

ST GEORGE'S CHURCH OF ENGLAND FOUNDATION SCHOOL

"Every moment, every day, every individual counts"



ABSENCE POLICY

Last Reviewed: ***September 2020***

Next Review: ***September 2021***

Governors Monitoring Group: **Behaviour and Attitudes**

SLT Responsible: **Head of School (Primary)**

Review Period: **Annually**

"For the body does not consist of one member but of many" 1 Corinthians 12:14

HOPE

FORGIVENESS

COMPASSION

FRIENDSHIP

WISDOM

ST GEORGE'S C OF E FOUNDATION SCHOOL, BROADSTAIRS
ABSENCE POLICY

1. AIMS:

Our school aims to meet its obligations with regards to school attendance by:

- Promoting good attendance and reducing absence, including persistent absence
- Ensuring every pupil has access to full time education to which they are entitled
- Acting early to address patterns of absence

We will also support parents to perform their legal duty to ensure their children of compulsory school age attend regularly, and will promote and support punctuality in attending lessons.

Pupils are expected to:

- Attend school regularly
- Arrive on time and appropriately prepared for the day
- Inform their parents or a member of staff of any problem that may hinder them from attending school
- Accept help, support and guidance when offered

Parents are expected to:

- Ensure their children attend school regularly and punctually
- Contact the school whenever any problem occurs that may keep their child away from school
- Contact the school on the first day of absence and then follow this up with a letter explaining the absence/or medical evidence where available
- Ensure that their child arrives in school "Ready to Learn"
- Actively avoid taking family holidays during term time

Legislation and Guidance:

This policy meets the requirements of the school attendance guidance from the Department for Education (DfE) and refers to the DfE's statutory guidance on school attendance parental responsibility measures. These documents are drawn from the following legislation setting out the legal powers and duties that govern school attendance:

- The Education Act 1996
- The Education Act 2002
- The Education and Inspection Act 2006
- The Education (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2006
- The Education (Pupil Registration) (England) (Amendment) Regulations 2010, 2011, 2013 and 2016
- The Education (Penalty Notices) (England) (Amendment) Regulations 2013
- School attendance guidance 2020

This policy also refers to the DfE's guidance on the school census, which explains the persistent absence threshold.

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2. SCHOOL PROCEDURES:

Attendance Register:

By Law, all schools (except those where all pupils are boarders) are required to keep an attendance register, and all pupils must be placed on this register.

The attendance register will be taken at the start of the first session of each school day and once during the second session. It will mark whether every pupil is:

- Present
- Attending an approved off-site educational activity
- Absent
- Unable to attend due to exceptional circumstances
- Not attending in circumstances relating to Coronavirus (COVID - 19)

Every entry in the attendance register will be preserved for 3 years after the date on which the entry was made.

Pupils must arrive in school by 8.45 am, the register for the first session will be taken no later than 8.50 am and will be kept open until 8.50 am. Primary registration opens 8.45 am and closes at 8.55 am

Unplanned Absence:

Parents must notify the school on the first day of an unplanned absence, e.g. if their child is unable to attend due to ill health – by 9.00 am or as soon as practically possible. A text message will be sent out to parents to inform them of their child's absence if we do not receive a message informing us of the reason for absence between 9.15 am – 9.30 am.

Absence due to illness will be authorised unless the school has a genuine concern about the authenticity of the illness. If a pupils is absence more than 10 school sessions due to illness, medical evidence may be asked for to support the reason for absence, if we do not receive this, the absence may be unauthorised.

What Constitutes Medical Evidence:

- A letter from the GP, Consultant, Nurse
- Prescription
- Appointment Card, letter or text from the medical professional or other appropriate form of evidence

We will not ask for medical evidence unnecessarily.

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.

Medical or Dental Appointments:

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.

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We ask that parents inform us in advance of the medical/dental appointment and show the appointment letter, text or card clearly stating the time and venue of the appointment, a copy of this will be taken and put in the pupil's file.

Lateness and Punctuality:

A pupil who arrives late but before the register has closed will be marked as late, using the appropriate code.

A pupil who arrives after the register has closed will be marked as absent using the appropriate code (U). This absence is an unauthorised absence.

We will respond to ongoing punctuality issues by:

- Speaking to pupils to ascertain the reasons for lateness and offer support
- Contacting parents to inform them of the child's ongoing lateness to school to discuss what support can be put in place
- If a pupil accrues 10 or more sessions after the register has closed a penalty notice may be applied for.
- 10 minute late detentions are issued daily, these are escalated, where necessary to 1 hour St George's detentions.

Following up Absence:

The school will follow up any absences to ascertain the reason, ensure proper safeguarding action is taken where necessary, identify whether the absence is approved or not and identify the correct attendance code to use.

