



Stratford St Mary Primary School

Attendance Policy

We are committed to the highest standards of attendance

Member of staff responsible:	Karen Bilner Headteacher
Issue status:	Approved by Governors : Nov 2022
Review date:	Nov 2024
Signed	<i>Matthew Carney</i> Chair of Governors

This policy should be read in conjunction with the following policies:

1. Safeguarding Policy and Child Protection Procedures
2. Medical Policy
3. SEND Policy
4. Behaviour Policy

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1. Introduction

The school is committed to providing an education of the highest quality for all its pupils and recognises this can only be achieved by supporting and promoting excellent school attendance by all. Only by attending school regularly, and punctually, will children and young people be able to take full advantage of the educational opportunities available to them. High attainment depends on good attendance.

All schools recognise their responsibilities to ensure children are in school and on time, therefore having access to learning for the maximum number of days and hours.

Our policy applies to all pupils registered at our school and this policy is made available to all parents/carers of pupils who are registered at our school on our school website.

This policy has been written to adhere to the relevant Children Acts, Education Acts, Regulations and Guidance from the Department for Education in addition to guidance from the Local Authority.

Although parents/carers have the legal responsibility for ensuring their child's good attendance, the school community -pupils, parents/carers, teachers, support staff and Governors work together with other professionals and agencies to ensure that all children are encouraged and supported to develop good attendance habits. Procedures in this policy are followed to ensure this happens.

Children who are persistently late or absent soon fall behind with their learning. Children who are absent from school frequently develop large gaps in their learning which will impact on their progress and their ability to meet age related learning expectations. A pupil whose attendance drops to 90% each year will, over their time at school, have just over 4 half-terms of learning or lose 19 full school days in each academic year. This will in turn have a significant impact on their over attainment.

This attendance policy ensures that all staff, parents, carers and governors in our school are fully aware of and clear about the actions necessary to promote good attendance.

2. Aims and Objectives

Through this Policy we aim to:

- Support the safeguarding of all children and families ensuring that pupils are in school.
- Promote a positive and welcoming atmosphere in which pupils feel safe, secure, and valued, and encourage in children a sense of their own responsibility.
- Improve pupil's achievement by ensuring high levels of attendance and punctuality.
- Create an ethos in which good attendance and punctuality are recognised as the norm and seen to be valued by the school and the community by raising the awareness of parents, carers and pupils of the importance of uninterrupted attendance and punctuality at every stage of a pupil's education.
- Work in partnership with pupils, parents and staff, so that all pupils realise their potential, unhindered by unnecessary absence.
- Establish a pattern of monitoring attendance and ensure consistency in recognising achievement and dealing with difficulties.
- Recognise the key role of all staff, but especially class teachers and our attendance officer, in promoting good attendance.

We maintain and promote good attendance and punctuality through:

- Raising awareness of attendance and punctuality issues among all staff, parents and pupils.
- Ensuring that parents understand the responsibility placed on them for making sure their child attends regularly and punctually.
- Equipping pupils with the life skills needed to take responsibility for good school attendance and punctuality appropriate to the child's age and development.
- Maintaining effective means of communication with parents, pupils, staff and governors on school attendance matters.
- Developing and implementing procedures for identifying, reporting and reviewing cases of poor attendance and persistent lateness.
- Supporting pupils who have been experiencing any difficulties at home or at school which are preventing good attendance by identifying barriers to school and developing strategies to overcome these.
- Developing and implementing procedures to follow up non-attendance at school.

3. Definitions

Authorised absence

- An absence is classified as authorised when a pupil has been away from school for a legitimate reason and the school has received notification from a parent or carer. For example, unavoidable medical/dental appointments (but try to make these after school if at all possible).
- Only the school can make an absence authorised. Parents do not have this authority. Consequently, not all absences supported by parents will be classified as authorised. Where the absences are not authorised, we will inform parents of this.

