



**Medway Anglican Schools Trust**

# **ATTENDANCE AND ABSENCE POLICY**

**St. James' Church of England Primary Academy**

Headteacher: Miss Fay Cordingley

Attendance Lead: Miss Fay Cordingley

Ratified by Governor: Mrs Carolyn Cassettari

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## Statement of Intent

All our policies are written with the objective of continuously improving our school in our aim of realising St. James' vision, which is to create a community that reaches their full potential:

*"He told them another parable: "The kingdom of heaven is like a mustard seed, which a man took and planted in his field. <sup>32</sup> Though it is the smallest of all seeds, yet when it grows, it is the largest of garden plants and becomes a tree, so that the birds come and perch in its branches."*

*Matthew 13: 31-32*

We believe a small act of kindness and an act of faith can have a huge impact on another's life.

Our Governors, leaders and staff uphold the vision of

***'We grow together, through God we are Giving, Loving and are Honest'***

St. James' Church of England Primary Academy believes that in order to facilitate teaching and learning, good attendance is essential. Pupils cannot achieve their full potential if they do not regularly attend school.

We understand that barriers to attendance are complex and that some pupils find it harder than others to attend school; therefore, we will continue to prioritise cultivating a safe and supportive environment at school, as well as strong and trusting relationships with pupils and parents.

We take a whole-school approach to securing good attendance and recognise the impact that our efforts in other areas such as the curriculum, behaviour standards, bullying, SEND support, pastoral support and the effective use of resources such as pupil premium can have on improving pupil attendance.

We are committed to:

- Promoting and modelling high attendance and its benefits.
- An attendance expectation of 95%.
- Ensuring equality and fairness for all.
- Intervening early and working with other agencies to ensure the health and safety of our pupils.
- Building strong relationships with families to overcome barriers to attendance, so that attendance improves for individuals.
- Working collaboratively with other schools in the area, as well as other agencies.
- Ensuring parents follow the framework set in Section 7 of the Education Act 1996, which states that the parent of every child of compulsory school age shall cause them to receive efficient full-time education suitable to their age, ability and aptitude, and to any SEND they may have, either by regular attendance at school or otherwise.
- Ensuring our Attendance Policy is clear and easily understood by all staff, parents and pupils.
- Regularly monitoring and analysing attendance and absence data to identify pupils or cohorts that require more support.

Our Attendance Lead and Attendance Champion is our Headteacher, Miss Fay Cordingley and she can be contacted via email at [office@stjames.medway.sch.uk](mailto:office@stjames.medway.sch.uk). Our Lead Governor for attendance is Mrs Sarah Malone.

Staff, parents and pupils are expected to contact our Home School Support Worker, Mrs Sue Weston, for queries or concerns regarding attendance.

## 1. Legal Framework

This policy has due regard to all relevant legislation and statutory guidance including, but not limited to, the following:

- Education Act 1996
- Equality Act 2010
- The Education (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2006 (As amended)
- The Children (Performances and Activities) (England) Regulations 2014
- Children and Young Persons Act 1963
- DfE (2024) 'Working together to improve school attendance'
- DfE (2023) 'Keeping children safe in education (KCSIE) 2023'
- DfE (2024) 'Keeping children safe in education (KCSIE) 2024'
- DfE (2016) 'Children missing education'
- DfE (2023) 'Providing remote education'
- DfE (2024) 'Summary table of responsibilities for school attendance'

This policy operates in conjunction with the following school policies:

- Child Protection and Safeguarding Policy
- Complaints Procedures Policy
- Behaviour Policy
- SEND Policy
- Supporting Pupils with Medical Conditions Policy
- Social, Emotional and Mental Health (SEMH) Policy
- Children Missing Education Policy
- Home Visit Policy
- Pupils with Additional Health Needs Attendance Policy

## 2. Roles and Responsibilities

The Local Governing Body has overall responsibility for:

- Monitoring the implementation of this policy and all relevant procedures across the school.
- Promoting the importance of good attendance through the school ethos and policies.
- Arranging attendance training for all relevant staff that is appropriate to their role.
- Working with the Leadership Team to set goals for attendance and providing support and challenge around delivery against those goals.
- Regularly reviewing attendance data.
- Sharing effective practice on attendance management and improvement across the school.
- Ensuring that this policy, as written, does not discriminate on any grounds, including, but not limited to, ethnicity/national origin, culture, religion, gender, disability or sexual orientation.

