

Stratford-sub-Castle Church of England VC Primary School

Life in all its fullness (John 10:10)

Attendance Policy

The *Attendance Policy* was reviewed during the Summer of 2023.
This document is the result of that review.

DATE AGREED BY FULL GOVERNING BODY:	20.09.23
REVIEW DATE:	September 2024
REVIEW CYCLE:	Annual
PLACED ON WEBSITE:	29.09.23
AUTHOR:	Mrs Kay Bridson Reviewed by Mrs Justine Watkins
FGB/COMMITTEE:	FGB
NOMINATED GOVERNOR:	Miss Angela Britten
HEADTEACHER:	Mrs Justine Watkins
SIGNED: (Chair of Governors)	
TO BE READ IN CONJUNCTION WITH:	https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/working-together-to-improve-school-attendance <i>Admissions Policy.</i> <i>Aims of the School</i> <i>Behaviour for Life and Learning Policy</i> <i>Child Protection Policy</i> <i>Safeguarding Policy</i> <i>Wiltshire Council Penalty Notice Code of Conduct</i>

Contact...

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Introduction:

Excellent education is vital to the lives of all children and to our society as a whole. Whilst it is known that the life chances of children may not be equal from the outset of their lives for various reasons, education can help to redress this imbalance and help to ensure that every child has the chance to fulfil their potential.

Regular attendance is an essential foundation of raising pupil attainment. Absence from school can seriously disrupt pupils' continuity of learning. Not only do they miss out on taught lessons, but many children find it difficult to catch up academically and socially when they return to school.

95% attendance equates to half a day off every two weeks for a whole year

90% attendance equates to a day off every two weeks for a whole year

85% attendance equates to one and a half days off every two weeks for a whole year

80% attendance equates to one whole day off every week for a whole year

Poor or irregular attendance places children at risk, can contribute to contextual safeguarding and welfare concerns and in some cases can result in them being drawn into patterns of anti-social or criminal behaviour and exposure to exploitation.

Purpose:

The purpose of this document is to support our pupils to aspire to, achieve and celebrate the best possible attendance. At Stratford-sub-Castle Primary School we constantly work towards our goal of 100% attendance for all children.

This document sets out how the school works to maintain, improve and celebrate attendance. It provides guidance for our particular context, within the legal framework, so that that procedures can be consistently applied, to all pupils.

Statement of Aims:

We aim:

- to ensure that all our pupils make the best use of their educational opportunities by attending regularly, punctually and in a state of readiness for learning
- to ensure that everyone within the school community understands the issues and procedures for attendance
- to fulfil our statutory duties in relation to school attendance
- to encourage, recognise and celebrate good attendance
- to raise parental awareness of unauthorised absence
- to improve overall attendance rates.

Implementation:

The Governing Body and the Headteacher have overall responsibility for the implementation of this Attendance Policy. *Attendance* is regarded as a *whole school issue*. We recognise that while parents have a legal duty to ensure that their child attends school regularly, we also have an important role to play and believe in a partnership approach to the issue.

Expectations:

We are committed to helping our pupils understand that:

- learning is important
- regular attending, being punctual and arriving in a state of readiness for learning is valued
- they are missed, when they are not here
- hard work, commitment and perseverance is recognised and celebrated
- problems leading to non-attendance are taken seriously- we listen
- excellent attendance and punctuality is something to aspire to.

Stratford-sub-Castle Primary School is a local authority, maintained school and as such, must open for at least 380 sessions (190 days) during a school year. **Term dates** are determined by the local authority and are published on the school-website.

Start of Day: The school gates open at **08:40** and children can be dropped off until school starts at **09:00**. Any children come in after this time must report to the school office. **End of Day:** The school day ends at **15:00**.

The legal framework

ATTENDANCE

Under section 7 of the Education Act 1996, parents/carers must ensure that their children are educated. For most parents this means registering their child at a school and ensuring their regular attendance. Failure to do so can result in prosecution.

If a child fails to attend school regularly an offence is being committed. A Penalty Notice could be issued to parents or they could be prosecuted, which could result in a fine of up to £2500 or imprisonment for failing to ensure a regularly attends school. Magistrates can also impose a Parenting Order, which would mean the attendance of parenting classes. The Local Authority can also apply for an Education Supervision Order.