Unauthorised absence

- An absence is classified as unauthorised when a pupil is away from school without the permission of the school. (Unauthorised holiday constitutes an unauthorised absence.)
- Therefore, the absence is unauthorised if a pupil is away from school without good reason, even with the support of a parent.
- If the absence is unauthorised the Local Authority Attendance service will be notified of the absence and consideration may be given to a Penalty Notice or legal proceedings for non-attendance. A Penalty Notice is issued to each parent/carer of each pupil taken out of school and that this carries a fine of £60 if paid within 21 days, increasing to £120 if paid within 28 days if the fine is not paid on time, it may result in legal action being taken against parents/carers. **Parents have a duty to ensure their child's regular attendance at school and failure to do so is an offence under Section 444(1) of the Education Act 1996. Legal action under Section 444(1) can result in a fine of up to £2500 and/or up to 3 months imprisonment.**
- A Penalty Notice will be considered if a pupil's attendance is deemed as 'not regular'.

Further information on avoidable absences and the Law can be found in Appendix A.

4. Procedures

Our schools will undertake the following procedures to support good attendance:

- record attendance twice daily and consistently record absence or lateness
- communicate clearly the attendance procedures and expectations to all staff, governors, parents/carers and pupils
- follow up absences and persistent lateness if parents/carers have not communicated with the school
- inform parents/carers what constitutes authorised and unauthorised absence
- strongly discourage unnecessary absence through holidays taken during term time
- work with parents/carers and other agencies to improve individual pupil's attendance and punctuality
- refer to the Safeguarding and Attendance Lead any child whose attendance causes concern and where parents/carers have not responded to school initiatives to improve this
- report attendance statistics to the LA and the DFE where requested

5. Responsibilities

All members of our school community have a responsibility for identifying trends in attendance and punctuality. The following includes a more specific list of the kinds of responsibilities which individuals might have.

Parents/Carers:

Parents/Carers are responsible for:

- Ensuring that their child attends school regularly and punctually unless prevented from doing so by illness or attendance at a medical appointment.
- Contacting the school office on the first morning of absence.
- Informing the school in advance of any medical appointments in school time. For the absence to be recorded as a medical absence we may require evidence from the doctor or dentist. (Appointment card/letter/prescription paperwork or packet.)
- As far as possible ensure that non-urgent medical or dental appointments are made outside of the school day or avoid registration periods.
- Making requests for authorised absence in term time, only if absolutely necessary as these are not automatically authorised.
- Talking to the school as soon as possible about any pupil's reluctance to come to school so that problems can be quickly identified and dealt with.
- Promote the link between attendance and attainment/progress.

Pupils

Pupils are responsible for:

- To aim for high attendance (an average pupil would achieve an attendance of over 97%)
- To be on time for school
- Attend school appropriately prepared for the day.
- Take pride in attendance and punctuality.

Class Teacher

Class teachers are responsible for:

- Welcoming pupils at the beginning of the day and for each lesson.
- Monitoring daily attendance
- Taking registers accurately and on time
- Highlighting concerns regarding attendance with parents and or pupils
- Discussing attendance during parent consultations or at individual parent meetings
- raising concerns with the school's Attendance Lead where necessary

Headteachers

- monitor attendance and where concerns are identified, consult with parents/outside agencies to agree actions to address identified issues
- inform Governors of attendance data through leadership reports
- inform parents of attendance for their child in line with the school's reporting procedures
- promote excellent attendance by pupils and provide opportunities to celebrate good attendance
- monitor the attendance of individual cohorts of children and plan appropriate interventions.

- consider requests for absence and meet with parents to discuss such requests as necessary
- make referrals to the Local Authority for the issue of Fixed Penalty Notices as appropriate
- Monitor the progress of attendance interventions across key groups to ensure all pupils have the best opportunity for success.
- meet parents/carers in danger of being issued a first warning
- making referrals to other agencies as appropriate
- liaise with other professionals to determine potential sources of difficulties and reasons for absence

School Office

- overall monitoring of school attendance
- Identify trends in authorised and unauthorised absence
- contacting families where concerns are raised about absence including arranging meetings to discuss attendance issues
- monitoring individual attendance where concerns have been raised
- keep an overview of class and individual attendance looking particularly for either poor overall attendance, anomalies in patterns of attendance and/ or unusual explanations for attendance offered by children and their parents/ carers and reporting concerns to the Headteacher
- inform the Headteacher where there are concerns and acting upon them
- provide background information to support referrals
- monitoring follow-up once actions have been taken to correct attendance concerns
- follow up absences with immediate requests for explanation via telephone calls or email
- ensure attendance issues are raised by teachers at parent consultation evenings where necessary
- collate and record registration and attendance information
- take and record messages from parents regarding absence
- contact parents of absent children where no reason for absence received
- record details of pupils who arrive late or go home
- send out standard letters regarding attendance

6. Registration

At the beginning of each school day every class teacher has the responsibility for keeping an accurate record of attendance. Any pupil who is absent must be recorded at the beginning of the morning session. The attendance register must be completed by the class teacher by the end of registration (Attendance code / and \ for pupils who are present.)

