



St Stephen's RC Primary School

Children's Attendance Policy

Vision

A world class school for children that want to make the world a better place as God intended

Mission Statement

'Love one another, as I have loved you.'
John 13:34

Our Values - St Stephen's CARES

Compassion, Ambition, Rejoice, Excellence, Service

Compassion	<i>be compassionate in all of our actions</i>
Ambition	<i>be ambitious – better ourselves and those around us</i>
Rejoice	<i>be rejoiceful – celebrate the Good News</i>
Excellence	<i>be excellent in everything we do – work hard always</i>
Service	<i>be a steward of the Lord – a service to the community</i>

Policy developed	January 2022
Governor approval	21st September 2023
Review date	21st September 2024

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1. Introduction

- We believe that good and regular attendance is essential for children to reach their full potential.
- Good attendance and punctuality help children to achieve academically, gain self-confidence, develop a sense of belonging and maintain friendships.
- We believe that setting good habits from the earliest point in education develops an understanding of responsibility and reliability that will help children throughout their time at school and into their adult lives. In order for this to happen, parents and the school need to work together to ensure that pupils attend regularly and on time.
- Attendance is subject to education laws and parents have a legal responsibility to ensure their child receives their right to an education. Failure to do so may lead to prosecution.
- Every opportunity will be used to convey to pupils and their parents/carers the importance of regular and punctual attendance.
- Children who miss a lot of school achieve less. This is illustrated in the table below:

Attendance during one school year	Equals approx. number of lessons missed
100%	0 lessons
99%	10 lessons
98%	20 lessons
97%	30 lessons
95%	50 lessons
92%	75 lessons
90%	95 lessons
85%	145 lessons
80%	190 lessons
75%	240 lessons

The importance of school attendance is a key priority of the school's rules:

BE READY | BE RESPECTFUL | BE SAFE |

2. Aims

- To improve the overall attendance and punctuality of pupils
- To make attendance and punctuality a priority for all those associated with the school including pupils, parents, staff and governors
- To promote good attendance and reduce absence, including persistent absence
- To promote good punctuality and reduce lateness
- To provide support, advice and guidance to parents and pupils
- To ensure every pupil has access to their entitlement to a full-time education and support parents to perform their legal duty to ensure pupils of compulsory school age attend regularly
- To develop positive and consistent communication between home and school
- To act early to address patterns of absence
- To develop a systematic approach to gathering and analysing attendance and punctuality data.
- To promote effective partnerships with the local authority and other external agencies

3. 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 setting out the legal powers and duties that govern school attendance:

- Part 6 of The Education Act 1996
- Part 3 of The Education Act 2002
- Part 7 of The Education and Inspections Act 2006
- The Education (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2006 (and 2010, 2011, 2013, 2016 amendments)
- The Education (Penalty Notices) (England) (Amendment) Regulations 2013

4. Roles and Responsibilities

The governing body has overall responsibility for:

- Monitoring the implementation of the attendance policy and procedures of the school
- Ensuring the policy, as written, does not discriminate on any grounds including, but not limited to, ethnicity, culture, religion, gender, disability or sexual orientation
- Holding the Headteacher to account for the implementation of this policy

The headteacher or designated deputy is responsible for:

- The day-to-day implementation and management of this policy
- Monitoring school-level absence data and reporting it to governors
- Supporting staff with monitoring the attendance of individual pupils
- Issuing fixed-penalty notices, where necessary

The school attendance officer and Senior Leaders are responsible for:

- Monitoring attendance data across the school and at an individual pupil level
- Reporting concerns about attendance to the headteacher or designated deputy
- Working with education welfare officers to tackle persistent absence
- Meeting with parents to discuss attendance issues
- Advising the headteacher when to issue fixed-penalty notices

Staff, including teachers and support staff are responsible for:

- Taking the attendance register at the start of each school day and at the start of the afternoon session
- Modelling good attendance and punctuality behaviour
- Using their professional judgement and knowledge of individual pupils to inform decisions as to whether any welfare concerns should be escalated

School office staff are responsible for:

- Receiving calls from parents and recording reasons for absence on Arbor
- Contacting parents when pupils are absent and no reason is provided
- Correctly coding attendance registers
- Escalating welfare concerns to the designated safeguarding lead

Parents and carers are expected to:

- Make school attendance and punctuality a priority
- Take responsibility for their child's attendance during term time
- Promote good attendance and punctuality and ensure their child attends every day
- Contact the school office to explain any absence

Recording Attendance

The school will keep an attendance register and place all pupils onto this register.

