



St Catherine's
School & College

*Specialists in Speech, Language and
Communication Needs*

Attendance Policy

September 2024

Document Information

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Please note: throughout this document when referring to 'school' this refers to both St Catherine's School and Sixth Form sites.

1. Aims

This policy aims to show our commitment to meeting our obligations with regards to school attendance, including those laid out in the Department of Education's (DfE's) statutory guidance on working together to improve school attendance (August 2024) through our whole-school culture and ethos that values good attendance, including:

- Setting high expectations for the attendance and punctuality of all pupils
- Promoting good attendance and the benefits of good attendance
- Reducing absence including persistent and severe absence
- Ensuring every pupil has full and equal access to full-time education to which they are entitled
- Acting early to address patterns of absence
- Building strong relationships with families to make sure pupils have the support in place to attend school
- 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.

2. Legislation and guidance

This policy is based on the Department of Education's (DfE's) statutory guidance on working together to improve school attendance (August 2024) and school attendance parental responsibility measures. These documents are drawn from the following legislation setting out the legal powers and duties that govern school attendance:

- Part 6 of [The Education Act 1996](#)
- Part 3 of [The Education Act 2002](#)
- Part 7 of [The Education and Inspections Act 2006](#)
- [The Education \(Pupil Registration\) \(England\) Regulations 2006](#) (and [2010](#), [2011](#), [2013](#), [2016](#) amendments)
- [The Education \(Penalty Notices\) \(England\) \(Amendment\) Regulations 2013](#)

This policy also refers to:

- The DfE's guidance on the [school census](#), which explains the persistent absence threshold
- Keeping Children Safe in Education (KCSIE) 2024
- Mental health issues affecting a pupil's attendance: guidance for schools

3. Roles and responsibilities

3.1 The governing board

The governing board is responsible for:

- Setting high expectations of all school leaders, staff, pupils and parents
- Making sure school leaders fulfill expectations and statutory duties, including:
- Making sure the school records attendance accurately in the register and share the required information with the DfE and Local Authorities
- Making sure the school works effectively with local partners to help remove barriers to attendance and keeps them informed regarding specific pupils, where appropriate
- Recognising and promoting the importance of school
- Recognising and promoting the importance of school attendance across the school's policies and ethos
- Making sure the school's attendance management processes are delivered effectively, and that consistent support is provided for pupils who need it most by prioritising staff and resources
- Making sure the school has high aspirations for all pupils, but adapts processes and support to pupils' individual needs
- Regularly reviewing and challenging attendance data and helping school leaders focus improvement efforts on individual pupils or cohorts who need it most
- Working with school leaders to set goals or areas of focus for attendance and providing support and challenge
- Monitoring attendance figures for the whole school and repeatedly evaluating the effectiveness of the school's processes and improvement efforts to make sure they are meeting pupils needs
- Where the school is struggling with attendance, working with school leaders to develop a comprehensive action plan to improve attendance
- Making sure all staff receive adequate training on attendance as part of the regular continued professional development offer, so that staff understand:

- The importance of good attendance
- That absence is almost always a symptom of wider issues
- The school's legal requirements for keeping registers
- The school's strategies and procedures for tracking, following up on and improving attendance, including working with partners and keeping them informed regarding specific pupils, where appropriate
- Making sure dedicated training is provided to staff with a specific attendance function in their role, including in interpreting and analysing attendance data
- Holding the Principal to account for the implementation of this policy
- The St Catherine's safeguarding governor, who monitors attendance is: **Mr Danny Carmichael**

3.2 The Principal, supported by the wider senior leadership team and Family Liaison Officer is responsible for:

- The implementation of this policy at the school
- Monitoring school-level absence data and reporting it to governors
- Supporting staff with monitoring the attendance of individual pupils
- Monitoring the impact of any implemented attendance strategies
- Issuing fixed-penalty notices, where necessary, and/or authorising the Family Liaison Officer to be able to do so
- Working with the parents of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) to develop specific support approaches for attendance for pupils with SEND, including where school transport is regularly being missed, and where pupils with SEND face in-school barriers
- Communicating with the Local Authority when a pupil with an education, health and care (EHC) plan has falling attendance, or where there are barriers to attendance that relate to the pupil's needs
- Communicating the school's high expectations for attendance and punctuality regularly to pupils and parents through all available channels

