

ST SAVIOUR'S CHURCH OF ENGLAND JUNIOR SCHOOL

Pupil Attendance Policy

St Saviour's Church of England Junior School	
Policy:	Pupil Attendance Policy
Review Period:	2 years
Ratified by Governing Body:	September 2024
Date of next review:	September 2026

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Summary

- There is no longer a register code for 'Authorised Holiday'. This means that headteachers can no longer authorise a holiday in term time and you are likely to receive a Penalty Charge Notice if you take an unauthorised holiday in term time. The guidance states, 'Generally, the DfE does not consider a need or desire for a holiday or other absence for the purpose of leisure and recreation to be an exceptional circumstance'. Headteachers can still authorise absence for emergencies, including funerals but will now only generally authorise the day of the event and reasonable travel time each way.
- Penalty Charge Notices have gone up to £80 per child per parent, if you pay within 21 days; £360 per child per parent if you pay within 21 and 28 days. Parents, including step parents - if they live in the same property as the child, receive individual penalties.
- If your child is absent from school, unauthorised for ten sessions or more within ten weeks, you are likely to receive a 'Notice to Improve Letter'. If attendance does not improve within 20 days, you are likely to have a Penalty Charge Notice issued. Please note, one school day = 2 sessions, so ten sessions equals five days. This does not include authorised absences such as illness, medical appointments etc.

Intent

All children are unique in the eyes of God and, as such, deserve to attend school on any day which school is open. Full attendance is critical to benefiting from education. We promote 100% attendance for children and reward good attendance. Governors, staff and parents have a duty to promote full attendance at St. Saviour's.

We will work in line with our vision and values to maximise the education children receive at St. Saviour's.

We recognise that absence is a symptom of a wider problem and that improving pupil's attendance is part of improving the pupil's overall welfare. This can be achieved by prioritising attendance in strategies on attainment, behaviour, bullying, special educational needs support, supporting pupils with medical conditions or disabilities, safeguarding, wellbeing, and support for disadvantaged students, young carers and children with a social worker. Where we believe absence to be sign of a wider welfare concern, we will follow our Child Protection Policy.

Guidance

This policy is informed by:

- DfE: Working together to improve school attendance 2024
- Part 6 of the Education Act 1996
- Part 3 of the Education Act 2002
- Part 7 of the Education and Inspections Act 2006

Responsibilities

The Governing Body

- Promote attendance across the school's policies and ethos
- Making sure leaders fulfil statutory duties
- Regularly review and challenge attendance data
- Making sure staff receive adequate training on attendance
- Holding the headteacher to account for the implementation of this policy

The Headteacher

- Act as SLT attendance champion
- Implement this policy
- Monitor and analyse attendance data and report to governors
- Support staff who deal with attendance (teachers, the FLO, the school's Administrative Officer)
- Monitor the impact of attendance strategies
- Issue fixed penalty notices where necessary
- Overall responsibility for attendance
- Data analysis
- Work with the local authority attendance service to ensure good attendance
- Delivering strategies for improving attendance for all
- Addressing poor attendance with targeted support / action
- Refer to external agencies if needed

The Family Liaison Officer

- Monitoring and analysing attendance
- Using data and knowledge of families to identify areas for improvement
- Liaise with the headteacher and teachers regarding attendance issues
- Arranging calls and meetings to address poor attendance

- Working with the families to tackle poor attendance
- Working with the headteacher in issuing fixed penalty notices

Class Teachers

- Record attendance registers accurately
- Relay concerns regarding attendance, including children of concern or patterns of absence

Parents and Carers

- Ensure their child attends school every day
- Only keep children off if they are seriously ill
- Report their child's absence by 9.30am by calling the school office on 01843 831 707 on each day of absence
- Keep contact details up to date, inform the school if you change your mobile number
- Ensure that, where possible, appointments are made outside of the school day
- Provide evidence for medical appointments in school time
- Ensure holidays are not taken in term time
- Ensure family members or anyone who might book a holiday on your behalf (grandparents etc.) know when St. Saviour's term times are – surprise holidays do not constitute exceptional circumstances. **There is no longer such a thing as an authorised holiday.**

