

Catch22 Education Policy
Attendance Policy
Catch22 Include School Suffolk

Policy information	Details
Policy Owner	Catch22 Education
Queries to	Headteacher / Senior Attendance Champion, Include Suffolk
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This policy applies to Include Suffolk, an independent specialist alternative provision for primary-aged pupils across Ipswich, Lowestoft and Bury St Edmunds.
Catch22 reserves the right to amend this policy, following consultation where appropriate.

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Summary

Regular attendance is central to education, safeguarding, belonging and successful reintegration. At Include Suffolk, attendance is understood in the context of specialist primary alternative provision: many pupils join us following disrupted education, exclusion, reduced timetables, anxiety about school, SEND-related barriers or experiences that have made trusting education difficult.

We therefore combine high expectations with a relational, child-centred and support-first approach. We do not lower our ambition for pupils because they have SEND, SEMH needs or a history of poor attendance. We work with pupils, families, dual-registered schools, commissioners, the local authority, health and social care partners to understand barriers and make attendance achievable.

Include Suffolk is an independent school. We keep admission and attendance registers in accordance with the School Attendance (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2024 and have regard to statutory attendance and safeguarding guidance. The school does not itself issue penalty notices or impose fines. Where legal intervention may be appropriate, we work with Suffolk County Council and our allocated Education Welfare Officer (EWO), who determine and undertake local-authority enforcement action.

1. Intent and Suffolk context

Include Suffolk provides specialist alternative education across Ipswich, Lowestoft and Bury St Edmunds. Our pupils have complex and overlapping profiles, including SEMH, ADHD, autism, communication and interaction needs, disrupted prior education and, for many, an EHCP or EHC needs assessment. Attendance cannot be separated from safeguarding, SEND, curriculum, behaviour, relationships and successful transition.

Our purpose is to re-ignite pupils' engagement with education. We want every child to experience the best People supporting them, a safe and inclusive Place to learn, and a clear Purpose in returning to learning and preparing for their next stage.

This policy aims to:

- secure the highest possible attendance for every pupil and intervene before absence becomes entrenched.
- make school a place pupils feel safe, known, valued and ready to attend.
- identify the reason behind absence rather than treating the percentage as the whole problem.
- use accurate attendance information as an early safeguarding indicator.
- work alongside families, rather than waiting for attendance to deteriorate before offering help.
- make reasonable adjustments and coordinate SEND, health and pastoral support without normalising avoidable absence.
- maintain clear, lawful registration, coding, information-sharing and follow-up procedures.
- work effectively with dual-registered schools, Suffolk County Council, the EWO and other partners.

2. Legal and statutory framework

This policy has been reviewed against the statutory guidance Working together to improve school attendance (July 2026), Keeping Children Safe in Education 2026 (KCSIE), the School Attendance (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2024, the Education (Independent School Standards) Regulations 2014, the Education Act 1996, the Equality Act 2010 and relevant SEND and safeguarding duties.

Working together to improve school attendance applies to independent schools as well as maintained schools, academies and local authorities. Include Suffolk is not required to submit daily attendance data to the Department for Education but must maintain accurate registers and meet the attendance requirements applying to independent schools.

Every child of compulsory school age is entitled to an efficient full-time education suitable to their age, aptitude and any special educational needs they may have. Parents are responsible for securing that education. Where a child is registered at school, parents have a duty to secure regular attendance.

For the purposes of education law, "parent" includes a biological parent, a person with parental responsibility, and a person who has care of the child.

3. Our attendance ethos and expectations

Attendance is everyone's business. Our approach reflects the school rules Be Safe, Be Kind and Be Ready to Learn, and the behaviour principles regulation before reasoning, connection before correction and teaching before sanction.

- Be Safe - unexplained, repeated or prolonged absence is followed up promptly because knowing where children are and whether they are safe is a safeguarding responsibility.
- Be Kind - conversations about attendance are respectful, curious and non-shaming. We listen to the child and family and distinguish unwillingness from inability or unmet need.

- Be Ready to Learn - we teach and scaffold the routines, regulation and communication pupils need to arrive, settle, ask for help, take an agreed break and return to learning.