ATTENDANCE REGISTERS (See Appendix 1)

Attendance registers are legal documents which may be required as evidence in court. Stratford-sub-Castle Primary school follows **The Education (Pupils' Attendance Records) Regulations 1991 and the Education (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2006** which stipulate that schools should maintain an attendance register for each class containing the names of all pupils in the class.

ABSENCE

Authorised absence includes late arrivals, illness, interviews, sporting activities, examinations, family funerals and family holidays all of which should be supported (where possible) by a written explanation for the absence.

Authorised absence, for the purpose of a family holiday can only be granted up to a maximum of ten school days in any school year. Schools cannot legally authorise more than ten school days in a school year and may only do so in **exceptional circumstances**.

Where there are no exceptional circumstances it is important to be aware that the school position is clear. Holiday absence during term time:

- **WILL affect your child's learning**
- **WILL put additional pressure on class teachers and support staff**
- **WILL impact negatively on the school during an Ofsted**

The Government has issued clear guidelines with regard to family holidays during term time. Parents are made aware via the Attendance Policy and regular newsletters of the following:

- a maximum of ten school days authorised absence for the purpose of a family holiday may be granted in any school year, and only in **exceptional circumstances**
- parents do not have the automatic right to withdraw their child from school for a holiday during term time and should not normally do so

- parents need to request permission in advance from the school (minimum of 4 weeks' notice) if they wish to take their child on any holiday during term time
- each request for a holiday absence is considered individually by the school
- if the school does not agree to an absence and the child is still withdrawn for a holiday the absence is recorded as unauthorised on the child's record.

An "Authorised Absence Request Form" is available from the school office should parents wish to take a family holiday during term time. It should be completed prior to any withdrawal of a child during term time- (See appendix).

By law schools are required:

- to take an attendance register twice a day: at the start of the morning session and once in the afternoon
- to report to the LA pupils who fail to attend regularly or who are absent for more than two weeks- unauthorised
- to show in the register whether a pupil absence is authorised or unauthorised
- to support and promote good attendance and take seriously problems which may lead to non-attendance.

Roles and responsibilities:

Parents and carers

Parents are responsible in law for ensuring that their children of compulsory school age receive an efficient education suitable to their age, ability, aptitude and any special educational needs which they may have. Most parents choose to fulfil this responsibility by registering children at a school.

Parents have a crucial role and legal responsibility to play in ensuring that their child maintains good attendance. **A child will infer how much a parent values education from their attitude to attendance issues. Parents invest in their child's future by:**

- ensuring that their child arrives at school on time, appropriately dressed and in a "condition to learn" (i.e. not too tired or too hungry)
- working in partnership with us to help their child gain an appreciation of the importance of attending school regularly
- working in partnership with us by taking an active interest in their child's attendance and education
- working in partnership with us and other agencies (as appropriate) to resolve problems relating to non-attendance or which have a negative impact on their child's attendance
- avoiding arranging medical or dental appointments during school hours unless there is an emergency (if at all possible)
- receiving, reading and supporting the school's Attendance Policy

Parents MUST:

- notify the school if their child is absent. Contact with the school needs to be made on the first day of absence, ideally first thing in the morning and before the school register closes. Parents should provide an explanation for the absence
- seek permission from the head teacher (or authorised representative) by submitting a written application in advance of any request for leave of absence. Requests should be made at least 4 weeks in advance of the requested absence. This could be for the purposes of a family holiday or family occasion, such as a wedding or funeral or for any other reason. Each request is considered individually and is required to meet the circumstance of being '**exceptional**' if authorisation is being considered.

It is the head teacher's decision to register an absence as either authorised or unauthorised.

The school

The schools is responsible for and committed to:

- supporting the attendance of our pupils and for managing concerns or issues which may lead to non-attendance
- maximising attendance rates of all pupils
- supporting parents to ensure regular and punctual attendance
- identifying and addressing promptly any issue which may lead to non-attendance or irregular attendance

- ensuring parents understand the school's **graduated response to non-attendance** by clearly communicating the school's policy and the school's intention to work with parents to resolve issues before they become problematic

We recognise our important role to play in ensuring that expectations regarding *attendance issues* are consistent and that the school's legal responsibilities are fulfilled. **Pupils and parents will infer how much the school values education by our handling of attendance issues.**

Staff invest in their pupils' futures by:

- following precise registration procedures
- maintaining accurate records
- monitoring attendance on a daily, weekly and half-termly basis
- liaising effectively with parents, Education Welfare Officers and other agencies
- employing strategies to improve, maintain and celebrate good attendance.