Pupils

- Attend school every day, on time
- Wear the correct uniform (including PE kit)

A culture of good attendance

St. Saviour's aims to build excellent relationships with families so we work in partnership to overcome barriers to good attendance. We will promote a culture of good attendance, emphasising to children and their families, the benefits of good attendance. We will record and analyse attendance data and support and challenge families who are allowing children to not attend. We will be particularly mindful of supporting families where physical or mental ill health is proving to be a barrier to good attendance. We will support families as soon as a problem becomes apparent rather than wait for attendance or welfare to reach a crisis point.

If a family is experiencing issues which are beyond the control or influence of the school, we will work with partner agencies to support families. We will discuss referral to agencies (such as Early Help) with families and regularly review the effectiveness of the support provided. Where attendance is not improving, the headteacher and Family Liaison Officer will hold formal meetings with families, alongside the local attendance service, to explore options and to make it clear that there may be formal legal consequences if attendance continues to be unsatisfactory.

Where support by the school has not been effective, the school will ask the local authority to start a formal process with the family. The local authority may issue a legal Notice to Improve and or a Penalty Notice. Children's social care may become involved, particularly where there are safeguarding concerns or where attendance has slipped below 50%.

The local authority may prosecute parents where all other routes have failed or are not deemed appropriate. This could include making the case for a community or parenting order where the parent is convicted to secure engagement with support.

The law on school attendance and right to a full-time education

The law entitles every child of compulsory school age to an efficient, full-time education suitable to their age, aptitude, and any special educational need they may have. It is the legal responsibility of every parent to make sure their child receives that education either by attendance at a school or by education otherwise than at a school.

Where parents decide to have their child registered at school, they have a legal duty to ensure their child attends that school regularly. This means their child must attend every day that the school is open, except in 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.

This is essential for pupils to get the most out of their school experience, including their attainment, wellbeing, and wider life chances. The pupils with the highest attainment at the end of key stage 2 and key stage 4 have higher rates of attendance over the key stage compared to those with the lowest attainment. At KS2, pupils not meeting the expected standard in reading, writing and maths had an overall absence rate of 4.7%, compared to 3.5% among those meeting the expected standard.

Moreover, the overall absence rate of pupils not meeting the expected standard was higher than among those meeting the higher standard (4.7% compared to 2.7%). At KS4, pupils not achieving grade 9 to 4 in English and maths had an overall absence rate of 8.8%, compared to 5.2% among those achieving grade 4-2. The overall absence rate of pupils not achieving grade 9 to 4 was over twice as high as those achieving grade 9 to 5 (8.8% compared to 3.7%).

For the most vulnerable pupils, regular attendance is also an important protective factor and the best opportunity for needs to be identified and support provided. Research has shown associations between regular absence from school and a number of extrafamilial harms, including crime (the proportion of children that had been cautioned or sentenced for any offence that had ever been persistently absent was 81% and for serious violence offence was 85%).

Recording Attendance

Attendance registers are taken at 8.50 - 9.00am and 1.05 – 1.15pm

Administrative Officer (Mrs Hearn) records reasons for absences from parents / carers.

Lateness

If children arrive at school between 9.00 and 9.20, they are recorded as late. If children arrive after 9.20am they are recorded as an unauthorised absence.

Absence

The pupil's parent or carer must notify the school, giving the reason for absence on each day of absence. The parent / carer must notify the school by 9.30am.

The school will mark absence due to illness as authorised, unless the school has a genuine concern about the authenticity of the absence – in which case, the school may ask for evidence (such as a note from a GP, prescription, appointment card etc.)

If the school has a genuine reason to not be satisfied that illness is genuine, the absence will be recorded as unauthorised.

Leave of Absence

See below for a list of reasons where a leave of absence may be granted. A request for a leave of absence should be made in writing to the headteacher at least 24 hours (preferably sooner) before the leave is required.

