

# **Attendance Policy**

**St Andrew's Primary School**

**Academic Year**

**2023/24**

## Attendance Policy

### St Andrew's Primary School

#### Document History Log:

<b>Author of document:</b>	Nicola James	<b>Job role:</b>	Headteacher
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Sims to Arbor	12.10.23	New record system		L Hudson
96% - 92,94,96% for KS2 Club	12.10.23	Attendance per day is worth a different amount as the year progresses.		L Hudson

### Attendance key contact List

Name	Role	Contact details
Nicola James	Head Teacher	01388605385
Martin Orwin	Designated member of staff responsibility for attendance	As above
Ashley Booth	Admin Manager	As above
Katie Howe	Office Administrator	As above
Kim Peacock	Attendance Improvement Team Link	Kim.peacock@durham.gov.uk

### Who in school can help if you are experiencing difficulty / require help and support:

Name	Role / type of help	Contact details
Nicola James	Head Teacher	01388605385
Martin Orwin	Designated member of staff responsibility for attendance	As above
Laura Hudson	Deputy Head	As above
Your child's class teacher	Class Teacher	As above

### Introduction to our school attendance vision and ethos

**St Andrew's Primary** School seeks to ensure that all of its pupils receive an education which maximises opportunities for each pupil to realise his/her true potential. The school will strive to provide a calm, orderly, safe, and supportive environment where all pupils want to be and are keen and ready to learn within a culture that promotes the benefits of high attendance.

Regular school attendance plays a vital role in children's wellbeing and their education, ensuring that their current learning needs are being met but also building their future ability to learn.

As attendance is the essential foundation to positive outcomes for all pupils', improving attendance is everyone's business, a concerted effort across all teaching and nonteaching staff in school, the trust or governing body, the local authority, and other local partners.

Some pupils find it harder than others to attend school and therefore at all stages of improving attendance, the school and partners will work with pupils and parents to remove any barriers to attendance by building strong and trusting relationships and working together to put the right support in place.

## **Why is regular attendance so important?**

Being in school every day that it is open, is important to your child's achievement, wellbeing, and their wider development. There is a renewed national focus on maximising pupils' time in the classroom, as evidence shows that the students with the highest attendance throughout their time in school gain the best GCSE and A Level results.

### **Here's what the data shows:**

Pupils with higher attainment at KS2 and KS4 had lower levels of absence over the key stage compared to those with lower attainment.

Pupils who did not achieve the expected standard in reading, writing and maths in 2019 had an overall absence rate of 4.7% over the key stage, compared with 3.5% among pupils who achieved the expected standard and 2.7% among those who achieved the higher standard.

Pupils who did not achieve grade 9 to 4 in English and maths GCSEs in 2019 had an overall absence rate of 8.8% over the key stage, compared with 5.2% among pupils who achieved a grade 4 and 3.7% among pupils who achieved grade 9 to 5 in both English and maths.

Generally, the higher the percentage of sessions missed across the key stage at KS2 and KS4, the lower the level of attainment at the end of the key stage.

Among pupils with no missed sessions over KS2, 83.9% achieved the expected standard compared to 40.2% of pupils who were persistently absent.

Among pupils with no missed sessions over KS4, 83.7% achieved grades 9 to 4 in English and maths compared to 35.6% of pupils who were persistently absent.

At St. Andrew's Primary School we have a vision for improving attendance

## **Attendance Vision**

***Attend Today. Achieve Tomorrow.***

***At St Andrew's Primary School, we want success for every child, every day.  
We pledge to encourage, support and motivate pupils and parents to  
reach our high expectations of attendance so every child can reach their  
full potential.***

**This policy is supported by our policies on:**

- Safeguarding and Child Protection
- Anti-Bullying,
- Behaviour,
- SEN

**The school and all partners will work together to:**

**EXPECT**

Aspire to high standards of attendance from all pupils and parents and build a culture where all can, and want to, be in school and ready to learn by prioritising attendance improvement across the school.