We celebrate attendance carefully. For a cohort in which disability, health, trauma, transport or family circumstances may affect attendance, rewards must not shame pupils for absence outside their control. Recognition will therefore emphasise individual improvement, consistency, effort, successful return and progress towards agreed attendance goals, as well as excellent attendance.

4. Roles and responsibilities

4.1 Proprietor / Catch22 governance and Local Advisory Board

- promote attendance as part of safeguarding, educational quality and school improvement.
- ensure leaders have sufficient capacity and systems to fulfil statutory attendance duties.
- receive and challenge attendance information, including persistent/severe absence, SEND, disadvantaged pupils, pupils with social workers and site-level patterns.
- ensure the policy is reviewed at least annually and that attendance practice is consistent with independent school standards.

4.2 Headteacher

- holds overall accountability for attendance and the implementation of this policy.
- ensures attendance, safeguarding, SEND and behaviour systems work together.
- decides whether absence is authorised in accordance with the regulations and school policy.
- ensures appropriate liaison with Suffolk County Council, the EWO, commissioners and dual-registered schools.
- ensures attendance concerns are escalated appropriately where support has not secured improvement or safeguarding risk is present.

4.3 Senior Attendance Champion

The Senior Attendance Champion is the senior leader responsible for the strategic approach to attendance. The current postholder is Tamsyn Carter. Contact details are available from the school office and on request.

- monitors whole school and individual attendance at least weekly.
- chairs/co-ordinates attendance review with safeguarding, SEND and site leaders.
- identifies pupils at risk of persistent or severe absence before thresholds are reached.
- ensures attendance plans, family contact, home visits and referrals are timely and recorded.

- reviews the impact of intervention and escalates cases to the Headteacher/EWO where appropriate.

4.4 Site leaders, Advocates and all staff

- provide a warm, predictable welcome and notice changes in attendance, presentation or engagement.
- complete registers accurately and on time and report errors immediately.
- make agreed first-day contact and record relevant information.
- share safeguarding concerns arising from absence with the DSL/deputy DSL without delay and record them on CPOMS where appropriate.
- work relationally with pupils and families to identify barriers and support return.
- ensure pupils educated off-site or through approved activity are accounted for and appropriately supervised/verified.

4.5 Parents/carers and pupils

- Parents/carers should ensure their child attends every session they are expected to attend, arrives on time, and contact the school before 09:30 on each day of unplanned absence unless another arrangement has been agreed.
- Parents/carers should tell us promptly about changes, difficulties, health needs, transport issues or family circumstances affecting attendance and engage with support and review meetings.
- Pupils are encouraged to tell a trusted adult when something at school, home or on the journey to school is making attendance difficult. Their views will be included in attendance planning.

5. Registers, attendance codes and punctuality

Attendance and admission registers are kept electronically. The attendance register is taken at the beginning of each morning session and once during the afternoon session. Each pupil is recorded using the national statutory attendance and absence codes in force from August 2024.

Include Suffolk's pupil day is 09:30-14:30. The morning register opens at 09:30. A pupil arriving after 09:30 but before the register closes is recorded as late (L). The morning register closes at 10:00; arrival after this point without another applicable reason is recorded as unauthorised late absence (U). The afternoon register is taken at 13:00 and the same principle is applied to the afternoon session.

Where a pupil is delayed because SEND transport normally provided by the local authority is unavailable, or another statutory circumstance applies, the school will use the appropriate national code rather than automatically recording unauthorised lateness. Transport concerns will be raised with the relevant local authority/transport service.

