



ST. AUGUSTINE OF CANTERBURY CATHOLIC PRIMARY SCHOOL

Attendance Policy

Mission Statement

"I called you by your name, you are mine." Isaiah 43

Our mission at St. Augustine of Canterbury Catholic Primary School is to provide a learning environment in which all children and staff reach their potential in an atmosphere of kindness, empathy, honesty, gratitude, courage and love.

All our work is inspired by the teachings of Christ and His Church. Working in partnership with parents and carers, we aim to enhance and celebrate the moral, physical, social and emotional development of all children entrusted to us.

We are an inclusive community, welcoming and accepting all who enter our school, regardless of ability or background; teaching children to be understanding of the world they are growing up in, together with learning how to live alongside and respect diversity within our society.

Equality Statement

This policy has been equality impact assessed, and we believe that it is in line with the Equality Act 2010 as it is fair, it does not prioritise or disadvantage any pupil or member of staff and it helps to promote equality at St. Augustine of Canterbury Catholic Primary School.

We have carefully considered and analysed the impact of these policies on equality and the possible implications for pupils and staff with protected characteristics, as part of our commitment to meet the Public Sector Equality Duty (PSED) requirement to have due regard to the need to eliminate discrimination, advance equality of opportunity and foster good relations.

Date reviewed: August 2024

Date to be reviewed: September 2025

Attendance Lead: Mrs Louise Prestidge

Headteacher: Mrs Louise Prestidge

Ratified by Governors: August 2024

Introduction:

DfE Guidance: Working Together to Improve Attendance 2024 states:

Improving attendance is everyone's business. The barriers to accessing education are wide and complex, both within and beyond the school gates, and are often specific to individual pupils and families. Good attendance begins with school being somewhere pupils want to be and therefore the foundation of securing good attendance is that school is a calm, orderly, safe, and supportive environment where all pupils want to be and are keen and ready to learn.

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 an additional 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.

Our school expects attendance of no less than 96%.

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:

- Setting high expectations for the attendance and punctuality of all pupils.
- Develop and maintain a whole school culture that promotes the benefits of high attendance.
- Reducing absence, including persistent and severe absence
- Set out the ways by which attendance and punctuality are managed by the school.
- Clarify roles and responsibilities including those of parents/carers.
- Reducing absence, including persistent and severe absence.
- Accurately complete admission and attendance registers and have effective day to day processes in place to follow-up absence.
- Regularly monitor and analyse attendance and absence data to identify pupils or cohorts that require support with their attendance and put effective strategies in place.
- Be particularly mindful of pupils absent from school due to mental or physical ill health or their special educational needs and/or disabilities, and provide them with additional support.
- 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 and work jointly with families, listening to and understanding barriers to attendance and working in partnership with families to remove them.

We will also promote and support good attendance and punctuality and the benefits.

Legislation and guidance

This policy is based on the Department for Education's (DfE's) statutory guidance on working together to improve school attendance (applies from 19 August 2024) and school attendance parental responsibility measures. The guidance is based on the following pieces of legislation, which set 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, and 2016 amendments)

➤ The Education (Penalty Notices) (England) (Amendment) Regulations 2024

It also refers to:

➤ [School census guidance](#)

➤ [Keeping Children Safe in Education](#)

➤ [Mental health issues affecting a pupil's attendance: guidance for schools](#)

Roles and Responsibilities

Governing Bodies of maintained schools

Improving attendance requires constant focus, and effective whole school approaches require regular ongoing support, guidance, and challenge.