Granting approval for term time absence:

Headteachers may not grant any leave of absence during term time unless they consider there to be 'exceptional circumstances'.

We define 'exceptional circumstances' as:

AUTHORISED – only the Headteacher can authorise absence:

- Unavoidable medical appointments when supported by official medical documentation
- Recognised religious observance
- Bereavement and funeral of immediate family member
- Military requirements
- Traveller pupils travelling for occupational purposes – this covers Roma, English and Welsh Gypsies, Irish and Scottish Travellers, Showmen (fairground people), and Circus people, Bargess (occupational boat dwellers) and New Travellers. Absence may be authorised only when a Traveller family is known to be travelling for occupational purposes and has agreed this with the school but it is not known whether the pupil is attending educational provision.

UNAUTHORISED – the Headteacher will not authorise absence in the following circumstances:

- Shopping
- Birthdays
- Looking after other family members or attending appointments for other family members
- Waiting in for Trades people
- Holidays taken in term time
- Unapproved sporting events

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- If attendance falls below 95%, medical evidence must be provided to support the reason for absence. Without medical evidence the absence will be unauthorised
- Illness (if absence is prolonged the Headteacher may decide not to authorise the absence without medical evidence)
- Unexplained absence (no note/contact from parents)
- An unacceptable reason for absence is provided
- Requests for leave of absence during examination periods of if attendance falls below 95%

The school considers each application for term time absence individually, taking into account the specific facts, circumstances and relevant context behind the request. A leave of absence if granted entirely at the Headteacher's discretion.

Study Leave:

We believe pupils are best supported during exam periods by attending school, therefore, we do not grant study leave by default, when it is appropriate for pupils to have study leave, parents and pupils will be contacted and informed. Study leave will only be granted to pupils in Year 11, however, provision will still be made for pupils who wish to revise in school.

3. REPORTING ABSENCE:

It is the responsibility of the parents to inform the school of the reason for the child's absence as soon as possible. In normal circumstances this should be by 9.00 am on the first day of absence. Parents may inform the school by telephone, to Reception (Primary), Attendance Officer/Reception (Secondary) or by visiting the school in person. Registration is at 8.45 pm. Our registers will close at 8.50 am (Secondary), 8.55 am (Primary) and pupils arriving after this time will be marked as arriving late after the register has closed.

Where a child is ill the parents should notify the school of the nature of the illness and if possible, the date the child is expected to be able to resume attendance.

4. RESPONDING TO PERSISTENT NON ATTENDANCE:

If there is a concern about a particular pupil's absence the following procedures may be actioned dependent on the level of absence/lateness:

- Telephone call or letter to parents
- Meeting with parents, Head of Year, Education Welfare Office (Primary and Secondary), Class Teacher and Head of School (Primary)
- Home visit by the Education Welfare Officer
- Engagement with the Digital Front Door Team and/or other relevant support agencies, where appropriate
- Formal referral to the Inclusion and Attendance Service or penalty notice applied for

5. LEGAL SANCTIONS:

Schools can refer to the Local Authority for parents to receive a fine for the unauthorised absence of their child from school, where the child is of compulsory school age.

If issued with a penalty notice, parents must pay £60 within 21 days or £120 within 28 days. The payment must be made directly to the Local Authority.

The decision on whether or not to request a penalty notice ultimately rests with the Headteacher, following the Local Authority's code of conduct for issuing penalty notices. This may take into

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account, if the payment has not been made after 28 days, the Local Authority can decide whether to prosecute the parent or withdraw the notice.

The following circumstances will be considered as appropriate reasons for the issuing of Penalty Notices:

- Truancy, including truancy sweeps
- Parentally-condoned absences
- Unauthorised holiday
- Excessive holidays in term time
- Excessive delayed return from extended holidays
- Persistent lateness after the register has closed (The register will be closed at 8.50 am for Secondary and 8.55 am for Primary, pupils arriving after the register has closed will be issued with a 'U' mark)
- Issuing of penalty notices after 10 unauthorised absences

If the payment has not been made after 28 days, the Local Authority can decide whether to prosecute or withdraw the notice.

6. STRATEGIES FOR PROMOTING ATTENDANCE:

The school will:

- Set appropriate targets for individual, groups and school
- Complete accurate registers at the beginning of each session and at the start of each lesson
- Carry out attendance checks at appropriate times
- Record good attendance in Academic Overviews
- Reward and celebrate good individual pupil attendance
- Hold pre-referral meetings with parents and the relevant Class Teacher/Head of Year and Education Welfare Officer when there is a concern that a child may be experiencing difficulties in school that impact upon attendance
- Act upon parental, staff and agency requests for support with attendance issues
- Introduce a reintegration plan for pupils returning after long term absence
- Put in place preventative procedures wherever possible
- Offer a range of interventions and support aimed at overcoming barriers to learning which may impact upon attendance
- Liaise with appropriate external agencies
- Hold Governor Attendance Panel meetings where relevant termly with relevant poor attenders
- The Education Welfare Officer may carry out a home visit to support parents and pupils to discuss referrals or organise reintegration back into school
- During periods of illness the Education Welfare Officer will visit pupil and parents and remain as a link for school work and to organise reintegration back into school.
- Record any pupil not able to attend due to Coronavirus (COVID – 19) with an X code until they receive a negative test result. Following this the most appropriate code will be used.
(www.gov.uk/government/publications/school-attendance/addendum-recording-attendance-in-relation-to-coronavirus-covid-19-during-the-2020-to-2021-academic-year)

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7. ATTENDANCE MONITORING:

The Attendance Officer monitors pupil absence on a daily basis. Parents are expected to call the school in the morning by 9.00 am, wherever possible if their child is going to be absent due to ill health.

If a pupil's absence goes above 3 days we will contact the parents to discuss the reasons for this, if we cannot contact parents by phone/text, a home visit may be carried out. If after contacting parents a pupil's absence continues to rise, we will invite parents in for a pre-referral meeting and will inform parents that we may be referring to the Schools Liaison Officer.

The persistent absence threshold is 10%. If a pupil's individual overall absence rate is greater than or equal to 10%, the pupil will be classified as a persistent absentee.

Responding to Persistent non-attendance:

If there is a concern about a particular pupil's absence the following procedure may be actioned dependent on the level of absence/lateness:

- Telephone call or letter to parents
- Meeting with parents, Head of Year and Education Welfare Officer (Primary and Secondary), Class Teacher and Head of School (Primary) (Primary)
- Engagement with teams through the Digital Front Door and/or other relevant support agencies, where appropriate
- Formal referral to the Inclusion and Attendance Service or penalty notice applied for.

Pupil – level absence data is collected each term and published at National and Local Authority level through the DfE's school absence National statistics releases. The underlying school-level absence data is published alongside the National statistics. We compare our attendance data to the National average, and share this with Governors.

We collect our data weekly and use this to enable us to track the attendance of vulnerable groups, e.g. Pupil Premium, Children in Care, pupils with English as an additional language, we also use this data to highlight individual pupils whose attendance may have become a cause for concern and who may be in need of further support. The support offered may be one or all of the following:

- We will offer support through the Digital Front Door and other external agencies (if appropriate)
- We will collate any work missed and offer sessions to catch up any work missed, in homework club
- If pupils are unable to attend due to an ongoing medical condition a referral may be made to Kent Health Needs Education Service (if appropriate). The Education Welfare Officer will go out to visit on a regular basis to deliver work and remain as a link for the family/pupil and to arrange the reintegration back into school.

8. ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES:

The Governing Board:

The Governing Board is responsible for monitoring attendance figures for the whole school on at least a termly basis. It also holds the Headteacher to account for the implementation of this Policy. Meetings are held with the link Governor to discuss actions that are being implemented to support parents and pupils where attendance is a concern.

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Headteacher and Head of School (Primary):

- The Headteacher and Primary Headteacher are responsible for ensuring this Policy is implemented consistently across the school and for monitoring school level absence and data and reporting it to Governors.
- The Headteacher and Primary Headteacher also supports other staff in monitoring the attendance of individual pupils and issues fixed penalty notices, where necessary.

The Education Welfare Officer:

- Monitors attendance data at the school and individual pupil level
- Reports concerns about attendance to the Primary Headteacher
- Works closely with the Schools Liaison Officers to tackle persistent absence
- Arranges and calls meetings with parents to discuss attendance issues
- Advises the Headteacher when to apply for fixed penalty notices
- Will carry out home visits to discuss attendance and offer support
- Will collate information and refer to the Local Authority, where appropriate
- Liaise with outside agencies
- Will meet with Head of School (Primary) and Heads of Year weekly to discuss attendance concerns and to inform of actions taken to address poor attendance.

Class Teachers/Form Tutors:

- Class teachers/Form Tutors are responsible for accurately recording attendance during from time and promptly at the beginning of each lesson.
- Class teachers are responsible for alerting the Behaviour Support/missing pupils account for pupils who are missing from their lesson, if they have been present in the session previously.

Attendance Officer:

- Complete all documentation relating to attendance
- To make first day contact with parents of all non attenders, using PS Engage text/phone call
- To liaise with the Education Welfare Officer
- To provide accurate attendance data information for all the relevant stakeholders
- To ensure Heads of Year are aware of pupils with 6 unauthorised sessions of absence
- To deal with all day to day administration related to the school's registration system
- To check registers on a daily basis and maintain accurate records relating to the absence and punctuality of pupils
- To notify parents by PS Engage text/phone call if pupils leave the site without permission during the day.

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