Attendance Codes:

Code	SIMS Description	DfE Description / Explanation
/	Present (AM)	Present for school morning session
\	Present (PM)	Present for school afternoon session
B	Attending any other Approved Education Activity	Attending any other approved educational activity
C	Other authorised circumstances	Leave absence for exceptional circumstance
C1	Leave of absence – regulated performance	Leave of absence for the purpose of participating in a regulated performance or undertaking regulated employment abroad.
C2	Leave of absence – Temporary part-time timetable	Leave of absence for a compulsory school age pupil subject to a part-time timetable
D	Dual registered	Dual registered to another school
E	Suspended or excluded without alternative provision	Suspended or permanently excluded and no alternative provision
I	Illness	Illness (not medical or dental appointment)
J1	Leave of absence – Interview for employment or transfer to another educational institution	Leave of absence for the purpose of attending an interview for employment or for admission to another educational institution
K	Alternative provision provided by LA	Attending education provision arranged by the local authority
L	Late (before registers closed)	Late arrival before the register closed
M	Medical or dental appointment	Leave of absence for the purpose of attending a medical or dental appointment
N	No reason yet provided for absence	Reason absence not yet established
O	Absence in other or unknown circumstance	Absence in other or unknown circumstance
P	Participating in sports activity	Participating in sports activity
Q	Unable to attend – lack of access arrangements	Unable to attend the school because of lack of access arrangements
R	Religious observance	Religious observance
S	Study leaves for public examination	Study leave for public examination
T	Traveling with parent for occupational purposes	Traveling with parent for occupational purposes
U	Late (after registers closed)	Late (after registers closed)
V	Attending an educational visit or trip	Attending an educational visit or trip
W	Attending work experience	Attending work experience
X	Not required to attend-non-compulsory school age pupil	Not required to attend-non-compulsory school age pupil

Y1	Unable to attend – Transport not available	Unable to attend due to transport normally provided not being provided
Y2	Unable to attend – widespread travel emergency	Unable to attend due to widespread disruption to travel
Y3	Unable to attend – unavoidable partial closure	Unable to attend due to part of the school premises being closed.
Y4	Unable to attend – unavoidable full closure	Unable to attend due to the whole schools' site being unexpectedly closed
Y5	Unable to attend – criminal justice detention	Unable to attend as pupil is in criminal justice detention
Y6	Unable to attend – Public Health Guidance / Law	Unable to attend in accordance with public health guidance or law
Y7	Unable to attend – Unavoidable other than Y1-Y6	Unable to attend because of any other unavoidable cause.
Z	Pupil not on roll	Prospective pupil not on admission requester
#	Planned whole school closure	Planned whole school closure

Future sessions must not be pre-populated with attendance codes. Codes must reflect what actually happened in the session and be amended promptly when further information establishes the correct reason. Where an attendance code requires explanation or additional context, a clear and factual register comment must be recorded. This should include, where relevant, the reason for absence or lateness, the pupil's actual time of arrival, details of illness reported by the parent/carer, the time and method of parental contact, and any other information necessary to evidence why the attendance code has been used. Register comments must be sufficiently detailed to provide a clear audit trail and support safeguarding, attendance monitoring and any subsequent Local Authority/EWO involvement.

6. Absence and leave of absence

6.1 Reporting unplanned absence

Parents/carers should contact the relevant Include Suffolk site before 09:30 on the first day of absence and each subsequent day unless a different arrangement has been agreed. They should give the specific reason for absence and, where known, the expected return date. If we have not received an explanation, first-day follow-up procedures will begin.

6.2 Illness and medical appointments

Parents should make routine appointments outside school hours where reasonably possible. Where an appointment during school time is unavoidable, pupils should miss only the minimum time necessary. Medical evidence is not routinely required for ordinary illness. It may be sought in a minority of cases where absence is long-term, recurring, complex or where evidence is needed to understand adjustments or provision; this will be handled sensitively and proportionately.

6.3 Leave of absence

All schools may grant leave of absence at their discretion. Include Suffolk will consider each request individually and will normally grant leave only where the circumstances are exceptional. A family holiday or other leisure/recreation would not normally be considered exceptional. Requests should be made in advance to the Headteacher using the form in Annex 2. The school will confirm its decision and the period of leave, if granted, in writing. Retrospective requests will not normally change an absence that was taken without permission. Where a pupil does not return on the agreed date and the school cannot establish their whereabouts or safety, safeguarding and Children Missing Education procedures may be initiated.

