

Attendance Policy

Saltford Church of England Primary School

Date of Policy:	September 2022
Responsibility:	Headteacher – D Sage
Review Date:	June 2023
Consultation:	This policy was developed, following local and national guidance, in consultation with staff and governors.

ETHOS STATEMENT

It is the aim of the Governing Body of Saltford C of E Primary School to develop policies and procedures which support the school’s vision of:

“Caring for our community”

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1. AIMS

The Staff and Governing Body at Saltford C of E Primary School give a high priority to its pupils' educational achievement and believe that maximum pupil attendance and punctuality are essential in order for all children to achieve their full potential.

We are committed to meeting our obligations with regards to school attendance by:

- Promoting good attendance and reducing absence, including persistent absence
- Ensuring every pupil has access to full-time education to which they are entitled
- Acting early to address patterns of absence

We will also support parents/carers to perform their legal duty to ensure their children of compulsory school age attend regularly as well as promote and support punctuality in attending school.

2. LEGISLATION & GUIDANCE

All children of compulsory school age (between 5 and 16) are required to receive an education. It is a parent/carer's responsibility to ensure that their child has an education suitable to their age, ability and aptitude and any special educational needs that they may have.

Whilst compulsory school age is between 5 and 16, all parents who choose Saltford C of E Primary for Reception are expected to comply with the guidance set out in this Attendance Policy.

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:

- 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.

3. ROLES & RESPONSIBILITIES

Statutory responsibilities for parents/carers, schools, governing bodies and local authorities are laid out in the summary guide of the DfE's '[Working Together to Improve Attendance](#)' document. These responsibilities include, but are not limited to, the following:

3.1 The Governing Body:

The Governing Body 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.

The Curriculum Working Party has specific responsibility for reviewing attendance information (due to the important safeguarding link) and the Safeguarding Link Governor has a key role in the monitoring of attendance procedures at the school.

They will:

- Monitor the school's procedures for managing pupil attendance (inc. training, procedures and data management)
- Annually review the attendance policy in line with the latest guidance

3.2 The Head Teacher (with the support of the school Attendance Officer):

The Head Teacher, supported by the school Attendance Officer in certain aspects, is responsible for:

- Effective 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
- Reviewing leave of absence requests and authorising the issuing of fixed-penalty notices, where necessary
- Maintaining oversight/authorisation of the removal from roll for any pupils (inc. elective home education requests) and part time timetable arrangements

3.3 The Attendance Leader:

The school Attendance Leader:

- Monitors attendance & lateness data across the school and at an individual pupil level and ensures appropriate completion/reconciliation of daily attendance registers
- Promotes a culture of attendance matters through effective communication with all stakeholders
- Reports concerns about attendance/absence (inc. persistent absence) to the Head Teacher
- Works with local authority education welfare officers & attendance support services to tackle persistent absence
- Arranges calls and meetings with parents to discuss attendance issues
- Advises the Head Teacher when to issue fixed-penalty notices

3.4 Class Teacher:

Class teachers are responsible for recording attendance on a daily basis, using the correct codes, and submitting this information to the school office. They will:

- Ensure that registers are taken at the start of each session
- Report any concerns relating to attendance to the Head Teacher
- Discuss attendance with parents/carers during parents evening appointments

3.5 Parents/Carers:

Parents/Carers have a key role to play, with legal responsibilities attached, in order to ensure regular attendance for their child at school. They will:

- Plan holidays outside of term time
- Consider whether it is wholly appropriate for the child/children to accompany adults in some circumstances where leave of absence in term time is required
- Complete all appropriate paperwork, and provide evidence requested, when children are absent from school
- Ensure their child attends school regularly in accordance with the Home School agreement
- Seek to arrange any medical appointments outside of the school day hours
- Notify the school by phone by 8.45am on the day, or in advance, when their child is absent from school using the Attendance Line – **01225 872185** e.g. sickness or medical appointments

4. 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 second session. 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 school by **8.45 am** on each school day. Gates are open between 8.40am – 8.50am to allow flexi- drop off. If a pupil arrives after this time, they will need to enter via the main entrance and will be marked as Late in the attendance register. Registers close promptly at 8.55am. If a child arrives in school after 8.50am they will be marked as late and after 9.00am they will be marked as absent for the session (an unauthorised absence.)

If a child is not able to be present for their attendance mark, due to illness or a medical appointment (which cannot be made outside of school hours), certain evidence may be requested, e.g. hospital or GP letter. Where a child has a medical appointment in school hours, they are expected to return to school immediately after this if they are well enough to do so.

The register for the first session will be taken immediately after lunch at the start of the afternoon lessons.

