



St John's Church of England Primary School

Attendance Policy

This policy has been updated to reflect the Statutory Guidance -
Working together to improve school attendance - applicable from 19 August 2024

Date Approved:	Summer 2024
Headteacher:	Miss Anna Pyatt
Chair of Governors:	Mr Robin Davis
Review Date:	Spring 2026

Love, Respect, Value

St John's Church of England Primary School is committed to high expectations for all and to embracing equality.

'A school community has no higher task than to help children and young people develop a deep and proper sense of their worth.'

John Cox: More Than caring and Sharing page 51

Introduction

We believe that children cannot learn if they are absent from school. Therefore, we aim to ensure that all our children and young people take full advantage of the educational opportunities available to them and will strive to raise standards by promoting the regular attendance and punctuality of our pupils. We believe the foundation of securing good attendance is that our school is a calm, orderly, safe, and supportive environment where our pupils will want to be and are keen and ready to learn.

Rationale/Purpose

The purpose of this policy is to set out the school commitment and proactive approach to ensuring good attendance. Therefore, it details the expectations, formal procedures and specific approaches that support good attendance.

Aims

This policy aims to:

- To demonstrate that improving attendance is everyone's business and embed a 'support first' approach.
- To develop and maintain a whole school culture that promotes the benefits of good attendance and is an integral part of the school's ethos.
- To work with pupils and parents to remove any barriers to attendance by building strong and trusting relationships.

Attendance Targets

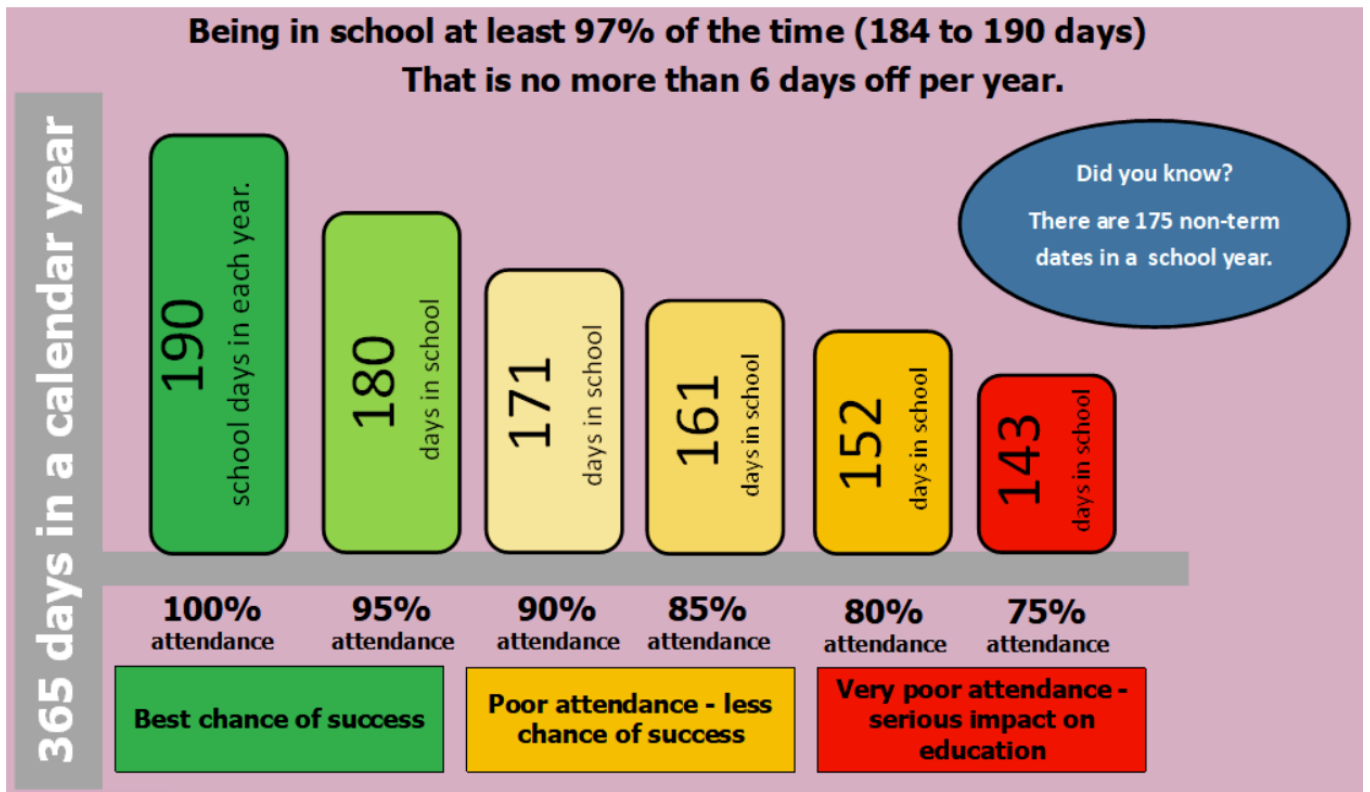
- To keep the whole school attendance at 96%. For each individual child, families should aim for a minimum of 97%.