The school will take an attendance register 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

The school will keep every entry on the attendance register for 3 years after the date on which the entry was made.

Day to day procedure:

- School doors open at 8.40am.
- Pupils arriving after the register is taken at 8.55am are late (L). The morning register closes at 9.15am.
- Pupils arriving after this time are late after the register has closed (U). This is an unauthorised absence.
- The register for the second session is taken after lunch.

5 Unplanned absence

- Parents/carers must notify the school on the first day of an unplanned absence by 8.50am or as soon as practically possible.
- Parents/carers must contact the school by telephone or in person at the school office. Parents must not report absences via Dojo or through door staff in the mornings. Parents/carers must give full details for the reason for the absence and share when they expect the pupil to return to school.
- Pupils with serious stomach bugs (e.g. gastroenteritis/norovirus) should not return to school until symptoms of vomiting, fever and diarrhoea are clear. Pupils who vomit, but are otherwise well and the sickness is not thought to be contagious (e.g. due to overeating/over excitement etc) may attend school as soon as they are better.
- The school will mark absence due to illness as authorised. Parents may be asked to provide supporting evidence in the form of an appointment card/copy of prescription etc where there is continuing absence or where there are repeated absences due to a reported illness.

- There are times when pupils may need to take medication during the school day e.g. to finish a course of antibiotics. Parents must sign a parental agreement to administer medication form at the school office. Medication must be in the original container, clearly labelled with the child's name.
- Pupils with minor ailments should attend school and school will contact parents if they are unwell during the day.
- When a parent is unwell, arrangements must be made for a pupil to attend school.

6 Planned absence

- Medical and dental appointments should be made outside of school hours where it is possible to arrange.
- With some forward planning, routine appointments such as opticians and dental appointments can be made after school or in the school holidays.
- Where appointments take place during the school day, pupils should attend school before/after the appointment if it is practical to do so. Appointment cards should be made available to the school office.
- Authorised medical appointments which do not exceed 6 sessions (3 days) will not count against a child's eligibility for 100% attendance awards.

7 Punctuality

- Frequent lateness can have the same impact on learning as poor attendance.
- Pupils who are late by just 5 minutes every day lose the equivalent of 3 days' learning every year.
- Lateness impacts on confidence, behaviour and causes an unacceptable disruption to the learning of other children.
- Good punctuality is a parental responsibility and lateness will always be challenged
- Parents are contacted by letter where punctuality is of concern. In some instances, parents will be expected to engage with Punctuality Improvement Plans.
- A pupil who arrives late before the register has closed will be marked as late (L)
- A pupil who arrives late after the register has closed will be marked absent (U). This code shows they are on site but will be counted as an unauthorised absence
- Pupils names and the reason for lateness will be recorded by the office staff.
- Pupils must be brought to the main entrance by a parent and should not be left in the playground or watched from the car park.

- Unaccompanied pupils will be asked to explain their lateness & for the whereabouts of their parents. The Headteacher will write to parents who do not accompany their child to the school office

8 Following up absence

Where any child we expect to attend school does not attend, or stops attending, the school will:

- Follow up on their absence with their parent/carer to ascertain the reason, by ringing parents/carers. If the child returns to school the next day, but no reason for absence is provided by the parent, an additional phone call will be made and a follow up email. Absences will be recorded as unauthorised should no reason be provided within 7 days of the first day of absence.
- If a child has been absent from school for a second day without explanation, a phone call will be made and a follow up email. The school will make telephone contact with parents on a third day of unexplained absence and will continue through a child's contact sheet until there is confirmation of the child's safety and a reason given for their absence. Where contact cannot be made and the school is concerned, a member of staff may conduct a home visit and may consult other contacts e.g. neighbours. The Education Welfare Service, Children's Social Care and/or the police may be informed. This procedure will be followed automatically on the first or second day of absence where there are concerns or for those known to the school's safeguarding team.
- If school are unable to contact home, a letter will be sent to request contact is made
- Where a pupil has not returned to school for ten days after an authorised absence or is absent without authorisation for twenty consecutive school days despite reasonable efforts to establish whereabouts, the pupil will be treated as 'Missing Education' and referred to Tameside's Education Welfare Service and deleted from the admission register. Nursery children will have their places withdrawn and offered to another child.