All attendance records are documented using SIMS software, which is supported by the Local Authority. Attendance registers are legal documents and these must be kept securely and preserved for a period of three years after the date they were last used.

7. Lateness

Any pupil who comes into school after the close of registers (8.45am) will be marked as late in the attendance record. Records are kept of those pupils who are late, this is documented on the electronic register for each pupil (Attendance code L).

15 minutes after the close of registers students will be marked as having an unauthorised absence for the morning. (Attendance code U).

Pupils who have attended a dentist or doctor's appointment and subsequently come to school late will have the absence recorded as a medical absence (attendance code M). Where possible routine dentist or doctor's appointments should be made outside of the school day.

Pupils who are persistently late miss a significant amount of learning, often the most important aspect, as the beginning of the day is where the teacher explains the learning and what each child is expected to achieve.

Where there have been persistent incidents of lateness:

- The Senior Leader/Attendance Lead responsible for attendance will meet with the parent/carer to create an action plan to improve punctuality. Should punctuality not improve the Local Authority may be approached to give consideration for a fixed penalty notice.

8. Absences

Parents/carers should contact the school on the first day of their child's absence. When parents/carers notify us of their child's absence it is important that they provide us with full details of the reason for their absence. Please avoid using phrases such as "poorly" or "sick".

All absences are recorded as either authorised or unauthorised absences on the computer. It is important that we receive accurate information from parents with reasons for the child's absence. This information is used to determine whether the absence is authorised or unauthorised. The Headteacher has the responsibility to determine whether absences are authorised or unauthorised.

Where we have not received reasons for a child's absence within 5 days the absence is recorded as unauthorised (attendance code O) in line with Department for Education Guidance.

9. First Day Contact

Where a child is absent from school parents/carers should contact the school immediately. Where the school has not received any verbal or written communication from the parent, then the Attendance Officer will telephone home. If no response is received, other contacts held for the child will also be contacted. If we have not heard from any contacts, then a home visit may be conducted.

If no contact is made following the home visit, the Headteacher and Designated Safeguarding Lead may consider the need for a referral to the Local Authority as a possible Child Missing Education. Contact may also be made with Children's Services and/or the police in line with safeguarding procedures.

10. Illness

When pupils have an illness that means they will be away from school long term, the school will do all it can to send material home, or establish on-line learning, so that they can keep up with their schoolwork.

If the absence is likely to continue for an extended period, or be a repetitive absence, the school will contact the support services to see if arrangements can be made for the child to be given some home tuition outside school.

Where over the course of an academic year, a pupil has repeated periods of illness, the school will write to parents to ask them to provide medical evidence for each future period of illness related absence. This evidence could be a doctor's note, appointment card or copy of a prescription. We may seek written permission from parents/carers for the school to make their own enquiries.

11. Exceptional Leave (Requests for Absence during term time)

With effect from September 2013 the government abolished the right of the Headteacher to authorise absence specifically for holidays of up to 10 days per year. Instead, the Headteacher will only be allowed to grant leave of absence for any reason if they are satisfied that **exceptional circumstances** exist.

Should parents be considering a holiday during term time a leave of absence request form must be completed by all adults with parental responsibility BEFORE the holiday is booked. Where a holiday is not authorised, consideration will be given to requesting a penalty notice from the Local Authority for this period of absence if a child's attendance is deemed as 'not regular'.