6.4 Religious observance and travelling families

The school will use the statutory attendance codes and guidance for religious observance and for mobile pupils whose parent is travelling for occupational purposes. Decisions will be made lawfully, respectfully and with attention to the individual circumstances of the child.

7. Attendance as safeguarding

KCSIE 2026 requires all staff to understand the school's safeguarding response to children who are absent from education, particularly on repeat occasions and/or for prolonged periods. In Include Suffolk this is especially important because many pupils have overlapping SEND, SEMH, social-care or exploitation vulnerabilities.

- Unexplained absence is followed up on the first day. Contact attempts and the outcome are recorded.
- Where contact cannot be made, staff consider known vulnerability, recent events, social-care involvement, transport arrangements, the child's history and any indicators of increased risk rather than relying only on an attendance percentage.
- A welfare/home visit may be undertaken where proportionate and safe, in accordance with school procedures. As part of Include Suffolk's usual absence response, where a pupil has been absent for three consecutive school days and no contact has been established with a parent/carers, a home welfare visit will normally be undertaken. This is not a threshold that prevents earlier action. Where there are safeguarding concerns, increased vulnerability or other information that raises concern about the pupil's welfare or whereabouts, the response will be determined on a case-by-case basis, and a welfare/home visit may be undertaken from the first day of absence. An Absence Concern Assessment and Safety Plan is maintained for every pupil and will inform the level, timing and nature of the school's response to unexplained or concerning absence. Any action taken, attempts to establish contact and the outcome of welfare visits will be recorded in accordance with the school's attendance and safeguarding procedures.
- Repeated or prolonged absence, a sudden unexplained change in pattern, or concerns about a child's whereabouts are discussed with the DSL/deputy DSL and may lead to contact with social care, police, the EWO, the dual-registered school or other agencies.

- Where a pupil has a social worker, youth justice worker or other lead professional, relevant attendance concerns are shared promptly and their involvement sought.
- Where a pupil is absent and the school cannot establish their location, Children Missing Education processes are followed with Suffolk County Council. We will not wait for a fixed number of days where risk requires earlier action.

Absence may be a symptom of harm, unmet need, bullying, exploitation, domestic abuse, mental or physical ill health, SEND-related distress or difficulties within the family. Attendance information must therefore be considered alongside CPOMS, behaviour, welfare, SEND and contextual safeguarding information.

8. Persistent and severe absence

A pupil is persistently absent when they miss 10% or more of possible sessions, for any reason. A pupil is severely absent when they miss 50% or more. Include Suffolk will not wait for a pupil to cross these thresholds before acting.

For pupils at risk of persistent absence we will identify the pattern, listen to the child and family, review SEND and safeguarding information, agree specific actions and monitor whether the plan is working. For severely absent pupils, support will be intensified and will normally involve multi-agency consideration, including Suffolk County Council/EWO and other relevant professionals.

Because our cohort is small and pupils may join us with an already established history of absence, leaders will consider both cumulative attendance and attendance since admission to Include Suffolk. Improvement from a very low baseline is important but does not remove the need to keep working towards full-time education wherever this is in the pupil's best interests.

9. SEND, health and emotionally based barriers

- The attendance ambition for pupils with SEND or health needs is the same as for other pupils, but the route to achieving it may require additional support and reasonable adjustments. We will not treat disability-related barriers as defiance, nor assume that anxiety or dysregulation makes absence inevitable.
- work with the pupil and parent/carers to understand the specific barrier, including sensory, communication, regulation, relationship, transport and transition factors.
- ensure relevant EHCP provision and reasonable adjustments are available and accessible.
- consider the school's behaviour curriculum and teach the component skills needed for attendance - arriving, settling, communicating distress, asking for help or a break, regulating, returning and repairing.
- use Advocates, pastoral work, predictable routines, nurture/therapeutic interventions and trusted relationships where these increase access to education.
- liaise with health professionals proportionately where health needs are complex or recurring.
- work with the local authority to review an EHCP/support package where attendance barriers indicate that provision may need to change.

- avoid blanket requirements for medical evidence and avoid punitive responses to disability-related absence.