The role of pupils.

Pupils have a responsibility to make sure that they follow school procedures. Pupils are expected to:

- maintain silence and remain stationary while the register is being called
- answer the register in a polite and clear manner when their name is called (i.e. Yes Miss X)
- apologise to their teacher if they arrive in the classroom late- (by walking over to a teacher and talking to them discretely, not shouting across the classroom! Apologies are accepted and children are not reprimanded when their lateness is beyond their control)
- report to the school office if they arrive after 9:00 a.m.
- give the teacher any absence notes written by their parents

The Local Authority

The Local Authority discharges its statutory duty to ensure regular school attendance through Education Welfare Officers within the Education Welfare Service. In doing so it enables schools and parents to meet their respective responsibilities.

The primary responsibility of the Education Welfare Service is to promote the excellent attendance of all pupils in Wiltshire, thereby contributing to raising pupil attainment.

The Education Welfare Service works in close partnership with all maintained schools and Academies (*subject to specific agreements*) in Wiltshire and other statutory and voluntary agencies to promote regular school attendance and support schools to discharge their responsibilities to ensure regular attendance. Whilst each school has access to a link Education Welfare Officer, the allocation of that resource is targeted according to identified need.

The Education Welfare Service wishes to work closely with schools to provide the following services:

Education Welfare Officer Consultation Visits

The link Education Welfare Officer offers consultation visits to meet with the designated member of staff in order to:

1. Identify pupils who are experiencing attendance difficulties by reviewing the attendance data of individual pupils or groups.
2. Agree on actions that need to be taken either by the school and/or the Education Welfare Service.
3. Feedback and exchange information in relation to work which has been undertaken by the Education Welfare Officer and/or the school and recording this in writing, a copy of which is given to the school.
4. Identify areas of concern and of good practice in relation to attendance matters.
5. Offer advice on strategies for improving attendance.

Intervention

On receipt of a referral the Education Welfare Officer (EWO) considers the most appropriate action to be taken. In the first instance this may involve arranging, by letter, a formal meeting to explain the actions that may be taken. It is good practice to make sure parents understand the consequences of failing to ensure their child's regular attendance, in particular that the case could result in a penalty notice and/or court proceedings. Intervention is based on an assessment of needs and is made in conjunction with schools. This may include:

1. Holding formal Local Authority Attendance meetings and reviews between the school, parents and pupil in school or elsewhere
2. Offering specific support to parents and individual pupils, either at school or elsewhere.
3. Visiting the parent or pupil at home (where this is deemed appropriate or necessary).
4. Helping the pupil and parents to access appropriate support from other services and agencies

The Education Welfare Officer may also signpost how pupils and families may receive additional support dependent upon need.

Procedures:

The following procedures are used to record attendance and identify and follow up all absence.

In-school Procedures

It is the head teacher's decision to register an absence as either authorised or unauthorised.

Registration: Class teacher

- morning register open 09:00-09:30
- register completed according to agreed codes on SIMS (see appendix 1)
- codes must not be entered by the class teacher if there is any doubt over the precise code to be entered
- number present indicated on board in classroom
- children arriving at school after the bell has gone to report to school office

School Office: Administrative Assistant/Headteacher.

- recording phone calls from parents on first day of absence, by phone- record name, date and reason for absence in book
- late-book, in the office recording reasons for late arrivals- i.e. any child arriving after the bell has rung
- phone call to parent of any child who has not arrived at school, if no phone call or note on first day of absence has been received (this is a safeguarding issue)
- record any child arriving after 09:30 when the registration closes
- the Headteacher formally monitors registers every week. Absences, which remain unaccounted for are followed up by a standard letter home (see appendix 2) and reasons for absences, sought.
- pupils whose attendance is poor and not improving or who have a pattern of absences, are referred to the Education Welfare Service (see appendix 3)
- any child truanting after registration-i.e. leaving the school premises during the school day will be reported to their parents.

