ATTENDANCE & PUNCTUALITY POLICY

St George's CE Primary School

Date of issue	September 2026
Attendance Lead	Miss Ann-Marie Preston
Senior leader with overall responsibility	Executive Headteacher
Approved by	Governing Body
Date approved	
Next review	September 2027

1. Aims

St George's CE Primary School is committed to securing excellent attendance and punctuality for all pupils. Regular attendance is essential for learning, wellbeing, relationships and participation in school life. Our approach is rooted in high expectations, early identification of concerns, strong relationships with families and a support-first response to barriers to attendance.

We aim to:

- Maintain whole-school attendance of at least 96%.
- Set high expectations for the attendance and punctuality of every pupil.
- Promote the benefits of regular attendance and recognise good and improving attendance.
- Reduce absence, including persistent and severe absence.
- Act early when patterns of absence or lateness emerge.
- Work in partnership with pupils and families to understand and remove barriers to attendance.
- Work effectively with the local authority and other services where additional support or formal intervention is required.
- Ensure attendance practice takes account of safeguarding, SEND, disability, medical needs and other individual circumstances.

2. Statutory framework and guidance

This policy has been updated with regard to the Department for Education's statutory guidance Working together to improve school attendance, updated in July 2026. It also reflects the School Attendance (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2024 and the national framework for penalty notices.

It should be read alongside current statutory guidance on Children Missing Education, Keeping Children Safe in Education, Supporting pupils at school with medical conditions, education for children with health needs who cannot attend school, and suspension and permanent exclusion.

The principal legislation includes the Education Act 1996, Education Act 2002, Education and Inspections Act 2006, School Attendance (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2024, and Education (Penalty Notices) (England) Regulations 2007 as amended.

3. Leadership and responsibilities

Governing Body

- Recognises the importance of school attendance and promotes it across the school's ethos and policies.
- Reviews attendance data and holds leaders to account for the implementation and effectiveness of the school's attendance approach.
- Ensures the school fulfils its statutory responsibilities.

Executive Headteacher

- Has overall responsibility for the strategic approach to attendance and punctuality.
- Ensures the school has appropriate systems, staffing and processes to improve attendance.
- Determines whether leave of absence may be granted in accordance with the 2024 Regulations and current statutory guidance.
- Works with the Attendance Lead and local authority where formal attendance intervention may be required.

Attendance Lead – Miss Ann-Marie Preston

- Leads the day-to-day monitoring and improvement of attendance and punctuality.
- Monitors whole-school, group and individual attendance data and identifies emerging patterns.
- Works with pupils and families to understand barriers and agree appropriate support.

- Coordinates attendance meetings, letters, plans and referrals where required.
- Liaises with the local authority School Attendance Team and other agencies.
- Reports attendance information and trends to senior leaders and governors.
- Promotes and coordinates the school's attendance incentives.

Class teachers and school staff

- Complete attendance registers accurately and on time.
- Promote a positive culture in which attendance and punctuality are valued.
- Share attendance concerns promptly with the Attendance Lead and safeguarding team where appropriate.
- Support agreed strategies for pupils experiencing barriers to attendance.

Parents and carers

- Ensure their child attends school every day it is open unless an absence is unavoidable or has been authorised.
- Ensure their child arrives on time and ready to learn.
- Contact school on the first morning of absence, provide the reason and expected return date, and keep school updated during extended absence.
- Arrange routine medical and dental appointments outside school hours wherever possible.
- Work with school and other services where attendance support is offered.
- Request any leave of absence in advance using the school's leave of absence form.

4. School attendance expectations

Our attendance target is a minimum of 96%. We want every pupil to attend as regularly as possible because absence interrupts learning and can affect relationships, routines, wellbeing and progress.

The school recognises that attendance percentages must always be considered in context. Pupils with medical conditions, SEND, disabilities or other significant barriers may require individual support and reasonable adjustments. Attendance action will be proportionate and sensitive to the circumstances of the child and family.

