



POLICY FOR ATTENDANCE AND PUNCTUALITY 2025

DATE APPROVED BY ST. STEPHEN'S CE PRIMARY SCHOOL	Autumn 25		
REVIEW DATE	Autumn 26		
HEAD TEACHER	E Bachour	DATE	Autumn 25
CHAIR OF GOVERNORS	A Bishop	DATE	Autumn 25

Aim of the Policy

1. To set high expectations for attendance and punctuality at St Stephens and outline the procedures and responsibilities of everyone involved in ensuring a whole school culture of high attendance.
2. To provide an effective and efficient system for monitoring attendance and punctuality.
3. To recognise the external factors which influence student attendance and punctuality and work with parents and the school to address these.
4. To identify possible safeguarding issues through the monitoring of lateness and poor attendance.
5. To encourage students to take full advantage of their educational opportunities by attending school regularly.

At St. Stephen's we believe that children can only learn effectively if they attend school regularly and on time. This is underpinned by research which shows that pupils with the highest attainment at the end of key stage 2 have higher rates of attendance over the key stage compared to those with the lowest attainment.¹ It is important too, that children arrive and leave school on time, without missing important elements of lessons or unnecessarily disrupting the class with late arrivals or early departures. We expect children to line up in the playground at 8:45 am ready for the school day to start at 8:50 am. The school day ends at 3:20 pm for EYFS and Key Stage 1 pupils and at 3:30 pm for Key Stage 2.

As attendance is crucial to effective learning and the continuity of learning experiences, school places great emphasis on this in its communication with parents.

However, for the wellbeing of the whole of our community, it is equally important that children should not be at school if they are unwell. We follow the NHS guidance for absence periods due to contagious diseases, infections, diarrhoea and vomiting.

The school has appointed a member of the senior leadership team as the Senior Attendance Champion who is the designated school leader for championing, supporting and improving attendance in school.

Senior Attendance Champion: Lydia Cuddy-Gibbs, Deputy Headteacher

Contact: 02088923462 or info@st-stephens.richmond.sch.uk

Types of Absence

A child's absence is calculated with one session equaling half a school day (either the morning or the afternoon session) and each absence session is classified as either authorized or unauthorized.

One day therefore equals 2 sessions.

Authorised absences are sessions away from school for the following reasons

- Medical/dental appointments. Authorisation for appointments will be given for appointments which unavoidably fall in school time and for which an appointment card is provided.
- Sickness. Please note that once absence drops below 90% medical, sickness or any other absences may only be authorized when a medical note is supplied.
- Emergencies.
- Exceptional circumstances.
- Absence for non-school sport or arts participation. Detailed information will be needed to authorise such absences.

¹ <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/working-together-to-improve-school-attendance>

- Exams/Interviews/Secondary school visits/transfer visits for another school - half a day's absence will be authorised for your child to visit another school, take an exam or attend an interview. If you need a whole day you will need to email the Headteacher at info@st-stephens.richmond.sch.uk and provide evidence of the need to request a whole day's absence.
- Religious observance - absence for a religious celebration will be authorised for the day of the event. Please note that we are unable to authorise any additional days other than the actual religious celebration or observance.

Unauthorised absences are those which the school does not consider reasonable. This includes events that could be scheduled outside of term time.

- Parents/carers keeping child at home unnecessarily
- Shopping
- Looking after other children
- Day trips and holidays not agreed
- Truancy before or during the school day
- Holidays in term time
- Dental appointments that are not considered an emergency / orthodontics

When a child's absence drops below 90%, medical proof is required after each absence. If medical evidence is not produced, each absence will be considered as **unauthorised**.

Legal Sanctions

When the child is of compulsory school age, schools can fine parents for the unauthorised absence of their child from school. St Stephen's CE Primary school will consider fining parents for unauthorised absence as follows:

If issued with a penalty notice, parents must pay £80 per child, per parent within 21 days or £160 within 28 days. The payment must be made directly to the local authority. All monies go to the local authority not to St Stephen's CE Primary School. The decision on whether or not to issue a penalty notice ultimately rests with the headteacher, following the local authority's code of conduct for issuing penalty notices.

