



# Attendance Policy

## September 2023

Reviewed in September 2023

Date Adopted by Governing Body: 11/09/2022

Review date: September 2024 or sooner if required

## **Intent**

At St Paul's Church of England (A) Primary School, we believe that in order to facilitate teaching and learning, good attendance is essential. Pupils cannot achieve their full potential if they do not regularly attend school. As an inclusive Christian school, St Paul's Church of England Primary School values everyone as a child of God and rejoices in its diversity. We provide a broad and balanced education in which every child and family can flourish.

*I have come that you might have life in all its fullness' (John 10:10)*

## **We are committed to:**

Section 7 of the Education Act 1996 which states that: 'the parent of every child of compulsory school age shall cause him / her to receive efficient full time education suitable: (a) to age, ability and aptitude and (b) to any special educational needs he/ she may have. Either by regular attendance at school or otherwise'.

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## 1. Aims

We are committed to meeting our obligation with regards to school attendance through our whole-school culture and ethos that values good attendance, including:

- Promoting good attendance
- Reducing absence, including persistent and severe absence
- Ensuring every pupil has access to the full-time education to which they are entitled
- Acting early to address patterns of absence
- Building strong relationships with families to ensure pupils have the support in place to attend school
- Ensuring equality and fairness of treatment for all.
- Providing early intervention and support and working with other agencies to ensure the health and safety of our pupils.
- Rewarding regular attendance.

We will also promote and support punctuality in attending lessons.

## 2. Legislation and guidance

This policy meets the requirements of the [Working together to improve school attendance](#) 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](#)

It also refers to:

- [School census guidance](#)
- [Keeping Children Safe in Education](#)
- [Mental health issues affecting a pupil's attendance: guidance for schools](#)

### 3. Roles and responsibilities

#### 3.1 The governing board

The governing board is responsible for:

- Promoting the importance of school attendance across the school's policies and ethos
- Making sure school leaders fulfil expectations and statutory duties
- Regularly reviewing and challenging attendance data
- Monitoring attendance figures for the whole school
- Making sure staff receive adequate training on attendance
- Holding the headteacher to account for the implementation of this policy

Our Attendance Governor is **Mrs Leanne Clarke**. Attendance will be monitored and discussed by the Full Governing Body or, delegated to the Premises, Health and Safety and Safeguarding committee.

#### 3.2 The headteacher

The headteacher is responsible for:

- Implementation of this policy at the school
- Monitoring school-level absence data and reporting it to governors
- Supporting staff with monitoring the attendance of individual pupils
- Monitoring the impact of any implemented attendance strategies
- Issuing fixed-penalty notices, where necessary

#### 3.3 The designated senior leader responsible for attendance

The designated senior leader is responsible for:

- Leading attendance across the school
- Offering a clear vision for attendance improvement
- Evaluating and monitoring expectations and processes
- Having an oversight of data analysis
- Devising specific strategies to address areas of poor attendance identified through data
- Building relationships with parents/carers to discuss and tackle attendance issues
- Creating intervention reintegration plans in partnership with pupils and their parents/carers
- Delivering targeted intervention and support to pupils and families

The designated senior leader responsible for attendance is **Mrs Jennifer Ferretti** and can be contacted via 01902 558621 or [stpaulsprimaryschool@wolverhampton.gov.uk](mailto:stpaulsprimaryschool@wolverhampton.gov.uk)

### 3.4 The attendance officer

The school attendance officer is responsible for:

- Monitoring and analysing attendance data (see Section 7)
- Benchmarking attendance data to identify areas of focus for improvement
- Providing regular attendance reports to school staff and reporting concerns about attendance to the designated senior leader responsible for attendance / the headteacher
- Working with Education Welfare Officers to tackle persistent absence
- Advising the headteacher (authorised by the headteacher) when to issue fixed-penalty notices

The attendance officer is **Carly Evans (IWS)** and can be contacted via 01902 558621 or [stpaulsprimaryschool@wolverhampton.gov.uk](mailto:stpaulsprimaryschool@wolverhampton.gov.uk)

### 3.5 Class teachers

On a daily basis, class teachers are responsible for recording attendance at the start of the morning and afternoon session. They will:

- Open doors to their classrooms at 8:40am to receive pupils into their classrooms.
- Close doors for pupils at 8:50am and take the register.
- Use the correct codes when marking the register - present or absent. (Absences that are marked 'N' will be completed by the admin staff.)
- submit the register to the school office by 9am for the morning session and 1:20pm for the afternoon session.