3.3 The designated senior leader responsible for attendance

The designated senior leader is responsible for:

- Leading, championing and improving attendance across the school
- Setting a clear vision for improving and maintaining good attendance
- Evaluating and monitoring expectations and processes
- Having a strong grasp of absence data and oversight of absence data analysis
- Regularly monitoring and evaluating progress in attendance
- Establishing and maintaining effective systems for tackling absence, and making sure they are followed by all staff
- Liaising with pupils, parents/carers and external agencies, where needed
- Building close and productive relationships with parents to discuss and tackle attendance issues
- Creating intervention or reintegration plans in partnership with pupils and their parents/carers
- Delivering targeted intervention and support to pupils and families

The designated senior leader responsible for attendance is **Jenn Walker** and can be contacted via snaithj@stcatherines.org.uk

3.4 The Family Liaison Officer (FLO)

The Family Liaison Officer is responsible for:

- Monitoring and analysing attendance data (see section 7)
- Benchmarking attendance data to identify areas of focus for improvement
- Providing regular attendance reports to school staff and reporting concerns about attendance to the designated senior leader responsible for attendance, and the Principal
- Working with the local education and inclusion team to tackle persistent absence
- Advising the Principal when to issue fixed-penalty notices

The Family Liaison Officer is: Lucy Reed and can be contacted via: reedl@stcatherines.org.uk

3.5 Class teachers

Class tutors are responsible for recording attendance on a daily basis in the morning, using either present or inputting an N (if not already populated by FLO), and submitting this information to the school office. The afternoon register is taken by the teacher taking the class at the beginning of lesson 4.

3.6 School admin staff

School admin staff are expected to take calls from parents about absence and pass this information to the FLO and class team.

3.7 Parents and carers

Where this policy refers to a parent, it refers to the adult the school and/or Local Authority decides is most appropriate to work with, including:

- All natural parents, whether they are married or not
- All those who have parental responsibility for a child or young person
- Those who have day-to-day responsibility for the child (i.e. lives with and looks after them)

Parents are expected to:

- Make sure their child attends everyday on time
- Call the school or email the Family Liaison Officer, Class Teacher and general@stcatherines.org.uk to report their child's absence before 9am on the day of the absence and each subsequent day of absence), and advise when they are expected to return
- Provide the school with more than 1 emergency contact number for their child
- Ensure that, where possible, appointments for their child are made outside of the school day
- Provide evidence to the FLO of any appointments that are attended during the school day
- Keep to any attendance contracts that they make with the school and/or Local Authority
- Seek support, where necessary, for maintaining good attendance, by contacting Lucy Reed, who can be contacted via reedl@stcatherines.org.uk

4. School procedures

Recording attendance

4.1 Attendance register

We will keep an attendance register, and place all pupils onto this register.

We will take our attendance register at the start of the first session of each school day and once during the afternoon session. Class tutors /class teachers will only mark the pupils present or not – the FLO will then ensure the correct code is used for the absence following the DfE absence codes. See appendix 1 for the DfE attendance codes

Any amendment to the attendance register will include:

- The original entry
- The amended entry
- The reason for the amendment
- The date on which the amendment was made
- The name and position of the person who made the amendment

We will keep every entry on the attendance register for 3 years after the date on which the entry was made.

Pupils must arrive in school by 9.00am on each school day.

The register for the first session will be taken at 9.00am and will be kept open until 9.15am. The register for the second session will be taken at 1.30pm and will be kept open until 1.45pm.

4.2 Unplanned absence

The pupil's parent/carer must notify the school on the first day of an unplanned absence by 9.15am or as soon as practically possible (see also section 3.6).

Parents/Carers can either telephone the school on 01983 852722 (preferred) or send an email to the class team (via the form tutor) and also copy in the FLO (reedl@stcatherines.org.uk)

We will mark absence due to illness as authorised unless the school has a genuine concern about the authenticity of the illness.

If the authenticity of the illness is in doubt, the school may ask the pupil's parent/carer to provide medical evidence, such as a doctor's note, prescription, appointment card 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/carers will be notified of this.

4.3 Planned absence

Attending a medical or dental appointment will be counted as authorised as long as the pupil's parent/carer notifies the school in advance of the appointment.

Notification should be made in writing to the class tutor and the FLO, including the appointment card/letter.

However, we encourage parents/carers 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.