- Recognise the importance of school attendance and promote it across the school's ethos and policies.
- Setting high expectations of all school leaders, staff, pupils and parents.
- Ensure school leaders fulfil expectations and statutory duties, including:
 - Making sure the school records attendance accurately in the register, and shares the required information with the DfE and local authority
 - Making sure the school works effectively with local partners to help remove barriers to attendance, and keeps them informed regarding specific pupils, where appropriate
- Regularly review attendance data, discuss, and challenge trends, and help school leaders focus improvement efforts on the individual pupils or cohorts who need it most. Repeatedly evaluating the effectiveness of the school's processes and improvement efforts to make sure they are meeting pupils needs
- Making sure the school's attendance management processes are delivered effectively, and that consistent support is provided for pupils who need it most by prioritising staff and resources
- Ensure school staff receive adequate training on attendance.
 - The importance of good attendance
 - That absence is almost always a symptom of wider issues
 - The school's legal requirements for keeping registers
 - The school's strategies and procedures for tracking, following up on and improving attendance, including working with partners and keeping them informed regarding specific pupils, where appropriate
- Where the school is struggling with attendance, working with school leaders to develop a comprehensive action plan to improve attendance
- Making sure the school's attendance management processes are delivered effectively, and that consistent support is provided for pupils who need it most by prioritising staff and resources
- Making sure the school has high aspirations for all pupils, but adapts processes and support to pupils' individual needs
- Regularly reviewing and challenging attendance data and helping school leaders focus improvement efforts on individual pupils or cohorts who need it most.
- Making sure dedicated training is provided to staff with a specific attendance function in their role, including interpreting and analysing attendance data
- Holding the headteacher to account for the implementation of this policy

The Headteacher

The headteacher is responsible for:

- The 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, and/or authorising the school secretary/attendance officer to be able to do so
- Parents/carers cannot authorise any absence, only the Headteacher can do this. However, parents/carers can provide reasons for absence for the school to consider.

- Working with the parents of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) to develop specific support approaches for attendance for pupils with SEND, including where school transport is regularly being missed, and where pupils with SEND face in-school barriers
- Communicating with the local authority when a pupil with an education, health and care (EHC) plan has falling attendance, or where there are barriers to attendance that relate to the pupil's needs
- Communicating the school's high expectations for attendance and punctuality regularly to pupils and parents through all available channels

The Senior Attendance Champion responsible for attendance.

At St. Augustine of Canterbury Catholic Primary School, we recognise improving attendance is a school leadership issue and our designated senior leader with overall responsibility for championing and improving attendance in school is:

The Senior Attendance Champion is Mrs Louise Prestidge (Headteacher and DSL)

Contact Details:

Email: headteacher@staugustine.medway.sch.uk

Telephone: 01634 371892

The Senior Attendance Champion is responsible for:

- Leading, championing and improving attendance across the school
- Setting a clear vision for improving and maintaining good attendance.
- Evaluating and monitoring expectations and processes
- Having a strong grasp of absence data and oversight of absence data analysis
- Benchmarking attendance data to identify areas of focus for improvement
- Devising specific strategies to address areas of poor attendance identified through data and making sure they are followed by all staff
- Building relationships with parents/carers to discuss and tackle attendance issues
- Creating intervention reintegration plans in partnership with pupils and their parents/carers
- Liaising with pupils, parents/carers and external agencies, where needed
- Delivering targeted intervention and support to pupils and families
- Look at and analysis data: half-termly on a whole-school and individual pupil basis
- Draw comparisons with national data
- Supply attendance reports to class teachers to help discussions with families
- Use data to understand the impact of interventions

The Attendance Officer

The school attendance officer is responsible for:

- Providing regular attendance reports to school staff and reporting concerns about attendance to the Senior Attendance Champion responsible for attendance (headteacher).
- Monitoring and analysing attendance data
- Benchmarking attendance data to identify areas of focus for improvement
- Advising the headteacher when to issue fixed-penalty notices
- Working with Local Authority Attendance Officers to tackle persistent absence
- Accessing StudyBugs to obtain reported absence information.

The attendance officer can be contacted via 01634 371892 or office@staugustine.medway.sch.uk

Class teachers

Class teachers are responsible for recording attendance on a daily basis (morning and afternoon), using the correct codes (see appendix 1), and submitting this information to the school office immediately after the register is taken at 8.55am and 1pm.