**MONITOR**

Rigorously use attendance data to identify patterns of poor attendance (at individual and cohort level) as soon as possible so all parties can work together to resolve them before they become entrenched.



**LISTEN AND UNDERSTAND**

When a pattern is spotted, discuss with pupils and parents to listen to and understand barriers to attendance and agree how all partners can work together to resolve them.



**FACILITATE SUPPORT**

Remove barriers in school and help pupils and parents to access the support they need to overcome the barriers outside of school. This might include an early help or whole family plan where absence is a symptom of wider issues.



**FORMALISE SUPPORT**

Where absence persists and voluntary support is not working or not being engaged with, partners should work together to explain the consequences clearly and ensure support is also in place to enable families to respond. Depending on the circumstances this may include formalising support through a parenting contract or education supervision order.



**ENFORCE**

Where all other avenues have been exhausted and support is not working or not being engaged with, enforce attendance through statutory intervention or prosecution to protect the pupil's right to an education.

## **1. Expectations**

We recognise that the relationship between attendance and achievement of our students is inextricably linked.

Regular school attendance is crucial to maximise pupil progress and enjoyment of learning, and for this reason the school is dedicated to ensuring its attendance policy is adhered to.

### **We will ensure that:**

- All students have an equal right, and access to, an education in accordance with the national curriculum, or agreed alternative.
- Attendance is a priority across the school.
- Aspire to high standards on attendance.
- Students will not be deprived of their education opportunities by, either their own absence or lateness, or that of students.
- Action is taken where necessary to secure an improvement in attendance.
- There is a culture amongst all stake holders that attendance is of the up most importance in our school

## **2. Attendance data**

St Andrew's Primary School will rigorously use attendance data to identify patterns, trends and frequencies of poor attendance (at individual and cohort level) as soon as possible so all parties can work together to resolve them before they become entrenched.

Data will be analysed on a daily, weekly, half and full term and annual basis by our attendance team.

## **3. Listening to and understanding barriers to attendance**

When a pattern is spotted or a cause for concern is identified, an appropriate member of the attendance team will discuss this with pupils and parents to listen to and understand barriers to attendance and make a plan / otherwise agree how all partners can work together to resolve them.

## **4. Facilitate support**

Parents and carers will be regularly invited to attend meetings with our Learning Mentor or Headteacher to discuss any barriers to attendance or punctuality. Support will be offered beyond school, such as; Early help, Local Charities to support families in improving attendance at school.

Where persistent or severe absenteeism is sustained and external support is not effective, the school will call upon the support of the Attendance Improvement Team to further support the family. This will be a more formalised level of support in conjunction with the Local Authority's policies.

## **5. Formalise support**

Where absence persists and voluntary support is not working or not being engaged with, partners will work together to explain the consequences clearly and ensure support is also in place to enable families to respond. Explain that, depending on the circumstances this may include formalising support through a parenting contract or education supervision order.

## **6. Enforce**

Where all other avenues have been exhausted and support is not working or not being engaged with, attendance may be enforced where necessary through statutory intervention or prosecution to protect the pupil's right to an education.

### **General / frequently asked questions**

#### **When can children be absent from school?**

When you register your child at school, you have a legal duty to ensure your child attends that school regularly.

This means that your child must attend every day that the school is open, unless:

- Your child is too ill to attend that day.
- You have asked in advance and been given permission by the school for your child to be absent on that day due to exceptional circumstances.
- Your child cannot attend school on that day because it is a day you are taking part in religious observance
- Your local authority is responsible for arranging your child's transport to school and it is not available on that day or has not been provided yet; or
- You are a gypsy/traveller family with no fixed abode, and you are required to travel for work that day meaning your child cannot attend their usual school. In most circumstances, however, your child is required to attend another school temporarily during such absences.

These are the only circumstances where schools can permit your child to be absent.