Consideration may be given to:

- the number of unauthorised absences occurring within a rolling academic year
- one-off instances of irregular attendance, such as holidays taken in term time without permission
- where an excluded pupil is found in a public place during school hours without a justifiable reason
-

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

In the event of more than five consecutive days unauthorised absence/holiday, the school will inform the EWO (Education Welfare Officer) who will contact parents/carers directly.

All state funded schools must consider whether a penalty notice for absence is appropriate in each individual case where one of their pupils reaches the national threshold for considering a penalty notice. Statutory guidance states that schools should not have a blanket position of issuing or not issuing penalty notices and should make judgements on an individual case by case basis. The threshold is 10 sessions of unauthorised absence in a rolling period of 10 school weeks. A school week means any week in which there is at least one school session. This can be met with any combination of unauthorised absence (e.g. 4 sessions of holiday taken in term time plus 6 sessions of arriving late after the register closes all within 10

school weeks). These sessions can be consecutive (e.g. 10 sessions of holiday in one week) or not (e.g. 6 sessions of unauthorised absence taken in 1 week and 1 per week for the next 4 weeks). The period of 10 school weeks can also span different terms or school years (e.g. 2 sessions of unauthorised absence in the Summer Term and a further 8 within the Autumn Term).

Notices to Improve When a “Notice to Improve” is issued to parents, the school will refer to the guidance in the DfE document “Working together to improve school attendance”, pages 56 – 61 (https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/66bf300da44f1c4c23e5bd1b/Working_together_to_improve_school_attendance_-_August_2024.pdf)

Communication about absence

At the initial curriculum meetings held each year, the importance of regular attendance is discussed and explained. This talk also includes parents and children arriving at school on time so that each child can be given the best possible start to each school day. Being picked up on time is also stressed as children can be very upset if they are left.

Parents are asked to share any worries their child might have in school. Sometimes little things upset children which means they become unhappy, and may not want to come to school. We know that through strong communication with parents and carers we can remove barriers to attendance. We also know that support is vital in excellent attendance. By working supportively and in partnership with families we can improve attendance.

At this initial meeting it is stressed that parents must arrange their family holidays/trips within the school holidays, rather than in term time so that their child’s education is not disrupted. Holidays in term time will not be authorised. The Headteacher talks to those parents who persistently take their holidays in term time, reminding parents of the disruption to their child’s education.

School Procedures

Class registers are marked at 8.50 in the morning and at the start of the afternoon session (13:00 in EYFS and KS1 and 13:30 in KS2). Children who arrive after 9.00 are marked as **L** late **and if arrive after 9.20 are marked as U arrived after the register has closed. This will mean the session will be marked as an absence.**

Registers will also be taken for children attending early morning intervention groups and before/after school clubs.

All parents are asked to contact school on the first day if their child is absent. Parents should **phone the school** on 02088923462 and select option 1 **before 9 am** so that the school knows the child is safe. There is a dedicated absence line (option 1) where messages can be left before the start of school. A book is kept by the telephone to record any messages. Parents can send a follow up email to school when their child returns explaining the absence. All information is used to inform teachers when filling in their registers. Teachers will also ask the children on their return the reason for their absence.

If the school does not hear from a parent and a child is absent, a member of the office team will phone the parents to find out the reason for the absence. This procedure is followed in case a parent is unaware that their child is absent and to ensure that the school is fulfilling its safeguarding duty for all children as we know that absence can be an indication of wider safeguarding issues.

