receive educational provision at home. Flexi-schooling is also different to children below compulsory school age attending part time as per Section 2.16 of the Admissions Code 2014.

9.5 In April 2019, the DfE issued updated guidance for Elective Home Education, alongside separate guidance for parents. This replaced the previous guidance issued by the DCSF in November 2007. The April 2019 guidance contains the following paragraphs in relation to flexi-schooling:

‘Although most children educated at home have all the provision made at home, or alternatively partly at home and partly in other ways such as attendance at privately-run part-time tuition settings, it is not essential that this be so. Some children who are educated at home most of the time are also registered at school and attend school for part of the week – perhaps one day a week. The purpose of this is usually to ensure the provision in

specific subjects is satisfactory, although it can also help in other ways such as socialisation. If a child is of compulsory school age he or she must, overall, be receiving fulltime education even if components of it are part-time'. (para10.7, DfE Guidance for LAs in relation to EHE)

'Schools are not obliged to accept such arrangements if requested by parents. If they do, then time spent by children being educated at home should be authorised as absence in the usual way and marked in attendance registers accordingly. It is not appropriate to mark this time as 'approved off-site activity' as the school has no supervisory role in the child's education at such times and also has no responsibility for the welfare of the child while he or she is at home. The department does not propose to institute a new attendance code specific to flexi-schooling. Some schools have expressed concern that such absence may have a detrimental effect for the purpose of Ofsted inspection, but this is not the case; some schools with significant flexi-schooling numbers have had good outcomes from Ofsted inspections. Schools which have flexischooled pupils should be ready to discuss with Ofsted inspectors the arrangements they have in place to deal with the requirements caused by such pupils. Schools are held to account through inspection for the performance of pupils, and that will include any who attend the school as part of a programme of flexi-schooling'. (para10.8, DfE Guidance for LAs in relation to EHE) Guidance documents can be viewed in full here:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/elective-home-education>

9.6 Flexi-schooling is also different from temporary part-time attendance arrangements which the school or parent/carer may seek to make (for example when a child has been away from school for a long time through illness and is reintegrating back to full time attendance). Such arrangements are monitored and reviewed with the intention that the child be returned to full-time attendance as soon as possible. A child following a flexi-school arrangement, although not in school everyday, is receiving full-time education.

9.7 Whilst there is an absolute right both to school placement and to Elective Home Education, there is not the same right to flexi-schooling; Headteachers may refuse to agree to such requests. There is no specific appeal against the decision of a Headteacher not to agree to a flexi-schooling request.

9.8 It will be the decision of the Headteacher as to whether he or she is willing to enter into a flexi-school agreement with the parent/carer. The governing body may be involved in agreeing and reviewing a general approach to requests for flexi-schooling but this does not exempt the Headteacher from the need to consider each request individually. The whole governing body should not become involved in individual cases and cannot overturn a Head teacher's decision. However, the governing body will have a clearly defined role if a complaint is made.

9.9 The safeguarding of any child should always be of paramount importance, so any decisions should be taken with any known and existing safeguarding concerns in mind. Where a child attends another setting on those days when not in school it is incumbent on the parent to ensure the adequacy of the safeguarding arrangements in operation at this setting. The headteacher should, however, still take action in response to any concerns that arise.

9.10 There is no opt-out for schools with regards to the National (Academy) Curriculum based on a flexi-schooling proposal. Although the child is not attending all school sessions,

the school will still need to ensure that the child has appropriate access to the National (Academy) Curriculum. The child cannot be disapplied from statutory curriculum or assessment arrangements simply because flexible attendance has been agreed.

9.11 Children should be recorded as absent when not in school. The C code (authorised absence) should be used. Some schools have expressed concern that such absence may have a detrimental effect for the purpose of Ofsted inspection, but this is not the case (para10.8, DfE Guidance for LAs on Elective Home Education).

9.12 In line with the DfE guidance on Elective Home Education issued in April 2019, on the days the child is being educated by the parent outside of school, the school should not use the B code as this would mean that the school is responsible for supervising the off-site education and will ensure the safety and welfare of the child when off site; C code would be the most appropriate code to use.