### 3.6 School admin staff

School admin staff will:

- Take calls from parents/carers about absence on a day-to-day basis and record it on the school system
- Contact parents of children who are absent from school
- Notify the Headteacher if;
  - a child is absent from school for 3 or more days
  - a child is absent from school and no contact has been made with the parents
  - a child classed as Persistently Absent is absent from school
- Transfer calls from parents/carers to the Headteacher / Deputy Headteacher in order to provide them with more detailed support on attendance

### 3.7 Parents/carers

It is the parents/carers responsibility to inform school of absence and, subsequently, reasons for absence.

Parents/carers are expected to:

- Make sure their child attends every day on time (8.50am)
- Call the school to report their child's absence and reason for absence by 9am on the day of the absence, and each subsequent day of absence, and advise when they are expected to return.

- Parents/ carers are able to report absence to school by leaving a message or by speaking to a member of staff from 8:30am onwards. Absence can also be reported via the School Comms Gateway app.
- Provide the school with more than 1 emergency contact number for their child. Ensure that, where possible, appointments for their child are made outside of the school day.

NOTE: Parents and carers who regularly fail to contact the school will have all absences unauthorised and may be contacted by the Education Welfare Service.

### 3.8 Pupils

Pupils are expected to:

- Attend school every day on time

## 4. Recording attendance

### 4.1 Attendance register

We will keep an attendance register, and place all pupils onto this register.

We will take our 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

See Appendix 1 for the DfE attendance codes.

We will also record:

- Whether the absence is authorised or not
- The nature of the activity if a pupil is attending an approved educational activity
- The nature of circumstances where a pupil is unable to attend due to exceptional circumstances

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

Pupils must arrive in school by 8.50am on each school day.

The register for the first session will be taken at 9am and will be kept open until 9.30am. The register for the second session will be taken at 1pm and will be kept open until 1.15pm.

#### **4.2 Unplanned absence**

The pupil's parent/carer must notify the school of the reason for the absence on the first day of an unplanned absence by 9.30am or as soon as practically possible by calling the school office or via the Gateway app (see also section 7).

We will mark absence due to physical or mental illness as authorised unless the school has a genuine concern about the authenticity of the illness.

Where the absence is longer than 5 days or there are doubts about the authenticity of the illness, the school will ask for medical evidence, such as a doctor's note, prescription, appointment card or other appropriate form of evidence. We will not ask for medical evidence unnecessarily.

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

Re-occurring absences will lead to parents being invited into school to address the concern with the Education Welfare Officer or Headteacher.

#### **4.3 Planned absence**

Attending a medical or dental appointment will be counted as authorised as long as the pupil's parent/carer notifies the school in advance of the appointment. However, we do encourage parents/carers to make medical and dental appointments out of school hours where possible. Where this is not possible, the pupil should be out of school for the minimum amount of time necessary. The school may ask for proof of a medical appointment such as an appointment card or letter.

Parents should inform school of any appointments via the office either in person or telephone or, via the Gateway app.

Children attending appointments during the school day will need to be signed out at the school office using our electronic system and signed back in on return.

The school follows the local authority procedures when parents and carers apply for leave of absence.

#### **How to Apply for a Leave of Absence**

- The Parent/ carer collects leave of absence form from school reception.
- The Parent/ carer returns completed application form at least four weeks before the date of absence.
- The office forward the application form to the Headteacher.
- The Headteacher applies approval criteria.
- A letter is written informing parent/carers of the outcome of the request (authorised / unauthorised / unauthorised with referral for legal action)

If an absence request is unauthorised and will be referred to the local authority for legal action, parents/carers are required to sign on receipt of the letter.

Applications are processed within seven working days.

- Leave of absence requests for children under 5 years of age will be approved as children are of non-statutory age.