The pupil's parent/carer must also apply for other types of term-time absence as far in advance as possible of the requested absence, using the Leave of Absence (LoA) form.

4.4 Lateness and punctuality

A pupil who arrives late:

- Before the register has closed will be marked as late, using the appropriate code
- After the register has closed will be marked as late, using the appropriate code

4.5 Following up absence

Where any child we expect to attend school does not attend, or stops attending, the school will:

- Follow up on their absence with their parent/carer to ascertain the reason, by FLO or school nurses.
- Ensure proper safeguarding action is taken where necessary
- Identify whether the absence is approved or not
- Identify the correct attendance code to use
- Ensure Local Authorities are notified if absence exceeds 10 days.

4.6 Reporting to parents

The school reports attendance to parents via the end of year school report and termly on the academic data sheet.

5. Authorised and unauthorised absence

5.1 Approval for term-time absence

The Principal will only grant a leave of absence to pupils during term time if they consider there to be 'exceptional circumstances'. A leave of absence is granted at the Principal's discretion.

The school considers each application for term-time absence individually, taking into account the specific facts, circumstances and relevant context behind the request.

Valid reasons for **authorised absence** include:

- Illness and medical/dental appointments
- Religious observance – where the day is exclusively set apart for religious observance by the religious body to which the pupil's parents belong. If necessary, the school will seek advice from the parents' religious body to confirm whether the day is set apart
- Traveller pupils travelling for occupational purposes – this covers Roma, English and Welsh Gypsies, Irish and Scottish Travellers, Showmen (fairground people) and Circus people, Bargees (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

- Temporary Part-Time schooling requests – in line with the Local Authority to support some students returning to education after a period of absence or due to health problems a part-time schooling request for a short term to help integrate back into the class will be considered.

5.2 Planned absences during term time (Non medical)

Parents must complete a Leave of Absence request form (see Appendix 2) if they wish to apply for time out of School. This should be returned to principal@stcatherines.org.uk at least 7 days prior to the absence. Once the Principal has signed the form and added any comments The FLO will return it to parent/carer via email. The FLO will update Integris accordingly and share information with relevant staff.

5.3 Reducing persistent absence

The school will continue to monitor persistent absentees and offer support through the FLO. If this persists the parents will be invited in for a meeting to devise a support plan.

5.4 Legal sanctions

The school or local authority can fine parents for the unauthorised absence of their child from school, where the child is of compulsory school age.

If issued with a fine, or penalty notice, each parent must pay £80 within 21 days or £160 within 28 days. The payment must be made directly to the local authority. **A second Truancy Penalty Notice issued within three years is not eligible for the reduction to £80** (from August 2024). Thereafter if the Truancy Penalty Notice remains unpaid after 28 days this may result in legal action to be taken against the parents.

Penalty notices can be issued by a Principal, local authority officer or the police.

The decision on whether or not to issue a penalty notice may take into account:

- 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 or withdraw the notice.

6. Attendance monitoring

The Family Liaison Officer at our school monitors pupil absence on a daily basis.

A pupil's parent/carer is expected to call or email the school in the morning if their child is going to be absent due to ill health.

If a pupil's absence goes above 2 days, the school will contact the parent/carer of the pupil to discuss the reasons for this.

If a pupil's absence continues to rise after contacting their parent/carer, we will consider involving an Education Welfare Officer.

Pupil-level absence data will be 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. The school will compare attendance data to the national average, and share this with the governing board.

7. Analysing attendance

The school will:

- Analyse attendance and absence data regularly to identify pupils, groups or cohorts that need additional support with their attendance, and
- Identify pupils whose absences may be a cause for concern, especially those who demonstrate patterns of persistent or severe absence
- Conduct thorough analysis of half-termly, termly, and full-year data to identify patterns and trends
- Look at historic and emerging patterns of attendance and absence, and then develop strategies to address these patterns

7.1 Using data to improve attendance

The school will:

- Develop targeted actions to address patterns of absence (of all severities) of individual pupils, groups or cohorts that it has identified via data analysis
- Provide targeted support to the pupils it has identified whose absences may be a cause for concern, especially those who demonstrate patterns of persistent or severe absence, and their families
- Provide regular attendance reports to the integrated class team to facilitate discussions with pupils and families, and to the governing board and school leaders (including the designated safeguarding lead and pupil premium lead)
- Use data to monitor and evaluate the impact of any interventions put in place in order to modify them and inform future strategies
- Share information and work collaboratively with other schools in the area, Local Authorities and other partners where a pupil's absence is at risk of becoming persistent or severe, including keeping them informed regarding specific pupils, where appropriate

7.2 Reducing persistent and severe absence

Persistent absence is where a pupil misses 10% or more of school, and severe absence is where a pupil misses 50% or more of school. Reducing persistent and severe absence is central to the school's strategy for improving attendance.