If your child is absent from school without authorisation, you will be committing an offence under the Education Act 1996. We may submit a request to the Local Authority for a Penalty Notice to be issued, in accordance with Sections 444A and 444B of the said Act. Penalty Notices are issued per liable parent, per child and each carry a fine of £60 if paid within 21 days or £120 if paid after this but within 28 days. Failure to pay the Penalty Notice may result in legal action. Absence not authorised by the school may result in a prosecution in the Magistrates' Court under Section 444(1) or Section 444(1A) of the Education Act 1996, leading to a fine of up to £2,500 and/or a custodial sentence.

12. Promoting Good Attendance

School staff will promote the importance of pupil attendance through:

- Assemblies
- Class discussions
- Parents/carers attendance meetings
- Newsletters
- Early communication with parents/carers around attendance issues

13. Addressing Attendance Concerns

It is important for pupils to establish good attendance habits early on in their school career. It is the responsibility of the Headteacher and the Governors to support good attendance and to identify and address attendance concerns promptly. Parents should ensure their child attends school regularly and punctually and therefore where there are concerns regarding attendance, parents are always informed.

Concerns about attendance are raised with parents/carers via texts/letters and phone calls home. There will be opportunities for the parent/carer to discuss reasons for absence and support to be given by the school with the aim to improve attendance.

Where a child's attendance record does not improve over a period the following process will take place

- If attendance drops below 96% - letter to parents
- Parents to attend meeting to discuss attendance
- Attendance action plan with parents/carers (4 weeks)
- Review action plan
- No improvement legal interventions

Fixed penalty notices will be issued for unauthorised absence, which will include unauthorised holiday requests, unauthorised lates and unauthorised absence.

Parents have a legal duty to ensure regular attendance and if they fail to do so, may commit an offence under Sections 7 & 444 of the Education Act 1996.

14. Monitoring and Review Attendance within school

The Head/Senior Lead for Attendance will ensure that:

- a recording and reporting system is in place and is maintained;
- attendance statistics, strategies and impacts are reported to the Head and to the Governors

The Governors receive monitoring reports on attendance and the implementation and effectiveness of this policy.

The effectiveness of the policy will be measured by the overall rates of pupil attendance and the numbers of pupils falling into the Persistent Absence category. This data will be shared with Governors to improve our aspirations for our communities

Appendix A

IMPORTANT: Please read carefully the information below.

WARNING: If you allow your child to miss school in term time for an avoidable reason without obtaining the prior approval of the school, you may be issued with a Penalty Notice* per parent per child or made the subject of court proceedings under section 444 Education Act 1996. As a parent/carer, you can demonstrate your commitment to your child's education by not allowing your child to miss school for anything other than an exceptional and unavoidable reason. *Penalty notice £60 if paid within 21 days increasing to £120 if paid after 21 days and before 28 days.

AVOIDABLE ABSENCE IN TERM TIME	
The Facts	The Law
<p>School aged pupils are expected to attend punctually on the 190 days that the school is open. Whilst there are a number of unavoidable reasons why a pupil might be away from school (illness, medical appointments, exclusions etc.) the legislation is clear that any avoidable absence may only be authorised by a school if there are exceptional circumstances.</p> <p style="text-align: center;">WHAT YOU SHOULD CONSIDER</p> <p>Research suggests that children who are taken out of school may never catch up on the learning they have missed. This may affect test results and can be particularly harmful if the child is studying for final year examinations.</p> <p>Children who struggle with English or Mathematics may also find it even harder to cope when they return to school, while younger children may find it difficult to renew friendships with their classmates.</p> <p>If the school is unable to authorise the absence and the child is still taken out of school, this will be recorded as unauthorised absence and you may receive a £60* fine per parent per child if your child's attendance is deemed to be 'not regular', falling below the threshold of 96%.</p>	<p>The law allows the school to consider individual requests to authorise a future avoidable absence. However, before the school can authorise any such requests, they must satisfy themselves that there are exceptional circumstances which justify such a decision. It is entirely the responsibility of the parent submitting the request to provide sufficient evidence/information in order to establish this fact. The request for leave must come from the parent with whom the child normally resides.</p> <p>If a child then stays away from school for more than the authorised period this must be recorded as unauthorised absence and could be quoted in a prosecution for poor attendance.</p> <p>If the child is away for a period of four weeks or more, the school may have the option to take the child off roll subject to the Education (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2006</p> <p>In case of unexpected extended absence, it is advisable that the parent fully informs the school as to the reasons. If a child is removed from roll, there is no guarantee that the child will regain a place at the school.</p>
<p>Unavoidable absence from school will be authorised. Examples include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Genuine illness ● Unavoidable medical/dental appointments (but try to make these after school if at all possible). ● Days of religious observance. ● Seeing a parent who is on leave from the armed forces ● External examinations 	<p>Other examples of absence from school that will not be authorised include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Any type of shopping ● Looking after siblings or unwell parents ● Birthdays ● Resting after a late night ● Relatives visiting or visiting relatives. ● Parental appointments

Please contact the Headteacher if you wish to discuss this issue.