10. Support, intervention and the Education Welfare Officer

Our default is support first. Attendance support is graduated according to need rather than triggered only by a percentage. A pupil may require intensive support even where their headline attendance remains above 90% if there is a concerning pattern or safeguarding risk.

- early conversation with the pupil and parent/carer.
- regular Advocate check-ins and a named trusted adult.
- attendance/support plan with clear barriers, adjustments, actions, owners, review date and desired outcomes.
- support with routines, transitions, transport or reintegration.
- SEND review and reasonable adjustments.
- pastoral/therapeutic support and Family Help/Early Help where appropriate.
- home visits and multi-agency meetings where needed.
- attendance contract/formalised support where voluntary support has not secured improvement.
- referral/consultation with Suffolk County Council and our allocated EWO where attendance remains concerning, support is not engaged with, or legal advice/intervention may be required.

Each Suffolk school has an allocated EWO. Include Suffolk works with the EWO as a professional partner. The EWO/local authority may advise on casework, formal support, Children Missing Education and legal intervention. Include Suffolk does not itself issue penalty notices or fines.

11. Part-time timetables and alternative education

All pupils of compulsory school age are entitled to full-time education. A temporary part-time timetable will be used only in very exceptional circumstances where it is in the pupil's best interests and is necessary to meet individual need. It will never be used as a behaviour-management sanction or as a long-term way of managing capacity or risk. agreement with the parent/carer.

- a clear rationale linked to a wider reintegration, health, SEND or support plan.
- the pupil's voice and best interests.
- specific attendance times and the correct C2 coding for agreed non-attendance sessions.
- a proposed end date and frequent review, with the ambition to increase education as quickly and safely as possible.
- involvement of the social worker where the pupil has one.
- discussion with the local authority where the pupil has an EHCP so that the support package can be reviewed.

clear arrangements for safeguarding during times the pupil is not expected on site.

Dual registration is common in alternative provision. Code D is used only where the pupil is registered at another school and is attending that school for the relevant session. Other off-site education is recorded using the appropriate statutory code, with the nature of approved activity and safeguarding/supervision arrangements recorded as required.

12. Children missing education and deletion from roll

Admission and deletion from the school roll will comply with the School Attendance (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2024. We will not remove a pupil from roll simply because they are persistently or severely absent.

Before a pupil leaves, we will seek the destination school, new address and relevant contact information, liaise with the commissioner/dual-registered school and local authority as appropriate, and transfer safeguarding and educational information securely. Where destination is unknown or statutory grounds for deletion require local-authority involvement, Suffolk Children Missing Education procedures will be followed.

For dual-registered pupils, any change to registration status will be planned with the other school and commissioner/local authority so that responsibility is clear and the pupil does not become missing from education.

13. Monitoring, data and governance

Attendance is reviewed at pupil, site and whole-school level. Because Include Suffolk is a small, mobile AP cohort, percentages will be interpreted alongside starting point, time on roll, dual registration, SEND, health and safeguarding context.

- daily identification and follow-up of unexplained absence.
- weekly review by the Senior Attendance Champion and relevant leaders.
- analysis of pupils approaching or within persistent/severe absence.
- site-level patterns across Ipswich, Lowestoft and Bury St Edmunds.
- SEND/EHCP, disadvantaged, looked-after/previously looked-after and social-worker cohorts where numbers allow meaningful and non-identifying analysis.
- punctuality, transport-related absence and patterns by day/session.
- impact of attendance plans and interventions.
- termly reporting and challenge through school/Catch22 governance arrangements.

Attendance data is used to ask: What is the barrier? What have we tried? Is it being implemented? Is attendance improving? Is the child safer and more engaged? What needs to change next?