#### **What do I need to do if my child needs to be absent from school for one of those reasons?**

You should contact their school as early as possible to explain why. If not, your child's school will contact you on the first morning of their absence to find out why.

All parents can request a 'leave of absence' for their child which gives them permission to be absent from school. Leaves of absence must be applied for before your child will be absent and will only be granted in exceptional circumstances.



Your child's headteacher has the final say over whether to approve the request and how long your child can be absent.

Their decision will be made after considering the specific facts and circumstances behind your request.

### **Can I take my child on holiday during term time?**

Parents should plan their holidays around school breaks and avoid requesting leaves of absence for holidays unless it is unavoidable.

As leave of absence is only granted in exceptional circumstances, it is unlikely that your child's headteacher will agree a leave of absence for a family holiday.

If permission is refused and you keep your child off school on the days requested, you are likely to be committing an offence and be issued a fixed penalty notice or be prosecuted by your local authority.

## **Attendance Procedures and Absence Processes**

### **Attendance and absence management**

#### **Promoting good attendance and punctuality**

1.	KS2 92+% (Autumn), 94+% (Spring) and 96%+ (Summer) Club – each class to display the pupils who have excellent attendance and share on Dojo on a weekly basis.
2.	Full House – Early Years and KS1 to celebrate every day or week they have a Full House, shared on Class Dojo
3.	Attendance end of term treat – the class with the highest attendance to have a treat at the end of the term – this promotes Teamwork and an incentive for children to turn up for school
4.	Certificates for end of term and rewards for end of year 99/100% attendance pupils
5.	Regular communication with parents about their child's attendance. End of term and year reports and Tiered letters when their child drops below 96,94 or 92%
6.	Support for parents whose children fell into persistent absentee category last academic year – letter to follow for individual families.
7.	Regular attendance or lateness promotions on Class Dojo and in half termly newsletters
8.	Displays around school and assemblies about the importance of good attendance and the consequences of poor attendance.
9.	Ensuring every household has a clear understanding of policies, procedures and expectations by providing copies of policies and regular information about expectations.
10.	Working with parents and carers of Early Years pupils so that good routines and attitudes to attendance are embedded before they reach statutory school age.

## Communication

The school requests that all parents please remember to report and explain the reasons for absence and to make sure your contact and emergency contact details are up to date.

It is vital, that school can contact parents if their child becomes unwell during the school day or in order to discuss the reasons for absence.

The school will analyse absence across the school. As a result of this, some families will receive letters to inform them if their child's absence is lower than it should be if no prior discussion has taken place (unless this is due to, for example medical needs). If we have concerns regarding your child's attendance then we may contact you by phone, letter, invite you to a meeting or make a visit to your home.

As a parent you may identify concerns about school attendance early on if you have seen a change in your child's attitude to school or in their willingness to attend. If this is the case, please share your concerns with us and we can work together to ensure that school attendance doesn't ever need to decline. The quicker that concerns are shared, the quicker they can be resolved.

We will be introducing the following procedures to help communicate with parents and reduce persistent absentees.

Pupils, who were persistent absentees who have a frequency pattern or trend that is a cause for concern last academic year, will receive a letter outlining how school will be monitoring and supporting their attendance this year and what will be expected from parents to ensure their child does not fall below 90% again.
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We are introducing a 3-tiered letter system to notify all parents/carers of their child's falling attendance at three crucial points –
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- Tier 1 - below 96% (white letter)
- Tier 2 – below 94% (yellow letter)
- Tier 3 – Below 92% (pink letter)

SEE APPENDIX

Parents and carers are now expected to call school daily to update us on their child's absence and expected date of return.
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A maximum of 3 absences of sickness or diarrhoea will be given within 1 academic year, (with a 48-hour isolation period to avoid contaminating others around school) Unfortunately, some parents/carers use this as a "get out" for regular absences as medical evidence cannot be sought for this.
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Patterns and trends in pupils' attendance will be closely monitored and we will be particularly looking for:
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- Absences over long weekends (Fridays and/or Mondays)
- Absences of multiple siblings on the same day as a regular occurrence
- Absences before/during/after local or national events such as: Football matches, local circus, the day after Firework/Halloween nights etc
- Absences on days when it is too hot or raining.