Punctuality will be monitored closely alongside attendance and action for unauthorised absences, due to arriving late after the register has closed, will be the same as an unauthorised session. If children are collected before the end of the day, their afternoon session may be marked as unauthorised and further action could be taken.

4.2 Unplanned Absence:

The pupil's parent/carer must notify the school on the first day of an unplanned absence by 8.45am, or as soon as practically possible, (see also section 7) by:

- Calling the Attendance Line on 01225 872185

Parents/carers should not report absences to a child's class teacher via Tapestry/Seesaw or via another parent/carers or pupil. It is important that the office is informed directly from somebody who has parental responsibility for the child not attending school.

We will mark absence due to illness as authorised unless the school has a genuine concern about the authenticity of the illness and/or evidence requested has not been provided.

If the authenticity of the illness is in doubt, or a pupil has had a significant amount of absence due to ill health, 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 in advance. Where an absence hasn't been reported, parents/carers will be contacted during the morning requesting a response and reason for absence. Where this is not forthcoming, the absence will be classed as unauthorised and further action could be taken.

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 using the same methods as detailed above (for unplanned absences).

Wherever possible, all medical and dental appointments should be made outside of school time. Furthermore, it is expected that every effort is made to minimise the amount of time that the child is absent for the appointment, i.e. not leaving until just before the appointment and returning immediately afterwards. If an appointment is unavoidable, siblings must not be taken out of school. If they are taken out of school, this would be recorded as an unauthorised absence.

The school may request confirmation of medical appointments or medical support of illness or injury. Medical evidence can include items such as a GP slip or letter, appointment card or letter, the original prescribed medication or the prescription itself. Parents/carers should note that not all illnesses or injuries require a child to be absent from school. Further information about whether an illness requires time off from school or not can be found on the NHS website: www.nhs.uk/live-well/healthy-body/is-my-child-too-ill-for-school.

Parents/carers must also apply for other types of term-time absence as far in advance as possible of the requested absence (see Section 5 for more details).

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 absent, using the appropriate code

Lateness is monitored, in the same way as pupil absence, by our Attendance Leader. Where concerns or patterns are spotted, parents/carers may be contacted and requested to attend a meeting to agree strategies to improve this. Where there is no improvement, further action could be taken or the case escalated to the Head Teacher.

4.5 Absence Monitoring:

- Where any child we expect to attend school does not attend, or stops attending altogether, the school will:
- Follow up on their absence with their parent/carer to ascertain the reason, on the first day of absence and any subsequent period of unexplained absence
- Ensure proper safeguarding action is taken where necessary
- Identify whether the absence is approved or not and/or whether referrals need to be made to any appropriate safeguarding or welfare services
- Identify the correct attendance code to use

4.6 Reporting Absence to Parents/Carers:

In addition to any 'ad-hoc' reporting of absence (e.g. when a concern has been identified), parents/carers are informed of their child's attendance at least twice each year within consultation evenings and end of year reports. This information will include their child's attendance and any appropriate comparison data such as class or national averages. Parents have access to their child's attendance records at all times via the My Child at School system.

5. AUTHORISED & UNAUTHORISED ABSENCE

Absence will only be authorised if it is unavoidable, such as illness or a medical appointment which cannot be made outside of school time. In these circumstances, proof such as a hospital letter or prescription may be requested.

If no reason is given for an absence, this will be recorded as unauthorised. It is the responsibility of the parent/carer to notify the school of any absences and give valid reasons for them. Failure to report absences within the guidelines set out in this policy will automatically result in that absence being recorded in the register as unauthorised. This may result in further action being taken if we are not informed of the whereabouts of the child and could possibly result in a missing child referral.

5.1 Term Time Leave of Absence Requests:

The Head Teacher 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 Head Teacher's discretion and this decision is final (i.e. it is not possible to appeal the decision taken with the Governing Body). The law does not grant parents the automatic right to take their child out of school during term time and the judgement of the Supreme Court in the case of R v Platt [2017] asserts that even one day of missed school could be an infraction of the law.

In line with the Department of Education regulations, which came into effect in September 2013, the Head Teacher may only grant a leave of absence during term time if there are exceptional circumstances which include, as examples, the following circumstances:

- Death of parent/carer or sibling of the pupil
- Life threatening or critical illness of parent or sibling of the pupil
- Parent/carer recuperation and convalescence from critical illness or surgery (leave request to be made within 6 months of recovery and medical evidence required)
- Leave for armed forces personnel who are prevented by operational duties to take leave at any other time
- Leave of absence already granted by a previous school or local authority (granted within the last six months and supported by documentation from the previous school)

Absences from school for the purposes of a term-time holiday will **not** be authorized unless there are exceptional circumstances which are considered on a case by case basis.

