

Attendance Policy

Author: Sarah Hawker (Headteacher)
Reviewed by: Sarah Hawker (Headteacher; 05/09/2021; 26/09/2022; with LAAO 01/09/2023)
Approved by: FGB 16/09/2021; Nigel Moorhouse (Chair of Governors; 26/09/2022; 13/10/23)
Version: 4.0
Date: 01/09/2023

1. Introduction

Park Street Church of England Primary School is a school with a Christian character and seeks to ensure that all who learn and work within the school are enabled to experience 'life in all its fullness' [Jn 10.10] - to be people 'fully alive' [St Irenaeus].

To this end, all of our work, our policies and our procedures seek to ensure that we honour God, love our neighbour as ourselves, do to others as we would have them do to us, we don't judge others, and we seek to be good stewards of God's creation. These basic tenets of our Christian faith inform our values of "Honesty and Respect, Friendship and Kindness, Learning and Fun."

2. Aims and Objectives

Our policy aims to

- Emphasise the importance to all pupils and families that maximum attendance at school is vital for achieving a child's full potential
- Reinforce the notion that every child has the right to access the education to which they are entitled and that parents are responsible in law for the regular and punctual attendance of their child.
- Make explicit to all (pupils, parents/carers, teachers) the school's expectations on attendance levels and support strategies to help pupils maximise their attendance.
- Promote a consistent approach across the school towards attendance matters
- Clarify the role and responsibilities of all parties linked to attendance at school and in the local authority.

3. Purpose

For a child to reach their educational potential, a high level of school attendance is essential. The school sees 96% attendance as a minimum expectation, although we will consistently work towards a goal of 100% attendance for all children. Every opportunity will be used to convey to pupils and their parents or carers the importance of regular and punctual attendance.

The aim of this Policy is to promote regular attendance for all pupils at the school and to ensure that effective systems are in place for dealing with absence. Promoting regular attendance is part of creating an effective school, which is committed to raising the levels of achievement of all its pupils.

This Policy has been written following consultation with the Local Authority Attendance Officer and is based on the most recent guidance from the Department of Education (DfE) and Cambridgeshire County Council (CCC). The principles of the Policy are explained to parents and there are regular reminders about the importance of good attendance on the *Latest News* page of the website.

For further information see <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/school-attendance> and <https://www.cambridgeshire.gov.uk/residents/children-and-families/schools-&-learning/education-your-rights-and-responsibilities/school-attendance/>

4. Roles and responsibilities

Parents have a legal duty to make sure that children attend school regularly, punctually, properly dressed and in a fit condition to learn. Permitting unauthorised absence from school is an offence under Section 444/441(a) of the Education Act 1996.

Park Street CofE Primary School expects all pupils to attend school regularly and punctually. The school encourages good attendance and will investigate unexplained or unjustified absenteeism.

The school is responsible for following up absences of pupils whose parents/carers have failed to inform the school of the reason why the pupil is absent. This may take the form of a text or phone call home if the parent/carer has not made contact.

Encouraging Attendance

At Park Street CofE Primary School, we take a number of steps to promote good attendance and punctuality.

- We know that all pupils are more likely to attend regularly if the curriculum is engaging and meets their needs. Therefore, the curriculum is monitored and developed to reflect the needs of all pupils.
- Attendance statistics are collected and used to inform pastoral and curriculum practices.
- There are regular reminders to parents and pupils about the importance of good attendance.
- Regular, structured meetings are held with the school's Local Authority Attendance Officer in order to identify and support those pupils whose attendance or punctuality is a source of concern.
- Termly reports are made by the Headteacher to the school's governing body on the issue of attendance/punctuality.
- A special certificate and badge is given at the end of the term to pupils who have 100% attendance for that term. A further reward is given to pupils who have 100% for one or more whole school years.
- All issues that may cause a pupil to experience attendance difficulties are to be promptly investigated by the class teacher and the Headteacher.

Working with Parents

We aim to establish a partnership with parents to promote good attendance and punctuality. The importance of regular attendance is stressed in the school website and at intake meetings for new parents. Parents are encouraged to discuss any problems that may arise with the school at the earliest opportunity and not to keep children away from school until they are resolved.