Leave of absence that is approved = authorised absence.

Leave of absence that is not approved = unauthorised absence.

Go to section 5 to find out which term-time absences the school can authorise.

#### **4.4 Lateness and punctuality**

A pupil who arrives late:

- Before the register has closed (9.30am) will be marked as late, using the appropriate code
- After the register has closed (9.30am) will be marked as absent, using the appropriate code
- Parents are asked to sign the child into school and provide a reason for being late

If a pupil is persistently late, staff will discuss this with the parent/carer and this may be referred to the Education Welfare Officer.

#### **4.5 Following up unexplained absence**

Where any pupil we expect to attend school does not attend, or stops attending, without reason, the school will:

- Call the pupil's parent/carer on the morning of the first day of unexplained absence to ascertain the reason. If the school cannot reach any of the pupil's emergency contacts, the school may ask the Education Welfare Officer to carry out a safe and well check or contact the Police.
- Identify whether the absence is approved or not
- Identify the correct attendance code to use and input it as soon as the reason for absence is ascertained – this will be no later than 5 working days after the session
- If contact is not made via phonecall, a text message will be sent asking the parent to contact the school office urgently
- Call the parent/carer on each day that the absence continues without explanation to ensure proper safeguarding action is taken where necessary. If absence continues, the school will consider involving an Education Welfare Officer
- After 2/3 days of absence for illness, proof of medication is required to authorise the absence. This can be medication from a pharmacy or GP.
- In cases where the child has a Social Worker, they will be informed if the child is absent from school.



## 4.6 Reporting to parents/carers

The school will regularly inform parents/carers about their child's attendance and absence levels.

- Our Education Welfare Officer attends school fortnightly and identifies any children for whom attendance is a concern, sending a letter to inform parents.
- If absences continue, a further letter is sent, informing that absence will only be authorised if medical proof is provided.
- Further absence will lead to the parents/carers being invited to meet with the Education Welfare Officer to discuss / open an Early Help Assessment.
- Where attendance improves, parents receive a text message.
- Each term, parents receive a traffic light letter to inform them of their child's attendance.

Green - >97%

Amber - 93-96.9%

Pink - 90-92.9%

Red - <90%

- Children with attendance above 97% are entered into a prize draw.
- An attendance report is included within children's end of year report.
- Whole school attendance is shared weekly in worship and monthly attendance is shared via the school newsletter.

## 5. Authorised and unauthorised absence

### 5.1 Approval for term-time absence

The headteacher will only grant a leave of absence to a pupil during term time if they consider there to be 'exceptional circumstances'. A leave of absence is granted at the headteacher's discretion, including the length of time the pupil is authorised to be absent for.

We define 'exceptional circumstances' (and so valid reasons for authorised absence) to be:

- Bereavement
- Serious illness
- Medical/dental appointments where it has not been possible to arrange outside of the school day
- Occasions where the child is taking part in an examination or similar for an extra-curricular activity (for example, a music exam)
- Religious observance – where the day is exclusively set apart for religious observance by the religious body to which the pupil's parents belong. If necessary, the school will seek advice from the parents' religious body to confirm whether the day is set apart
- Traveller pupils travelling for occupational purposes – this covers Roma, English and Welsh gypsies, Irish and Scottish travellers, showmen (fairground people) and circus people, bargees (occupational boat dwellers) and new travellers. Absence may be authorised only when a

traveller family is known to be travelling for occupational purposes and has agreed this with the school, but it is not known whether the pupil is attending educational provision

- Significant events such as a family wedding.
- Absence due to a family emergency

The following are examples that would not be deemed 'exceptional circumstances' (and therefore absence would be unauthorised):

- Parents/carers keeping children off school unnecessarily
- Truancy
- Unexplained absences
- Shopping, looking after other children or birthdays
- Day trips and holidays
- Leaving school for no reason during the day

The government and schools realise that it is more expensive to go on holiday during the school holiday period than at other times of the year. However, it is the view of the DfE that a child should be in school for the 39 weeks of the academic year and that holidays in term time, in whatever form, **are not considered to be 'exceptional' circumstances.**

Holidays are **not** a good enough reason for taking a child or young person out of school and are not deemed as 'exceptional' circumstances. As such, a fixed penalty notice will be issued for any holiday taken in term time of 5 days or more.