- Handling complaints regarding this policy as outlined in the Complaints Procedures Policy.
- Having regard to KCSIE when making arrangements to safeguard and promote the welfare of children.
- Ensuring there is a Children Missing Education Policy in place and that this is regularly reviewed and updated.
- Ensuring school staff receive adequate training on attendance

The Headteacher is responsible for:

- The day-to-day implementation and management of this policy and all relevant procedures across the school.
- Appointing a member of the SLT to the attendance lead officer role.
- Ensuring that the pastoral team have the skills and knowledge to work effectively with parents to support them to improve attendance.
- Ensuring all parents are aware of the school's attendance expectations and procedures.
- Ensuring that every pupil has access to full-time education and will act as early as possible to address patterns of absence.
- Authorising or unauthorising all absences.

Staff are responsible for:

- Following this policy and ensuring parents and pupils do so too.
- Ensuring this policy is implemented fairly and consistently.
- Modelling good attendance behaviour.
- Using their professional judgement and knowledge of individual pupils to inform decisions as to whether any welfare concerns should be escalated.
- Where designated, taking the attendance register at the relevant times during the school day.

The Senior Lead Attendance Officer is responsible for:

- The overall strategic approach to attendance in school.
- Developing a clear vision for improving attendance.
- Monitoring attendance and the impact of interventions.
- Analysing attendance data and evaluating the impact of intervention and support on improving attendance and punctuality.
- Communicating with pupils and parents with regard to attendance, ensuring that regular updates on individual attendance are communicated.
- Modelling and leading a compassionate approach when listening to parents and pupils regarding barriers to attendance.
- Following up on incidents of persistent poor attendance.
- Enforcing attendance through statutory interventions in cases of persistent poor attendance where other supports have not succeeded.
- Informing the LA of any pupil being deleted from the admission and attendance registers.

Pupils are responsible for:

- Attending their lessons and any agreed activities when at school.
- Arriving punctually to lessons when at school.
- Following any support provided by the school to improve attendance.

Parents are responsible for:

- Providing accurate and up-to-date contact details.
- Providing the school with more than one emergency contact number.
- Updating the school if their details change.
- The attendance of their children at school.
- Promoting good attendance with their children.
- Proactively engaging with any attendance support offered by the school and the LA.
- Notifying the school as soon as possible when their child has to be unexpectedly absent.
- Requesting leave of absence only in exceptional circumstances and in advance.
- Booking any medical and dental appointments around school where possible. When these have to be booked during the school day, collecting the child from school and returning them to school as soon as possible after the appointment.
- Following any family-based support implemented by the school to improve attendance.

### **3. Definitions**

The following definitions apply for the purposes of this policy:

#### **Absence:**

- Arrival at school after the register has closed
- Not attending the registered school for any reason

#### **Authorised absence:**

- An absence for sickness for which the school has granted leave
- Medical or dental appointments which unavoidably fall during school time, for which the school has granted leave
- Religious or cultural observances for which the school has granted leave
- An absence due to a family emergency

#### **Unauthorised absence:**

- Parents keeping children off school unnecessarily or without reason
- Truancy before or during the school day
- Absences which have never been properly explained
- Arrival at school after the register has closed
- Absence due to shopping, looking after other children or birthdays
- Absence due to day trips and holidays in term-time which have not been agreed
- Leaving school for no reason during the day

**Persistent absence (PA):**

- Missing 10% or more of schooling across the year for any reason

**Missing education**

- Not registered at a school and not receiving suitable education in a setting other than a school
- There are six terms in our school year

**4. Attendance Expectations**

We have high expectations for pupils' attendance and punctuality and ensure that these expectations are communicated regularly to parents and pupils.

Pupils will be expected to attend school punctually every day they are required to be at school, for the full day.

In the morning, school gates open at 8.40am and close at 8.55am. Pupils who arrive after this time must report to the school office on entering the building. This is to ensure that the child's arrival in school is noted and that the register is updated accordingly.

The morning register will close at 9.05am.

Pupils who arrive between 9.05am and 9.30am will receive a late mark in the register, which will show as L.

Pupils who arrive after 9.30am will be marked with a U, which will show as an unauthorised absence for the session and can be used solely or in a combination with any other unauthorised session marks to issue a penalty notice. If 10 unauthorised sessions are recorded over a period of 10 weeks, a penalty notice can be given.