The school will work closely with the Local Authority Attendance Officer and Family Workers as necessary to support families in difficult circumstances.

5. Monitoring and Evaluation

Attendance figures are reported to Governors and statistics are collected by the DfE.

An attendance target is set by Governors each year and a report is prepared for each meeting which analyses attendance patterns.

The registers are checked regularly by the Headteacher and the Local Authority Attendance Officer to ensure that school systems are being followed.

Unauthorised term time leave (including holidays)

In accordance with the **Education (Pupil registration) (England) (Amendment) Regulations 2013** Headteachers may not grant any leave of absence during term time *unless there are exceptional circumstances*. Holidays during term time will not be authorised. Parents must apply in advance for any absence from school and the Headteacher will consider each case on an individual basis.

In line with CCC guidelines, any parent who takes a child out of school for term time leave for 6 consecutive sessions (3 days) or more over a 4 week period, not authorised by the school (under exceptional circumstances rule), may receive a Penalty Notice. **Therefore Penalty Notices may be issued for single event absences of at least 3 consecutive school days or more where these absences are unauthorised because they are neither exceptional nor unavoidable. For further information <https://www.cambridgeshire.gov.uk/residents/children-and-families/schools-&-learning/education-your-rights-and-responsibilities/term-time-holidays/>**

Penalty notices can be issued following discussion with the Local Authority Attendance Officer.

Please note that The Local Authority cannot override the decision made by the Headteacher to unauthorise the absence. If you have any reasons to believe the Penalty Notice should not have been issued please contact the school within 10 working days. There is no statutory right of appeal against the issuing of a Penalty Notice.

6. Procedures

Registration Practice

- **The school day starts at 8:45am and all children should be in school at this time.**
- Registration takes place twice a day at 9:00am and 1:00pm.
- Registration closes at 9:15am and 1:25pm
- The school use the Arbor system to record attendance. Teachers complete the register on this system online. The Office Administrator checks at 9.15 for reasons for any absences and contacts parents if this is not the case.
- Any child arriving in school after registration has been taken will be recorded as 'L' (late).
- Teachers should ensure that any child who arrives after the close of registration has reported to the school office to be signed in.
- Unauthorised absence at the beginning of the day is particularly damaging to a child's academic and social progress and for this reason will be treated very seriously by the school and the Local Authority Attendance Officer.
- The appropriate code for the absence is inserted by teachers if known, or administrative staff if not, during the checking process. Teachers and TAs should make a note of any relevant information, which may be provided to them by a parent, passing this to the Office Administrator. This will be destroyed after transference.
- Any child leaving the school for a medical appointment during the session is collected from the classroom by a member of staff and parents are asked to "sign them out" in the school office, so we have an accurate record of pupils on site for fire and evacuation purposes.

Absences

Absences from school will be either Authorised or Unauthorised, depending upon circumstance.

Authorised absences are where a pupil has been absent and a satisfactory and legal reason has been communicated to the school via a class teacher, direct to the attendance officer or whilst representing the school, educational visit. Other reasons may include: genuine illness, days of religious observance, unavoidable medical appointments, exceptional circumstances (bereavement, marriage of immediate family). The school expects authorised absences to be kept to a minimum and therefore routine medical and dental appointments should be arranged out of school hours or during school holidays wherever possible. **Where absence through illness has led to an attendance of below 95%, parents/carers will be expected to provide evidence of illness and/or medical appointments. (see below)**

Unauthorised absences are when no letter or acceptable explanation is provided by parents/carers or the reason provided is not deemed as acceptable by the school. Examples of these may be lateness after the end of registration, attending a birthday celebration, minding a house, caring for a sibling, lack of childcare, visiting relatives or going on holiday. The Headteacher, or a delegated Senior Leader, using DfE guidelines, makes the final decision about whether or not any absence is seen as authorised or unauthorised. Parents who wish to request absence may do so by completing an absence form (available via the school website and school office) and returning it to the school office before the absence occurs. Authorisation cannot be granted retrospectively.