Parents are encouraged to make appointments out of school hours. If the appointments are within school hours, the school requires proof of the appointment, usually an appointment card or letter. If a parent knows that their child is likely to be absent for a significant period or to incur multiple appointments for health reasons, they are encouraged to come into school to discuss and plan around this where possible. Parents should email info@st-stephens.richmond.sch.uk and their child's year group email in advance with the necessary documents to request leave. Leave for holidays in term time is not authorised and, following the introduction of the national framework for penalty notices, may result in a fixed penalty notice or legal intervention. Should parents require any further information about attendance, they are welcome to speak to or email their child's class teacher, a member of our front desk office team and/or to the Senior Attendance Champion.

Punctuality

Punctuality is a skill that can become habitual. It is a mark of self-organisation that is an important aspect of education. It demonstrates respect and care which reinforce everything being taught at St Stephen's. Children's well-being can be adversely affected by being late.

Lateness can pose a safeguarding risk. Children coming into school and not reporting to the office may miss the register and become subject to poor attendance procedures. More importantly, a child not recorded in the register may be at serious risk during fire and emergency evacuations.

A member of SLT is usually on duty at the gate in the morning. Once the gate has closed, staff will not open it for late comers. Again this is to keep all of our community safe. Staff stress to latecomers the importance of arriving on time. They will be asked to walk to the Chertsey Road entrance so we can ensure that the children are registered. Please ensure that you stay with your child until they are marked as late in the school office. Children must not be left on their own by the gate.

Please note that all staff are asked to lock classroom doors immediately after the children have entered the class. Please do not ask the member of staff to open the door as this is a safeguarding risk to the children. We lock the door to keep children safe from any possible intruders.

If a child misses the start of the day they will miss the input of a lesson, possibly 1:1 work. In addition, latecomers can disrupt the lesson for others. Being late impacts on the child's ongoing learning. Every minute matters.

If a child is late more than once a week or is regularly late each week a letter is sent home explaining the problems that lateness can cause and asking the parents to ensure their child is brought into school on time. The Educational Welfare Officer will also become involved if lateness is persistent as again this is a risk to a child's education and wellbeing.

Late Pick Ups

Lateness in collecting children at the end of the school day can leave children feeling isolated, uncared for and causes distress. The school appreciates that from time to time events conspire to make people late. Parents and carers, please tell us if you expect to be late and help us reduce the worries.

If a parent does not arrive after 10 minutes, we may take your child to our wraparound care, Stars and ask you to pay for the session as we do not have any other facilities to look after children at this time.

Please note that if a child is regularly picked up late or is collected more than 30 minutes late on any occasion, this will be recorded and we may, as part of our safeguarding duty, be required to refer to the Local Authority.

COVID

Under the current NHS guidance, children with Covid, if well, should only be absent for 3 days.

Absence

For any absence, we will always encourage parents to provide evidence for the reason so that this is kept on record, e.g. antibiotics/medical letters. This helps the school to provide the Education Welfare Services (EWS) with reasons for a child's absence if attendance drops below a certain percentage.

Attendance below 96%

Once a child's attendance is below 96% a letter is sent home pointing out that the absence has reached a level at which monitoring of the child's attendance will begin. Please see the letter in the appendix. The school may ask for a doctor's note to provide evidence of a child's illness. A doctor's note may also be requested if there is a pattern of absences or if a child is absent 2 days before or after a school holiday.

If this pattern continues to a second half term, the parents are invited to a meeting with the Headteacher to discuss the reasons for the absence. The Educational Welfare Officer (EWO) may also be involved at this stage.

Attendance below 90%

If at the end of term, the attendance is below 90% the school will send a letter asking parents to attend a meeting with the head teacher to discuss the child's absence, please see letter in appendix. At the meeting, discussions will take place on the reasons for the high absence. Again, a doctor's note/ medical note will be required. If there is proof that a child has been in hospital this letter will not be sent. There may also be other extenuating circumstances e.g. bereavement of an immediate family member.

If this pattern continues to a second half term, the parents are invited to a meeting with the Headteacher and EWO to discuss the reasons for the absence. A doctor's note will be required at this stage.

