

# ST. STEPHEN'S JUNIOR SCHOOL

## ATTENDANCE POLICY

### Our Responsibility

St Stephen's Junior School is committed to the continuous raising of achievement of all our pupils. In line with our school values, we want every child to feel a sense of 'belonging' whilst at school. To achieve both these things and to ensure that all children can take full advantage of the education opportunities open to them, regular attendance in school is critical.

The school will aim to create a stimulating, friendly and welcoming environment to encourage regular attendance and to discourage late arrival. **Our expectation is that all children are in school for 95% of the time.** This policy explains our processes and procedures, how the school will celebrate, support and encourage good attendance and how we will work with parents to remove barriers that prevent children from attending school. Attendance is 'everyone's responsibility' and all staff at St Stephen's Junior School are committed to improving the attendance of all our children.

### Parental Responsibility

Parents have a legal duty to ensure that their children attend school regularly and arrive on time. It is the parent's responsibility to contact the school on the first day their child is absent and maintain communication throughout a child's absence to inform the school when the child is likely to return to school. This is a safeguarding requirement so that all parties know that your child is safe and their whereabouts are known.

The school gates will open at 8.40am and all pupils should be in class by 8.45am for registration and be ready to learn. A member of the school's Senior Leadership Team will be at the gate to welcome pupils into school and where possible, a member of our Family Support team (Mrs Taylor or Mrs Amos) will be available to support pupils and parents where necessary. All pupils arriving late must report, with their parent to the school office where they will be marked in the register and reason for lateness will be recorded. The school will contact parents whose children are regularly late for school to offer support with overcoming any barriers that are preventing a pupil from arriving at school on time.

### Registration

The calling of attendance registers is seen as an integral and key part of the school day and is a vital tool to monitor the safety of our children. It is also a time when pupils meet their teacher and their peers and promotes a positive start to the school day. Pupils will be marked present or absent at the beginning of each morning and afternoon session. Absences will be categorised into 'authorised' or 'unauthorised' and a consistency of registration practice will be adopted throughout the school in line with the guidance "Working together to improve school attendance Aug 2024".

Registers will be marked when the children arrive at the classroom by the class teacher. Any not present will be marked absent. Children arriving after 8.45 will be marked late (L) until the register closes at 9.15am. After 9.15am the code will change to U (Late after register closed).

Every effort will be made to contact the parents of those children absent by 10.00am if the school has not received prior notification that the child will be absent. This contact will be made by Mrs Rayner, the School Secretary or Mrs Amos (FLO) and the absence will then be categorised as authorised or unauthorised. The reason for absence provided by the parent will be noted on the child's record. Should the school not be able to contact a parent to establish the reason for absence, every means of communication possible will be used to establish that the child is safe. This may include email, text, letter. If the school is still unable to determine if the child is safe, a visit to the child's home will be made. If this is unsuccessful, the local authority will be informed. Should a social worker be appointed to the family, they will be also be notified.

The local police will be informed if the school deems this appropriate.

Parents are able to report their child's absence in a variety of ways:-

- By telephone to the school office on 01227 464119 (use option 1 to report absence)
- Via the Parentmail system using the absence reporting facility
- In person in the school office
- By email to [admin@ststephensjuniorschool.co.uk](mailto:admin@ststephensjuniorschool.co.uk)

**Please note that children will not be allowed to leave the school unaccompanied during the school day.**

**Parents are asked to collect their child from school at the normal finish time of 3.15pm and avoid a 5 or 10 minute early collection from the school office unless it is an emergency. This takes staff away from the school office to retrieve children from classrooms at a crucial time of the day. This also disrupts the end of the lesson and is often an important time for children at the end of their day.**

### **Categorising Absences**

If a reason has not yet been provided for the absence, the school will mark the absence as 'N' and make every effort to establish the reason and subsequent coding. The school may authorise absence retrospectively when a satisfactory reason has been offered. If, after 5 school days the reason for absence has not been established, the 'N' code will be amended to 'O' indicating an unauthorised absence.

Should a child be absent from school due to illness for 15 school days or more, the local authority will be advised.

The governors will not authorise any absence for Year 6 children during SATS week. This is usually in May every year.

### **Authorised Absences include:**

- Sickness confirmed by a note or telephone call from the parents
  - \*Other exceptional circumstances notified and agreed beforehand
  - Exclusion for a fixed period
  - Medical/dental appointments. Records will be kept of children leaving the site for medical/dental appointments after registration for purposes of emergency evacuation. **Parents are urged to make all routine medical and dental appointments after school or during school holidays.**
  - Day of observance in the religious body to which the pupil or parents belong providing prior notice has been given
  - Educational visits
  - Participation in an approved sporting activity or public performance
  - A pupil is subject to a temporary part time timetable
  - Traveller absence – when a pupil's parent(s) is travelling for occupational purposes and the school has granted a leave of absence following a request from the parent.
- \*Exceptional circumstances will be rare and would be for events such as a family wedding or funeral

### **Unauthorised Absences include:**

- Absence without notification or where the school doubts the authenticity of an absence attributed to illness
- Failure to return to school after an agreed period of leave
- Unauthorised family holiday during term time. A letter will be provided to all parents advising of the possibility of a Penalty Notice

- Pupils arriving late without valid reasons after the register has closed
- Shopping during school hours/birthday celebrations
- Minding the house/looking after brothers or sisters (except in genuinely exceptional circumstances)
- Traveller children, who are registered pupils and known to be present at a site but not attending school

To request an absence, applications must be submitted in writing **before** the event either using the school's own form available from the school office or alternatively by email. **The school will not grant leave of absence retrospectively.**

If in exceptional circumstances an absence in term time is agreed, or an unauthorised absence is taken, it is very important that the child returns to school promptly. Where a pupil fails to return within ten school days of the agreed return date and there is no good reason for this absence, the school will make a Child Missing in Education (CME) referral to the Attendance service. Following this referral and on advice from the CME team/Attendance service, the school may remove that child's name from the school roll. This means the child would no longer have a place at the school.

