

Attendance Policy



Reviewed November 2019

Sturry CE Primary School is a distinctively Christian school so the story and values of our Christian faith have an impact on all our relationships and how we view our policies. Recognising that God wants us all to live life in all its fullness we are concerned that all children are enabled to flourish at school and to achieve their potential socially, emotionally, spiritually and academically. We approach this policy with a caring and listening attitude, recognising that parents and carers may be reluctant to express their concerns and their circumstances, which may impact on their children's absences from school. We will try to be creative in supporting and encouraging parents and carers in enabling their children to attend school.

Term times are for education. This is the priority. Children and families have 175 days off school to spend time together, including weekends and school holidays.

There is a clear connection between regular attendance and achievement. As attendance deteriorates, so does performance, achievement, friendship circles and self-esteem.

We actively promote 100% attendance for all our pupils and we use a variety of weekly and termly awards to promote good attendance and punctuality.

The Education Act 1996 requires parents and carers to ensure their child receives full time education. Therefore, a pupil's previous record of attendance will not be taken into account when making decisions regarding requests for leave of absence as full attendance is the expected standard.

Background

The education (pupil registration) (England) (amendment) regulations 2013, which came into force on 1 September 2013, removed references to family holidays and extended leave as well as the notional threshold of ten school days. The amendments made clear that head teachers may not grant any leave of absence during term time unless 'exceptional circumstances' exist. Therefore our school will only authorise holidays in line with these regulations. Exceptional circumstances will only be agreed **very rarely**.

What is accepted as exceptional circumstances?

- Absence for a bereavement of a close family member is usually considered an exceptional circumstance but for the funeral service only, not extended leave.
- Absences for important religious observances are often taken into account but only for the ceremony and travelling time, not extended leave. This is intended for one off situations rather than regular or recurring events.
- Absences to visit family members are not normally granted during term time if they could be scheduled for holiday periods or outside school hours. Children may however need time to visit seriously ill relatives and the school will authorise leave, up to a maximum of three days.
- Failure by local Authority to provide transport

What is not accepted as exceptional circumstances?

- Holidays where employees are not granted leave by their employer during school holidays.
- Holidays booked by other family members.
- Financial savings made by holidays during term times.
- Birthdays or weddings abroad.

Other unacceptable reasons for absence

- Persistent non-specific illness e.g. poorly/unwell.
- Absence of siblings if one child is ill.
- Absence of sibling who attends another school where absence is due to school closure e.g. development day/snow.
- Parental illness [alternative arrangements should be made to get children to school – emergencies excepted].
- Transport issues e.g. breakdown of a car.
- Oversleeping.
- Inadequate clothing/uniform.
- Confusion over school dates.
- Medical/dental appointments of more than half a day without very good reasons.
- Child's/family birthday.
- Shopping trip.
- Family Holidays

Persistent unauthorised absence (10% or more of the school year) may result in an AS1 referral to the Local Authority School Liaison Officer for consideration of prosecution. The school will follow procedures prior to referral and parents will be notified in writing.

Impact of absence

Parents, guardians and carers must ensure that they are fully aware of the school's attendance policy as any absence will have a huge impact on:

- a) Your child's learning and social skills
- b) Other pupils learning, as resources including teacher and teaching assistant are diverted onto returning pupils.

Sturry CE Primary School is committed to the continuous raising of achievement of all our pupils. Regular attendance is critical if our pupils are to be successful and benefit from the opportunities presented to them.

Responsibility

There is a **whole school responsibility** and approach for improving school attendance. Class Teachers complete a register at the beginning of each morning and once during the afternoon as per The Education Pupil Registration Regulations 2006 – England. The school's Attendance Officer has overall responsibility for monitoring attendance issues.

It is the **parents' responsibility** to contact the school on the first day their child is absent. This is a safeguarding issue requirement so that all parties know that your child is safe and their whereabouts is known. Parents should regularly update the school and inform on when their child is returning.

Absence through illness

Keeping your child off school with minor ailments such as a headache or slight cold is not acceptable. Repeated absences will require us to request that you obtain medical evidence from your doctor's surgery. This may be in the form of a date stamped compliment slip confirming your visit, or prescription or medicine bottle. Any of the above is to be shown to a member of the school office. (Please note: the school is not asking any parent to incur a charge for such information and will not be liable for the cost.)

Please avoid medical and dental appointments during the school day. If such appointments are necessary e.g. appointments allocated for you, such absences usually only take up part of a day and children should attend either before and/or after the appointment. The school office will require a copy of the appointment letter in order to authorise the absence.