All schools can grant a leave of absence when a pupil needs to be absent from school with permission. All schools are expected to restrict leaves of absence to the specific circumstances set out in regulation 11 of the School Attendance (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2024 and schools maintained by a local authority and special schools not maintained by a local authority must do so.

These circumstances are:

- Taking part in a regulated performance or employment abroad: in line with a licence issued by a local authority or Justice of the Peace or a body of persons approval (BOPA). (For full details please see Code C1).
- Attending an interview: for entry into another educational institution or for future employment where requested in advance by a parent the pupil normally lives with.
- Study leave: for public examinations, as agreed in advance with a parent the pupil normally lives with. Please note this does not include any internal examinations such as mocks as study leave should not be granted in such cases.
- A temporary, time-limited part-time timetable: where the pupil is of compulsory school age, both the parent who the pupil normally lives with and school agree the pupil should temporarily be educated on a part-time basis for exceptional reasons and have agreed the times and dates when the pupil will be expected to attend school as part of that timetable. (For full details please see part-time timetable)
- Exceptional circumstances: All schools can grant a leave of absence for other exceptional circumstances at their discretion. In the case of schools maintained by local authorities and special schools not maintained by local authorities, it must be requested in advance by a parent who the pupil normally lives with. Schools are then expected to consider each application individually taking into account the specific facts and circumstances and relevant background context behind the request. If a leave of absence is granted, it is for the school to determine the length of the time the pupil can be away from school.

Generally, the DfE does not consider a need or desire for a holiday or other absence for the purpose of leisure and recreation to be an exceptional circumstance.

There is no longer an 'Authorised Holiday' register code any school can use.

Leave of absence should not be granted for a pupil to take part in protest activity during school hours.

Pupils absent from school due to mental or physical ill health or their special educational needs and/or disabilities

Many children will experience normal but difficult emotions that make them nervous about attending school, such as worries about friendships, schoolwork, examinations or variable moods. It is important to note that these pupils are still expected to attend school regularly - in many instances, attendance at school may serve to help with the underlying issue as being away from school might exacerbate it, and a prolonged period of absence may heighten anxious feelings about attending in future.

School staff play a critical role in communicating this expectation to parents. They should also work alongside families to ensure that such circumstances do not act as a barrier to regular attendance by mitigating anxious feelings in school as much as possible. Schools may also find it helpful to refer to DfE's non-statutory guidance on mental health issues affecting a pupil's attendance for case study examples.

Some pupils face more complex barriers to attendance. This can include pupils who have long term physical or mental health conditions or who have special educational needs and disabilities (SEND). Their right to an education is the same as any other pupil and therefore the attendance ambition for these pupils should be the same as it is for any other pupil but additional support may need to be provided.

In developing this support, the usual processes relevant to any attendance case apply:

- Understanding the individual needs of the pupil and family
- Working in partnership with the pupil and family to put in-school support in place and working with other the local authority and other agencies where external support is needed (and available)
- Regularly reviewing and updating the support approach to make sure it continues to meet individual needs.

In cases of both long term physical or mental ill health, school staff are not expected to diagnose or treat physical or mental health conditions, but they are expected to work together with families and other agencies with the aim of ensuring regular attendance for every pupil. They should:

- Facilitate any relevant pastoral support with the clear aim of improving attendance as much as possible whilst supporting the underlying health issue.
- Consider adjustments to practice and policies to help meet the needs of pupils who are struggling to attend school, as well as making formal reasonable adjustments under section 20 of the Equality Act 2010 where a pupil has a disability. Any adjustments should be agreed by, and regularly reviewed with the pupil and their parents.
- Consider whether a time-limited phased return to school would be appropriate, for example for those affected by anxious feelings about school attendance.
- Make a sickness return to the local authority if a pupil is recorded in the attendance register as absent using code I (unable to attend because of sickness) and there are reasonable grounds to believe the pupil will have to miss 15 consecutive school days or more for illness or the pupil's total number of school days missed during the current school year because of illness (whether consecutive or cumulative) will reach or exceed 15 school days.

