

Attendance Policy

St Peter's Catholic Primary School

Approved by Governors: July 2024

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Attendance Policy

1. Aims

St Peter's Catholic Primary School is dedicated to supporting parents and children by:

- Promoting good attendance and reducing absence, including persistent absence
- Ensuring every pupil has access to full-time education to which they are entitled
- Safeguarding every child and protecting their right to education
- Acting early to address patterns of absence proactively with necessary support and challenge to bring forth improvements
- Working with the Local Authority as required
- Striving to exceed the Local Authority annual attendance figure aims
- Supporting parents to perform their legal duty to ensure their children of compulsory school age attend regularly
- Promoting and supporting punctuality in attending lessons.

Improving attendance is everyone's business. The barriers to accessing education are wide and complex, both within and beyond the school gates, and are often specific to individual pupils and families. The foundation of securing good attendance is that school is a calm, orderly, safe, and supportive environment where all pupils want to be and are keen and ready to learn.

Working Together to Improve School Attendance, DfE, September 2024

We aim for 96% attendance for every child. Pupils who attend for more than 95% of the year achieve GCSE results that are one grade higher than those with lower attendance. Alongside the academic benefits, attending school is also about being with friends, experiencing new activities and learning new skills. The routine of school can be comforting and familiar for children, providing a consistent support network. To contextualise this aim:

- Missing 19 days in a school year means only being in school for 90% of the time
- Being late 15 minutes every day would mean missing two weeks of learning in a year
- The pupils with the highest attainment at the end of key stage 2 and key stage 4 have higher rates of attendance over the key stage compared to those with the lowest attainment

Each child's attendance at school can be summarised as –

96%+ Excellent	-	Well done! This will help all aspects of their life and supports a positive work ethic.
94-95% Average	-	Well done, strive to build on this.
85-93% Poor	-	Absence is now affecting attainment and progress at School
Below 85% Unacceptable	-	Absence is causing serious concern. It is affecting the child's attainment and progress and is disrupting their learning.

2. Legislation and Guidance

This policy meets the requirements of the [school attendance guidance](#) from the Department for Education (DfE), and refers to the DfE's statutory guidance on [school attendance parental responsibility measures](#). These documents are drawn from the following legislation setting out the legal powers and duties that govern school attendance:

- [The Education Act 1996](#)
- [The Education Act 2002](#)
- [The Education \(Pupil Registration\) \(England\) Regulations 2024](#)
- [The Education \(Penalty Notices\) \(England\) \(Amendment\) Regulations 2024](#)
- [The Education \(Information About Individual Pupils\) \(England\) \(Amendment\) Regulations 2024](#)
- [Working Together to Improve School Attendance \(Statutory Guidance\)](#)
- [West Sussex County Council - School Absences](#)

3. School Procedures

3.1. Attendance Register

By law, all schools (except those where all pupils are boarders) are required to keep an attendance register, and all pupils must be placed on this register.

The attendance register is taken at the start of the first session of each school day (by 9.00am) and once during the second session (by 1.30pm). It will mark whether every pupil is:

- Present
- Attending an approved off-site educational activity
- Absent
- Unable to attend due to exceptional circumstances

Pupils must arrive in class by 8.40am on each school day (gates open at 8.30am).

See Appendix 1 for the DfE attendance codes.

3.2. Unplanned absence

Parents must notify the school on the first day of an unplanned absence – for example, if their child is unable to attend due to ill health – by 9am or as soon as practically possible (see also section 6). Please contact us every day that your child is ill.

We ask that parents call the School Office on 01273 454066, send an email to office@stpetersshoreham.co.uk or use the Studybugs app to record your child's absence from school.

Absence due to illness will be 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 parents 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 will be notified of this in advance.

3.3. Medical or Dental Appointments

Missing registration for a medical or dental appointment is counted as an authorised absence; advance notice is required for authorising these absences. Please call or visit the School Office to inform us of an appointment and provide evidence, such as a letter, text or email, of confirmation of appointment.

However, we encourage parents 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.

Applications for other types of absence in term time must also be made in advance. Information relating to whether the school can authorise such absences can be found in section 4.

3.4. Lateness and Punctuality

A pupil who arrives late but before the register has closed will be marked as late, using the appropriate code.

A pupil who arrives after the register has closed will be marked as absent, using the appropriate code. Registers close at 9.00am. In line with our attendance procedure, the office staff will ask the reason your child is late. If this is something personal or an ongoing factor which you would like the school to be aware of, please request to the Headteacher or Head of School.

The school will contact parents if a child arrives after registers have closed multiple times.

We will send letters informing parents and carers of their child's total number of lateness at key trigger points.

