



St James' CE Primary School



Attendance Policy 2023

Statement of Intent

St James CE Primary School is committed to the continuous raising of achievement of all our pupils. Regular attendance is fundamental if our pupils are to be successful and benefit from the opportunities presented to them.

One of our basic principles is to celebrate success. Good attendance is fundamental to a successful and fulfilling school experience. We actively promote 100% attendance for all our pupils.

The Governors, Headteacher and Staff in partnership with parents have a duty to promote full attendance at our school.

This policy has been written with reference to Working Together to Improve School Attendance (September 2022).

Parental Responsibility

Parents have a legal duty to ensure that their children attend school regularly and arrive on time. Regular attendance is essential to the all-round development of the child and they should be allowed to take full advantage of educational opportunities available to them in order to make good progress in their learning. Poor attendance undermines their educational attainment and progress and, sometimes, puts pupils at risk by encouraging anti-social behaviour.

It is the parents' responsibility to contact the school on the first day their child is absent. This is a safeguarding requirement so that all parties know that your child is safe and their whereabouts is known. Parents should regularly update the school and inform the school when their child is returning.

Pupils are expected to arrive by 8:55 am. All pupils that arrive late must report, with their parent, to the school office where the reason for lateness is recorded.

The Role of the School Staff

At St James' CE Primary School there is a whole school responsibility and approach for improving school attendance, with specific staff taking individual responsibility.

The Attendance Officer has overall responsibility for monitoring attendance issues.

Class teachers complete a register at the beginning of each morning and each afternoon session. Marking the attendance registers twice daily is a legal requirement. (The Education (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2006). Teachers mark pupils present, absent or late. The class teacher notifies the school office of children whose attendance is causing concern.

It is the responsibility of the Attendance Officer (AO) to ensure:

- Attendance and lateness records are up to date
- If no reason for absence has been provided, parents are contacted on the first day of absence by phone call.
- Where there has been no communication, letters are sent to parents requesting reasons for absence.
- The appropriate attendance code is entered into the register (see National Attendance Codes)
- Parents are informed annually of the child's attendance figure

Timeline of the Staged Approach for Managing Poor Attendance

- 95 - 100% attendance – the class teacher to investigate and notify the AO of concerns. The AO to contact parent if appropriate or arrange for someone to do so on her behalf.
- 90 - 95% attendance - school intervention letters/meeting with parents
- Where the level of absence has not improved and there are unauthorised absences, the school will make a referral to the KCC Inclusion and Attendance Service using the Digital Front Door. If it is not clear a referral to the Service is appropriate, the school will consult with the Local Authority School Liaison Officer for advice.
- For the cases that require intensive family support, the school may make an Early Help Notification.

Children Missing Education

No child should be removed from the school roll without consultation between the Headteacher and the Inclusion and Attendance Service when appropriate. Please see the circumstances below:-

Where a child is missing from education, Local Authority guidance will be followed, by completing a Child Missing Education referral for the following circumstances:-

- If the whereabouts of the child is unknown and the school has failed to locate him/her.
- The family has notified the school that they are leaving the area but no Common Transfer Form (pupil file) has been requested by another school.

Lateness

At St James' the morning register is taken at 09:00 across the whole school. The playground gate closes at 08:55. Pupils arriving after this time must enter school by the main entrance and report to Reception where they record their name and the reason for lateness using the electronic entry system. The pupil will be marked as late before registration has closed (Code 'L').

An afternoon register is taken at 13:10 for EYFS and Years 1, 3 & 4 & 13:20 for Year 2 and Upper Key Stage 2.

The registers will close at 09:05 and 13:15 for EYFS and Year 1,3 and 4, & 13:25 for Year 2 and Upper Key Stage 2. Pupils arriving after the register has closed will be marked as late after registration (Code 'U') and this will count as an unauthorised absence.

Frequent lateness after the register has closed (U) will be discussed with parents and could provide grounds for prosecution or a Penalty Notice (please see below).

Persistent and Severe Absence

Where absence escalates and pupils miss 10% or more of school (equivalent to 1 day or more a fortnight across a full school year), we will work together with the local authority to put additional targeted support in place to remove any barriers to attendance and reengage these pupils. In doing so, we will sensitively consider some of the reasons for absence and understand the importance of school as a place of safety and support for children who might be facing difficulties, rather than reaching immediately for punitive approaches such as Penalty Notices

Particular focus will be given by all partners to pupils who are absent from school more than they are present (those missing 50% or more of school). These severely absent pupils may find it more difficult to be in school or face bigger barriers to their regular attendance and as such are likely to need more intensive support across a range of partners. These children will therefore be prioritised and all partners will work together to make this group the top priority for support.

Authorising Absence

Only the Headteacher can authorise absence using a consistent approach. The Headteacher is not obliged to accept a parent's explanation. A letter or telephone message from a parent does not in itself authorise an absence. If absences are not authorised, parents will be notified. If no explanation is received, absences will not be authorised.