If the child was on the persistent absence list from the previous academic year, the parent will be required to provide a medical note for every absence. Without this evidence, the absence will be marked unauthorised.

Attendance below 85%

If at the end of term, the attendance is below 85% the school will send a letter asking parents to attend a meeting with the Headteacher and EWO to discuss the child's absence, please see letter in appendix. At this point, a doctor's note / appointment card/ letter from GP will be required for every absence. If we do not receive this evidence, the absence will be marked unauthorized.

If the absences continue and are unauthorised, the Educational Welfare Officer will monitor this pattern and may take further action. E.g. legal/fixed penalty notices.

The school will inform the EWO if

- Any child is absent for 5 consecutive days and there is no contact from the parents/carers.
- A child is being issued with a 20 day notice letter.
- Parents have informed the school in writing that they intend to home educate their child.

Truancy

All the staff at St. Stephen's are concerned about children's regular attendance, and the importance of continuity in each child's learning. They are also concerned about each child's safety, welfare and happiness. Although it is a very rare occurrence for a child to truant, if there is a concern that a child might be truanting then action is taken straight away.

If truancy is suspected, the Headteacher is notified who then contacts the parent, either by phone, or by home visiting if possible, and the Educational Welfare Officer. Parents are encouraged to bring their child to school so that reasons for the child not wanting to attend can be discussed and hopefully resolved. In the event of not being able to talk to the parent then the Headteacher talks to the child concerned to find out if there are any worries or problems in school that might make that child not want to attend. If there are, then these are discussed with the class teacher and appropriate action is taken.

The Educational Welfare Officer (EWO)

The EWO comes to school once each half term. The EWO will look at the registers to check absences of individual children whose attendance is below 90%. Concerns are discussed.

During this visit, the School Business Leader and the SENCO talk about concerns and actions already taken. Together they discuss further possible actions. If the Head teacher has an urgent concern they will contact the EWO at the office for an emergency meeting.

If the EWO becomes involved they may take action which includes fines and legal action under the National Framework for Penalty Notices. Please see the Policy from Achieving for Children [Local Authority] Penalty Notices - Code of Conduct.

Child Missing from Education (CME)

If a child leaves and the new school is not known, the Educational Welfare Service will be alerted so that the child can be included on the database for missing pupils. If a parent or carer reports that a child has moved to a new school, we will remove the child from the school roll once we have received confirmation that the child has been placed elsewhere and have started at their new school by their new school and the EWS.

All children, regardless of their circumstances, are entitled to a full time education which is suitable to their age, ability, aptitude and any special educational needs they may have. Local authorities have a duty to establish, as far as it is possible to do so, the identity of children of compulsory school age who are missing education in their area.

A child going missing from education is a potential indicator of abuse or neglect. School staff should follow the school's procedures for dealing with children that go missing from education, particularly on repeat occasions, to help identify the risk of abuse and neglect, including sexual exploitation, and to help prevent the risks of their going missing in future.

We have in place appropriate safeguarding policies, procedures and responses for children who go missing from education, particularly on repeat occasions. It is essential that all staff are alert to signs to look out for and the individual triggers to be aware of when considering the risks of potential safeguarding concerns such as travelling to conflict zones, Female Genital Mutilation and forced marriage.

The law requires all schools to have an admission register and, with the exception of schools where all pupils are boarders, an attendance register. All pupils must be placed on both registers.

All schools must inform their local authority of any pupil who is going to be removed from the admission register where they:

- have been taken out of school by their parents and are being educated outside the school system e.g. home education;
- have ceased to attend school and no longer live within reasonable distance of the school at which they are registered;
- have been certified by the school medical officer as unlikely to be in a fit state of health to attend school before ceasing to be of compulsory school age, and neither he/she nor his/her parent has indicated the intention to continue to attend the school after ceasing to be of compulsory school age;
- are in custody for a period of more than four months due to a final court order and the proprietor does not reasonably believe they will be returning to the school at the end of that period; or,
- have been permanently excluded.