Senior Attendance Champion

Miss Pyatt, as Headteacher, is the Senior Attendance Champion. Miss Pyatt will be supported by Mrs Moore - Safeguarding Officer and Family Support Advisor. They may be contacted via the school office.

Monitoring

We believe that unnecessary absence or lateness is a barrier to learning and progress. As a result, the school will monitor, on a regular basis, the attendance and punctuality of pupils in order to take action where there are concerns. The LA Attendance Officer monitors the school attendance data through regular meetings.



Expectations of Parents

Parents are responsible in law for ensuring that their children of compulsory school age receive an efficient education suitable to their age, ability, aptitude and any special educational needs that they may have. Most parents fulfil this responsibility by registering their children at a school.

Parents whose children are registered at a school are responsible for ensuring that their children attend and stay at school every day school is open.

Parents are responsible for:

- ensuring that their children arrive on time and know the importance of good attendance.
- instilling in their children an appreciation of the importance of attending school regularly.
- impressing upon their children the need to observe the school's code of conduct.
- informing the school **office** on the first day of absence, by **8:55** am at the latest.
- providing the school **office** with an explanation for the absence.
- informing the school **office** of any changes to their contact details. **This can be requested through the Arbor app.**
- taking an active interest in their children's school career, praising and encouraging good work and behaviour and attending Updates on Learning and other relevant meetings.
- working in partnership with the school to resolve issues and help the school to understand their child's barriers to attendance.
- proactively engage with the support offered by school to prevent the need for more formal support.
- If formal support is needed, proactively engage with this support to prevent the need for any legal intervention.
- booking any medical appointments around the school day where possible.

- only requesting leave of absence in exceptional circumstances and do so in advance. An absence request form will need to be completed in advance. It is at the discretion of the Headteacher as to whether an absence is authorised in full, part or no authorised (see Appendix A).
- treating staff with respect
- actively supporting the work of the school
- calling staff for help when they need it
- communicating as early as possible circumstances which may affect absence or require support
- ensuring that their children are collected on time. Children who have not been collected by 3:30pm will be placed into Eagle Club and the appropriate charge applied.

Expectations from Pupils

All pupils are expected to attend school, and all of their lessons, regularly and on time. They should also:

- be ready to learn
- not leave the school without permission and without signing out at reception