10. Authorised and Unauthorised absence

- Absence is categorised as authorised or unauthorised.
- Where the school gives permission for the child to be absent, the absence is categorised as authorised.
- Where the school does not give permission for the child to be absent, the absence is categorised as unauthorised.
- Only the school can authorise an absence; parents do not have this authority.

- Not all absences supported by parents will be classified as authorised by the school.

11. Leave during term time

- Any time missed from school is damaging to a pupil's learning and will impact on their progress and achievement
- All leave of absence should be booked during school holidays. All term dates can be found on the school's website
- The amendments to the Education (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2006 make it clear that Headteachers may not grant any leave of absence during term time unless there are exceptional circumstances
- Where parents believe that there are exceptional circumstances for taking their child out of school during term time they must make a written request to the Headteacher for authorisation of the period of absence at least six weeks prior or as far in advance of the leave as possible stating:
 - Student's name and class
 - The first day of absence and date the student will return to school
 - The reason for the request, giving as much detail as possible
 - Providing supporting evidence where available
- The headteacher will only grant a leave of absence to pupils during term time if they consider there to be 'exceptional circumstances'.
- A leave of absence must be requested with at least 6 weeks' notice in writing to the headteacher to allow adequate time for the headteacher to respond.
- Leave of absence is at the headteacher's discretion and parents will be notified in writing of how the absence will be recorded. Failure to receive a response from school to a request should not be considered authorization of the absence and parents are advised, if in doubt, to check with the school.
- The headteacher will determine the number of school days a child can be away from school if the leave is granted.
- The school considers each application for term-time absence individually, taking into account the specific facts, circumstances and relevant context behind the request.

Valid reasons for authorised absence include:

- Religious observance – where the day is exclusively set apart for religious observance by the religious body to which the pupil's parents belong. Parents are requested to give advance notice in writing to the

Headteacher. No more than one day will be authorised for any individual occasion of religious observance. No more than three days in any academic year will be authorised for religious observance. Any further absence will be categorised as unauthorised. Authorised absences for religious observance will not affect achievement of 100% attendance awards

- 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. Evidence of employment/work permits must be provided to school.
- 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.
- Out of school programmes such as music, arts or sport operating at a high standard of achievement. Evidence will be required.
- To attend the funeral of a close relative.

Requests for leave will not be granted in the following circumstances:

- When a pupil's record shows any unauthorised absence
- When a student's absence record is already above 10% for any reason
- If the request was not made in advance (where it was possible to do so)
- During test/assessment periods
- During the first half term of an academic year
- If holidays have been taken within the last 12 months

The Headteacher will not grant leave of absence for any holidays taken during term time. This includes:

- holidays taken to celebrate the wedding of a parent or close relative
- holidays taken to suit parental work patterns
- holidays taken to lower cost

12. Staged approach to managing attendance

- To help parents understand how the school interprets 'good and regular' attendance, all pupils are set a minimum expectation of 97% attendance. This percentage is in line with local and national averages. When attendance

does not meet the school's minimum expectation, parents are notified by letter (Stage 1).

- The school considers absence to be of significant concern when attendance is at 92%. The school will contact parents in writing (Stage 2) to notify them of this and will no longer authorise absences without medical evidence (e.g. medical appointment card/prescription). A penalty notice warning from the local authority will be issued where there have been 10 sessions (5 days) of unauthorised absence from school in any 12 week period.
- Where a penalty notice warning has been issued and there is continued absence, parents will be contacted by letter to attend an Attendance Improvement Meeting at school (Stage 3). Failure to attend a meeting will be recorded and used in evidence should poor attendance become eligible for prosecution. Attendance Improvement Plans will be written in the absence of parents who do not engage with meetings. Absences will continue to be recorded as unauthorised
- Where attendance falls to 90%, the pupil is now classed as a persistent absentee. If attendance is below 85% (75% in the first half term), absence will automatically be managed at this stage (Stage 4). Parents will be notified of their legal responsibilities under Section 444(1)/444(1A) of the 1996 Education Act. Targets will be set with the parent to improve school attendance and shall be monitored closely thereafter. Failure to attend a meeting will be recorded and used in evidence for prosecution. Attendance Improvement Plans will be written in the absence of parents who do not engage with meetings. Absences will continue to be recorded as unauthorised
- If attendance does not improve following an Attendance Improvement Plan and there are further unauthorised absences resulting in attendance falling to 85% (75% in in the first half term), school will refer to the Local Authority Education Welfare Department for consideration in relation to prosecution for an offence under the Education Act 1996. Conviction of an offence under section 444(1) may result in a fine of £1000. Under section 444(1A) convictions may result in a fine of £2500 or a custodial sentence. School will continue to work with parents during the time of prosecution.
- Pupils of non-statutory school age in Nursery and Reception are included in the school's attendance monitoring and parents will be contacted should attendance be of concern