9.13 If the child is unable to attend a home-based session because of illness the parent/carer should inform the school and this should be reflected in the school's register.

9.14 In all cases where flexi-schooling is agreed, best practice has shown itself to be that it is sensible for a written agreement be in place so that expectations and arrangements are clear for all. Such an agreement may helpfully include:

- The normal expected pattern of attendance at school
- Procedures for flexibility around special events which fall outside the normal arrangement.
- How the register will be marked.
- That the school will follow up any unexpected or unexplained absence in the same way as it does for other children.
- Arrangements at times of assessment.
- Agreement that if a parent/carer chooses to employ other people to educate their child at home, they will be responsible for making sure that those whom they engage are suitable to have access to children.
- Details of any perceived special educational needs and associated provision including how any high needs funding, if a child has an EHCP, will be deployed.
- Arrangements for regular planning and review meetings between parent/carer and school to ensure the child achieves his/her potential and to promote good home-school relationships.
- Clarity about the circumstances under which, and with what notice, either party can withdraw from the arrangement.
- The arrangements for the resolution of any disputes (usual processes are for disputes to be resolved at the most informal level possible, but ultimately any complaints will need to be considered by the Headteacher first and then the governing body as set out under the school's complaints procedures).

Sources of further information for parents and schools For Parents

The Flexi-schooling Families UK Facebook group provides support and information from other parents flexi-schooling:

<https://www.facebook.com/groups/380046592033979/search/?query=adrian%20gill>

For schools:

Flexi-schooling federation can provide further support and information to schools

<http://flexischoolfederation.co.uk/>

For Parents and Schools Centre for Personalised Education:

<http://www.personalisededucationnow.org.uk/flexischooling-info-sheets/>

10. Monitoring arrangements

This policy will be reviewed annually by the Assistant Headteacher. At every review, the policy will be shared with the governing board.

11. Links with other policies

This policy is linked to our child protection and safeguarding policy

Appendix 1: attendance codes

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

Code	Definition	Scenario
/	Present (am)	Pupil is present at morning registration
\	Present (pm)	Pupil is present at afternoon registration
L	Late arrival	Pupil arrives late before register has closed
B	Off-site educational activity	Pupil is at a supervised off-site educational activity approved by the school
D	Dual registered	Pupil is attending a session at another setting where they are also registered
J	Interview	Pupil has an interview with a prospective employer/educational establishment
P	Sporting activity	Pupil is participating in a supervised sporting activity approved by the school

V	Educational trip or visit	Pupil is on an educational visit/trip organised, or approved, by the school
W	Work experience	Pupil is on a work experience plSt. Mark'sment

Code	Definition	Scenario
Authorised absence		
C	Authorised leave of absence	Pupil has been granted a leave of absence due to exceptional circumstances
E	Excluded	Pupil has been excluded but no alternative provision has been made
H	Authorised holiday	Pupil has been allowed to go on holiday due to exceptional circumstances
I	Illness	School has been notified that a pupil will be absent due to illness
M	Medical/dental appointment	Pupil is at a medical or dental appointment
R	Religious observance	Pupil is taking part in a day of religious observance
S	Study leave	Year 11 pupil is on study leave during their public examinations
T	Gypsy, Roma and Traveller absence	Pupil from a Traveller community is travelling, as agreed with the school
Unauthorised absence		
G	Unauthorised holiday	Pupil is on a holiday that was not approved by the school
N	Reason not provided	Pupil is absent for an unknown reason (this code should be amended when the reason emerges St. Mark's with code O if no reason for absence

		has been provided after a reasonable amount of time)
O	Unauthorised absence	School is not satisfied with reason for pupil's absence
U	Arrival after registration	Pupil arrived at school after the register closed

Code	Definition	Scenario
X	Not required to be in school	Pupil of non-compulsory school age is not required to attend
Y	Unable to attend due to exceptional circumstances	School site is closed, there is disruption to travel as a result of a local/national emergency, or pupil is in custody
Z	Pupil not on admission register	Register set up but pupil has not yet joined the school
#	Planned school closure	Whole or partial school closure due to half-term/bank holiday/INSET day