Expectation of the School

- To ensure a whole school culture of high attendance, underpinned by clear expectations, procedures and responsibilities are communicated to and understood by staff, pupils and families.
- Regularly review and understand attendance data to understand which individual families or groups of pupils need support to achieve good attendance and punctuality. Report regularly to the Governing Body and the Local Authority.
- Ensure that staff, pupils and families understand that absence from school is a potential safeguarding risk and understand their role in keeping pupils safe. For school staff - <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/keeping-children-safe-in-education--2>
- Have an attendance policy, ensuring compliance with <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/working-together-to-improve-school-attendance>
- Develop good support for children with medical conditions (including the use of individual healthcare plans), mental health problems and special educational needs (SEND). Ensuring compliance with Statutory Guidance for governing bodies of maintained schools and proprietors of academies in England December 2015 - Supporting pupils at school with medical conditions - [Supporting pupils with medical conditions at school - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/supporting-pupils-at-school-with-medical-conditions)
- Ensuring accurate completion of admission and attendance registers.
- Ensure that all staff adopt a consistent approach in dealing with absence and lateness.
- Building and modeling respectful relationships with staff, pupils, families and other stakeholders in order to secure their trust and engagement. Making sure there is a welcoming and positive culture across the school.
- Open and honest communication with staff, pupils and families about their expectations of school life and performance so that they understand what to expect and what is expected of them.
- Liaising with other agencies working with pupils and their families to support attendance, for example, where a young person has a social worker or is otherwise vulnerable.
- Sharing information on and working collaboratively with other schools in the area, LA's and other partners when absence is at risk of becoming severe or persistent.
- Ensuring the school attendance policy is applied fairly and consistently and recognises the individual needs of pupils and their families who have specific barriers to attendance. Schools should consider their obligations under the Equality Act 2010 and the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child.

- Ensuring all staff members:
 - treat pupils with dignity
 - build relationships rooted in mutual respect and observe proper boundaries
 - take into consideration the vulnerability of some pupils and the ways in which this might contribute to absence, handling confidential information sensitively
 - understand the importance of school as a place of safety where pupils can enjoy trusted relationships with staff and pupils, particularly for children with a social worker and those who have experienced adversity.
 - communicate effectively with families regarding pupils' attendance and well-being
 - deliver clear messages about expectations, routines and consequences to new pupils and families through prospectus and admission/transition events
 - reinforce routines and expectations on arrival and departure
 - regularly communicate expectations for attendance and punctuality and school performance through regular channels of communication with staff, pupils and parents
 - establish and monitor implementation of sanctions for absence and lateness. Provide positive feedback where applicable
 - Establishing and ensuring implementation and robust monitoring of arrangements to identify, report and support children missing education (CME) or at risk of becoming CME

Specific roles within school are detailed later in this policy.

Working with the Local Authority

- Our school works in partnership with the Statutory Attendance & Participation Team to devise a strategic approach to attendance.
- The Headteacher/Attendance Lead will meet with the link LAAO (Local Authority Attendance Officer) when required to discuss and improve attendance for all persistently absent or severely absent pupils.
- Action Plans will be developed for all persistently and severely absent pupils. The school may request support from the LAAO for advice and guidance with the implementation of these action plans.
- If parents do not proactively engage with support offered through the action plan, then formal intervention may be requested from the LAAO.
- If parents do not engage with formal support, the school may request statutory intervention from the Local Authority.
- Statutory intervention can include:
 - Attendance Contract
 - Fixed Penalty Notice application from school
 - Parenting Order
 - Education Supervision Order
 - Prosecution

Punctuality (Getting to School On Time)

It is important that children arrive at school on time so they have a positive start to their day and don't miss out on vital learning opportunities.

- We operate a soft start to the school day with doors opening for Y1-6 between 8.40am and 8:49:59am and for Reception at 8.50am until 8:59:59am. All children who do not arrive in their arrival time slot will need to be signed in through the main school office. Parents must stay with their children and complete a late form giving the reason for their late arrival. If a child is in Upper Key Stage 2 and walks to school independently, they will need to complete the late form and office staff will inform their parents of their late arrival at school.
 - Registration will take place at the start of each morning and afternoon session. This means Registers will be taken by 9am for the morning session. In the afternoon, the register will be taken within 10 minutes of the children returning to the classroom.
 - Pupils who arrive after their arrival slot but before registers close will be marked as late in the registers (Code L).
 - Pupils who arrive after 9:00am when registers close will be marked with the code U - Unauthorised absence
 - Where there are exceptional reasons for late arrival, a parent whose child arrives after registers close may make a request, in writing, providing the details of the exceptional circumstances for consideration by the Headteacher. At the Headteacher's discretion, the absence may be changed from an unauthorised absence to authorised.
- The table below shows when registers close

	AM register	PM register
Reception	9:00	12:40
Years 1 and 2	9:00	12:40
Years 3 and 4	9:00	1:15
Years 5 and 6	9:00	1:55

- School may arrange a meeting with parents to discuss concerns so that the problem can be addressed.