From this year and following DfE guidance, leave of absences will not be authorised unless under "exceptional circumstances, "this means the absence must be a "One Off" - an annual family holiday is not a one off. Please note an application for an exceptional circumstance may need to be supported by evidence. This will be at the headteacher's discretion only and will not be open to appeal.
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Moving a holiday due to COVID is no longer an exceptional circumstance.

The school will work with you to discuss ways that we can offer support in finding a way to improve attendance.

Parents and Carers must follow this procedure when their child is absent from school:

- Call school on the first day of absence giving a reason
- Call every day your child is absent with an update on their condition
- Provide medical evidence for any illnesses
- If one child is ill, please send siblings into school. We can collect and drop off if it is difficult for you
- Send your child to school if they have a cough, runny nose, headache – these are minor ailments and more than enough some Calpol can help them get through the day – we promise to call you to collect your child should they deteriorate during the day
- Complete Leave of absence request forms so that our records are correct and we know where your child is
- Log the reason for lateness on our Inventory system
- To attend a half termly meeting to discuss any barriers and to celebrate the improvements

### **On the first day of absence**

If a child is absent for any reason, parents or carers are asked to phone the School Office giving a reason for the child's absence. If a child is absent from school and there is no phone call from home then school will phone home to inform parents that the child is not in school and enquire about a reason why.

Doctors and dentist's appointments should be made outside of school time. If this is not possible, your child should miss the minimum amount of school time necessary. If they are well enough to come back to school following the appointment they need to. An appointment card or text must be shown as evidence before a child is released during the school day. If a parent has an appointment, and it interferes with collecting or dropping a child off at school, parents and carers will be asked if every effort has been made to ensure alternative arrangements have been made and that breakfast or after school clubs can rectify the situation, to avoid the child missing school.

### **Periods of extended absence**

If a child's absence continues after one day then parents are requested to notify the school to update them daily. If a phone call is not received, the school will send a text to verify the absence and take any relevant action in relation to assuring itself of the child's welfare.

Where there is a safeguarding concern, such as no communication from parents and carers, staff may make a home visit to ensure the child is safe. If this does not confirm the child's safety the school may call the police to make a welfare call.

If the school receives no reason for any absence then an unauthorised absence will be recorded. Continued absenteeism and unauthorised absences could result in more formal action.

### **Absence authorisation**

The High Court has confirmed that the school's Head Teacher authorises absences. In some circumstances, the school may request that parent's provide medical evidence to support absences.

We are committed to supporting your child effectively, to ensure that they get the very best education possible and therefore have the best life chances. All challenges made concerning persistent absences, will be handled sensitively and in confidence.

### **Punctuality:**

Registration time is at **8.45 am** at which point the pupil entry gates will be locked and all pupils must enter by the main entrance. It is so important for all children to be on time, as missing the first few minutes of any lesson can be disruptive and unsettling, both for children and for the rest of the class. If a child arrives in school up to 15 minutes after this time then a late mark will be recorded in the register (L). Registers will be closed at this point and any children arriving more than 15 minutes late will be recorded as (U) which is a late after registers close mark and this is classed as an unauthorised absence (a number of these marks can also contribute to more formal action being considered).

### **If your child is late for school:**

All children arriving late at school will be asked the reason for their lateness and this will be recorded on the school's attendance data base (Arbor).

### **If a child is late (after registers close) for school on a number of occasions**

If a child is late for a school (either before or after the register closes). Parents and carers will receive a text reminding them of the time that the school gates close and registration starts.

If a child is late, after the register closes, for three occasions, a letter (See Appendix) will be sent to parents informing them of the lateness and provide information on how the school can further support the family.