The most common cause of absence is for diarrhoea and/or vomiting. Children should stay off school for 48 hours after last bout (this is 24 hours after the last bout plus 24 hours recovery time). This is to avoid widespread contamination. Please check your child understands why they need to wash and dry their hands frequently. Where sickness is not due to a contagious infection ie a coughing bout, and the child shows no signs of being unwell, then parents should use their discretion regarding their child's fitness to return to school.

Lateness

Punctuality is an important life skill. It is also polite.

School gates open at 8.30 am (unless accessing Breakfast Club). Children must be in class by 8.50 a.m. each day. Registers will be taken as soon as possible after that time. Children will be marked late if they arrive at school after the registers have been taken. The school gates will be shut by 8.45 am. Children who arrive after that time will be recorded with the reason for their lateness and must come into the building via the main office. They will be marked as an L code.

Lateness will be monitored and where there are concerns a discussion with the attendance service – School Liaison Officers will occur. Penalty fines may be issued for unauthorised lateness.

If the arrival at school occurs after 9.15, the pupil will receive a 'U' mark. This equates to an absence although we are aware that the pupil is on the school premises in accordance with health and safety.

Pupils who are consistently late are disrupting not only their own education but also that of other pupils. Lateness is considered to be an equally serious absence. Parents, guardians or carers of pupils who seem to be developing patterns of lateness will be reminded by letter of the importance of good time keeping in line with Project 95. If lateness persists, parents, guardians or carers will be invited to attend the school and discuss the problem with the Pastoral Support Manager.

95 – 100%	Excellent – Well done! This will help all aspects of your child’s progress and life in school. This will give them a good start in life and supports a positive work ethic.
95%	Average – Strive to build on this. We will work with parents to continue to promote full attendance to move to 97%+
90 – 95%	The school is part of the ‘Project 95’ initiative and we will write to all parents when their child’s attendance falls below 95%. An informal meeting to discuss attendance will be arranged.
	Where the level of absence has not improved and there are unauthorised absences, the school may consult with the Local Authority School Liaison Officer for advice and may make a referral to the KCC Inclusion and Attendance Service. For the cases that require intensive family support, the school may make an Early Help Notification

Penalty notices for poor attendance

Penalty Notices are issued in accordance with the Kent County Council’s Education Penalty Notices Code of Conduct effective from January 2016 and revised in April 2017.

Leave of absence taken without authorisation may be referred to the Attendance Service. This may result in a fixed Penalty Notice being requested by the school of the Local Authority. If a Fixed Penalty Notice is issued, a separate Notice would be issued to each parent for each child.

Where penalty notices are imposed the regulations state that the penalty will be £120 to be paid within 28 days, reduced to £60 if paid within 21 days. Penalty Notices are issued to each parent of each child. Failure to pay the penalty in full by the end of the 28 days period will result in prosecution by the Local Authority.

If the penalty notice is not paid, each parent may be liable to prosecution at the Magistrates Court, and if proved, each notice may receive a criminal conviction and/or a fine to a maximum of £1,000, plus costs.

Note: Parent also includes guardian/carer

- A penalty notice can only be issued in cases of absence for 10 or more half days sessions (5 school days) without authorisation during any 100 possible school sessions or period of 50 days of schooling – these do not need to be consecutive

- A penalty notice can also be issued where an excluded child is found in a public place during school hours.
- After the appropriate request for a penalty notice is received, the KCC inclusion and attendance service will issue a warning letter setting out 15 school days during which no unauthorised absence is to be recorded.
- If unauthorised absence is recorded during the 15 day period a Penalty Notice will be issued (one per parent per child).

Section 444 of the Education Act 1996 says that parents are guilty of an offence of failing to secure regular attendance at school.

Penalty Notice Proceedings for Lateness

Penalty Notices are issued in accordance with Kent County Council's Education Penalty Notices Code of Conduct effective from January 2016, as revised in April 2017 when:

- 10 incidents of late arrival after the registers have closed during any possible 100 leads to a Penalty Notice Warning Letter.
- The Penalty Notice Warning Letter sets out 15 school days during which no unauthorised absence is to be recorded
- If unauthorised absence is recorded during the 15 day period, a Penalty Notice(s) will be issued (one per parent per child).
- Where a Penalty Notice is not paid within 28 days of issue the Local Authority will instigate court proceedings.

Children Missing Education

No child should be removed from the school roll without consultation between the Head Teacher, School Attendance Officer and the PRU, Inclusion and Attendance Service when appropriate.

Where a child is missing from education, Local Authority Guidance will be followed, by complete a Child Missing Education referral for the following circumstances:

- a) If the whereabouts of the child is unknown and the school have failed to located him/her
- b) The family has notified the school that they are leaving the area but no Common Transfer Form (pupil file) has been requested by another school.

Kent School Referral Pathway – Pupil Attendance