As decided by the governors of the school, the Headteacher, apart from highly exceptional cases, can only authorise up to 5 days leave of absence in an academic year. Any further leave of absence in that academic year will not be authorised. If any further leave of absence exceeds 5 days in succession, the school will contact the Education Welfare Service who may make a referral to the local authority to serve a penalty notice.

The school considers each application for term-time absence individually, taking into account the specific facts, circumstances and relevant context behind the request. Any request should be submitted as soon as it is anticipated and, where possible, at least 2 weeks before the absence, and in accordance with the leave of absence request form, available via the school office. The headteacher may require evidence to support any request for leave of absence.

## 5.2 Non-return from leave of absence (authorised or unauthorised)

It may occur that a child does not return at the end of the stated period of leave of absence. Initially, normal school absence procedure are followed. If the child has not returned within five days, after the stated period of leave of absence, the following procedure is followed:

- Case referred to the Education Welfare Officer.
- Home visit is carried out by the Education Welfare Officer and/ or the Headteacher.
- Letter is sent by post to parents/ carers by the Education Welfare Officer on behalf of the Headteacher.
- If the child does not return to school for ten days after an authorised absence, the matter will be referred to the Local Authority who will follow the procedures for 'missing pupils'. The pupil will not be removed from roll until the Local Authority has ascertained the pupil's whereabouts and safety or has made reasonable enquiries to this end.

### 5.3 Children Missing from Education (CME)

Guidance has been issued by the Department of Education (DfE) for Children Missing from Education (Sept 2016) If a child fails to attend school regularly or has missed ten school days without permission and no contact has been made by the parents/carers to inform of the child's whereabouts and reason for absence, the school will complete a referral to the Local Authority following procedures for 'missing pupils'.

The pupil will not be removed from roll until the Local Authority has ascertained the pupil's whereabouts and safety and has confirmed that the pupil is registered at another school, is being educated otherwise or at the very minimum has made reasonable enquiries as to the missing child's whereabouts.

Other reasons for when a CME form will be completed by the School:

- If the school has been informed that a child is moving out of area but the details of the new school are not provided.
- The school has been informed that the child is moving out of area, details of the new school are provided but after 15 days, no confirmation has been received.
- If at any point there is reason to believe a child is in immediate danger or at risk of harm, a referral should be made to children's social care (and the police if appropriate).

Where a parent notifies our school that a pupil will live at another address, our school will record in the admission register:

- the full name of the parent with whom the pupil will live;
- the new address; and
- the date from when it is expected the pupil will live at this address.

Where a parent of a pupil notifies our school that the pupil is registered at another school or will be attending a different school in future, our school will record in the admission register:

- the name of the new school; and
- the date on which the pupil first attended or is due to start attending that school.

Our school will notify the local authority within five days when a pupil's name is added to the admission register. We will provide the local authority with all the information held within the admission register about the pupil. Our school will also notify the local authority when a pupil's name is to be deleted from the admission register under any of the fifteen grounds set out in the

Education (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2006 as amended as soon as the ground for deletion is met and no later than the time at which the pupil's name is deleted from the register.

Our school will only delete a pupil's name from the admission if our school and the local authority have failed to establish the pupil's whereabouts after jointly making reasonable enquiries.

When our school notifies the local authority that a pupil's name is to be deleted from the admission register, our school will provide the local authority with:

- the full name of the pupil;
- the full name and address of any parent with whom the pupil lives;
- at least one telephone number of the parent with whom the pupil lives;
- the full name and address of the parent with whom the pupil is going to live, and the date the pupil is expected to start living there, if applicable;
- the name of pupil's destination school and the pupil's expected start date there, if applicable; and
- the ground in regulation 8 under which the pupil's name is to be deleted from the admission register.