Absence (for example leave for holidays) during term time can only be approved in "exceptional circumstances". The following reasons are examples of absence that will not be authorised:

- Persistent nonspecific illness e.g. poorly/unwell
- Absence of siblings if one child is ill
- Oversleeping
- Inadequate clothing/uniform
- Confusion over school dates
- Medical/dental appointments of more than half a day without very good reasons
- Child's/family birthday
- Shopping trip
- Family Holidays (with some rare exceptions)

Exceptional circumstances could include:

- Service personnel returning from a tour of duty abroad where it is evidenced the parent 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's or child's rehabilitation from a medical or emotional issue.
- The death or terminal illness of a person close to the family.
- To attend a wedding or funeral of a person close to the family.
- Any strong personal reasons why a family might need to take a child away from school for a short break.

Any examples provided are illustrative rather than exhaustive. It is acceptable to take a pupil's previous record of attendance into account when the headteacher is making decisions. The fundamental principles for defining 'exceptional' are rare, significant, unavoidable and short. And by 'unavoidable' it implies that an event could not reasonably be scheduled at another time. It is important to note that the school can agree the absence of a child in exceptional circumstances and this discretion can be used also to determine the length of the authorised absence.

Section 444 of the Education Act 1996 says that parents are **guilty** of an offence of failing to secure regular attendance at school unless they can prove that the child was absent:

- with leave (the school has given permission)
- due to sickness or any unavoidable cause (the sickness or unavoidable cause must relate to the child, not the parent)
- religious observance
- failure by the Local Authority to provide transport

In law, these are the only acceptable reasons for a child being absent from school.

The Headteacher may authorise absence in “exceptional circumstances” but this must be requested in advance and agreement to each request is at the discretion of the Headteacher, acting on behalf of the Governing Body (Education (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2006). Each case will be judged on its merits and the Headteacher’s decision is final. Once the decision not to authorise leave is taken, it cannot be authorised retrospectively.

If the absence is not authorised and the holiday is taken anyway, the case may be referred to the Inclusion and Attendance Service who may issue a Penalty Notice to each parent for each child taken out of school.

Persistent unauthorised absence (10% or more of the school year – please see below) may result in a referral to the Local Authority School Liaison Officer through the digital front door for consideration of prosecution. The school will follow procedures prior to referral and parents will be notified in writing.

When a referral is made, the child’s Registration Certificate, copies of all letters sent to parents and minutes of any meetings **need to** be attached to the completed referral with any other relevant information.

Local Authority Action may include:-

- Attendance Improvement Meeting
- Home visits
- Liaison with other agencies
- Parenting Contract
- Fast Track to Prosecution

Penalty Notices Proceedings for Poor Attendance or Persistent Lateness

Where the school is considering a Penalty Notice, the parent will be contacted and an attempt will be made to resolve the issue which is causing the lateness or persistent absence. If a Penalty Notice is being considered the parent shall be written to and warned that the school may take this action. This letter will include:

- details of the pupil’s absence or persistent lateness
- an offer to meet with the parent to discuss the concerns and to provide advice and support in an attempt to resolve any difficulties
- a statement of the legal responsibilities of the parent regarding attendance
- the consequences for the parent in failing to ensure his or her child’s regular attendance; in particular, warning that further unauthorised and persistent absence could result in a Penalty Notice or prosecution
- an expectation that, after receipt of the warning letter, the level of attendance will significantly improve and that this improvement will be maintained.

Penalty Notices are issued in accordance with Kent County Council’s Education Penalty Notices Code of Conduct effective from January 2016 and revised in June 2020.

A Penalty Notice can only be issued in cases of unauthorised absence or where an excluded child is found in a public place during school hours.

Unauthorised absences

Parents and pupils are supported by St James’ and by Kent County Council to overcome barriers to regular attendance through a range of assessment and intervention strategies. Sanctions of any nature

are for use only where parental co-operation in this process is either absent or deemed insufficient to resolve the presenting problem.

Sanctions are used as a means of enforcing attendance where there is a reasonable expectation that their use will secure improvement.

Penalty Notices can only be issued in cases where a pupil of compulsory school age has been absent or late for a period, or periods, of time and the absence or lateness has not been authorised by the school, or shown improvement as a result of actions taken by the school.

After the school has taken the steps above, the relevant case may be referred directly to Kent's Inclusion and Attendance Service to issue a Penalty Notice for any unauthorised absence where the pupil has been:

- absent for 10 or more half-day sessions (five school days) without authorisation during any 100 possible school sessions or 50 school days – these do not need to be consecutive
- persistently late (coded U) for 10 or more sessions after the register has been closed
- unauthorised absence for any public examinations of which dates are published in advance
- unauthorised absence for any formal school assessments, tests or examinations where the dates have been published in advance 7 unless the issuing of a Penalty Notice in these circumstances would conflict with other intervention strategies in place, such as Early Help support, or other sanctions already being processed.