The school will:

- Use attendance data to find patterns and trends of persistent and severe absence
- Consider potential safeguarding issues and, where suspected or present, address them in line with Keeping Children Safe in Education 2024
- Hold regular meetings with the parents of pupils who the school (and/or local authority) considers to be vulnerable or at risk of persistent or severe absence, or who are persistently or severely absent, to:
 - Discuss attendance and engagement at school
 - Listen, and understand barriers to attendance
 - Explain the help that is available
 - Explain the potential consequences of, and sanctions for, persistent and severe absence
 - Review any existing actions or interventions
 - Provide access to wider support services to remove the barriers to attendance, in conjunction with the Local Authority, where relevant
 - Consider alternative support that could be put in place to remove any barriers to attendance and re-engage these pupils. In doing so, the school will sensitively consider some of the reasons for absence
 - Implement sanctions, where necessary

8. Strategies for promoting and improving attendance

Good attendance is promoted and celebrated through our weekly newsletter, which is shared with all families. At the end of term, students with excellent attendance receive a certificate and reward prize. Top attenders are also put into a draw to win a voucher as a reward for excellent attendance.

The Family Liaison Officer monitors and analyses attendance closely and works with external services to manage and support any attendance that falls below expectations and/or causes concern. This will include working closely with families in order to offer pro-active support to improve attendance.

Excellent relationships with a range of external professionals ensure that a joined up approach is advocated in supporting families and individuals to improve attendance at school.

9. Supporting pupils who are absent or returning to school

9.1 Pupils absent due to complex barriers to attendance

We will look to support any pupil who presents with complex barriers to attendance, including working with families and implementing strategies for removing in-school barriers.

9.2 Pupils absent due to mental or physical ill health or SEND

Where students are absent from school due to mental or physical ill health or their SEND, we will look to support the student and their family by making any reasonable adjustments we can and providing any additional support required. This will extend to working with any other professionals working with that student and their family.

Where a pupil has an education health and care (EHC) plan and their attendance falls, or the school becomes aware of barriers to attendance that are related to the pupil's needs, the school will inform their Local Authority and SEN casework officer.

9.3 Pupils returning to school after a lengthy or unavoidable period of absence

When a student is returning to school after a period of absence, we will look to support flexibly and sensitively in order to achieve a positive and sustainable transition back into school.

10. Policy monitoring arrangements

This policy will be reviewed as guidance from the local authority or DfE is updated, and as a minimum every two years by the Principal.

11. Links with other policies

This policy links to the following policies:

- Child protection and safeguarding policy
- Positive behaviour management policy

Appendix 1: attendance codes

The following codes are taken from the DfE's guidance on school attendance.

Code	Definition	Scenario
/	Present (am)	Pupil is present at morning registration
\	Present (pm)	Pupil is present at afternoon registration
L	Late arrival	Pupil arrives late before register has closed
B	Off-site educational activity	Pupil is at a supervised off-site educational activity approved by the school
D	Dual registered	Pupil is attending a session at another setting where they are also registered
J	Interview	Pupil has an interview with a prospective employer/educational establishment
P	Sporting activity	Pupil is participating in a supervised sporting activity approved by the school
V	Educational trip or visit	Pupil is on an educational visit/trip organised, or approved, by the school
W	Work experience	Pupil is on a work experience placement

Code	Definition	Scenario
Authorised absence		
C	Authorised leave of absence	Pupil has been granted a leave of absence due to exceptional circumstances
E	Excluded	Pupil has been excluded but no alternative provision has been made
H	Authorised holiday	Pupil has been allowed to go on holiday due to exceptional circumstances