Pupils at Risk of Persistent Absence

School is expected to:

- Proactively use data to identify pupils at risk of poor attendance.
- Work with each identified pupil and their parents to understand and address the reasons for absence, including any in-school barriers to attendance.
- Signpost and support parents to access any required services where out of school barriers are identified.
- If the issue persists, take an active part in a multi-agency effort with the Local Authority and other partners.

- Act as the Lead Practitioner where all partners agree that the school is the best placed lead service.
- Where the Lead Practitioner is outside of the school, continue to work with the Local Authority and partners.

Pupils who are persistently absent

Persistent absence occurs when a child's attendance is at or falls below 90%. Absenteeism at this level will considerably damage a pupil's educational prospects and the school will work alongside parents/carers to tackle this issue.

School is expected to:

- Continue support as for pupils at risk of becoming persistently absent.
- Ensure additional targeted support is in place to remove any barriers. Where necessary this includes working with partners.
- If there is lack of engagement, hold more formal conversations with parents, being clear about the potential need for legal intervention in future.
- Where support is not working or being engaged with, work with the Local Authority on legal intervention.
- If there are safeguarding concerns, intensify support through statutory children's social care.
- Work with other local schools, such as schools previously attended or schools of siblings.

Pupils who are severely absent

Severe absence occurs when a child's attendance is at or falls below 50%.

School is expected to:

- Continue support as for pupils who are persistently absent.
- Agree a joint approach for all pupils who are severely absent with the Local Authority.
- Pupils who are severely absent may be at risk of CCE/CSE/grooming etc. and teachers must ensure this cohort is made the top priority for action and support.
- You must be especially conscious of any potential safeguarding issues ensuring joint working between the school, children's social care services and other statutory safeguarding partners.
- Often severely absent pupils have additional needs and therefore it is vital that school ensure all appropriate services are informed and aware of the pupil's absence so suitable support can be considered, and education provided/accessed.

Absence

Only the school can authorise an absence. The fact that a parent has provided a note or other explanation (telephone call or personal contact) in relation to a particular absence does not, of itself, oblige the school to accept it, if the school does not accept the explanation offered as a valid reason for

absence.

If, after further investigation doubt remains about the explanation offered – or when no explanation is forthcoming at all – the absence will be treated as unauthorised and the parent informed.

- Leave of absence must be applied for in advance. It is the Headteacher's decision as to whether this is granted because of exceptional circumstances relating to the application (parents cannot expect, as of right, that the school will grant leave of absence).
- Leave of absence to allow a pupil to take part in a performance within the meaning of s37 of the Children and Young Persons Act 1963 © for which a child performance licence has been issued. HCC will not issue a child performance licence where absence is required without the written permission of the Headteacher.

All leave of absences must be made using the school's Absence Request Form (Link in Appendix A) and the parent should request any information to support their request for exceptional leave. This can include letters showing a hospital procedure, invitation to sit an entrance examination etc.

Penalty Notices

We always strive to work with parents/carers to address attendance and punctuality issues. There is now a National Framework for penalty notices. The full details of which are contained within [Working Together to Improve School Attendance](#)

If a pupil has at least 10 sessions (half day= 1 session) unauthorised absence in a 10 week rolling period, the Head Teacher is required to review whether it is appropriate to ask the Local Authority to issue a Penalty Notice. The 10 week rolling period can be consecutive i.e 5 school days missed due to a term time holiday or no i.e. being late after registers close 10 times. The period of 10 school weeks can also span different terms or school years. The National Framework does not prevent a penalty notice from being used in other cases where an offence has been committed. For example, where parents are deliberately avoiding the national threshold by taking several term time holidays below threshold, or for repeated absence for family events.