Our school will work with the local authority to agree on methods of making returns. When making returns, we will highlight to the local authority where we have been unable to obtain the necessary information from the parent, for example in cases where the child's destination school or address is unknown. We will also consider whether it is appropriate to highlight any contextual information of a vulnerable child who is missing education, such as any safeguarding concerns. It is essential that schools comply with these duties, so that local authorities can, as part of their duty to identify children of compulsory school age who are missing education, follow up with any child who might be at risk of not receiving an education and who might be at risk of being harmed, exploited or radicalised.

#### **5.4 Legal sanctions**

The school or local authority can fine parents/carers for the unauthorised absence of their child from school, where the child is of compulsory school age.

If issued with a fine, or penalty notice, each parent/carers must pay £60 within 21 days or £120 within 28 days. The payment must be made directly to the local authority.

Penalty notices can be issued by a headteacher, local authority officer or the police.

The decision on whether or not to issue a penalty notice may take into account:

- The number of unauthorised absences occurring within a rolling academic year
- One-off instances of irregular attendance, such as holidays taken in term time without permission
- Where an excluded pupil is found in a public place during school hours without a justifiable reason

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

## 6. Strategies for promoting attendance

Attendance is tracked by the office and Headteacher daily on the school's SIMS data tracking system and rewards are given as follows:

- The children who have 100% attendance each term will receive a certificate and a badge: Bronze for the Autumn term, Silver for maintaining 100% attendance throughout the Spring Term and Gold for maintaining 100% attendance throughout the Summer Term.
- Each week, the highest attending class is presented with the Attendance trophy and receives story with SLT.
- Classes achieving over 95% receive a class token for their jar.
- Pupils who have achieved 100% at the end of July will receive a £5 note gift card and a pencil.
- Each term, parents of children with attendance above 97% are entered into a prize draw to win a voucher.

Parents/ carers are kept informed about attendance through the school's website, pupil reports, parents' evening termly letters and the monthly newsletter.

## 7. Attendance monitoring

The Headteacher will regularly update the governors with an overview of attendance and formally report to the governing body termly.

For parents/ carers of children whose attendance is identified as a cause for concern, they will be informed that attendance will be monitored and targets for attendance will be set. Parents/ carers of pupils must provide medical evidence when their child returns to school. Where pupil attendance is below 95% and falling, parents/carers will receive a letter stating current attendance and next required steps. This letter is posted and will be monitored by the admin staff and the Education Welfare Officer.

### 7.1 Monitoring attendance

The school will:

- Monitor attendance and absence data half-termly, termly and yearly across the school and at an individual pupil level
- Identify whether or not there are particular groups of children whose absences may be a cause for concern

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

## 7.2 Analysing attendance

The school will:

- Analyse attendance and absence data regularly to identify pupils or cohorts that need additional support with their attendance, and use this analysis to provide targeted support to these pupils and their families
- Look at historic and emerging patterns of attendance and absence, and then develop strategies to address these patterns

## 7.3 Using data to improve attendance

The school will:

- Provide regular attendance reports to class teachers, and other school leaders, to facilitate discussions with pupils and families
- Use data to monitor and evaluate the impact of any interventions put in place in order to modify them and inform future strategies

## 7.4 Reducing persistent and severe absence

Persistent absence is where a pupil misses 10% or more of school, and severe absence is where a pupil misses 50% or more of school.

The school will:

- Use attendance data to find patterns and trends of persistent and severe absence
- Hold regular meetings with the parents/carers of pupils who the school (and/or local authority) considers to be vulnerable, or are persistently or severely absent, to discuss attendance and engagement at school

Provide access to wider support services to remove the barriers to attendance

Liaise with the School Nurse if absences are due to medical reasons.

If there is no further improvement in attendance, an Early Help Assessment will be offered to provide access to wider support services to remove the barriers to attendance. If the Early Help Assessment is refused, or has no response, a DNA letter (did not attend) is sent to parents/ carers and if unauthorised absences continue; legal proceedings may take place.

## 1. 8. Monitoring arrangements

This policy will be reviewed as guidance from the local authority or DfE is updated, and as a minimum annually by the headteacher. At every review, the policy will be approved by the full governing board.

## 2. 9. Links with other policies

This policy links to the following policies:

- Safeguarding and Child Protection policy
- Behaviour policy

### Appendix 1: Attendance Codes

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

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

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



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