Term-Time holidays

The school strongly discourages holidays being taken in term time as learning is disrupted and the lost time is detrimental to the educational progress of the child. Park Street CofE Primary School follows the DfE guidelines from September 2013 that stated that requests for long term leave can only be granted in exceptional circumstances and decisions are made on a case-by-case basis. No term time leave will be granted or deemed granted without a formal request on the appropriate forms (available from the school reception or the school website) being received and a written response given. Interviews following a request may be conducted prior to any decision being made. The school will not authorise any holidays retrospectively and may follow up any reported illnesses that we feel may have been a term time holiday.

In line with CCC guidelines, any parent who takes a child out of school for term time leave for 6 consecutive sessions (3 days) or more over a 4 week period, not authorised by the school (under exceptional circumstances rule), may receive a Penalty Notice. Therefore Penalty Notices may be issued for single event absences of at least 3 consecutive school days or more where these absences are unauthorised because they are neither exceptional nor unavoidable. For further information <https://www.cambridgeshire.gov.uk/residents/children-and-families/schools-&learning/education-your-rights-and-responsibilities/term-time-holidays/>

Penalty notices can be issued following discussion with the Local Authority Attendance Officer.

Illness

- Parents are asked to telephone the school office on the first day of their child's absence. A record of the reasons for absence is made on the attendance system and teachers are able to view this information in the classroom. Absence due to illness should be reported on a daily basis unless there are circumstances where the duration of absence is known in advance.
- If a child is absent for more than three days, parents are asked to phone again to confirm that the child is still unwell and they will also be asked to provide a doctor's note or other medical evidence such as an appointment card or prescription.
- If the child has a doctor's or medical appointment, parents are asked to show the office the appointment card/text message or appointment confirmation in order that the absence can be authorised.
- If there is any query about whether to authorise an absence, the administrative staff will check with the Headteacher.
- Once all the registers have been completed, an email or phone call is made to any family where a child is absent and a reason for the absence has not been received.
- If a child with safeguarding concerns is absent, the administrative staff will inform a Designated Person who will contact the relevant social worker.

Lateness

- If a child is not present when the register is called he or she is marked absence with an "N". This is followed up by the Administration staff in line the safeguarding policy by a phone call or text message to the parent to obtain a reason for absence.
- If a child arrives after the close of registration he or she must report to the school office and be signed in the late book. A note is made of the reason given for lateness. During the weekly check of registers, the administrative staff will code lateness as authorised (e.g. medical appointments before school,) or unauthorised (no reason given or unsuitable reason).
- If a child is persistently late, the child's class teacher may speak to the parents and if lateness continues, then a late letter will be sent to the parents.

Following up on absence

- Any member of staff who has a concern about attendance or patterns of absence of a pupil should raise their concerns with the Headteacher, who will make appropriate enquiries.
- The Headteacher checks the registers regularly to note any patterns of absence or lateness. Standard letters are sent to families where absence is causing concern and they are invited to discuss the situation (see Appendix).
- If no explanation for an absence has been received, an email is sent, reminding parents of the need to inform the school and requesting an explanation. Those parents who do not have email, will be phoned by the administrative staff.
- The school works closely with the Local Authority Attendance Officer who has meetings with the Headteacher regularly (often remotely), checking attendance and following up any families causing concern.
- Following the advice from our Local Authority Attendance Officer – if the attendance drops to 94% over a given period, parents may be required to provide medical evidence if the absence is due to illness. Evidence such as an appointment card or prescription is acceptable.

Monitoring Attendance

From September 2015 the DfE defines 10% absence as persistent absence. For example, if your child is absent for 2 or more days within 4 weeks without a valid reason (called an unauthorised absence), this would reach the persistent absence threshold. Please note that a day has two sessions, the morning and the afternoon, so if a child has a medical appointment, they are encouraged to come into school for one of the sessions.