The local authority must be notified when a school is to remove a pupil from its register under the above circumstances. This should be done as soon as the grounds for offrolling are met, but no later than removing the pupil's name from the register. It is essential that schools comply with this duty, so that local authorities can, as part of their duty to identify children of compulsory school age who are missing education, follow up with any child who might be in danger of not receiving an education and who might be at risk of abuse or neglect.

At St. Stephen's, if we have been provided with a forwarding address and confirmation of the new school for the child in question, then we will notify the Admissions Department. If we do not have a new address or contact details of the new school the child's papers need to be sent to then we will make a referral to SPA for the attention of Educational Welfare.

All schools must inform the local authority of any pupil who fails to attend school regularly, or has been absent without the school's permission for a continuous period of 20 school days or more, at such intervals as are agreed between the school and the local authority (or in default of such agreement, at intervals determined by the Secretary of State). More information about CME can be found on the LSCB's website.



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Appendix 1

Dear.....

Child's name

(Date of birth)

Letter 1 (below 96% attendance)

It has come to my attention that.....'s attendance has become a cause for concern. I am enclosing a copy of the computerised register and as you will see so far this year his/her attendance stands at just, this equates to ...sessions missed, a session being half a day.

I am sure that you will appreciate that there is a direct link between attendance and achievement and that your child's education will begin to suffer if this pattern continues. If there are any concerns or circumstances affecting your child's attendance that we should be aware of please ensure that you speak to the class teacher.

We are required to continue monitoring his/her attendance, and am sure that an improvement will be made.

Thank you in advance for your support in this matter.

Yours sincerely

E Bachour

Headteacher



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Appendix 2

Dear.....

Child's name

(Date of birth)

Letter 2 (below 90% attendance)

I am writing to you again to express my concerns as 's attendance has not improved and is currently only.....% which is below the Government's acceptable level. If this pattern were to continue it would be the equivalent of 19 days absence a year or a yearly total of 5 weeks out of school. This is likely to impact on your child's overall progress.

I would like to invite you to meet with me to discuss this further, please call the school office to arrange an appointment.

Yours sincerely

E Bachour

Headteacher



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Letter 3 (below 85% attendance)

Dear Parent/Guardian of:

Child's name «First_Name_»«Surname_»

(Date of birth) «Date_of_Birth_»

I am writing to you again to express my concerns as «First_Name_»'s attendance is currently only «Percentage_Attendance_»% which is below the Government's acceptable level. This is likely to impact on your child's overall progress.

As outlined in our policy, from the date of this letter, we will now require an original paper copy of the doctor's appointment card [dated and stamped] or a doctor's note or a medical note explaining the high levels of absences. e.g. for a child with an ongoing medical condition.

Please make an appointment to see me if you require any support, would like to discuss this further or would like help with a referral to the school nurse.

Thank you in advance for your support in this matter.

Yours sincerely

E Bachour

Headteacher



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Appendix 4

Dear.....

Child's name

(Date of birth)

Letter 3 (below 85% attendance)

Unfortunately your child's attendance has not risen above acceptable levels and I am now referring the issue to the Education Welfare Officer responsible for our school. She shall be contacting you in the near future to discuss the situation.

Yours sincerely
E Bachour

Headteacher



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Appendix 4

Lateness Letter

Dear.....

Child's name

(Date of birth)

I have noticed that has been late on several occasions recently. Registers are marked at 8.50 am throughout our school. Children who arrive after 9.00am are marked as late, this will be recorded as an L. It is essential that children come to school every day, on time. We understand that school mornings can be hectic, but when your child is late for school they are missing out vital parts of their education.

If for any reason you are experiencing difficulties in getting your child to school on time, please contact us as soon as possible so that we may support you in every way. Thank you for your continued support in these matters. I am sure we will see a marked improvement.

Yours sincerely,

E Bachour

Headteacher