14. Related policies and guidance

- Include Suffolk Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy
- Include Suffolk Behaviour Policy and Therapeutic Behaviour and Teaching Curriculum
- SEND Policy and SEN Information Report
- Supporting Pupils with Medical Conditions / First Aid arrangements
- Pupil Premium Policy and Strategy
- Suspension / exclusion arrangements applicable to the school
- Children Missing Education procedures.
- DfE: Working together to improve school attendance (July 2026)

- DfE: Keeping Children Safe in Education 2026
- School Attendance (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2024
- Education (Independent School Standards) Regulations 2014
- Suffolk County Council: Pupil attendance, penalty notices and welfare / local Code of Conduct

Annex 1 - Attendance response framework

Indicator	Our response
Strong / improving attendance	Warm welcome; recognition of consistency, effort and improvement; maintain universal support and communication.
Emerging concern or pattern	Early conversation; check safeguarding/SEND/transport; pupil voice; parent contact; agree practical adjustments; monitor closely.
At risk of persistent absence	Written attendance/support plan; named lead; regular review; home visit/multi-agency support as appropriate; SEND/health review; consider EWO consultation.
Persistent absence - 10%+ missed	Intensify support; formalise plan/attendance contract where appropriate; regular multi-agency review; EWO/local authority involvement where needed.
Severe absence - 50%+ missed	Priority safeguarding and multi-agency response; senior oversight; intensive family work; social care/health/SEND/commissioner involvement as relevant; EWO/local authority support and legal consideration only where appropriate.
Any safeguarding concern regardless of %	Immediate DSL consideration and safeguarding action. Attendance thresholds never delay a safeguarding response.

Annex 2 - Leave of absence request form

Important information: Include Suffolk expects pupils to attend every session they are required to attend. Leave during term time is discretionary and will normally be granted only for exceptional circumstances. Holidays or leisure/recreation are not normally exceptional. Please submit this form in advance wherever possible.

Pupil details	Information
Pupil name	
Date of birth / class	
Include Suffolk site	Ipswich / Lowestoft / Bury St Edmunds
First day requested	
Last day requested	
Expected return date	
Reason for request and any supporting information	

Parent/carers name: _____ Relationship: _____

Contact details: _____

Signature: _____ Date: _____

For school use

Decision	Details
Date received	
Authorised / unauthorised	
Reason for decision	
Number of sessions/days granted (if applicable)	
Headteacher / authorised decision-maker	
Date parent/carers notified	

Annex 3 - Parent/carers quick guide

- School starts at 09:30. Please make sure your child arrives ready for the start of the session.
- If your child is absent unexpectedly, contact the relevant site before 09:30 and tell us the specific reason. Keep us updated each day unless we agree to another arrangement.
- Tell us early if anxiety, SEND, health, transport, relationships or family circumstances are making attendance difficult. Asking for help early gives us more options.
- We will contact you on the first day if we do not know why your child is absent. This is part of safeguarding.
- We may ask to meet, visit home or involve other professionals where attendance is becoming a concern. Our first aim is to understand the barrier and agree support.
- Leave during term time must be requested in advance and will normally be granted only for exceptional circumstances.
- Include Suffolk cannot fine parents. Where unauthorised absence may require formal action, we work with Suffolk County Council and the Education Welfare Officer.
- If you are worried about your child's attendance, contact your child's Advocate, site leader or the Senior Attendance Champion.

Annex 4 - Equality Impact Assessment

This policy has been considered against the Equality Act 2010. Attendance expectations apply to all pupils, while support and reasonable adjustments must reflect individual disability,

SEND, health, cultural and family circumstances. Equal ambition does not mean identical intervention.

Equality area	Impact / mitigation
Disability / SEND	Positive: requires reasonable adjustments, SEND-informed attendance planning and avoids punitive responses to disability-related barriers.
Race / ethnicity / Gypsy, Roma and Traveller heritage	Neutral/positive: statutory codes and individual consideration are applied consistently; occupational travel and cultural/religious factors are considered lawfully.
Religion or belief	Neutral/positive: religious observance is considered under the statutory framework.
Sex / gender reassignment / sexual orientation	Neutral: decisions are based on attendance need, safeguarding and individual circumstances without discrimination.
Pregnancy and maternity	Neutral/positive: where relevant, leave/support is considered reasonably and individually.
Socio-economic disadvantage	Positive: barriers such as transport, routines, housing and family stress are explored and support/signposting considered.
Risk of stigma	Mitigation: rewards focus on improvement and effort as well as high attendance; pupils are not shamed for unavoidable absence.