3.5. Following up Absence

The school will follow up any absences to ascertain the reason, ensure proper safeguarding action is taken where necessary, identify whether the absence is approved or not and identify the correct attendance code to use.

If the school has not been informed about an absence, either in advance or via phone, a member of the Office staff will call parents or carers. This will take place from 9.15am. This is for safeguarding reasons and in order to log reasons for absence.

3.6. Reporting to Parents

You will receive your child's absence record within their end of year report. This will show whether they have attended each session and the codes applied to any sessions which they were absent for. Their overall attendance percentage will also be included.

4. Authorised and Unauthorised Absence

4.1. Granting Approval for Term-time Absence

Headteachers may not grant any leave of absence to pupils during term time unless they consider there to be 'exceptional circumstances'.

We define **exceptional circumstances** as:

- Visits to seriously ill relatives
- Bereavement of a close family member (usually for funeral only but each situation is considered individually)
- Weddings for immediate family
- Religious observances
- An unexpected and traumatic event which may require time off

Exceptional circumstances **do not** include:

- Birthdays
- Day trips or holidays
- Siblings who are mildly unwell and home from school
- Attending a protest

All the above will be **unauthorised absences**.

Valid reasons for **authorised absence** include:

- Illness and medical/dental appointments – as explained in sections 3.2 and 3.3
- 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
- Some sporting, music or theatre activities outside of school

All children can feel unwell or show mild illness sometimes; it shouldn't normally be a reason to keep them off school.

Children are generally expected to attend school if they have:

- runny nose, cold or cough
- tummy ache
- headache
- nits
- conjunctivitis

We will always contact you if your child becomes increasingly unwell or we don't feel they are well enough to be at school. Please refer to our Administration of Medicines Policy if your child requires prescribed medication for any illness.

Vomiting and diarrhoea are good reasons for staying off school and the school enforces a 48 hour rule before returning to school. Equally, a child may have a doctor's note saying they need to be off school.

Sometimes children complain of illness as a way of communicating that they are worried about something. This can be indicative of a wider problem or concern. It's always good to make time to talk to your child, listen to them and find out what the real problem is. If you find it difficult to talk to your child about things, speak to someone at your child's school. If you are aware of a reason your child's attendance may be affected, such as being a Young Carer, please speak to the school office who will make an appointment for you to see the Headteacher or Head of School.

4.1. Legal Sanctions

Schools can request that the Local Authority fine parents for the unauthorised absence of their child from school, where the child is of compulsory school age (the first term after their 5th birthday).

With the introduction of the new National Framework for Penalty Notices – ([Fines for Parents Taking Children out of School: What you Need to Know](#)) the following changes will come into force for Penalty Notice Fines issued after 19th August 2024 –

Under the new national framework, all schools will be required to consider a fine when a child has missed 10 or more sessions (5 days) for unauthorised reasons. Schools are required to inform the Local Authority if a pupil is absent from school for 15 consecutive days.

The following changes will come into force for Penalty Notice Fines issued after 19th August 2024 –

First Offence – The first time a Penalty Notice is used for term time leave or irregular attendance the amount will be £160 per parent, per child, if paid within 28 days. Reduced to £80 per parent, per child, if paid within 21 days.

Second Offence (within 3 years) – The second time a Penalty Notice is issued for term time leave or irregular attendance the amount will be £160 per parent, per child, to be paid within 28 days. No reduced rate will be offered.

Third Offence and any further offences (within 3 years) – The third time an offence is committed for term time leave or irregular attendance a Penalty Notice will not be issued and the case will be presented straight to the Magistrates' Court. Magistrates' fines can be up to £2,500 per parent, per child. Cases found guilty in Magistrates' Court can show on a parent's future DBS certificate due to failure to safeguard a child's education.

Penalty Notice Fines will be considered when there has been 10 sessions (5 days) of unauthorised absence, or irregular attendance, in a 10 week period.

The payment must be made directly to the local authority.

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. The West Sussex *Code of Conduct for issuing Fixed Penalties* states that penalty notices can be issued when a pupil has accrued 10 sessions recorded of unauthorised absence in a 10 school week period. A school day is 2 sessions, AM and PM. This period can straddle school holidays and academic year and the absence doesn't have to be consecutive. This includes -

- Holidays taken in term time without the agreement of the school;
- Arriving late to school after the register has closed;
- Any absence marked in the register as unauthorised.

The Pupil Entitlement: Investigation team will issue penalty notices on behalf of schools and will always serve them by first class post. The team will also ensure that the issuing of penalty notices is closely monitored with the relevant financial penalty being imposed.

If the penalty notice has not been paid within the 28 day deadline the case may be escalated and consideration given to prosecution for the original attendance offence.

A parent may receive more than one separate penalty notice resulting from the unauthorised absence, but not in excess of 3 penalty notices for an individual child in any twelve-month period. A penalty notice will be issued to each parent of each child.

If an initial Fixed Penalty Notice has failed to secure an improvement in attendance, the Pupil Entitlement: Investigation team reserves the right to proceed with prosecution, providing the necessary casework has been completed by the school. Each case will be considered on its own merit.

5. Strategies for Promoting Attendance

Attendance certificates are given out to children who have attained 100% attendance on a termly basis to celebrate attendance strengths.

We screen reasons behind any attendance drop below 95%. We inform parents if their child's attendance is 90% and below in Autumn term, 92% and below in Spring term and 95% and below in Summer term via letter following weekly screening of all children's attendance. If attendance

does not improve, this will lead to a supportive phone call and an invitation for parents to come and meet with the Headteacher to discuss their child's attendance..

We work with families to support improving attendance in a collaborative and supportive way, working with a key member of the Senior Leadership Team.

6. Attendance Monitoring

Attendance is monitored on a daily and weekly basis by the Head's PA; this is in liaison with the Headteacher as necessary to monitor and track attendance and any penalty notices. The Head's PA monitors and screens pupil absence on a weekly basis.

Parents are expected to contact the school in the morning if their child is going to be absent due to ill health (see section 3.2). If a child has been had vomiting or diarrhoea, they are not permitted back into school for 48 hours, in line with healthcare recommendations. In this instance, a follow up phone call the next day is not required. If a child has been hospitalised or a doctor has signed them off from school for a set period of time, daily call ins are not required. In all other circumstances of illness, daily calls are required.

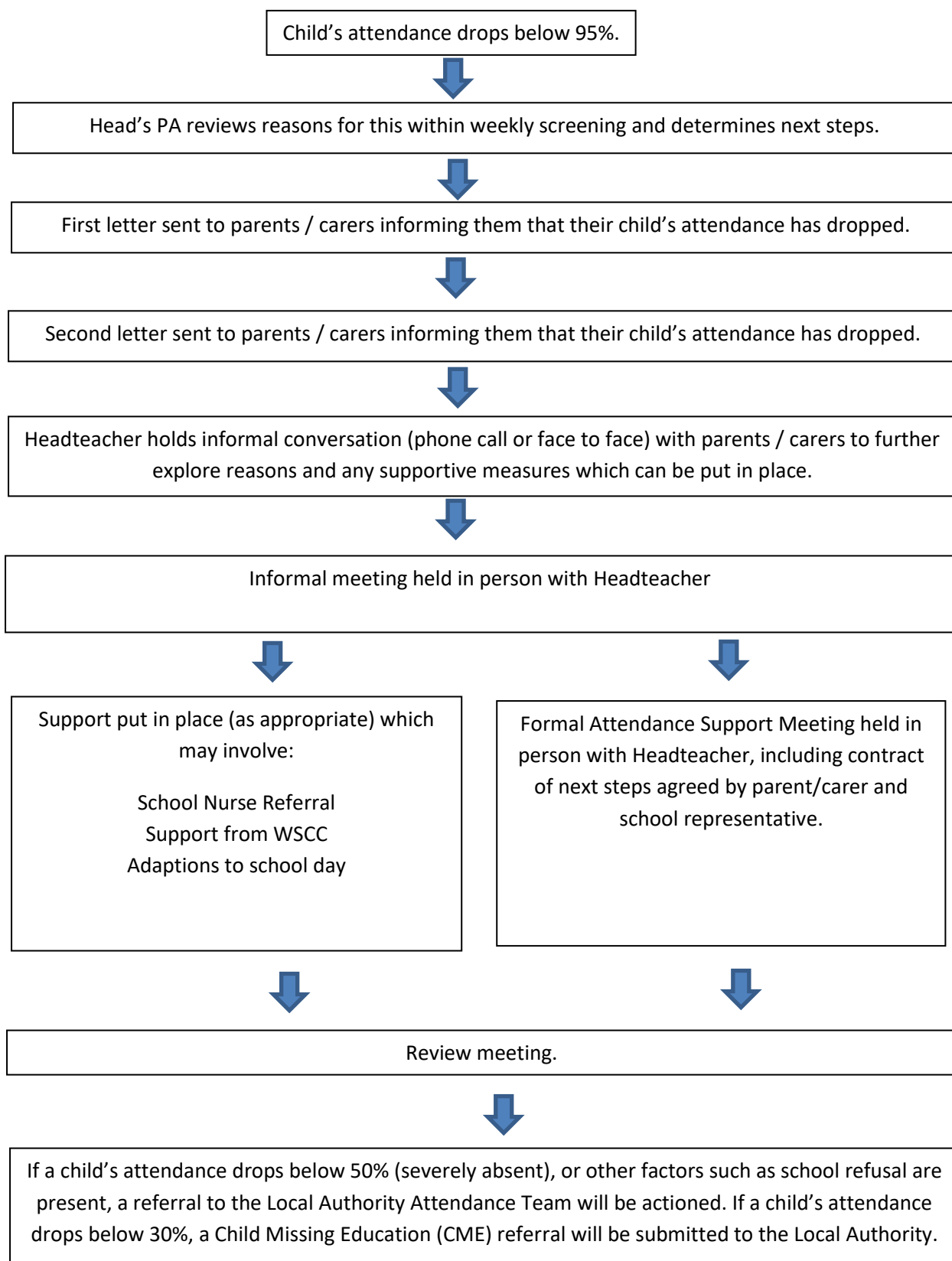
If a pupil's attendance dips under 96% or persistent lateness (more than 5 times) occurs, the Head's PA will look further into the reasons around this through analysis of the pupil attendance record. They will take into account authorised and unauthorised absences, lateness or any illness or other reasons for absence. A letter will be sent to the parent/carer alerting them to their child's attendance.

The persistent absence threshold is 10%. If a pupil's individual overall absence rate is greater than or equal to 10%, the pupil will be classified as a persistent absentee. The Head's PA will make regular contact with the pupil's parents and carers to discuss the reasons behind persistent absence and any support required.

If a pupil is regularly absent from school or misses 10 or more school days without authorisation, the school is required to inform the Local Authority. We are required to investigate any unexplained absences as part of our safeguarding duty. This may include home visits.

Pupil-level absence data is 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. We compare our attendance data to the national average, and share this with governors.

The below flow chart shows our approach to keeping parents fully informed about their child's attendance, and the thresholds of our different levels of support.



7. Roles and Responsibilities

7.1 Local Governing Committee

The local governing committee is responsible for monitoring attendance figures for the whole school on at least a termly basis. It also holds the Headteacher to account for the implementation of this policy.

7.2 The Headteacher

The Headteacher is responsible for ensuring this policy is implemented consistently across the school, and for monitoring school-level absence data and reporting it to governors.

The Headteacher also supports other staff in monitoring the attendance of individual pupils and issues fixed-penalty notices, where necessary.

7.3 The Head's PA

The Heads PA will:

- Monitor attendance data at the school and individual pupil level
- Report concerns about attendance to the Headteacher
- Work with staff and outside agencies to tackle persistent absence
- Arrange calls and meetings with parents to discuss attendance issues
- Advise the Headteacher when to issue fixed-penalty notices

7.4 Class Teachers

Class teachers are responsible for recording attendance on a daily basis, using the correct codes, and submitting this information to the school office. They may also discuss absence or lateness concerns with the Heads PA for follow up.

7.5 Office Staff

Office staff are expected to take calls from parents about absence and record it on the school system.

Appendix 1: Attendance Codes

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

Present Codes	
/ \	present during registration
B	educated off site and taster days and do not fit K, V, P or W codes
K	attending provision arranged by the local authority
L	arrived after the register has started but before it has closed
P	Sporting activity with prior agreement from school
V	educational visit or trip
W	work experience
Absent Codes	
Authorised Absences	
C	exceptional circumstances
C1	in a regulated performance/undertaking regulated employment abroad
C2	absent due to part-time timetable
D	dual registered
E	suspended or permanently excluded
I	illness (not medical or dental appointments)
J1	job/school/college interview
M	medical or dental appointment
Q	unable to attend because of a lack of access arrangements
R	religious observance (only 1 day allowed, any more coded as C if agreed)
S	study leave
T	parent travelling for occupational purposes
X	non-compulsory school age pupil not required to attend school
Y1	unable to attend due to transport provided not being available
Y2	unable to attend due to widespread transport disruption
Y3	unable to attend due to part of the school premises being closed
Y4	unable to attend due to whole school closure
Y5	unable to attend as pupil is in criminal justice detention
Y6	unable to attend in accordance with public health guidance or law
Y7	unable to attend due to other avoidable cause (must affect the pupil NOT the parent)
Unauthorised Absence	
G	holiday (not agreed)
N	reason for absence not yet established (must be corrected within 5 days)
O	absent in other or unknown circumstances
U	late after register has closed
Z	pupil not yet on register
#	planned whole school closure (eg holidays, insets and polling station days)