I	Illness	School has been notified that a pupil will be absent due to illness
M	Medical/dental appointment	Pupil is at a medical or dental appointment
R	Religious observance	Pupil is taking part in a day of religious observance
S	Study leave	Year 11 pupil is on study leave during their public examinations
T	Gypsy, Roma and Traveller absence	Pupil from a Traveller community is travelling, as agreed with the school
Unauthorised absence		
G	Unauthorised holiday	Pupil is on a holiday that was not approved by the school
N	Reason not provided	Pupil is absent for an unknown reason (this code should be amended when the reason emerges, or replaced with code O if no reason for absence has been provided after a reasonable amount of time)
O	Unauthorised absence	School is not satisfied with reason for pupil's absence
U	Arrival after registration	Pupil arrived at school after the register closed

Code	Definition	Scenario
X	Not required to be in school	Pupil of non-compulsory school age is not required to attend
Y	Unable to attend due to exceptional circumstances	School site is closed, there is disruption to travel as a result of a local/national emergency, or pupil is in custody
Z	Pupil not on admission register	Register set up but pupil has not yet joined the school
#	Planned school closure	Whole or partial school closure due to half-term/bank holiday/INSET day

Appendix 2: Leave of Absence request

APPLICATION FOR PUPIL LEAVE OF ABSENCE FROM SCHOOL DURING TERM TIME		
Important Information for Parents – please read before completing this form		
<p>We expect every pupil's attendance at school to be 100% unless there are exceptional or unavoidable reasons for absence. Parents do not have any legal entitlement to take their child on holiday during term time. It is the Principal who decides whether a period of leave during term time will be authorised or not, in line with legislation. The Education (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2006 (amended in September 2013) make it clear that Principals cannot grant any leave of absence during term time unless 'exceptional circumstances' exist.</p> <p>Every request for leave of absence during term time will be reviewed on an individual basis with due consideration of the circumstances, but the Principal can only grant leave of absence if they consider exceptional circumstances apply. If the exceptional circumstances are agreed, the Principal will determine the length of the absence to be authorised.</p> <p>All requests for leave of absence should be made in advance and before any arrangements are confirmed or money committed. This form must be completed in full by the parent who intends to remove the pupil from school during term time and sent to principal@stcatherines.org.uk. Failure to make a request for a leave of absence in advance will result in the absence being recorded as unauthorised and the Local Authority will be notified.</p>		
I have read the above information and wish to apply for Leave of Absence from school for:		
Child's Full Name:	Date of Birth:	Class:
Parent/Carer Details (please list all parents)		
First Name:		Surname:
Date of Birth:		Relationship to the child:
Address and postcode:		
Telephone number:		
First Name:		Surname:
Date of Birth:		Relationship to the child:
Address and postcode:		
Telephone number:		
Siblings: Please provide the name of any siblings and the school that they attend		
Child's Full Name:	Date of Birth:	School:

Details of the absence			
Date of First day of absence:		Date of last day of absence:	
Total Number of days absent:		Expected date of return to school:	
Please provide the reason for this request including supporting evidence:			
<p>Please read the following statement and sign to indicate you understand this:</p> <p>Unauthorised absence and persistent lateness may result in the issue of a Truancy Penalty Notice to each parent/carer, for each child for the period of absence from school. This will be issued as an alternative disposal to prosecution for failing to secure regular attendance at school.</p> <p>The Penalty Notice is £80 per pupil, per parent/carer if paid within 21 days, rising to £160 per pupil, per parent/carer if paid within 28 days. A second Truancy Penalty Notice issued within three years is not eligible for the reduction to £80 (from August 2024). Thereafter if the Truancy Penalty Notice remains unpaid after 28 days this may result in legal action be taken against you.</p> <p>Failure to pay the Penalty Notice within the specified time will result in its withdrawal and will result in a prosecution under Section 444 Education Act for the non-attendance where the maximum fine is £2,500 and up to 3 months imprisonment.</p> <p>Please note that for absences in excess of 15 days (30 sessions) prosecution under Section 444 Education Act 1996 may be considered, in accordance with the IW Council's Code of Conduct which can be found at https://www.iow.gov.uk/schools-and-education/school-attendance/family-holidays-and-school-holidays/</p> <p>Please note there is no provision for payment of the penalty notice in instalments.</p>			
Signed:		Full name:	Date:
Signed:		Full name:	Date:

To be completed by the school:			
Date request received by the school:		Total number of days requested:	
Child's Name:	Current % Attendance	Application Authorised or Declined?	

Comments	Please see attached letter.	
Principal:		
Signed:		Date: