



Staploe Education Trust

# Attendance Policy for primary schools within Staploe Education Trust

Version:	2.1
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Approved by:	School Advisory Bodies
Date:	Autumn 2020
Review date:	Autumn 2023
	Registration closure times updated for The Weatheralls Primary School 17/11/2022

## Aims

Our attendance policy aims to:

- Support children and their parents/carers to have the highest possible levels of attendance and punctuality;
- Ensure that all children have full and equal access to the best education that we can offer;
- Make parents/carers aware of their legal responsibilities;
- Take steps to ensure attendance meets or exceeds Government targets.
- Our expectations are that pupils attendance should be 100%

## Legal and National Context

Under Section 7 of the Education Act 1996, parents of a child of compulsory school age are under a legal duty to ensure that their children receive full-time education; and, that they have a legal duty to ensure the regular attendance and punctuality of that child at the school where he/she is a registered pupil. If a child of compulsory school age who is registered at a school fails to attend regularly at the school then the parent is guilty of an offence under Section 444(1) of the Education Act 1996. Since March 2001 there has been a further offence where a parent, knowing that their child is failing to attend regularly at school, fails without reasonable justification to cause him/her to attend (Education Act 1996, section 444(1A) as amended by the Criminal Justice and Court Service Act 2000).

## Being at school

School education lays the vital foundations of a child's life. Research clearly demonstrates the link between regular attendance and educational progress and attainment. Parents/carers and the school staff (including pre-school and nursery) should work in partnership to ensure children have full and equal access to all that school has to offer. As a school we will encourage parents/carers to ensure that their child achieves maximum possible attendance and that any problems that prevent this are identified and acted on promptly.

## Compulsory school age

Your child must start full-time education once they reach compulsory school age. This is on 31 December, 31 March or 31 August following their fifth birthday - whichever comes first. If your child's fifth birthday is on one of those dates then they reach compulsory school age on that date.

For example, if your child reaches compulsory school age on 31 March, they must start full-time education at the beginning of the next term (summer term that year).

Children must stay in full-time education until they reach [school leaving age](#).

## Expectations

**We expect that all children will:**

- Attend school every day;
- Attend school punctually;

- Attend appropriately prepared for the day;
- Discuss promptly with the school any problems that may affect their school attendance.

**We expect that all parents/carers will:**

- Ensure regular school attendance and be aware of their legal responsibilities;
- Ensure that their child arrives at school punctually and prepared for the school day;
- Ensure that they contact the school before 9:20am if their child is unable to attend school (see appendix 1);
- Notify school immediately of any changes to contact details.

**We expect school will:**

- Provide a safe learning environment;
- Keep regular and accurate records of attendance and punctuality;
- Monitor individual children’s attendance and punctuality;
- Contact parents when a child fails to attend and where no message has been received to explain the absence;
- Follow up all unexplained absences to obtain explanations from parents. Although parents may offer a reason, only the school can authorise the absence. In the case of long term or frequent absence due to medical conditions, verifications from a GP or other relevant body may be requested;
- Encourage good attendance and punctuality through the schools’ values and ethos (reinforced in assemblies and class discussions);
- Meet as required with the Local Authority Attendance Officer (LA AO) to monitor and support school attendance and punctuality;
- Refer irregular or unjustified patterns of attendance to the Non School Attendance Helpline, [Nsa.helpline@cambridgeshire.gov.uk](mailto:Nsa.helpline@cambridgeshire.gov.uk), 01223715682

**Registers, Punctuality and Lateness**

- Punctuality to school is crucial. Lateness into school causes disruption to that individual’s learning and to that of the other children in the class.
- By law, schools must take a morning and afternoon register and record the attendance or absence of every child;
- Registration takes place twice daily at the times specified for each school below Registers will close at the times stated below. Any child arriving after the closing of the register will be recorded as ‘late’ for that session.
- Children’s attendance is recorded on their report and will be passed on to future schools as necessary.
- If a child is persistently late after registration closes the parent could be at risk of legal intervention from the Local Authority Attendance Officer.
- Persistent lateness covering more than 3 sessions in a week of 20 minutes will be followed up by letters home, telephone conversations, direct communication and possibly a parental agreement.

	Start of the day	Registrations Open	Registrations Close
Kennett Primary School	The main playground is supervised from: 8.45am	Registration is at 8.55am & 1.15pm	Registration closes at 9.05am and 1.25pm
The Shade Primary School	The main playground is supervised from: 8.45am	Registration is at 8.55am and 1.15pm	Registration closes at 9.05am and 1.25pm
The Weatheralls Primary School	The main playground is supervised from:	Registration is at 8.50am and 1.00pm	Registration closes at 9.05am and 12.50pm (Early

	8.30am		Years, KS1, Yr 3 & 4) or 1.50pm (Yr 5 & 6)
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### **Child leaving school during the school day**

During school hours the school staff are legally in loco parentis and therefore must know where the children are during the school day.

- Children are not allowed to leave the premises without prior permission from the school;
- Whenever possible, parents should try to arrange medical and other appointments outside school time.
- If children attend medical or dental appointments at the start of the school day, thus being absent for the register, but return promptly to school by 10am, the school is able to change their attendance code from M (absent for medical appointment) to present at school.
- If children attend medical or dental appointments in the middle of a morning or afternoon

- session they will be marked as present for that half day provided that they leave school just before the appointment and return promptly afterwards;
- Parents are requested to confirm in person at the office or with the class teacher, or in writing by letter or email, the reason for any planned absence, the time of leaving and the expected return time;
- When a child is being collected from the school, parents are to report to the office before the child is allowed to leave the site;
- Children must be signed out by an adult on leaving school and be signed back in by an adult on their return;
- If a child leaves the school site without permission their parents will be contacted and then the police if the child is not quickly found, unless the child is deemed to be at risk of harm, in which case the police will be called first.

### **Leave of absence during term time**

In line with the Government's 2013 amendments to the 2006 regulations, holidays during term time will NOT be authorised unless circumstances **strictly** meet those described as 'exceptional'. These are stated as:

- a parent, grandparent or other close relative is seriously/terminally ill and the holiday proposed is likely to be the last such holiday;
- there has recently been a death or significant other trauma in the family and it is felt that an **immediate** holiday might help the child concerned better deal with the situation;
- the parent is a member of the armed forces on leave from active duty abroad and can only have a family holiday during this period.

This means that it is not possible to authorise a normal family holiday for any other reasons, including on the grounds of cost, available dates for flights or particular holidays and because it is difficult for parents to take leave from their work during school holidays. Where leave of absence is due to exceptional circumstance, an application must be made in writing, no less than 4 weeks prior to the requested date. If leave is taken without prior authorisation by the school, it will be recorded as an unauthorised absence and Education Welfare will be notified.

### **Penalty Notices**

There are two criteria for Penalty Notice Fines issued by Cambridgeshire County Council for unauthorised leave.

### **Unauthorised Term Time Leave**

We are obliged to follow the government guidelines which state that any time taken off during term time will be unauthorised and parents or carers liable to a penalty notice unless exceptional circumstances apply. Penalty Notices will 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.

### **Overall attendance**

Penalty Notices for term time holidays are issued based on information and referrals received from schools. 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.

### **Monitoring Attendance**

The School Administrator will monitor attendance alongside the Headteacher.

If a class teacher has particular concerns about an individual child's attendance or punctuality, she/he should inform the Headteacher.

Attendance is formally monitored by the Headteacher and LAAO each half term. The school has adopted the following Local Authority procedures for attendance below 96%

96% attendance -	Letter 1 (where appropriate – depending upon circumstances)
95 – 94% attendance -	Letter 1 or Letter 2 (where appropriate – depending upon circumstances), a school meeting requested, and recorded, and an Education, Health and Care Plan offered

If attendance fails to improve, the school will either send Letter 3 or go direct to Local Authority Attendance Officer intervention.

A Letter 3 will be sent as a final monitoring period before LAAO intervention.

A referral is made via an Early Health Assessment. In the case of attendance only, the school are able to do this without consent.

A register of letters issued to individual parents is kept and stored in line with data retention guidelines.

Attendance data is reported to the School Advisory Bodies in the Headteacher's termly report and is evaluated against the target.

#### **The Local Authority Attendance Officer**

The school and Local Authority Attendance Officer always endeavour to work with pupils and parents at an early stage to resolve problems. This is nearly always successful. However, the LAAO also has a legal role and if other ways of resolving attendance have failed, these officers can use legal sanctions such as Penalty Notices or prosecutions in the Magistrates court.

# Appendix 1: Procedure for reporting absence at school

**1. If a child is absent from school the following procedures are required to ensure the school is fully informed.**

## **1.1. First day absence**

Parent/Carer contacts the school on the relevant school reception number:

Kennett: 01638 750386

The Shade: 01353 612948

Weatheralls: 01353 720456

Information is provided, including the reason for absence, pupil name and class

## **1.2. Third day absence**

If the pupil is absent for three days, further contact with the school reception office is required by the parent/carers to provide details about the due date for a return to school by the pupil.

## **1.3. Continued absence**

In the case of longer term absence, the school reception office is informed so that appropriate work or support can be provided.

## **1.4. Ten days' absence**

A pupil who is absent without an explanation for 10 consecutive days will be notified to the Local Authority, by submitting a referral to the Children Missing Education Team and the Local Authority Attendance Officer. This is a legal requirement.

## **2. If a child needs to be absent during the school day the following procedures are required.**

The school should be contacted either via the class teacher or directly to school reception by the parent/carers to inform of reason for absence during the day, e.g. dental appointment. Evidence will also need to be provided of the appointment.

The pupil must be signed out before they leave the school premises and signed in on their return.

## **3. School action in the case of pupil absence**

- On the first day of absence, if the school is not contacted by 9:30am the school will try to contact the pupils parent/carers.
- We may make a home visit to ensure the safety of the pupil. These visits will always be attended by two members of staff.
- In the case of pupil attendance that is deemed 'at risk', the parent will be invited to school to discuss absence and actions for improving attendance.
- In the case of a pupil absence moving towards the 90% Persistent Absence (PA) level, the pupil is at risk of being referred to the Local Authority Attendance Officer.

## Appendix B: Understanding Types of Absence

The School will use an electronic register system for keeping the school attendance records. The following national codes will be used to record attendance information.

CODE	DESCRIPTION	MEANING
/	Present (AM)	Present
\	Present (PM)	Present
B	Educated off site (NOT Dual registration)	Approved Education Activity
C	Other Authorised Circumstances (not covered by another appropriate code/description)	Authorised absence
D	Dual registration (i.e. pupil attending other establishment)	Approved Education Activity
E	Excluded (no alternative provision made)	Authorised absence
F	Extended family holiday (agreed)	Authorised absence
G	Family holiday (NOT agreed or days in excess of agreement)	Unauthorised absence
H	Family holiday (agreed)	Authorised absence
I	Illness (NOT medical or dental etc. appointments)	Authorised absence
J	Interview	Approved Education Activity
L	Late (before registers closed)	Present
M	Medical/Dental appointments	Authorised absence
N	No reason yet provided for absence	Unauthorised absence
O	Unauthorised absence (not covered by any other code/description)	Unauthorised absence
P	Approved sporting activity	Approved Education Activity
R	Religious observance	Authorised absence
S	Study leave	Authorised absence
T	Traveller absence	Authorised absence
U	Late (after registers closed)	Unauthorised absence
V	Educational visit or trip	Approved Education Activity
W	Work experience	Approved Education Activity
X	Untimetabled sessions for non-compulsory school-age pupils	Not counted in possible attendances
Y	Enforced closure	Not counted in possible attendances
Z	Pupil not yet on roll	Not counted in possible attendances
#	School closed to pupils	Not counted in possible attendances



## Appendix C: COVID-19 Appendix

Following the closure of schools due to the Coronavirus pandemic (and partial re-opening) the government has made it clear in the document titled '[Guidance for full opening – schools](#)' of their plans that all pupils in all year groups will return to school full time from the beginning of the autumn term. Therefore, it is expected that the government will reapply sections 444(1) and 4441(A) of the Education Act 1996, allowing the application of sanctions on parents/carers for non-school attendance. This will mean that, effective from 1 September 2020, schools will recommence their responsibility to record attendance and follow up absences.

Our schools will take a balanced approach when dealing with attendance matters, and will need to recognise, and be mindful of the impact that COVID may have had on both the pupil and the wider family. Local Authorities will be unable to apply legal sanctions without the school providing clear evidence that they have attempted to engage the pupil and family, offering reassurance, support and referrals to outside agencies where necessary, as part of their early intervention toolkit.

The COVID pandemic limited Local Authorities access to the legal system from the 1<sup>st</sup> April 2020, this applied to both the Magistrates courts and the Single Justice Process, resulting in cases without an allocated court date pre-COVID, having to be withdrawn as a consequence of timeframes. Both attendance registers and early interventions conducted prior to March 2020 are unable to be considered as evidence, and therefore, schools are advised to monitor attendance from the start of the autumn term and make new referrals where and when appropriate, as the Magistrates and Single Justice Process will be fully functioning for September 2020.

### Leave in Term Time

If a leave of absence request is received, for any period in the new academic year, schools will follow the Trust Attendance Policy and unauthorise the absence, unless the absence is due to an exceptional circumstance or a COVID related issue, and is evidenced as such. Headteachers will provide a response to the parent/ carers in writing to ensure that they are fully informed of their decision.