5. Attendance incentives and recognition

St George's promotes attendance positively. Our incentives are intended to encourage regular attendance and punctuality, recognise effort and improvement, and build a whole-school culture in which being in school and on time are valued. Attendance rewards sit alongside our support-first approach for pupils and families who experience barriers to attendance.

- Weekly recognition for the class with the best attendance, including the Attendance Bear.
- Certificates to recognise positive attendance.
- Termly recognition for pupils whose attendance is above 98%.
- A termly attendance reward activity for pupils with attendance above 98% or significantly improved attendance:
  - AUTUMN TERM – An attendance breakfast
  - SPRING TERM – A picnic
  - SUMMER TERM – An ice-cream parlour
- A weekly attendance and punctuality raffle. Every pupil who has achieved 100% attendance for that week and has had no late marks will be entered into the raffle. One pupil will be drawn at random and will receive a £15 Amazon voucher.
- A whole-class attendance challenge. Each class earns one letter from the word 'ATTENDANCE' for every school day on which the class achieves 100% attendance. Once the class has collected all ten letters to spell 'ATTENDANCE', the class earns a non-uniform day.
- Positive recognition of improved attendance where this is appropriate, particularly where a pupil or family has worked hard to overcome barriers.

Attendance incentives are reviewed regularly. The school may adapt the form of rewards and activities according to pupil voice, circumstances and available resources. The school will apply incentives sensitively and fairly, recognising that some absence may be unavoidable or related to medical needs, SEND, disability or other circumstances outside a pupil's control. Attendance rewards do not replace the school's responsibility to understand and support pupils who face barriers to attendance.

6. Registration and punctuality

The school gates open at 8:40am and close at 8:50am. Lessons and morning registration begin at 8:50am. Pupils should be in school and ready to learn by 8:50am. The morning register closes at 9:10am.

- A pupil arriving after 8:50am but before the register closes at 9:10am will be recorded as late (code L).
- A pupil arriving after the register has closed at 9:10am, without another applicable authorised reason, will be recorded as an unauthorised late arrival (code U) for that session.
- All pupils arriving after 8:50am must report to the school office so that their arrival time and reason for lateness can be recorded and the school's safeguarding and fire records remain accurate.
- Lateness is monitored. Where a pattern develops, Miss Ann-Marie Preston will contact the family to discuss the reasons, offer support and agree next steps.
- Persistent lateness after the register closes contributes to unauthorised absence and may count towards the national penalty notice threshold.

Punctuality matters because arriving late can mean missing teaching, instructions and routines at the beginning of the school day.

7. Reporting and responding to absence

Parents/carers should contact school on the first morning of every absence, giving the reason and expected return date. If school has not received a reason, a member of staff will make first-day contact.

Where contact cannot be made, or where an unexplained absence raises a safeguarding concern, school will take reasonable steps to establish the pupil's whereabouts and safety. This may include contacting additional emergency contacts, undertaking a home visit where appropriate, consulting the DSL and/or contacting other agencies.

Where an absence continues, the school will maintain appropriate contact with the family and may request further information where necessary to decide how the absence should be recorded. The school will not routinely require medical evidence for every illness, but may seek appropriate evidence where there are genuine concerns about the authenticity of illness or where support is needed for a long-term medical condition.

8. Authorised and unauthorised absence

The school records absence using the national attendance codes. Absence can only be authorised where the circumstances meet the requirements of the School Attendance (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2024.

Examples of authorised absence may include illness, certain medical or dental appointments, specified religious observance, and leave granted for exceptional circumstances. The correct national code will be used according to the circumstances.

Examples of absence that would normally be unauthorised include a family day out, shopping or hair appointments, a pupil's birthday, oversleeping, a holiday that has not been granted, or absence for which no satisfactory reason has been established.

9. Leave of absence and holidays in term time

There is no entitlement to a holiday during term time. Under the 2024 Regulations, the Executive Headteacher may grant a leave of absence only where the relevant statutory circumstances apply. For other requests for leave, the Executive Headteacher may grant leave where exceptional circumstances exist and will determine the number of school days the pupil may be absent.