A penalty notice is an out of court settlement which is intended to change behaviour without the need for criminal prosecution. If repeated penalty notices are being issued and they are not working to change behaviour they are unlikely to be most appropriate tool. Therefore, from autumn term 2024, only 2 penalty notices can be issued to the same parent in respect of the same child within a 3 year rolling period and any second notice within that period is charged at a higher rate:

- The first penalty notice issued to a parent in respect of a particular pupil will be charged at £160 if paid within 28 days. This will be reduced to £80 if paid within 21 days.
- A second penalty notice issued to the same parent in respect of the same pupil is charged at a flat rate of £160 if paid within 28 days.
- A third penalty notice cannot be issued to the same parent in respect of the same child within 3 years of the date of issue of the first. In a case where the national threshold is met for a third time (or subsequent times) within those 3 years, alternative action should be taken instead. This will often include considering prosecution, but may include other tools such as one of the other attendance legal interventions. The 3 years still applies where a child has moved within

schools/Local Authority areas.

Please be aware that penalty notices are issued to a parent in relation to a particular child e.g. if two children go on an unauthorised holiday with two of their parents, they can result in penalty notices of £640 being issued - £160 per child, per parent.

All those defined as a parent under section 576 of the Education Act 1996 are considered to be parents for the purpose of these provisions. As with prosecutions under section 444 of the Education Act 1996 a penalty notice may be issued to each parent liable for the offense in respect of each child.

Follow guidance on HCC Grid when considering a Fixed Penalty Notice - <https://thegrid.org.uk/admissions-attendance-travel-to-school/attendance/penalty-notices-for-unauthorised-absenceholiday>

Part-time Timetables

- As part of the framework for the inspection of services for children in need of help and protection, children looked after, and care leavers (Ofsted June 2015) local authorities are required to provide detailed data on school age children in their area who are not in receipt of full-time education and schools are similarly expected to maintain data on students of compulsory school age who are on their roll but attending on a part-time timetable.
- The Local authority has published guidance for all maintained school, academies, free schools, studio schools, UTCs, ESCs and PSBs on the use of part-time timetables for pupils of compulsory school age (the term after their fifth birthday to the last Friday in June following their 16th birthday)
- All schools are required to return information on children who are on part-time tables within five days of the pupil starting or ending a part-time timetable. In Hertfordshire, schools are able to report by logging into the Reduced Timetables Portal

Follow guidance from HCC Grid when considering a part-time timetable - <https://thegrid.org.uk/admissions-attendance-travel-to-school/attendance/part-time-timetables>

The Role of the Headteacher/Attendance Lead

- Monitoring and analysing attendance data regularly to allow early intervention to address issues. This includes raising concerns with other agencies like children's social care and early help services which are working with families.
- Ensuring a positive working relationship with the LAAO is fostered, including attending Attendance Targeted Support Meetings.
- Communicating messages to pupils and parents
- School attendance, safeguarding and pastoral support policies which should clearly outline:
 - the key principles
 - rules pupils need to follow
 - routines
 - consequence systems
- If required, holding regular meetings with the parents of pupils who the school (and/or Local Authority) consider to be vulnerable or are persistently or severely absent to discuss attendance

and engagement at school.

- Undertaking home visits in line with school's safeguarding responsibilities to engage families and ensure children are safe.
- Identifying pupils who need support from wider partners as quickly as possible and make the necessary referrals.
- Making sure escalation procedures to address absence are initiated proactively, understood by pupils and families, implemented consistently and their impact reviewed regularly.
- ensuring that the Local Authority is notified of any pupil who fails to attend school regularly via a **10 Day Absence Form**.

The Role of Teaching Staff

- Ensuring that the registers are taken at the start of the morning session and once during the afternoon session and are accurate and up to-date;
- Reviewing class and individual attendance patterns;
- Informing the school attendance champion/line manager of any concerns;
- Emphasising with pupils the importance of punctuality and good attendance;
- Reminding parents of their commitment to this policy.