Local Authority

- Provide each school with a named point of contact in the School Attendance Support Team who can support with queries and advice, and with whom Targeting Support Meetings will be held.
- Communication and advice: regularly monitor attendance at St. Augustine of Canterbury Catholic Primary School and other schools to communicate messages, provide advice and share best practice between schools and trusts within the area.
- Targeting Support Meetings: hold termly conversations with schools, using their attendance data to identify pupils and cohorts at risk of poor attendance and agree targeted actions and access to services for those pupils.
- Multi-disciplinary support for families: provide access to early help support workers to work intensively with families to provide practical whole-family support where needed to tackle the causes of absenteeism and unblock the barriers to attendance.
- Legal intervention: take forward attendance legal intervention (using the full range of parental responsibility measures) where voluntary support has not been successful or engaged with.
- Monitor and improve the attendance of children with a social worker through their Virtual School.
- Work together with all schools to tackle common issues across the geographical area. This may include agreeing common practices to issues such as term time holidays or follow up for persistent lateness so that families receive the same approach if they have children at several schools.

The School will:

- Give attendance and punctuality a high priority.
- Develop and maintain a whole school culture that promotes the benefits of high attendance.
- Have a clear school attendance policy which all staff, pupils and parents understand.
- Accurately complete admission and attendance registers and have effective day to day processes in place to follow-up absence.
- Regularly monitor and analyse attendance and absence data to identify pupils or cohorts that require support with their attendance and put effective strategies in place.
- Build strong relationships with families, listen to and understand barriers to attendance and work with families to remove them.
- Share information and work collaboratively with other schools in the area, local authorities, and other partners when absence is at risk of becoming persistent or severe.
- Recognise children missing education can act as a vital warning sign to a range of safeguarding issues including neglect, sexual abuse and child sexual and criminal exploitation.
- Provide and promote a welcoming and positive atmosphere so that children feel safe and know that their presence is valued.
- Raise awareness of the importance of full attendance and punctuality, using newsletters and other communications to parents.
- Encourage parents to fully support the policy as a vital contribution towards their child's education.
- Encourage the children to have a positive attitude towards attendance and punctuality so that they can retain this into adult life.
- Ensure that attendance is effectively monitored, using a computer-based registration system, and absences are followed up promptly.
- Communicate effectively with other agencies (Traveller education, Health, Attendance Advisory, Children Missing in Education, Social Services etc.)
- Meet the legal requirements with particular reference to authorised and unauthorised absence.
- Ensure that all staff comply with the school policy and deal consistently with absence and punctuality.
- Ensure information is available for Governors and parents.
- Ensure good liaison where a change of school occurs.
- Develop incentives for good attendance including end of term raffles for 100% attendance and Class of the Week Attendance trophy.
- Share good practice with other schools.
- Have procedures in place to help children settle in after a long absence.

Parents/Carers

Where this policy refers to a parent, it refers to the adult the school and/or local authority decides is most appropriate to work with, including:

- All natural parents, whether they are married or not

- All those who have parental responsibility for a child or young person
- Those who have day-to-day responsibility for the child (i.e. lives with and looks after them)

We expect the parent to:

- Make sure your child attends school every day on time.
- Provide up to date contact numbers and changes of address.
- Provide the school with at least two emergency contact numbers for their child
- Notify the school by telephone when their child is unable to attend, with a reason, on the **first** day of absence by 9.00am, if this is not received the school will ring the parents as a precaution, in case the parent is unaware the child is not in school.
- Notify the school of an absence using the 'Study Bugs' app and follow relevant instructions and advice.
- Telephone the school after the first day of absence to advise the school if the absence is continuing – and/or use the Study Bugs app to inform of continued absence.
- In cases of lengthy absence, Parents and Carers to liaise to ensure health care plan in place.
- Provide a letter indicating attendance to the dentist, doctor or optician **before** the arranged appointment, as far as possible these should be made outside of school hours, unless an emergency situation has arisen.
- Ensure that their child arrives at school on time each day.
- Let the school know if their child is going to be late, e.g. if a car breaks down, if an urgent appointment has been made.
- Keep to any attendance contracts that they make with the school and/or local authority.
- Seek support, where necessary, for maintain good attendance, by contacting Mrs Prestidge via 01634 371892.
- Understand the importance of good attendance and punctuality and promote this with their child.