Home/ In-school Procedures

- any day of absence parent to contact school by phone, in person or in writing (letter/e-mail) giving reasons for absence

Strategies:

Strategies for encouraging good attendance are targeted at both pupils and parents. They include:

Pupils.

- pupil involvement on attendance issues through the School's Council
- assemblies
- use of happy book and Head Teachers certificates for improved attendance

Parents.

- attendance issues and procedures discussed during Induction of new Reception children
- attendance issues and procedures published in the School Prospectus
- regular newsletters reinforcing procedures and the importance of regular attendance
- their child's attendance rate is published with the Annual School Report
- data and information published in the Governors' Report to Parents.

Monitoring and Evaluation:

In order to evaluate the effectiveness of procedures and strategies, this policy is monitored on a regular basis. While the Headteacher has an overall view of school attendance issues and patterns, class teachers monitor their registers on a daily basis.

Class teachers:

- report any concerns or emerging patterns to the Headteacher as soon as they become aware of them
- share issues at weekly staff meetings
- monitor absence communication/lack of absence communication - report concerns to Headteacher
- send absence notes/e-mails to school office to be filed

Headteacher:

- monitors registers/ attendance every week. Absences which remain unaccounted for are followed up by a standard letter home (see appendix 2) and reasons for absences sought and patterns of non-attendance are identified for individuals and groups of pupils
- provides verbal and or written feedback to staff, following any monitoring exercise undertaken by the Headteacher (agenda item at the weekly staff meeting)
- identifies pupils whose attendance is poor or who have a pattern of absences and supports the pupil and their family using the school's '**graduated response to non-attendance**' (see appendix 3); ultimately involving legal action through the Education Welfare Service.
- monitors the awarding of certificates to 100% attendees
- meets with the school's Education Welfare Officer to discuss concerns and if necessary organise meetings with parents
- collates information and data to contribute towards any legal action the LA may wish to bring against a parent
- works towards attendance targets, set annually in the School Development Plan and evaluates and reviews as part of the Annual School Review
- includes attendance issues as part of the Headteacher's Report to Governors

Governing Body:

- monitors attendance data and sets targets as part of the school Annual School Review cycle
- evaluates the success of the school's Attendance Policy

APPENDIX 1

For a full explanation of the codes go to page 55 of

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

ATTENDANCE CODES

PRESENT

/ \: The presence of a pupil who has arrived at school on time should be marked by a black oblique stroke.

The presence of a pupil who has arrived at school late, but while the register remains open should be marked by the symbol L within a red circle.

AUTHORISED ABSENCE (ZERO, TOGETHER WITH APPROPRIATE CODE)

- B** Pupil attending another institution under a formalised dual registration arrangement.
- C** Other circumstances (bereavement, agreed special occasions, performances, other approved absences not covered by other codes).
- E** Excluded.
- H** Family holiday (for which leave has been granted).
- I** Attending interview, eg: with prospective employer or with another educational establishment.
- M** Medical and dental appointments, confirmed illness.
- R** Day of religious observance for the religious body to which the parents belong.
- S** Approved study leave.
- T** Traveller child travelling.

APPROVED EDUCATIONAL ACTIVITY (CODE LETTER ONLY, NO ZERO)

- P** Approved sporting activity (participation in/attendance at).
- V** Educational visit or trip (UK/overseas).
- W** Approved work experience.
- Z** Pupil attending another institution under link course/consortium/franchising arrangement (but short of a formal dual registration arrangement).

APPENDIX 2

(On headed note paper)

Variables

Dear NAME

I have attached to this letter a registration certificate DATES for your daughter /son NAME. As you can see her/his attendance rate is x%.

(Detail of absence). I would like to warn you that the Education Welfare Service could take action if NAME attendance does not improve by DATE.

Please do not hesitate to contact me if you have any concerns or would like some support in this matter.

Yours sincerely

Justine Watkins

APPENDIX 3

Graduated Response to Non-attendance.

Expect

At Stratford-sub-Castle Primary School we expect every pupil to attend school every day unless they have a legitimate reason for not being at school. (There are 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).