The law requires parents to ensure their children receive an efficient full-time education, and every minute of every day is important. Please help them not to miss any of this valuable time.

We hope that when you have read this leaflet you will consider that your child's education is too important to allow them to miss school for avoidable reasons.

Appendix B - INFORMATION LETTER TO ALL PARENTS (ANNUAL)

Whole School Warning Letter regarding unauthorised leave of absence (holidays)

Dear Parent/Carer

Here at Stratford St Mary Primary School we recognise that there are occasions when it is appropriate to authorise an absence, such as when a pupil is genuinely too ill to attend school, has a medical appointment that cannot be taken outside of school hours or a request for leave has been agreed in exceptional circumstances.

However, the Government does not support parents taking children out of school unless the school agrees this is appropriate under 'exceptional circumstances'. Any request for leave should be made in writing to the Headteacher using the school's request form.

If your child is absent from school without authorisation, you will be committing an offence under the Education Act 1996. We may submit a request to the Local Authority for a Penalty Notice to be issued, in accordance with Sections 444A and 444B of the said Act. Penalty Notices are issued per liable parent, per child and each carry a fine of £60 if paid within 21 days or £120 if paid after this but within 28 days. Failure to pay the Penalty Notice may result in legal action. Absence not authorised by the school may result in a prosecution in the Magistrates' Court under Section 444(1) or Section 444(1A) of the Education Act 1996, leading to a fine of up to £2,500 and/or a custodial sentence.

'Parent' as set out in Section 576 of the Education Act 1996, defines parent to include: natural parents, whether they are married or not; any person or body who has parental responsibility for a child (as defined by the Children Act 1989) and; any person who, although not a natural parent, has care of a child. Having care of a child means a person with whom a child lives and who looks after a child, irrespective of what their relationship is with said child.

You are welcome to contact the school to discuss any concerns you may have regarding this or if you feel you would like advice or support in helping your child attend more regularly. Stratford St Mary Primary School is committed to maximising the education of all its pupils and aims to work with parents to ensure this can be achieved.

The decision to submit a request for the issue of a Penalty Notice will be considered when a child's attendance is deemed to be 'not regular'. The definition of 'not regular' in this instance is when it is below the threshold. For this school, this attendance threshold is set at 96%, in line with national attendance data. In the Autumn Term, a child's attendance for the previous academic year will be considered before deciding on a course of action. From January onwards, the decision will be based on attendance data from the current academic year.

Yours sincerely,
Mrs Bilner
Headteacher

APPENDIX C – EXCEPTIONAL CIRCUMSTANCE LEAVE REQUEST NOTICE TO PARENTS /CARERS

The law does not grant parents an automatic right to take their child out of school during term time. Any absence from school will disrupt your child's learning. You may consider that a holiday will be educational, but your child will miss out on the teaching that their classmates will receive during your holiday. Attendance is vital to academic success and lost education poses a potential risk of underachievement. This is something we all have a responsibility to avoid.

The Department for Education no longer allows Headteachers to grant any leave of absence during term time unless there are exceptional circumstances. If you consider that your request for absence is exceptional you will need to complete the form attached to this notification. A response will be sent to you as soon as possible. If leave is not authorised and you nevertheless withdraw your child from school, the absence will be recorded as unauthorised absence.

If your child is absent from school without authorisation, you will be committing an offence under the Education Act 1996. We may submit a request to the Local Authority for a Penalty Notice to be issued, in accordance with Sections 444A and 444B of the said Act. Penalty Notices are issued per liable parent, per child and each carry a fine of £60 if paid within 21 days or £120 if paid after this but within 28 days. Failure to pay the Penalty Notice may result in legal action. Absence not authorised by the school may result in a prosecution in the Magistrates' Court under Section 444(1) or Section 444(1A) of the Education Act 1996, leading to a fine of up to £2,500 and/or a custodial sentence.