Parents/carers wishing to request leave must complete the school's leave of absence form in advance wherever possible. Each request will be considered individually. A family holiday or leisure trip would not normally constitute exceptional circumstances.

Where leave has not been granted, the absence will be recorded using the appropriate unauthorised absence code. The school will consider whether the national threshold for a penalty notice has been met and whether a penalty notice is appropriate in the individual case.

10. Monitoring attendance and early intervention

Attendance is monitored regularly by Miss Ann-Marie Preston. The school uses attendance data to identify individual pupils and groups whose attendance is causing concern or showing a declining pattern.

Under the national definitions, a pupil is persistently absent when they miss 10% or more of possible sessions, and severely absent when they miss 50% or more. The school will not wait for a pupil to reach these thresholds before offering support.

Our response may include:

- Early conversation with the pupil and family.
- Attendance letters or telephone contact.
- A meeting with Miss Ann-Marie Preston to understand barriers and agree actions.
- An attendance support plan, including reasonable adjustments or help from other school staff and services where appropriate.
- Regular review of progress and attendance data.
- Working with the local authority School Attendance Team where absence is persistent, severe or support has not led to sufficient improvement.
- Safeguarding action where absence gives rise to concerns about a child's welfare.

Where a pupil has a social worker, youth justice worker or other relevant professional, school will share attendance information and work with them in accordance with statutory guidance and information-sharing requirements.

11. Formal attendance support and legal intervention

The school's approach is support first. Where voluntary support is not sufficient, not appropriate, or is not engaged with, the school and local authority may consider formal support or legal intervention in accordance with statutory guidance.

Possible interventions include a formal attendance contract, an Education Supervision Order, a School Attendance Order where relevant, a penalty notice, or prosecution. The appropriate course will depend on the circumstances of the individual case.

National penalty notice threshold

The national threshold is 10 sessions of unauthorised absence within a rolling period of 10 school weeks. The 10 sessions may arise from any combination of unauthorised absence, including unauthorised holiday and unauthorised late arrival after the register has closed.

Reaching the threshold does not mean that a penalty notice is automatically issued. The school must consider the individual case and whether support is appropriate. Where support is appropriate but has not worked or has not been engaged with, a Notice to Improve may be used before a penalty notice. In some cases, such as an unauthorised holiday, a penalty notice may be considered without a Notice to Improve where support would not be appropriate.

Penalty notice amounts

- First penalty notice for a particular pupil within a three-year period: £160 per parent, per child, reduced to £80 if paid within 21 days.
- Second penalty notice for the same pupil within three years: £160 per parent, per child, payable within 28 days, with no reduced rate.

- A third penalty notice cannot be issued to the same parent for the same pupil within the three-year period. Where further offences occur, the local authority may consider other legal action, including prosecution.

Penalty notices are issued by the local authority in accordance with the national framework and the local authority code of conduct.

12. Attendance registers and attendance codes

The school keeps its admission and attendance registers electronically. Attendance is recorded for every morning and afternoon session using the statutory national attendance codes.

Morning registration is taken at 8:50am and the morning register closes at 9:10am. Afternoon registration is completed by 1:00pm. Registers must be completed accurately and promptly.

The school will preserve every entry in the admission and attendance registers for six years from the date the entry was made, in accordance with the 2024 Regulations.

The school will provide attendance data to the Department for Education as required and will share attendance information with the local authority and other relevant agencies where there is a lawful basis and need to do so.