- If attendance drops to 96% (that is, 4% absence) in a monitoring period of 2 – 6 weeks of which the absence is unauthorised, attendance Letter 1 will be generated and the attendance will be formally monitored. Parents will also be asked in future to provide medical evidence in the form of an appointment card, doctor's notes or prescription. If there are any particular circumstances that the school may not be aware of which is having an impact on the attendance, then they are encouraged to speak to their child's class teacher.
- If the attendance does not improve or drops further to 92%, a letter (Letter 2) will be sent to inform the parent and they will be invited to speak to either the Attendance Officer or the Headteacher to discuss ways forward. Advice and support will be offered to help improve the attendance.
- If the attendance does not improve or drops to 90%, the parent may be sent a letter (Letter 3) informing them that if the attendance fails to improve during the next 4 weeks, they may be referred to Cambridgeshire County Council for a Penalty Notice fine to be issued.
- If the attendance does not significantly improve and is between 86% - 89%, then they may be referred to Cambridgeshire County Council for a Penalty Notice fine.
- If the attendance after the third letter is at 90% or below, they may be referred to the EWO who will contact them directly to arrange a meeting.

Please note:

- If a child has a genuine reason for absence, the procedures above will not be implemented. However, if there are concerns about the pattern of a child's attendance, then the parent may be contacted to discuss this and offer support and advice.
- If your child has ongoing health issues, the parent may be contacted to see any additional support can be given.

Punctuality

It is vital that children arrive on time at school; important information is often given out at the start of the day. The gates are opened at 8.45am and children go straight into their classes to begin learning activities. The school gates close at 9:00am.

If a child arrives after 9.00am, pupils should be signed in at reception with a reason for lateness. The pupil register will be a code in line with CCC guidelines according to the time of arrival.

For children in Key Stage 1 and Key Stage 2:

- If a child arrives after 9.00a.m., they will be expected to enter the school building through the front office and sign in indicating their choice of dinner for the day.
- If a child is regularly late, the child's class teacher will contact the parent to discuss this and suggest ideas to improve the punctuality. This will be monitored for two weeks and then reviewed. Examples of "Regularly late" include being late several times in one week or late once or twice a week, for several weeks.
- If punctuality does not improve in the two weeks, a late letter will be sent and the parent encouraged to speak to the Headteacher to discuss ways forward.
- If there continues to be a problem with punctuality, the child may be referred to the Local Authority Attendance Officer.

Appendix 1: Attendance letters

LETTER ONE

Threshold 96%

Name and address of parent

Dear Parent,

Re: Name of pupil _____ Dob: _____ Park Street CofE Primary School

I am writing to advise you that _____ school attendance is causing concern as it has fallen to ___% and as a result we are becoming concerned that _____ is missing a significant part of learning.

I have enclosed a copy of _____ attendance record which shows an analysis of attendance, punctuality and whether the absence is authorised or unauthorised.

Regular attendance is extremely important as missing school can have an impact on learning, and as I am sure you are aware it is a legal requirement. Good attendance enables students to keep up with the work required.

I will continue to monitor _____ attendance and I look forward to seeing an improvement. If possible, and again if it is for medical reasons, please ensure we have relevant doctor's / appointment details or prescribed medication label.

If there are any particular circumstances that the school may not be aware of which is having an influence on _____ attending school regularly, please do not hesitate to contact me. However, it does no harm in speaking with the class teacher, because together we can make a difference.

Yours sincerely

Mrs Sarah Hawker
Headteacher

cc Local Authority Attendance Officer– *(for information only and to be available on request)*

Enc Record of attendance
School Attendance Leaflet

LETTER TWO

Threshold 92%

Name and address of parent

Re: Name of pupil _____ Dob: _____ Park Street CofE Primary School

Dear Parent

I am writing to inform you that _____ attendance is still causing concern. We are very worried that continued poor attendance is affecting _____ progress and we need to meet with you urgently.

You are required to attend a meeting with me to discuss this matter further at the date and time below.

Date:

Time:

Should _____ attendance remain irregular; the Local Authority may be requested to take more formal action. This could result in a Penalty Notice and/or prosecution through the Magistrates court for failing to ensure regular school attendance of your child under **Section 444 Education Act 1996**, and a fine of up to **£2500 and/or 3 months in prison**.

Medical evidence is now required for any future absences to be authorised with immediate effect.

We look forward to meeting you to discuss any concerns you may have so we can continue to support our students in making good progress and I hope that you will work with us to improve _____ attendance and therefore avoid the need for legal proceedings to be implemented. If you have any queries please do not hesitate to contact me on the number above.