Pupils at risk of severe or persistent absence

Welcome pupils back following an absence and provide good catch-up support to build confidence and bridge gaps. This could include:

- lesson resources
- buddy support
- one to one input
- meet with parents to discuss absence, patterns, barriers and problems
- establish action plans to remove barriers, provide additional support and set targets. This could include:
 - lunchtime arrangements
 - support with uniform, transport, wake up routines or emotional wellbeing
 - lead daily or weekly check-ins to review progress and the impact of support
 - make regular contact with families to discuss progress
 - consider what support for re-engagement might be needed, including for vulnerable groups
 - prepare supporting resources to ensure pupils can access learning when they return
 - develop targeted intervention to address gaps and build pupils' confidence (including considering small group additional support)
 - contribute to action plans which attendance staff draw together where appropriate
 - provide tailored praise and encouragement when pupils attend and arrive on time

The Role of the Office Staff, Pastoral Team and SOFSA

- To ensure the recording of attendance and absence data is accurate.
- To ensure robust day-to-day processes are in place.

- To track and follow up absence and poor punctuality (implement punctuality routines such as late gate or sign in procedures).
- Provide appropriate support and challenge to establish good registration practice.
- Carry out robust first day calling procedures including priority routines for vulnerable children including children with a social worker. If absence continues without explanation, further contact should be made to ensure safeguarding.
- Identify any absences that are not explained for each session and contact parents to understand why and when the pupil will return.
- Where absences are recorded as unexplained in the attendance register the correct code should be inputted as soon as the reason is ascertained, but no later than 5 working days after the session.
- Where reasonably possible, ensure that school holds more than one emergency contact number for each pupil.
- Keep parents informed on a regular basis of their child's attendance and absence record (this should be communicated to parents in an easy-to-understand format and percentage headlines should be avoided. For example, concentrate on the amount of time missed and the impact on the pupil's learning).
- Hold regular meetings with the parents of pupils who the school (and/or Local Authority) consider to be vulnerable or are persistently or severely absent to discuss attendance and engagement at school.
- Identify pupils who need support from wider partners as quickly as possible and make the necessary referrals.
- Undertake home visits in line with your safeguarding responsibilities to engage families and ensure children are safe.
- Identify and, where possible, mitigate potential barriers to good attendance in liaison with families and relevant support agencies.
- Implement children missing education (CME) procedures when appropriate -

See guidance on HCC Grid regarding Children Missing Education, <https://thegrid.org.uk/admissions-attendance-travel-to-school/attendance/children-missing-from-education>

- Where pupils have additional vulnerabilities, which may require multi-agency meetings try to arrange those meetings outside of lesson time, where possible.
- Engage with feeder schools or organisations to access absence information in order to identify target cohorts prior to transfer, including mid-year transfers and managed moves.

Pupils at risk of persistent absence

- Provide regular attendance reports to teachers to facilitate fortnightly reviews with leaders (including special educational needs coordinators, designated safeguarding leads and pupil premium leads) for monitoring and evaluation purposes
- Initiate and oversee the administration of absence procedures.
- This should include:
 - letters home

- engagement with local authorities and other external agencies and partners
- work with families and the community to identify which methods of communication work best, recognising potential barriers in hard-to-reach families and find methods that work and are understood
- consideration as to whether further interventions are required in line with the statutory guidance on parental responsibility measures
- provide regular reports to leaders on the at-risk cohort
- provide regular reports/caseloads to local authority attendance team or independent attendance organisations to raise awareness of emerging at-risk pupils

Pupils who are persistently absent

- Develop and implement persistent absence action plans with pupils and families which address barriers and help establish positive attendance routines
- Lead daily or weekly check-ins to review progress and impact of support, make regular contact with families to discuss progress
- Hold regular meetings or reviews of caseload with the Statutory Attendance & Participation Team (SAPT), external partners and alternative providers to check on welfare and review progress
- Liaise with school leaders (designated safeguarding, special educational needs coordinator and pastoral leads) on referrals to external agencies and multi-agency assessments
- Coordinate and contribute to multi-agency meetings to review progress and agree on actions
- Work in partnership with SAPT and other agencies to ensure the appropriate use of statutory parental responsibility measures
- Provide regular reports to leaders on the impact of action plans and interventions

Appendix A

[Blank Absence Request Form](#)