It is a legal requirement that parents/carers obtain the permission of the Head Teacher before removing their child from school. If a parent/carer wishes to make an application for a term-time absence, this must be done in advance of the absence by the parent/carer with whom the child normally lives. This request must be made in writing by completing a **Leave Of Absence Form** which can be obtained from the school office or available to download from the school website via the Office section.

This must be then handed in to the office for the Head Teacher to review at least two weeks in advance. The Head Teacher will formally reply to any applications within 7 days upon receiving this. This reply will explain whether the absence is authorised or not and explain any action needed.

The Head Teacher (or a representative of the Head Teacher) are within their rights to decline an application and refuse permission for parents/carers to take their children out of school during term time. Such a decision will have been made in the best interest of the pupils' educational progress and attainment and with due regard to their previous attendance record. If the child is subsequently taken out of school this absence will be recorded as 'unauthorised'. The Head Teacher's decision is final and there is no right of appeal with the decisions taken.

Parents/carers who take their children out of school during term time without the authorisation of the Head teacher not only damage their children's educational opportunities but also risk being issued with a penalty notice, being prosecuted in court and losing the child's place at the school.

When making a decision, the Head Teacher will consider a range of circumstances in addition to reason for absence including the child's previous attendance, the dates requested (e.g. impact on public examinations or assessments), the length of absence and the welfare needs of the child. Family emergencies need careful consideration. It is not always in the best interests of the child nor wholly appropriate for them to miss school for family emergencies that are being dealt with by adult members. School and school friendships/relationships can provide the children with stability and care during difficult times. The routine of school can provide a safe and familiar anchor to life during times of upheaval.

However, where the Head Teacher judges there to be genuine and pressing reasons for a child to be absent during term time, **they may only agree up to a maximum of 5 days' absence in any one school year.** It must be clear that the 5 days is not an entitlement for any individual but can be used, at the discretion of the Head Teacher, for exceptional circumstances.

If a child is involved in a sporting event or a performance, which requires time out of school, then a license may need to be applied for. In this situation, parents/carers should write to the Head Teacher with the details and official confirmation from the organising body.

At the Head Teacher's discretion, a limited amount of time may be authorised for religious observance (usually one day per year where the religious festival falls during term time).

If a parent/carer chooses to elect to home educate their child, and effectively remove them from roll at Saltford C of E Primary School, they must put this in writing. Parents/Carers should ensure their child still attends school until a removal from roll date has been agreed, in writing, with the Head Teacher.

5.2 Penalty Notices:

Penalty Notices may be issued to parents/carers by Banes Council, on behalf of the school, for any unauthorised absences of 10 or more sessions (5 or more days) in any 25 day period, including, but not limited to, absences for term-time holidays, sporadic unauthorised absences or illness where supporting medical evidence has been requested by the school but not supplied by the parent/carers.

During the 25 day period, the school will attempt to make at least three points of contact (i.e. phone, letter or home visit). If, at any point, there are safeguarding concerns (i.e. we are not able to locate a child or make contact) then, we may have no option but to make a referral to Children's Services and/or the police. This could also result in a referral to the Child Missing Education (CME) team. Therefore, it is always important to maintain contact when children are absent. Furthermore, these attempts at contact demonstrate that a referral for a penalty notice or prosecution really are a last resort.

The amount of a Penalty Notice is £60 per parent/carer, per child if paid within 21 days, rising to £120 if paid between 22 and 28 days. If the Penalty Notice is not paid the parent/carer may be prosecuted for the offence of failing to ensure their child's regular attendance at school. Any parents/carers with parental responsibility, even if they are currently living at a different address, may also be liable.

Section 23(1) Anti-Social Behaviour Act 2007:

Penalty notices may be issued to the parent of pupils who have unauthorised absence from school. The amount of the penalty is £60.

- If this is not paid within 21 days the amount rises to £120.

- If not paid within 28 days the Local Authority will prosecute under section 444(1) unless it comes to our attention that the penalty notice had been issued in error.

Section 444(1) Education Act 1996:

“If you are the parent of a child of compulsory school age who fails to attend school regularly, you are guilty of an offence.”

The court can fine each parent up to £1,000 per child, order payment of the prosecution costs and/or make a Parenting Order.

These prosecutions are criminal proceedings and could result in you having a criminal record.

A full copy of Banes LA's 'Penalty Notice Code of Conduct' can be obtained upon request.

5.3 Children Missing Education (CME):

Children are classed as missing education when they are not registered at a school or receiving suitable provision elsewhere and are of compulsory school age. To avoid children becoming CME, it is important that they are placed on and off a school roll according to Department for Education (DfE) guidelines. It is vital that schools and local authorities work together to safeguard children and ensure that they receive their educational entitlement.