Yours sincerely

Mrs Sarah Hawker
Headteacher

cc Local Authority Attendance Officer

Enc Record of Attendance
School Attendance Leaflet

LETTER THREE – PENALTY NOTICE WARNING

Threshold 90%

Dear _____

Re: Child Name: _____ DOB: _____

As the Attendance Officer for Park Street CofE Primary School, it has been brought to my attention that _____ has been absent from school for ___ sessions this school year/over the previous _____ weeks. I enclose a record of _____ attendance.

As parent(s) it is your legal responsibility, as stated under Section 444 of the Education Act 1996, to ensure that your child attends the school at which he/she is registered, regularly and punctually.

With effect from September 2015 schools have been advised by the government's Department for Education (DfE) that the Persistent Absence (PA) threshold will be reduced to 10%. Until this date it has been 15%.

This means that if a child/young person has an overall attendance of 90% or less over a given period, they will be classified as a persistent absentee pupil.

I am therefore writing to inform you that if attendance fails to improve during the next **(6)** weeks, the case may be referred to Cambridgeshire County Council for possible legal intervention.

Yours sincerely

Mrs Sarah Hawker
Headteacher

Enc. Record of Attendance
School Attendance Leaflet

LATE LETTER

Name and address of parent

Dear Parent

Re: Child Name: _____ DOB: _____

I have noted during a recent attendance review that your child is beginning to show a pattern of persistent lateness.

It is the duty of parents to ensure that children attend school regularly and punctually. This encourages habits of good timekeeping and lessens any possible classroom disruption.

If you are experiencing any difficulties regarding your child's education, I would welcome the opportunity of meeting with you to discuss this.

Please note that if your child arrives after registers close this will be recorded as an unauthorised absence. I must remind you that as parent(s) it is your legal responsibility, as stated under Section 444 of the Education Act 1996, to ensure that your child attends the school at which he/she is registered, regularly and punctually.

Failure to do so may result in a Penalty Notice being issued against you and/or legal proceedings being considered.

Yours sincerely

Mrs Sarah Hawker
Headteacher

Appendix 2: Register Codes

Register Code	Description
/	Present AM **
\	Present PM **
L	Late (before registers closed) marked as present **
I	Authorised absence due to illness (NOT medical or dental etc. appointments). This should also be used for pupils who have symptoms and/or have tested positive for Covid-19
M	Authorised absence due to medical/dental appointments
R	Authorised absence due to religious observance
S	Authorised absence due to study leave
T	Authorised absence due to traveller absence
H	Authorised absence due to agreed family holiday
E	Authorised absence as pupil is excluded, with no alternative provision made
C	Authorised absence as pupil is absent due to other authorised circumstances
B	Approved education activity as pupil being educated off site (NOT dual registration) **
D	Dual registered (at another establishment) - NOT counted in possible attendances **
J	Approved education activity as pupil is attending interview **
P	Approved education activity as pupil is attending an approved sporting activity **
V	Approved education activity as pupil is away on an educational visit or trip **
W	Approved education activity as pupil is attending work experience **
G	Unauthorised absence as pupil is on a family holiday, NOT agreed, or is taking days in excess of an agreed family holiday
U	Unauthorised absence as pupil arrived after registers closed
O	Unauthorised absence as pupil missed sessions for an unauthorised absence not covered by any other code/description
N	Unauthorised absence as pupil missed sessions for a reason that has not yet been provided

X	<p>Non-compulsory school age absence - not counted in possible attendances **</p> <p>Also Pupils who are required to self-isolate as they have symptoms or confirmed Covid-19</p> <p>Also pupils how are required to be in quarantine on arrival in or return to the UK</p> <p>At present, (Sept 2021) shielding is not in operation. Should it be advised again nationally or in the local area, non-attendance of affected pupils must be recorded as code X.</p> <p>Pupils who have symptoms and are self-isolating but unable to take a PCR test.</p>
Y	<p>Unable to attend due to exceptional circumstances - not counted in possible attendances.</p>
Z	<p>Pupil not yet on roll - not counted in possible attendances **</p>
#	<p>Planned whole or partial school closure - NOT counted in possible attendances **</p>