### **If lateness becomes persistent with no identifiable reason**

When persistent lateness becomes a concern and a child's unauthorised absences increase, parents and carers will be notified using the 3 tiered letter system, identifying the impact on their child's overall attendance and will be invited to a meeting should this fall below 92%.

## **If the school continues to have concerns about a child's punctuality**

A referral to the Attendance Enforcement Team will be made, who will decide whether to issue a warning letter, a fixed penalty fine or invite parents to a meeting.

### **Help & Support**

If you need help with attendance, it is important that you contact school about the issues as soon as possible. The quicker we know what the problem is, the quicker that we can work together to solve it and put a plan together which will meet your child's needs and ensure your child can benefit from all that school has to offer. Where needed we can also involve other services to make sure that your child and your family gets the right support, at the right time from the right people.

### **Leave of Absence in Term Time**

Head teachers are only able to grant leave of absence during term time **if there are exceptional circumstances**. The school will consider each request of absence individually; taking into account the circumstances, such as; the nature of the event for which leave is sought, the pupil's prior attendance and any important events taking place in school at that time, such as start of the year, statutory tests being taken etc

An application for leave of absence must be made well in advance via a form which is available from the school website or in person from the school office. Where a leave of absence is granted, the head teacher will determine the number of days a pupil can be away from school.

A leave of absence is granted entirely at the head teacher's discretion. If an application for leave of absence is not made prior to the time of the required absence, then the absence will be recorded as unauthorised regardless of circumstances.

**Please note that absence will not be authorised under any circumstances during any period of public examinations or internal assessments.**

**There is no right to appeal against the Headteacher's decision.**

### **Pupils with specific needs**

Our policy acknowledges the specific needs of pupils/pupil cohorts, such as SEN and medical needs and we will act fairly and consistently, considering the individual needs of pupils/ families who have specific barriers to attendance.

We respect the obligations under the Equality Act 2010 and the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child.

### **Children Missing from Education**

If you move from the area and your whereabouts are unknown, the school can legally remove your child from the roll after 20 school days of unauthorised absence. It is **vital that if you keep school informed of any change of details** and regularly update them if details change. Your child may be at risk of losing their school place if your whereabouts are not known.

It is also important that emergency contact information is kept up to date and that if you are leaving the area, you provide details of where and how you can be contacted. If you do not do this and the school is unable to trace your child, this would be treated as a **safeguarding matter**.

### **Roles and Responsibilities**

Please see key contact list and details at the start of this document.

## Appendix

### Tier 1 – Attendance warning letter (White)

Re: First attendance warning letter – Below 96%

Dear [parent/carer's name],

I am writing to you because [pupil's name]'s attendance has become a cause for concern. It currently stands at [add percent].

Regular attendance is an important factor in a child's academic success. When pupils are frequently absent, it is difficult for them to keep up with their school work and this could affect their life chances. For this reason, we take school attendance very seriously and feel it is our duty to keep you informed about your child's attendance, so that you too can monitor it closely.

If your child is going to be absent from school, it is important that you contact the school on the first day of the absence to inform us of the reasons. If this continues for more than one day, you should make contact with the school on a daily basis to keep us updated.

Please remember that, if your child arrives late for school, after the register has closed, then that morning session will be logged as an unauthorised absence and will contribute to your child's overall absence percentage.

All absences are authorised or unauthorised at the Headteachers discretion and medical evidence may be requested in the form of a prescription or medicine with your child's name and date on.

We are keen to work with you to address any barriers to your child's attendance. If you require any advice or support on this matter, please get in touch with Mr Orwin to discuss this and we will do our best to help.

Yours sincerely,

Mrs N James  
Headteacher

## Tier 2 – Attendance warning letter (Yellow)

Re: Second attendance warning letter – Below 94%

Dear [parent/carer's name],

Following our previous letter dated [date of first letter] regarding [child's name]'s attendance, there continues to be a cause for concern. Our records show that [insert name of child]'s attendance is currently at [add percent].

School attendance is an important issue and something we take very seriously. I am therefore requesting that you come into school to discuss the current situation. I have arranged for this meeting to take place in school on [add date] at [add time].

Please could you confirm that you are able to attend this meeting. If you are unable to attend, please contact the school office to make an alternative arrangement. The purpose of this meeting is to listen to parents and carers about their child's barriers to attendance and to see if school can support in any way or to signpost you towards support that may be available outside of school. We want your child to attend school and want to help you achieve this.

Regular school attendance is the responsibility of parents/carers. If your child's attendance remains at the current level and unauthorised absences continue, you will receive a third and final letter which will outline the more formal consequences of poor attendance: a referral will be made to the local authority who may need to start legal proceedings.

We look forward to your support in resolving this matter.

Yours sincerely,

Mrs N James  
Headteacher



## Tier 3 – Attendance warning letter (Pink)

Re: Third attendance warning letter – Below 92%

Dear [parent/carer's name],

Following two previous letters, we are now writing to formally express our ongoing concerns about the irregular attendance of your child, [add name and date of birth].

If a pupil fails to attend school regularly, the parent could be guilty of an offence under section 444 of the Education Act 1996. I therefore have a duty to inform you that, if further unauthorised absences are recorded, or your child fails to attend school regularly, we will need to refer this matter to the local authority.

I am obliged to ensure you are fully informed of the consequences of your child having further unauthorised absences and that, following this notification, if your child's attendance and/or punctuality does not improve, the local authority may start legal proceedings against you. If it is determined that an offence has been committed, this could eventually result in a fine of up to £2,500, a community order or imprisonment.

We will not issue further notification should we need to escalate this matter to the local authority.

We have attached a record of your child's attendance with this letter.

Yours sincerely,

Mrs N James  
Headteacher

## PERSISTANT LATENESS LETTER TO PARENTS

CHILD'S NAME \_\_\_\_\_ DATE \_\_\_\_\_  
ARRIVAL TIME \_\_\_\_\_

Dear Parent/Carer,

This letter is to notify you that your child has been late for school three or more times since the beginning of this academic year.

School starts at 8:45am (gates open at 8:35am) and the class register is done, by the class teacher by 8:50am each morning.

The start of the day, is the most important part of any child's day. Here they get to greet their friends and teachers, they find out about the routines of the school day and if there are any changes or surprises, and they find out what instructions they have for starting the first lesson. We begin the day by half of the class attending our whole school assembly while the other half read with an adult. This 1:1 reading time is vital in improving your child's reading ability. If a child struggles to read, then they will also struggle in most other subjects too. Children are then taught either maths or English from 9am, again another very important part of learning.

Entering a classroom late can be very daunting for your child. They can often become anxious, they feel like others are looking at them, they don't know what to say to the teacher and they often don't know what to do because they have missed the crucial first instruction. Please imagine what that must feel like for your child.

We understand that there may be many reasons why your child has been late frequently. Perhaps they do not have a bedtime routine and so are too tired on a morning, perhaps a good morning routine is not in place which makes you late, perhaps your child has anxieties about coming to school causing them to find ways to delay coming to school. If any of these issues apply to your family, then there are ways we can help you, but you must talk to us about them.

Ultimately, parents have a legal duty to ensure their child attends school on a regular basis and this includes being on time for school. If your child arrives in their classroom after the register has been taken, they will receive a "U code" which is an unauthorised absence for a late. Parents can face fines for lateness should their child accrue 12 or more unauthorised absences, which can include late arrivals and/or unauthorised absences.

I hope this letter has fully informed you of the consequences to both your child's education and wellbeing as well as to yourself should their persistent lateness continue. Please do not hesitate to contact me should you feel you need some further support in this matter.

Yours sincerely  
Mrs N James  
Headteacher