At Salford C of E Primary School, we work closely with the Local Authority and inform them when we have concerns over a child missing education.

These are the practices that we have put in place in order to safeguard children from becoming CME:

- Pupils are entered onto the admission register at the beginning of the first day that child is due to attend. If the child fails to attend then enquiries will be made to establish their whereabouts and Banes Council will be notified. If a place is enquired about for a child who is not currently on roll at a Salford C of E Primary School, and a place is not available, the school will notify Banes council.
- If a pupil does not return to school for ten days after an authorised leave of absence, or is absent without authorisation for twenty days, the pupil can be removed from the admission register. This can only be done if the school and Banes have made reasonable enquiries to establish the whereabouts of the child.
- If a child is temporarily excluded from school for more than five days, the governing body will arrange suitable alternative full-time education. This must begin no later than the sixth day of exclusion. For permanent exclusions, the local authority will provide alternative education.
- Attendance will be monitored through our daily registers and any unexplained absences will be investigated as part of our safeguarding duty.
- The school will notify Banes when a pupil's name is removed from the school admission register at non-standard transition points.
- The school will notify Banes within five days of adding a pupil's name to the admission register at a non-standard transition point.
- If the school cannot locate a pupil by reasonable enquiries (emergency contacts, home visits, contacting other professionals involved with the family), then a Pupil Tracking Referral must be made via Banes.

If a child is not able to attend school, due to being incapacitated, chronically poorly or for any other long-term medical condition, the school will agree appropriate provision with the parent/carer and any other professionals involved. This could include a hybrid range of activities such as remote education provided by Salford Primary alongside any other provision allocated such as hospital education or tutoring.

5.4 Reducing Persistent Absence:

The school has a responsibility to work with parents/carers, and the LA Attendance Support Service, to reduce persistent absence rates (i.e. to reduce the number of children whose attendance is less than 90% at school). Action is therefore taken, at different stages, to achieve this goal and this is summarised in our Attendance Strategy which is available on the Office section of our website:

Actions include, but are not limited to, the following:

- Meetings with parents/carers and pupils
- Action plans agreed with any support required identified
- Referrals to education welfare/support services as necessary
- Support within school

Where there is no improvement to attendance for pupils identified as persistently absent, legal sanctions may be pursued (as detailed in Section 5.2) where there is no other alternative.

The Attendance Leader monitors attendance for all pupils at the school so may seek to intervene and work with families before a pupil is identified as persistently absent. This is because we know that attendance of less than 95% (i.e. absences of 9.5 days or more out of the 190 pupil days in the school year) has been shown to compromise pupil attainment. **At 90% attendance pupils miss the equivalent of almost 4 weeks education (19 days) and only 10% of pupils who are persistently absent from school achieve expected levels at GCSE.** We do not want children to get to this point.

6. STRATEGIES FOR PROMOTING ATTENDANCE

At Saltford C of E Primary School, we use a variety of strategies to maximise attendance and punctuality including, but not limited to, the following.

- Attendance display celebrating the classes with the highest percentages each half term shared via the newsletter
- Mention in newsletters and on social media.
- Class drop-ins from the Attendance Leader to promote attendance.
- Use of an 'Attendance Matters' poster to promote attendance within class.
- Certificates and letters home for children who have been working hard to improve their attendance (these are the children who have previously fallen below the expected 96%).
- Attendance leader to have meetings, calls and write letters to parents when attendance becomes a concern.
- Parent contract meetings to take place where a child's attendance is causing us a concern and having a negative impact on their learning

7. ATTENDANCE MONITORING

The Attendance Leader at our school monitors pupil absence on a daily basis.

A pupil's parent/carer is expected to call the school in the morning if their child is going to be absent due to ill health (see section 4.2). Parents/carers will be advised, when reporting illness on the first day of absence, whether calls are required each day of absence. This will usually depend on the circumstances of their child's illness.

If a pupil's absence causes concern, 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 and/or somebody from the LA Attendance Support Service.

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.

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.

Attendance data will be collected and used to:

- Track the attendance of individual pupils
- Identify whether or not there are particular groups of children whose absence may be a cause for concern
- Monitor and evaluate those children identified as being in need of intervention and support

8. MONITORING

This policy will be reviewed as guidance from the Local Authority or DfE is updated, and as a minimum every three years in line with the Policy Review Schedule.

9. LINKS WITH OTHER POLICIES

This policy links to the following policies:

- Safeguarding & Child Protection Policy
- Positive Behaviour Policy