For pupils with special educational needs and disabilities, schools are expected to:

- Work in partnership with parents to develop specific support approaches for attendance for pupils with special educational needs and disabilities, including, where applicable, ensuring the provision outlined in the pupil's education, health and care plan is accessed.

- Work in partnership with families to help support routines where school transport is regularly being missed and work with other partners to encourage the scheduling of additional support interventions or medical appointments outside of the main school day. Please see further details on SEN support.
- Establish strategies for removing the in-school barriers these pupils face, including considering support or reasonable adjustments for uniform, transport, routines, access to support in school and lunchtime arrangements.
- Consider adjustments to practice and policies to help meet the needs of pupils who are struggling to attend school, as well as making formal reasonable adjustments under section 20 of the Equality Act 2010 where a pupil has a disability. Any adjustments should be agreed by, and regularly reviewed with the pupil and their parents.
- Ensure joined up pastoral care is in place where needed and consider whether a time-limited phased return to school would be appropriate. Attendance is everyone's business so in many of these cases school will not be able to fully support a pupil without the assistance of a range of other agencies. School should:
 - Make use of school nursing services and mental health support teams where they are available. • Consider whether additional support from other external partners (including the local authority, children and young people's mental health services, GPs or other health services) would be appropriate and make referrals.
 - Where external support is provided work together with those services to deliver any subsequent support. If the child has an education health and care plan, school staff should:
 - Communicate with the local authority where a pupil's attendance falls or they become aware of barriers to attendance that relate to the pupil's needs.
 - Where possible agree adjustments to its policies and practices that are consistent with the special educational provision set out in the education health and care plan in collaboration with parents.
 - Where needed work with the local authority to review and amend the education health and care plan to incorporate the additional or different attendance support identified.

Medical evidence for recording absences should only be needed in a minority of cases (see Code I). Where a pupil's health need means they need reasonable adjustments or support because it is complex or long term, schools can seek medical evidence to better understand the needs of the pupil and identify the most suitable provision in line with the statutory guidance in supporting pupils at school with medical conditions or arranging education for children who cannot attend school because of health needs.

Where parents do not engage in support, schools should work with the local authority or other local partners to formalise that support and as a last resort, enforce attendance through legal intervention.

Lateness and Punctuality

Children arriving at school between 9.00 and 9.20am will be recorded as late.

Frequent lateness (before 9.20am) will be discussed with the parents / carer.

Lateness after 9.20am is recorded as an unauthorised absence and may lead to a penalty notice.

The school gates are closed at 8.50am, children and their parents should sign in at the school office if arriving after 8.50am.

Penalty Notices

All state funded schools must consider whether a penalty notice for absence is appropriate in each individual case where one of their pupils reaches the national threshold for considering a penalty notice. Schools should not have a blanket position of issuing or not issuing penalty notices and should make judgements on each individual case to ensure fairness and consistency across the country.

A penalty notice is an out of court settlement which is intended to change behaviour without the need for criminal prosecution. If repeated penalty notices are being issued and they are not working to change behaviour they are unlikely to be most appropriate tool. Therefore, only 2 penalty notices can be issued to the same parent in respect of the same child within a 3 year rolling period and any second notice within that period is charged at a higher rate:

- The first penalty notice issued to a parent in respect of a particular pupil will be charged at £160 if paid within 28 days. This will be reduced to £80 if paid within 21 days.
- A second penalty notice issued to the same parent in respect of the same pupil is charged at a flat rate of £160 if paid within 28 days.

The threshold is 10 sessions of unauthorised absence in a rolling period of 10 school weeks. A school week means any week in which there is at least one school session. This can be met with any combination of unauthorised absence (e.g. 4 sessions of holiday taken in term time plus 6 sessions of arriving late after the register closes all within 10 school weeks). These sessions can be consecutive (e.g. 10 sessions of holiday in one week) or not (e.g. 6 sessions of unauthorised absence taken in 1 week and 1 per week for the next 4 weeks). The period of 10 school weeks can also span different terms or school years (e.g. 2 sessions of unauthorised absence in the Summer Term and a further 8 within the Autumn Term).