'Parent' as set out in Section 576 of the Education Act 1996, defines parent to include: natural parents, whether they are married or not; any person or body who has parental responsibility for a child (as defined by the Children Act 1989) and; any person who, although not a natural parent, has care of a child. Having care of a child means a person with whom a child lives and who looks after a child, irrespective of what their relationship is with said child.

All requests must be completed on this form; letters will not be accepted. This form should be returned to the Office at least 15 school days before the start of the absence, along with any supporting documentation.

I hope you will support our efforts in raising attendance and attainment at Stratford St Mary Primary School.

APPLICATION BY PARENT/CARER

If you consider an absence during term time to be an exceptional circumstance, please complete this form and return it to the Attendance Office **at least 15 school days** before the date you wish to remove your child from school.

Pupil Name: _____ **DOB:** _____ **Year** _____

Home Address:

Name of Parent/Carer completing this form: _____

First day of absence: _____ **Date of return to school:** _____

If leaving your home address before the first day of absence, please provide the date on which you will leave _____

Total number of days missed: _____ days

Reason for absence:

Supporting Evidence:

Please provide copies of documentation in support of the request including, for example, medical appointment cards and travel documentation

I understand that if the absence request is unauthorised the school may request that the Local Authority issues a Penalty Notice. I understand that a Penalty Notice is issued to each liable parent/carer of each child taken out of school and that this carries a fine of £60 if paid within 21 days, increasing to £120 if paid within 28 days. I understand that if I do not pay the fine, it may result in legal action being taken against me.

I understand that parents have a duty to ensure their child's regular attendance at school and failure to do so is an offence under Section 444(1) and Section 444(1A) of the Education Act 1996.

Please inform us if you have a child in another local school – we will need to contact the school to discuss the absence request. Please note, we will need to share information about your child with the other school.

Name of child _____ Year _____ School _____

SignedDated

(Please ensure you give at least 15 school days' notice of the proposed absence)

Below to be completed by the school:

FAO – Headteacher

% Current	% Last Year	Comments

Pupil Name:Year:

AUTHORISED:

Request has been authorised for the following dates **only**:

___/___/___ to ___/___/___

UNAUTHORISED:

Signed Headteacher

Date ___/___/___

Letter sent / Phone Call / other	Signed:	Date:
Action: Penalty Notice Request	Signed:	Date:

Appendix D: PN Model Leave Refusal Letter (for school use)

NAME AND ADDRESS

Date

Dear Name of parent/carer(s)

I am writing regarding your request to take (Pupil Name) out of school on Date until Date.

The law states that a planned absence from school should only be authorised for pupils in 'exceptional circumstances'. Here at [enter school name], we recognise that there are occasions when it is appropriate to authorise an absence; we look at each request on its own merit, before reaching a decision.

Under the circumstances, we regret that on this occasion we are unable to authorise your request for absence. If (Pupil Name) does not attend school on the dates concerned, the absence will be recorded as unauthorised. In cases where parents subsequently report their child as ill during this period, medical evidence may be requested to support this. I urge you to reconsider your decision.

If your child is absent from school without authorisation, you will be committing an offence under the Education Act 1996. We may submit a request to the Local Authority for a Penalty Notice to be issued, in accordance with Sections 444A and 444B of the said Act. Penalty Notices are issued per liable parent, per child and each carry a fine of £60 if paid within 21 days or £120 if paid after this but within 28 days. Failure to pay the Penalty Notice may result in legal action. Absence not authorised by the school may result in a prosecution in the Magistrates' Court under Section 444(1) or Section 444(1A) of the Education Act 1996, leading to a fine of up to £2,500 and/or a custodial sentence.

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I would like to offer you the opportunity to contact {enter staff contact or team} at {enter school name} if you would like advice or support in helping your child attend more regularly. {Enter school name} is committed to maximising the education of all its pupils and aims to work with parents to ensure this can be achieved. If you would like to discuss this matter further, please contact the school.

Yours sincerely
Headteacher