13 Legal sanctions

Prosecution for non-school attendance

- Section 444 of the Education Act 1996 states that if a parent fails to ensure the regular school attendance of their child if she/he is a registered student and is of compulsory school age they are guilty of an offence

- Where intervention has failed to secure an improvement in a pupil's attendance, the Local Authority will be notified and legal action in the Magistrates' Court may be taken. This is to ensure that parents realise their own responsibilities in ensuring attendance at school and most importantly about returning children to regular education
- Parents who fail to secure regular attendance are guilty of an offence under section 444(1) of The Education Act 1996. This carries a maximum fine of £1000.
- Where it can be proved that a parent knows their child is not attending school and does not try to bring about an improvement in school attendance, the parent is guilty of an offence under section 444(1a). This offence carries a potential custodial sentence of 3 months imprisonment or a £2500 fine
- Alternatives to section 444 include: Penalty Notices, Parenting Contracts or an Education Supervision Order
- The definition of 'regular attendance' as decided by the Supreme Court means in accordance with the school rules. At Fairfield Road, a pupil is considered to attend regularly if they attend on each and every day that the school is open for instruction, with the exception of those absences that are considered acceptable by the school and as such are recorded as authorised absences.

Penalty Notices (Anti-Social Behaviour Act 2003)

A penalty notice can be issued in cases of unauthorised absence where a pupil has had 10 half days/5 days of unauthorised absence in a 12 week period. Penalty notices are used in cases of:

- Parentally condoned absence
- Truancy
- Holidays in term time
- Lateness after the register has closed

A penalty notice is a fine of £120 per child/per parent, which is reduced to £60 if paid within 21 days. The penalty notice has to be paid in full within 28 days of notice being served. Failure to pay the penalty notice will result in prosecution.

Penalty Notice Warning

Penalty Notice Warnings are issued in cases of unauthorised absence where a pupil has had 10 half days/5 days of unauthorised absence in a 12 week period. They are sent through the post to the parent's home address. A Penalty Notice Warning is not a fine. The warning states that the child's attendance will be formally monitored by the local authority. No further absences from school will be authorised unless they are supported by medical evidence. If a child is absent during the monitoring period and evidence is not provided, a fine will be issued.

Where a referral is made by the school for unauthorised leave of absence during term time e.g. for a holiday, no warning will be given and parents will receive a fine.

14. Rewards and raising the profile of attendance

The school is committed to making attendance a priority for parents, staff and pupils and works hard to raise the profile of attendance in the following ways:

- All parents will receive the 'generic letter' from the local authority at the beginning of the academic year
- All parents will receive notification of the school's attendance target at the beginning of the academic year
- Attendance will be promoted with all pupils at a termly assembly
- Weekly class attendance will be displayed in classrooms, school hall and on the weekly newsletter
- The class with the highest attendance each week will receive an extra playtime
- Individual pupils receive a certificate half termly for attendance which has met the school's attendance target over the half term
- Individual pupils receive a badge termly for attendance which has met the school's attendance target over the half term
- 100% attendance receive a trip to the cinema at the end of the year
- Attendance is reported to parents at parents' consultations and on reports

The school recognises 100% attendance for those pupils who have been in school every day for the academic year.

The school includes the following in its criteria for rewarding 100% attendance at the end of the year:

- authorised medical appointments which do not exceed 6 sessions
- authorised religious observations which do not exceed 3 days
- education off site
- dual registration

Pupils are not eligible for 100% attendance if they have authorised or unauthorised absences for paid work taken during school time to take part in performances or modelling activities, or for sporting events or trials, as these occasions are avoidable and may impact a pupil's education.

Pupils are not eligible for 100% attendance if they have had any period of illness.

14 Monitoring and Review

This policy will be reviewed annually by the Headteacher and Governors.

The policy will be updated in line with guidance from the Local Authority or DfE

Any changes to the policy will be communicated to all staff, pupils and parents.