Following up unexplained absence

Where any pupil does not attend without reason, the school will:

- Call on the morning of the first day of unexplained absence. If the school cannot contact the parent / carer by telephone, the HT and FLO may do an unannounced home visit
- Identify whether the absence is authorised or unauthorised
- Attempt to contact the parent / carer each day. If the absence continues, the school may contact the School Liaison Officer

Children Missing Education

Where a child is missing education, we will follow local authority guidance and complete a CME referral. The school will do this if we a) do not know the whereabouts of the child b) the family has notified the school that the child has moved to another school but no Common Transfer File has been requested by another school.

Legal Sanctions

Where children are of a compulsory school age, the school can request the issue of a Penalty Notice by the local authority. If issued with a Penalty Notice, each parent must pay £60 within 21 days or £120 within 28 days. The payment is made directly to the local authority. Schools do not receive the money from Penalty Notices and local authorities do not recoup their costs. Penalty Notices can be issued by the Headteacher, the local authority or the police.

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

- The number of unauthorised absences during the academic or calendar year
- The pattern of absence
- If a suspended or excluded pupil is found in a public place, during school hours, without a valid reason

Where parents or carers do not pay a Penalty Notice within 28 days, the local authority can make the decision to take further legal action.

Strategies at St. Saviour's for promoting attendance:

- Basing a positive school ethos, firmly on our Christian values
- Rewarding pupils with 100% attendance
- The use of reward charts or trackers for targeted pupils
- Explicitly stating the link between good attendance and good outcomes from school
- Celebrating good attendance during celebration assemblies
- Employing good teachers who have a genuine regard for children
- Working with families to remove barriers to good attendance. This might include using pupil premium funding to subsidise or pay for breakfast club, paid music tuition, after school clubs. The school also makes referrals to school health or Level 3 social services support (Early Help) if we believe there are wider issues to tackle

Monitoring attendance

The school will:

- Monitor patterns of attendance on a monthly basis (more frequently if there is a specific issue). This includes comparing different groups of pupils looking for patterns of absence for individual pupils (eg. missing Mondays or PE lessons)
- Weekly monitoring of pupils with attendance which is causing us concern
- Share this data with governors and seek ways to address weaknesses
- Look for barriers to attendance at group or individual level
- Look at emerging patterns of behaviour (particularly post-pandemic) and develop strategies to address issues. Use data to monitor the impact of any strategies put in place

Reduced Timetables

In very exceptional circumstances a temporary part time timetable may be provided for a pupil. For example, where a medical condition prevents a pupil from attending school or another setting full-time and a part-time timetable is used to help the pupil access as much education as possible. A part-time timetable should not be used to manage a pupil's behaviour.

A part-time timetable should:

- Have the agreement of both the school and the parent the pupil normally lives with.
- Have a clear ambition and be part of the pupil's wider support, health care or reintegration plan.
- Have regular review dates which include the pupil and their parents to ensure it is only in place for the shortest time necessary.
- Have a proposed end date that takes into account the circumstances of the pupil, after which the pupil is expected to attend full-time, either at school or alternative provision. It can, however, be extended as part of the regular review process. In some limited cases, a pupil with a long-term health condition may require a parttime timetable for a prolonged period.

Where the pupil has a social worker, the school is expected to keep them informed and involved in the process.

If the pupil has an education health and care plan, the school should discuss the part-time timetable with the local authority so that any support package that is in place can be reviewed as swiftly as possible.

In agreeing to a part-time timetable, a school has agreed to a pupil being absent from school for part of the week or day and therefore must record the absence accordingly (normally using code X or C2).

Register Codes from September 2024

/ Present

L Late, arrived before register closed, before 9.20am

N Late, after register closed (after 9.20am) – this becomes an unauthorised absence

K attending another local authority provision such as a college or pupil referral unit

V attending a trip arranged by the school

P attending an approved sporting activity – supervised by an appropriately qualified person

W attending work experience

U Unauthorised absence

Note – there is no longer any code for holidays