Unauthorised Term-Time Leave (including leave for family holiday):

Any parent who takes a child out of school for term-time leave of 10 or more morning and afternoon sessions during any 100 possible school sessions or 50 school days, not authorised by the school (under exceptional circumstances), may receive a Penalty Notice.

The unauthorised term-time leave does not have to be consecutive for a parent to receive a Penalty Notice. In deciding whether to refer a case for the sanction of a Penalty Notice, the Headteacher should take into account whether there is known evidence of previous unauthorised term time leave taken in the last 3 years and evidence of parents being warned about a potential Penalty Notice.

Exclusion:

Where a child is found in a public place during school hours of day one to five of any fixed term or permanent exclusion, a Penalty Notice may be issued.

Analysing attendance

Attendance for all pupils, as well as vulnerable groups of pupils are regularly analysed and reported to the school's Senior Leadership Team and Governing Body. Lucy Hayward and John Tutt take the lead on this, in discussion with the school's Attendance Officer. The aims of analysing attendance are as follows:

1. To celebrate good attendance
2. To support students where medical diagnosis hinders attendance
3. To monitor attendance of all students and proactively engage with parents and students with support and challenge
4. To use attendance tracking information to identify safeguarding concerns eg FGM (Female genital mutilation), possible young carers, CME (Children missing education), PA (Persistent Absentees - below 90% attendance), SA (Severe Absentees).

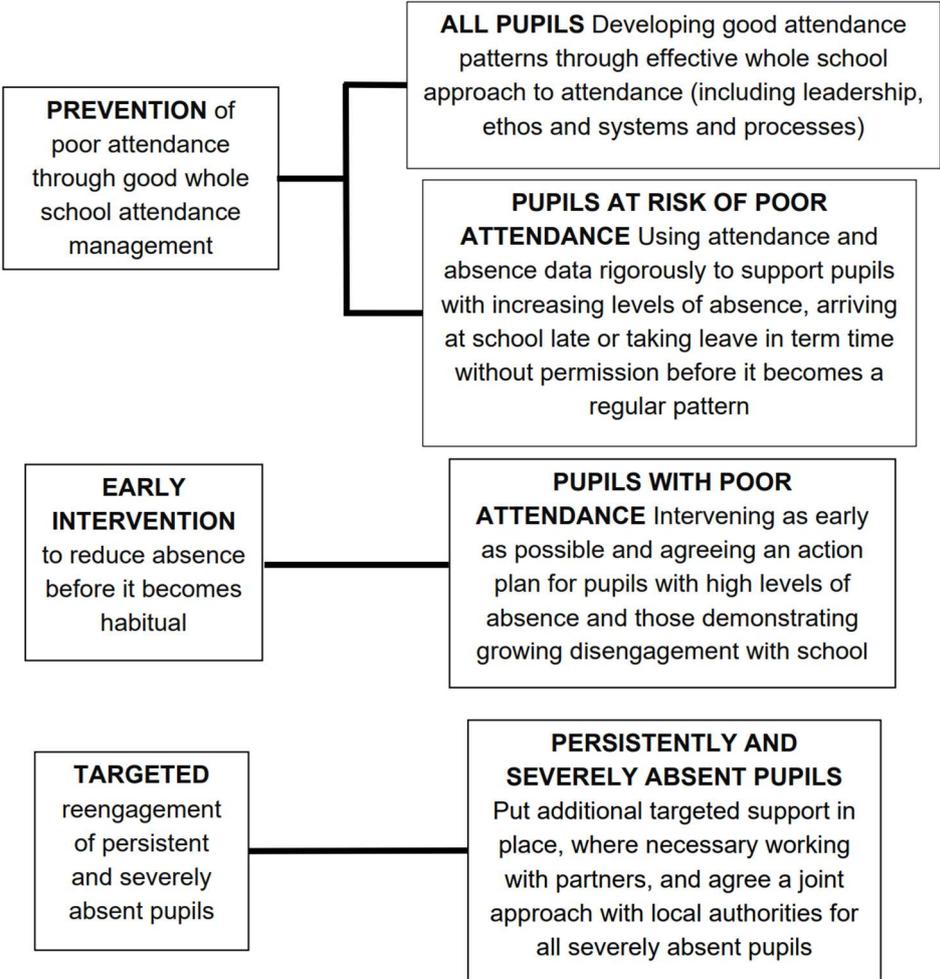
Part time timetables

Children have the right to a full-time education and part time timetables should only be used in very exceptional circumstances and should be time limited. Part time timetables will not be used in response to negative behaviour and will be agreed in consultation with parents and educational specialists; they will only be used when they are of benefit to the child.

Part time timetables, when used for any extended period, will have the support of parents and relevant educational specialists and will be reviewed termly. All part time timetables are reported to the local authority through their digital front door.

Appendix 1

Effective school attendance improvement and management



Kent School Referral Pathway – Pupil Attendance