Punctuality

If parents know their child is going to be late for any reason, they should let the school know as soon as possible.

Parents of children who persistently arrive late will be approached and reminded of these times and their obligation to comply with them. It will be explained that the lateness not only interrupts their child's education, but also that of others in the class.

If a regular pattern of lateness is observed, a note will be sent home asking the parent to explain the lateness or to ensure that punctuality is maintained. In rare circumstances where the school is made aware of a situation, an arrangement allowing a degree of flexibility can be agreed with the Headteacher.

Recording attendance

Attendance register

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

We will take our attendance register at the start of the school day and after lunch 1pm. It will mark, using the appropriate national attendance and absence codes from the School Attendance (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2024, 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, where 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 6 years after the date on which the entry was made.

The school day starts at 8.55am and ends at 3.30pm.

The school day begins at 8.55am and the register will be taken at 8.55am and kept open until 9.05am. Children arriving at school after this time should report to the school office; children will be marked in the register as late (L code). Children arriving after 9.15am will be registered as an unauthorised absence (U code). The register for the afternoon will be taken at 1pm. Arriving at 1.05pm is L code. Children arriving at or after 1.10pm will be U code.

Unplanned absence

The pupil's parent must notify the school of the reason for the absence on the first day of an unplanned absence by 9am, or as soon as practically possible, by calling the school office staff, who can be contacted via 01634 371892.

See parent responsibilities above.

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

Planned absence

Attending a medical or dental appointment will be counted as authorised as long as the pupil's parent notifies the school in advance of the appointment.

Leave of absence forms are available from the school office.

However, we encourage parents 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 pupil's parent must also apply for other types of term-time absence as far in advance as possible of the requested absence.

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 on the morning of the first day of unexplained absence to ascertain the reason. Home visit required day 3, then if no response to all enquires, school to make a safeguarding referral requesting a police welfare check.
- 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(s) for which the pupil was absent.
- Call the parent on each day that the absence continues without explanation, to make sure proper safeguarding action is taken where necessary. If absence continues, the school will consider involving an Medway Attendance Advisory Services.
- Where relevant, report the unexplained absence to the pupil's youth offending team officer
- Where appropriate, offer support to the pupil and/or their parents to improve attendance
- Identify whether the pupil needs support from wider partners, as quickly as possible, and make the necessary referrals
- Where support is not appropriate, not successful, or not engaged with: issue a notice to improve, penalty notice or other legal intervention as appropriate.

Reporting to parents

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

What is meant by persistent and severe absence:

➤ Persistent is where a pupil misses 10% or more of school

➤ Severe is where a pupil misses 50% or more of school

Persistent and Severe absence data is also shared with the DFE.

Authorised and Unauthorised Absence

The headteacher will allow pupils to be absent from the school site for certain educational activities, or to attend other schools or settings.

The headteacher will only grant a **leave of absence** to a pupil during term time if the request meets the specific circumstances set out in Working Together to improve School attendance 2024. These circumstances are:

- Taking part in a regulated performance, or regulated employment abroad
- Attending an interview
- A temporary, time-limited part-time timetable
- 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.

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

As a leave of absence will only be granted in exceptional circumstances.

The school considers each application for term-time absence individually, taking into account the specific facts, circumstances and relevant background context behind the request.

Any request should be submitted as soon as it is anticipated and, where possible, at least two weeks before the absence, and in accordance with any leave of absence request form, accessible via the school office. The headteacher may require evidence to support any request for leave of absence.

Permission for leave of absence in term time may only be granted where:

- The absence does not occur during the school's assessment times and SAT's and also during the preparation towards these tests and examinations.
- A formal application is made on the prescribed forms (available from the school office) with an accompanying letter explaining the **exceptional** circumstances. The Headteacher may request a meeting to discuss the application with the parent.
- Reasonable notice must be given at least 2 weeks' notice which will allow preparation of any work by the class teacher.
- Retrospective permission will not be granted if sought.

Parents are asked to support the school with its aims and not to take their children out of school during term time.

Upon receipt of this form, an appointment may be arranged with the Headteacher, and a decision will be made. The headteacher may require evidence to support any request for leave of absence. Parents are asked to reflect on the possible impact that this time out of school will have on their child's learning when requesting such authorisation. Please also bear in mind that significant periods of absence can impact on a child's social relationships and affect friendship patterns.

The ultimate responsibility to authorise absence rests with the Headteacher. If the Headteacher is not satisfied with the reasons provided, the absence may be categorised as unauthorised.

Any holiday-related absence taken that includes 10 sessions in 10 weeks, may result in a Penalty Notice. In this instance, a 'Notice to Improve' notification will not be issued beforehand. The Local Authority may proceed the case to court.

The Local Authority can issue a maximum of two penalty notices within a rolling three-year period:

First offence - The first time a Penalty Notice is issued the amount will be: £80 per parent, per child paid within 21 days. This increases to £160 per parent, per child if paid after day 21, until day 28. Any non-payment of the Penalty Notice may be referred to the Magistrates Court.

Second Offence (within 3 years) - the second time a Penalty Notice is issued the amount will be £160 per parent, per child paid within 28 days. Any non-payment of the Penalty Notice may be referred to the Magistrates Court.

Third Offence and Any Further Offences (within 3 years) - the third time an offence is committed a Penalty Notice will not be issued, and the case may be presented straight to the Magistrates' Court under s.444 of the Education Act (1996) or other legal interventions considered. The Magistrates' Court can order fines up to £2500 per parent, per child.

Other valid reasons for **authorised absence** include (but are not limited to):

- Illness (including mental-health illness) and medical/dental appointments
- Religious observance - where the day is exclusively set apart for religious observance by the religious body to which the pupil's parent(s) belong(s). If necessary, the school will seek advice from the parent's religious body to confirm whether the day is set apart
- If the pupil is currently suspended or excluded from school (and no alternative provision has been made)

Other reasons the school may allow a pupil to be absent from the school site, which are not classified as absences, include (but are not limited to):

- Attending an offsite approved educational activity, sporting activity or visit or trip arranged by the school
- Attending another school at which the pupil is also registered (dual registration)
- Attending provision arranged by the local authority
- If there is any other unavoidable cause for the pupil not to attend school, such as disruption to travel caused by an emergency, a lack of access arrangements, or because the school premises are closed.

Examples of absences which will not be authorised:

- A child is kept off school because a parent is ill.
- A child is absent because a sibling is ill.
- The parent cannot get the child to school.
- The child is taken on a shopping trip.
- The child is absent due to birthday treat/family treat.
- A child is absent due to family work patterns.
- The child refuses to come to school or wants to stay at home.
- The family have overslept.
- The parents have forgotten the term dates.
- There is a problem with the uniform.

Sanctions

Our school will make use of the full range of potential sanctions - including, but not limited to, those listed below - to tackle poor attendance. Decisions will be made on an individual, case-by-case basis.

Penalty notices

The headteacher (or someone authorised by them), local authority or the police can fine parents for the unauthorised absence of their child from school, where the child is of compulsory school age, by issuing a penalty notice.

Schools refer to the local authority to issue penalty notices on behalf of the school.

Before issuing a penalty notice, the school will consider the individual case, including:

- Whether the national threshold for considering a penalty notice has been met (10 sessions of unauthorised absence in a rolling period of 10 school weeks)
- Whether a penalty notice is the best available tool to improve attendance for that pupil
- Whether further support, a notice to improve or another legal intervention would be a more appropriate solution
- Whether any obligations that the school has under the Equality Act 2010 make issuing a penalty notice inappropriate

Each parent who is liable for the pupil's offence(s) can be issued with a penalty notice, but this will usually only be the parent/parents who allowed the absence.

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

The Local Authority can issue a maximum of two penalty notices within a rolling three-year period:

First offence - The first time a Penalty Notice is issued the amount will be: £80 per parent, per child paid within 21 days. This increases to £160 per parent, per child if paid after day 21, until day 28. Any non-payment of the Penalty Notice may be referred to the Magistrates Court.

Second Offence (within 3 years) - the second time a Penalty Notice is issued the amount will be £160 per parent, per child paid within 28 days. Any non-payment of the Penalty Notice may be referred to the Magistrates Court.

Third Offence and Any Further Offences (within 3 years) - the third time an offence is committed a Penalty Notice will not be issued, and the case may be presented straight to the Magistrates' Court under s.444 of the Education Act (1996) or other legal interventions considered. The Magistrates' Court can order fines up to £2500 per parent, per child.

A penalty notice may also be issued where parents allow their child to be present in a public place during school hours without reasonable justification, during the first 5 days of a suspension or exclusion (where the school has notified the parents that the pupil must not be present in a public place on that day).

Notices to Improve

If the national threshold has been met and support is appropriate, but parents do not engage with offers of support, the school may offer a notice to improve to give parents a final chance to engage with support.

Notices to improve will be issued in line with processes set out in the local code of conduct for the local authority area in which the pupil attends school.

They will include:

- Details of the pupil's attendance record
 - The benefits of regular attendance and the duty of parents under section 7 of the Education Act 1996
 - Details of the support provided so far
 - Opportunities for further support, or to access previously provided support that was not engaged with
 - A clear warning that a penalty notice may be issued if attendance doesn't improve within the improvement period, along with details of what sufficient improvement looks like, which will be decided on a case-by-case basis
 - A clear timeframe of between 3 and 6 weeks for the improvement period
- A Penalty Notice may be issued as soon as an unauthorised absence is recorded.

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Strategies to Promote and Maintain High Standards of Attendance and Punctuality

- All parents are informed of the Policy and information on attendance in the School Prospectus. It is also accessible on the school website.
- The newsletter is used as a vehicle to promote this aspect of school life and serves as a reminder.
- Individual parents are approached where there is concern about their child's attendance or punctuality if it falls below 96%.
- Reward classes, children and groups of children for high attendance.
- Maintain up to date records within SIMS and StudyBugs.
- The school has a breakfast club which is open (from 7.45am) to any pupil whose parents wish to send them to attend. The club offers a healthy choice of breakfast including cereal, toast, fruit and drinks and a range of educational activities and games.
- Children in each year group with 100% attendance at the end of each term will be entered into a raffle (3 terms).
- Liaise with the ATTENDANCE OFFICER during regular monitoring visits to identify attendance concerns.

Pupils absent due to mental or physical ill health or SEND

Where a pupil has an education health and care (EHC) plan and their attendance falls, or the school becomes aware of barriers to attendance that related to the pupil's needs, the school will inform the local authority.

Procedures to support and improve attendance

Where a pupil or family needs support with attendance, it is important that the best placed person in the school works with and supports the family and wherever possible the person should be kept consistent.

Where a pattern of absence is at risk of becoming, or becomes, problematic St Augustine of Canterbury Catholic Primary School will draw on these relationships and listen to and understand the barriers to attendance the pupil or family is experiencing. In doing so, ST Augustine of Canterbury Catholic Primary School will take into consideration the sensitivity of some of the reasons for absence and understand the importance of school as a place of safety and support.

Procedures may include:

Telephone call to parent/carer to discuss attendance

Home visit

Attendance letters to parent/carer

Medical evidence letter

Meeting with Headteacher/Deputy Headteacher/SENCO to discuss attendance

Offers of support which may include referral to Family Solutions/Early Help or support interventions

Attendance contracts

Notice to Improve (see Notice to Improve information)

If attendance fails to improve a referral may be made to LA.

In the first instance, we will:

Stage 1:

- Support pupils and parents by working together to address any in-school barriers to attendance.
- Where barriers are outside of the school's control, all partners should work together to support pupils and parents to access any support they may need voluntarily. This may include meeting with pupils and parents at risk of persistent or severe absence to understand barriers to being in school and agreeing actions or interventions to address them. This may include referrals to services and organisations that can provide support. These actions should be regularly discussed and reviewed together with pupils and families.

Stage 2:

Where absence intensifies, so should the support provided, which will require the school to work in partnership with the local authority and other relevant partners:

- If the needs and barriers are individual to the pupil this may include provision of mentoring, 1-2-1 tuition or where appropriate an education, health and care plan or alternative provision.
- Where the needs are wider and a whole family response is more appropriate, this is likely to include a voluntary early help assessment.
- Where engagement in support is proving challenging, schools should hold more formal conversations with the parents. This is likely to be led by the senior leader responsible for attendance. These meetings should clearly explain the consequences of persistent and severe absence to the parent and carer and the potential need for legal intervention in future but should also be an opportunity to continue to listen to and understand the barriers to attendance and explain the help that is available to avoid those consequences.

Notices to Improve may be issued at Stage 2.

Stage 3:

Where voluntary support has not been effective and/or has not been engaged with, St Augustine of Canterbury Catholic Primary School will work with the local authority to:

- Put formal support in place in the form of a parenting contract or an education supervision order.
- Issue a fixed penalty notice where support would not be appropriate or has not been successful or engaged with and it is likely to change the parents' behaviour. (Refer to Penalty Notice Section)
- Intensify support through statutory children's social care involvement where there are safeguarding concerns, especially where absence becomes severe (below 50% attendance).
- 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.

In all cases, St Augustine of Canterbury Catholic Primary School the school will monitor the impact of any intervention(s) and make adjustments where necessary in discussion with the pupil, parents and any other partners involved as part of any whole family plan or team around the family. Where interventions are failing, all parties should work together to identify the reasons why and either adjust or change the approach.

Pupils with medical conditions or special educational needs and disabilities

Some pupils face greater barriers to attendance than their peers. These can include pupils who suffer from long term medical conditions or who have special educational needs and disabilities. 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 they are for any other pupil. That said, in working with their parents to improve attendance, St Augustine of Canterbury Catholic Primary School will be mindful of the barriers these pupils face and put additional support in place where necessary to help them access their full-time education. This should include:

- Having sensitive conversations and developing good support for pupils with physical or mental health conditions. For example, making reasonable adjustments where a pupil has a disability or putting in place an individual healthcare plan where needed. Considering whether additional support from external partners (including the local authority or health services) would be appropriate, making referrals in a timely manner and working together with those services to deliver any subsequent support.
- Working 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.

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.

- Ensure joined up pastoral care is in place where needed and consider whether a time-limited phased return to school would be appropriate, for example for those affected by anxiety about school attendance.
- Ensure data is regularly monitored for these groups including at governing body meetings and in Targeting Support Meetings with the local authority so that additional support from other partners is accessed where necessary.

Pupils with long term illnesses or other health needs may need additional support to continue their education, such as alternative provision provided by the local authority. Local authorities are responsible for arranging suitable education for children of compulsory school age who, because of health reasons, would otherwise not receive suitable education. Please see further information on supporting pupils with medical conditions at school.

In all cases, schools will be sensitive and avoid stigmatising pupils and parents and they should talk to pupils and parents and understand how they feel and what they think would help improve their attendance to develop individual approaches that meet an individual pupil's specific needs.

Equal opportunities

The school will consider religious and cultural diversity when using discretion to authorise absence for religious holidays. A pupil absence may be authorised on a day exclusively set aside for religious observance by the relevant religious body. Parents/carers should give 2 weeks notice of these days.

For requests which involve a family holiday abroad each case will be considered on its merits. A pupil may have family in another country and need to attend an important ceremony such as the funeral of a grandparent. It is important therefore that the Headteacher exercises discretion.

It will be made clear that if a pupil does not return after the agreed time then further absence will be unauthorised and if they have not returned within 2 weeks of the expected return date the pupil may be taken off roll and the parents/carers need to reapply for a school place.

Where a pupil has been continuously absent from the school for a period of 20 school days or more and:

- at no point has the absence been agreed by the school;
- the school does not have reasonable grounds to believe that the pupil is unable to attend because of sickness or an unavoidable cause; and
- the school has made reasonable efforts to find out the pupil's location, but they have not succeeded

Reduced/Part-time timetables

All pupils of compulsory school age are entitled to a full-time education. In very exceptional circumstances, where it is in a pupil's best interests, there may be a need for a temporary part-time timetable to meet their individual needs. For example, where a medical condition prevents a pupil from attending full-time education and a part-time timetable is considered as part of a re-integration package. A part-time timetable should not be used to manage a pupil's behaviour.

A part-time timetable must only be in place for the shortest time necessary and not be treated as a long-term solution. Any pastoral support programme or other agreement should have a time limit by which point the pupil is expected to attend fulltime, either at school or alternative provision.

There should also be formal arrangements in place for regularly reviewing it with the pupil and their parents. 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 treat absence as authorised. The School will inform the Local Authority of all Reduced Timetables (RTT).

Managing Absences and Lateness

- Issuing and checking registers on a weekly basis, ensuring parental letters informing about absence and lateness are brought in.
- Lateness is recorded on SIMS
- The ATTENDANCE OFFICER will check the registers on a termly basis for persistent absence or lateness.
- A letter will be sent to warn the parents/carers that the school is concerned and has referred the matter to the ATTENDANCE OFFICER. This letter will also notify the parents of the sanctions which could be applied if attendance does not improve.

Each child's unauthorised absences (including unauthorised holiday absences) will be noted and recorded on an annual report to parents.

It is a legal requirement for a school to report percentages of authorised and unauthorised absences to parents in the annual Governors Report. It is statutory to share all attendance data with the DFE.

Parents have a responsibility to telephone the school if their child is ill. If a child needs to be absent for a medical appointment a note must be received by the class teacher before the appointment. When a child returns from a period of absence due to sickness, a note must be provided. This will be noted in the register.

Where over the course of an academic year, a child has repeated periods of illness, the school will request parents 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.

The school will telephone the child's home to enquire about an absence if the parent has not contacted the school on the first day of absence, this will be escalated to include other emergency contacts on the child's records if the school are unable to make contact with the parents/carers.

If a child has been absent without an explanation, the absence will be marked unauthorised and the school will inform the Local Attendance Officer about the child's lack of attendance.

Where there is cause for concern, i.e. when attendance falls below 90% (persistent absence) in any term, the reasons for this will be investigated and where appropriate. The school will follow process prior to reaching 90% and a referral to Attendance Officer (AO).

Medical appointments

Medical appointments should not be made during school hours if at all possible. Should this be absolutely necessary then parents must sign their child/ren out and back in again. A log is kept for this purpose. Parents should come to the office, where a member of staff will contact the classroom and ask that the child comes down to reception to meet their parent/carer.

If a child has an appointment in a morning or afternoon session and does not attend school for the other session, this will be recorded as an unauthorised absence unless it has been agreed with the Headteacher.

Supporting Policies and Guidance:

Working together to improve school attendance: Guidance for maintained schools, academies, independent schools, and local authorities. August 2024

Working Together to Safeguard Children 2023

KCSIE 2024

Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy

Supporting Medical Conditions in School

KEY:

AO - Attendance Officer

SIMS - School Information Management System

DFE - Department for Education