



ST. AUGUSTINE OF CANTERBURY CATHOLIC PRIMARY SCHOOL

Attendance Policy

Mission Statement

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

The mission of our school is to support and further the teachings of Christ and His Church.

We welcome and embrace individuals of all abilities and cultural backgrounds.

We aim to enhance and celebrate their moral, physical, social and emotional development, so that they may reach their full potential in an atmosphere of stability, care and respect.

We believe that education is for all and in partnership with parents, carers, children and the wider Catholic community: we will strive and succeed in a wholly inclusive setting.

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 issued: September 2022

Date reviewed: October 2023

Date to be reviewed: September 2024

Introduction:

DfE Guidance: Working Together to Improve Attendance 2022 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. 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.

Irregular attendance will undermine a child's educational progress. There is also evidence which links non-attendance at school with criminality and anti-social behaviour in later life.

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:

- Promoting good attendance
- 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
- Ensuring every pupil has access to the full-time education to which they are entitled
- Acting early to address patterns of absence
- Building strong relationships with families to ensure pupils have the support in place to attend school.
- We will also promote and support punctuality in attending lessons.

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.
- Ensure school leaders fulfil expectations and statutory duties.
- 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.
- Ensure school staff receive adequate training on attendance.

The Designated Senior Leader 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:

Mrs Louise Prestidge (Headteacher and DSL)

Contact Details:

Email: headteacher@staugustine.medway.sch.uk

Telephone: 01634 371892

The Designated Senior Leader is responsible for:

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

The Attendance Officer

The school attendance officer is responsible for:

- Providing regular attendance reports to school staff and reporting concerns about attendance to the designated senior leader responsible for attendance (headteacher).
- Working with Local Authority Attendance Officers to tackle persistent absence
- Advising the headteacher when to issue fixed-penalty notices

The attendance officer is Mrs Yvonne Turner and 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, using the correct codes, 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, 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.
- Share good practice with other schools.
- Have procedures in place to help children settle in after a long absence.

We expect the parent to:

- Provide up to date contact numbers and changes of address.
- 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.
- Telephone the school after the first day of absence to advise the school if the absence is continuing.
- In cases of lengthy absence, keep the school well informed so that work can be sent home in certain cases and in order for the school to prepare for the child's return.

- 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.
- Understand the importance of good attendance and punctuality and promote this with their child.

Punctuality

The school day begins at 8.55am and the register will be taken at 8.55am. Children arriving at school after this time should report to the school office; children will be marked in the register as late. Children arriving after 9.15am will be registered as an unauthorised absence.

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.

Authorised and Unauthorised Absence

Absences can be authorised if they are for certain reasons e.g. sickness, absence following the death of a close member of the family, attendance of an interview or examination, participation in a regional or national sporting event.

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.

Examples of absences which will be 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.

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.

- 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 AAP during regular monitoring visits to identify attendance concerns.

Requests 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.

From September 2013, the Department for Education (DfE) amended the regulations governing requests for holidays in term time. Amendments to the Education (pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2006 make it clear that Head Teachers **MAY NOT** grant any holidays or other absences during term time unless there are exceptional circumstances.

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. 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.

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.

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 and may include the school's point of contact in the local authority School Attendance Support Team. 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.

Stage3:

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.
- 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

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.

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 AAP 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 AAP. 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 and 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 AAP about the child's lack of attendance.

Where there is cause for concern, i.e. when attendance falls below 90% in any term, the reasons for this will be investigated and where appropriate, discussed with the AAP during one of their regular visits.

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.

Sanctions

Where absences are unauthorised.

- Referral can be made to the AAP, where legal sanctions may be applied, in the usual manner.
- Where 10 unauthorised sessions (5 days) occur, the school, at the Headteacher's discretion, can apply to the LA for the issuing of a Penalty Notice*. This application would be made after consultation with the AAP.
- The offence of non-school attendance is absolute, and the legal requirement regarding evidence is simply that the child did not attend.

***£120 fine for each adult/carer in the household if paid within 28 days**

£60 fine for each adult/carer in the household if paid within 21 days

Failure to pay will result in a summons to the magistrate court

The payment must be paid direct to the local authority regardless of who issued the penalty notice.

If the penalty is not paid by the end of the 28-day period, the local authority must decide either to prosecute for the original offence to which the notice applies, or withdraw the notice. Parent(s) can only be prosecuted if 28 days have expired, and full payment has not been made. There is no right of appeal by parents against a fixed penalty notice. Monies collected through fixed penalty notices can only be used for the administration of the fixed penalty notice system or for prosecuting for the original offence in cases of non-payment. Any surplus at the end of the year must be returned to the Secretary of State. This policy complies with the current regulations, has been approved by the Governing Body.

Supporting Policies and Guidance:

Working together to improve school attendance: Guidance for maintained schools, academies, independent schools, and local authorities. September 2022

KCSIE 2023

Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy

Supporting Medical Conditions in School

KEY:

AAP - Attendance Advisory Practitioner

SIMS - School Information Management System

DFE - Department for Education