Monitor

Attendance is monitored on a daily basis and any concerns are acted upon immediately. Concerns include:

- absent pupils whose parents have not contacted the school by 09:30
- pupils absent on the same day over a period of weeks
- attendance dipping below 95%



Listen and Understand

Pupils and their parents are consulted in order to understand and address the reasons for absence, including any in-school barriers to attendance. At the outset parents are contacted by the headteacher (in person or by phone) and an informal discussion regarding attendance takes place.



Facilitated Support

Any adaptations which are necessary for the school to make are implemented. Where out of school barriers are identified, signposting to support or help to access to any required services is given in the first instance. A partnership approach to improving attendance is adopted. This may include early help or whole family plan where absence is a symptom of wider issues.

If improvements are not immediately evident or attendance slips towards or falls below 90% a more formal meeting is called by the Headteacher which may result in a referral to the Education Welfare service (EWO).



Formalised Support

Where absence persists and voluntary support does not work, or is not being engaged with, the school and partners will explain the consequences clearly (providing written advice when necessary) and ensure support is in place to enable families to respond. This may include formalising support through a parenting contract or education supervision order.



Enforce

Where all avenues have been exhausted and support is not working or being engaged with, attendance is enforced through statutory intervention or prosecution in order to protect the pupil's right to an education. (See Appendix 4)

APPENDIX 4

Criteria for requesting the issue of a Penalty Notice

Fixed penalty notices are served on parents as an alternative to prosecution where they have failed to ensure that their child of compulsory school age regularly attends the school where they are registered. Fixed penalty notices can be used by all schools (with the exception of independent schools) where the pupil's absence has not been authorised by the school and the absence constitutes an offence. Fixed penalty notices can be issued to each parent liable for the attendance offence or offences, which should usually be the parent or parents with day- to -day responsibility for the pupil's attendance.

The school follows the legal framework and procedures set out in the 'Wiltshire Council Penalty Notice - Code of Conduct'.

The school requests the issue of a Fixed Penalty Notice for absence when:

- **unauthorised holiday in term time has occurred**
- **when support has been unsuccessful and/ or the school has not been engaged with.**

[https://www.wiltshire.gov.uk/media/3307/Penalty-notice-code-of-conduct-March-2020/pdf/Penalty Notice Code of Conduct -March 2020.pdf?m=637588340594300000](https://www.wiltshire.gov.uk/media/3307/Penalty-notice-code-of-conduct-March-2020/pdf/Penalty%20Notice%20Code%20of%20Conduct%20-March%202020.pdf?m=637588340594300000)

'Wiltshire Council Penalty Notice - Code of Conduct': Criteria for the Issuing of a Penalty Notice (page 3)

4.1 Penalty Notices can be issued where a pupil has accrued 10 unauthorised sessions within the six-month period prior to the request being made or evidence of an offence under s.103 (3) Education and Inspections Act 2006 is established.

4.2 The issue of a penalty notice will be preceded by having previously issued a formal warning letter to each parent / carer. The letter will:

- Raise concern regarding the level of the unauthorised absence and give advice regarding contact with the school and the Education Welfare Service
- Advise the parent of the powers of the Local Authority to issue penalty notices
- State the number of unauthorised absences accrued which give rise to the formal warning being issued
- Notify the parent that additional unauthorised absence may lead to a penalty notice if no improvement is affected within an agreed period – the standard period shall be fifteen school days except where exceptional circumstances apply e.g., deliberate parentally condoned absence or where a pupil has been located on a truancy sweep / located by the Police during school time and there are additional occurrences of unauthorised absence.
- In the case of unauthorised leave of absence from school, advise that a request for leave of absence has not been authorised and that parents can be liable to the issue of a penalty notice by the Local Authority where the unauthorised absence amounts to 10 sessions or more.

The penalty is £60 if paid within 21 days of receipt, rising to £120 if paid after 21 days but within 28 days. The payment must be paid direct to the local authority regardless of who issued the penalty notice. If the penalty is not paid by the end of the 28-day period, the local authority must decide either to prosecute for the original offence to which the notice applies, or withdraw the notice. Parent(s) can only be prosecuted if 28 days have expired, and full payment has not been made. There is no right of appeal by parents against a fixed penalty notice.