Failure to attend school regularly or if the child has been absent from school for a continuous period of at least 10 school days and the absence is unauthorised, a return will be made to the local authority.

### **Celebrating success and promoting good attendance**

The school will celebrate good attendance both across the whole school, in classes and with individual pupils. Those children who achieve 100% attendance during the school year will be recognised at the end of the year. Those children who narrowly miss out on achieving 100% through illness or unforeseen circumstances but whose attendance is very high will also be rewarded and their achievement recognised. The school appreciates however, that for some children who have experienced some barriers to good attendance throughout the year, that improvement is equally important. Individual children will be given incentives and praised for overcoming obstacles and improving their attendance.

### **Communication and Absence monitoring**

The attendance of all children will be tracked on a regular basis. The school will liaise closely with all parents if their children's attendance falls below the expected 95%. An Attendance Data sheet will be provided in terms of the number of days of learning that have been lost and the impact that this has had on their progress and wellbeing. This information will also be provided at regular parents evening throughout the year.

If a child's attendance falls below 95% this will be shared with Teachers and Heads of Year so that academic progress can be linked to attendance. The Behaviour Lead (Mrs Taylor) will also attend Year group meetings every week to discuss/highlight particular children's attendance and/or behaviour and any impact this is having on the child.

The school will support, listen and work together with parents and pupils to address any 'in school' barriers to good attendance. Where a pupil or parent requires support, a meeting with parents, class teacher or one of the attendance staff will be made to put strategies in place to support improvement. Where these barriers are outside the school's control, the school will work with parents to access any agency support that is needed. This may include referrals to services and organisations that can provide this support. For support on any attendance matters, parents can contact Mrs Jayne Dowkes on 01227 464119 or email directly on [admin@ststephensjuniorschool.co.uk](mailto:admin@ststephensjuniorschool.co.uk)

Where absence intensifies and agency support is not effective or has not been engaged with, the school will make a referral to the local authority to take advice on suggested next steps. This may be in the form of an attendance contract, a notice to improve, a fixed penalty notice or statutory legal action.

All children that have absence of below 90% (Persistent Absence) will be tracked and monitored with notes of actions taken, meetings and conversations with parents or external agencies and any other relevant information. Parents will be invited to a meeting to discuss their child's attendance and what support can be offered in order for the attendance to improve. Should a pupil's attendance fall to below 85%, providing a meeting with parents has taken place and support has been offered, a referral will be made to the Attendance service. Parents will be advised of this referral prior to the referral being made. The school will work alongside the Attendance Service should a child's attendance fall below 50% (Severe Absence).

### **Attendance Service, Kent County Council**

The Attendance Service monitors the attendance of all children, and the school will consult with or make a referral if a child regularly accumulates unauthorised absences. This could ultimately result in the prosecution of parents by the Attendance Service in accordance with Section 444A of the Education Act 1996.

### **Penalty Notices**

A penalty of £160 per parent per child (reduced to £80 per parent per child if paid within 21 days) may be raised by the school and issued by the Attendance Service, Kent County Council in the following circumstances:

- The child is absent for 5 consecutive days (ie.10 sessions) in a rolling period of 10 school weeks on a holiday in term time that is unauthorised by the Head teacher.
- The child has accumulated at least 5 days (10 sessions) of unauthorised absence in a rolling period of 10 school weeks.
- Where a child is found in a public place during school hours during days 1 to 5 of any fixed period or permanent exclusion without reasonable justification.
- The child is persistently late (Coded U after the register has closed) for up to 10 sessions during the preceeding10 school weeks.

The period of 10 school weeks can span different terms or school years.

Failure to pay a penalty notice may result in prosecution by the Local Authority.

A letter will be sent to parents prior to the application for a Penalty Notice to be issued.

### **Attendance Data**

The school will maintain, use and analyse attendance data to provide targeted support for individuals and to those cohorts of children classed as vulnerable.

Data will be analysed by the Attendance Lead, Mrs Jayne Dowkes for the following groups of pupils:-

- Children in Care
- Children in Need or Children under a Child protection order
- Children who have a Special Educational Need or disability
- Children identified as Pupil Premium
- Children whose first language is not English
- Any children that do not belong in one of the above categories but has attendance below 90%

This data will be used to identify trends, issues affecting particular groups and used to formulate strategies to improve future attendance procedures and practices. This information will be provided to the Board of Trustees regularly throughout the year.

### **Distribution**

This policy will be provided to all parents on admittance to the school and annually to all parents as a reminder of our procedures and practices, The policy will also be published on the school's website [www.ststephensjuniorschool.co.uk](http://www.ststephensjuniorschool.co.uk) and a paper copy is available from the school office if required.

This policy will be reviewed annually in line with the guidance 'Working together to improve school attendance'.

Attendance Staff at St Stephen's Junior School

Mrs Laura Cutts, Headteacher/Mrs Sarah Heaney, Headteacher

Mrs Jayne Dowkes, School Manager/Attendance Lead

Mrs Nikki Rayner, School Secretary

Mrs Karyn Taylor, Behaviour Lead DSL/Mrs Kym Amos, Family Liaison Officer

**Linked Policies**

Supporting pupils with medical conditions

Children with health needs who cannot attend school

Child Protection policy

Children leaving school alone

**Jayne Dowkes**

**July 2025**