13. Key attendance codes

Code	Meaning	Use
/ / \	Present	Present at morning / afternoon registration.
L	Late before register closes	Arrives after 8:50am but before 9:10am.
U	Late after register closes	Arrives after 9:10am without another applicable authorised reason.
I	Illness	Unable to attend because of illness, including physical or mental health-related illness.
M	Medical/dental appointment	Absent for a medical or dental appointment.
R	Religious observance	Absence for a day set apart exclusively for religious observance by the relevant religious body.
C	Exceptional circumstances	Leave granted for other exceptional circumstances.
C1	Regulated performance/employment abroad	Leave for a regulated performance or regulated employment abroad.
C2	Temporary reduced timetable	Compulsory-school-age pupil not required to attend because of an agreed temporary reduced timetable.
G	Holiday not granted	Absent for a holiday that the school has not granted.
N	Reason not yet established	Reason for absence has not yet been established; this must be followed up and amended within the statutory timescale.
O	Other/unknown unauthorised absence	No reason established or the reason does not qualify for another authorised code.
V	Educational visit/trip	Attending an approved educational visit or trip.
B	Other approved educational activity	Attending an approved educational activity away from the school.
D	Dual registered	Attending another school at which the pupil is also registered.

E	Suspended/permanently excluded	Absent following suspension or permanent exclusion where no alternative provision is being attended.

14. Children Missing Education

The school recognises that unexplained or prolonged absence can be a safeguarding concern. Where a pupil's whereabouts are unknown or a pupil may meet the definition of a child missing education, the school will follow current statutory Children Missing Education guidance and work with the local authority.

A pupil will not simply be removed from the admission register because they have stopped attending. Any deletion from roll will only take place where a statutory ground for deletion applies and the required enquiries and notifications have been completed.

15. Pupils with SEND, disabilities, medical conditions or mental health needs

The school will work with families and relevant professionals to remove attendance barriers for pupils with SEND, disabilities, medical conditions or mental health needs. This may include reasonable adjustments, an individual healthcare plan, SEN support, pastoral support or other agreed arrangements.

Where a temporary reduced timetable is considered necessary, it will be used only in exceptional circumstances, for the shortest time necessary, with a clear plan for reintegration and regular review. It will not be used to manage behaviour or as an alternative to appropriate provision.

16. Equalities and safeguarding

St George's is committed to equality of opportunity and to ensuring that attendance practice does not unlawfully discriminate. Decisions will take account of individual circumstances and the school's duties under the Equality Act 2010, Children and Families Act 2014 and safeguarding legislation and guidance.

Attendance is everybody's business. Staff should remain alert to changes in attendance or punctuality that may indicate safeguarding, welfare, health, SEND or family difficulties and share concerns through the school's safeguarding procedures.

17. Monitoring and review

Miss Ann-Marie Preston will monitor implementation of this policy and attendance patterns throughout the year. Attendance information will be reported to the Executive Headteacher and Governing Body so that trends, groups and individual concerns can be scrutinised and appropriate action taken.

This policy will be reviewed at least annually and sooner where legislation, statutory guidance or local authority arrangements change.

Appendix 1 – St George's attendance response

Stage	**School response**
Every pupil	Promote belonging, punctuality and attendance; communicate expectations; recognise good and improving attendance.
Emerging concern	Review data and patterns; speak with pupil/family; identify barriers; offer early support.
Attendance declining / repeated lateness	Attendance Lead contact; agree actions; consider reasonable adjustments and other school support; monitor closely.
Persistent absence (10%+)	Targeted attendance support; regular review; consider wider services and local authority support.

Severe absence (50%+)	Intensive, coordinated support with the family and relevant local authority/safeguarding partners.
Unauthorised absence reaches national threshold	Consider individual circumstances and whether support, Notice to Improve, penalty notice request or another intervention is appropriate.

Appendix 2 – Key references

- Department for Education: Working together to improve school attendance – statutory guidance, updated July 2026.
- School Attendance (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2024.
- Education (Penalty Notices) (England) Regulations 2007, as amended, including the 2024 national framework.
- Department for Education: Children Missing Education – statutory guidance, updated September 2025.
- Keeping Children Safe in Education – current statutory guidance.
- Department for Education: Supporting pupils at school with medical conditions.
- Department for Education: Mental health issues affecting a pupil's attendance – guidance for schools.