The register is called again in the afternoon at 1.00pm. Pupils will receive an L mark if they are not in class between 1.00pm and 1.10pm. Pupils will receive a U mark if they arrive after 1.10pm.

Pupils are encouraged to communicate any concerns related to attendance and absence as soon as possible to the relevant member of staff.

**5. Absence Procedures**

Parents will be required to contact the school office via telephone on 01634 270341 by 9:30am on the first day of their child's absence – they will be expected to provide an explanation for the absence and an estimation of how long the absence will last, e.g. one school day.

Where a pupil is absent, and their parent has not contacted the school by the close of the morning register to report the absence, administrative staff will contact the parent by telephone call as soon as is practicable on the first day that they do not attend school.

The school will always follow up any absences in order to:

- Ascertain the reason for the absence.
- Ensure the proper safeguarding action is being taken.
- Identify whether the absence is authorised or not.
- Identify the correct code to use to enter the data onto the school census system.

Where a pupil is absent for more than three school days in a row, the pupil's parent will be expected to provide a signed letter with an explanation for the absence(s). They may be invited to attend a meeting to discuss how to improve attendance.

The school will not request medical evidence in most circumstances where a pupil is absent due to illness; however, the school reserves the right to request supporting evidence where there is genuine and reasonable doubt about the authenticity of the illness and/or recurring absences for illness.

In the case of persistent absence, arrangements will be made for parents to speak to the Home School Support Worker. They may also need to speak with the Senior Attendance Lead. The school will inform Medway of the details of pupils who fail to attend regularly or who have missed 10 school sessions (5 days) in any 10 week rolling period or more without authorisation. Parents will be invited to a meeting to discuss how to improve attendance and when unauthorised absence meets the threshold of 10 sessions in 10 weeks, then a notice to improve with targets that are monitored will be made.

If a pupil's attendance drops below 90 percent, the Senior Lead Attendance Officer will be informed, and a formal meeting will be arranged with the pupil's parent.

Where a pupil has not returned to school for 10 days after an authorised absence, or is absent from school without authorisation for 20 consecutive school days, the school will remove the pupil from the admissions register if the school and Medway have failed to establish the whereabouts of the pupil after making reasonable enquiries.

## **6. Attendance Register**

The school uses Arbor Sto keep attendance registers to ensure they are as accurate as possible and can be easily analysed and shared with the appropriate authorities.

Designated staff members will take the attendance register at the start of each school day and at the start of the afternoon session.

This register will record whether pupils are:

- Present
- Absent
- Attending an approved educational visit
- Unable to attend due to exceptional circumstances

The school will use the national attendance codes to ensure attendance and absence are monitored and recorded in a consistent way. The following codes will be used:

- # = planned whole or partial school closure
- / = Present in the morning
- \ = Present in the afternoon
- L = Late arrival before the register has closed
- C = Leave of absence granted by the school for exceptional circumstances
- S = Study leave
- C1 = Leave of absence for participating in a regulated performance or employment abroad
- C2 = Leave of absence for part-time pupils
- E = Suspended or permanently excluded but no alternative provision made
- J1 = Leave of absence for job or education interviews
- I = Illness
- M = Medical or dental appointments

- K = Attending provision arranged by the local authority
- R = Religious observance
- B = Off-site education activity
- G = Unauthorised holiday
- O = Unauthorised absence
- U = Arrived after registration closed
- N = Reason not yet provided
- X = Not required to be in school
- T = Traveller absence
- Q = Absent due to a lack of access arrangements
- V = Educational visit or trip
- P = Participating in a supervised sporting activity
- D = Dual registered – at another educational establishment
- W = Attending work experience
- Y1 = Absent due to their regular transport not being available
- Y2 = Absent due to travel disruption
- Y3 = Absent due to part of the school premises being closed
- Y4 = Absent due to the school site being closed
- Y5 = Absent due to being in criminal justice detention
- Y6 = Absent due to public health guidance or law
- Y7 = Absent due to any other unavoidable cause
- Z = Pupil not on admission register

When the school has planned in advance to be fully or partially closed, the code ‘#’ will be used for the relevant pupils who are absent. This code will also be used to record year groups who are not due to attend because the school has set different term dates for different years, e.g. induction days.

Pupils who are absent from school but are receiving remote education for any reason will be marked as absent in the register.

All amendments made to the attendance register will include the original entry, the amended entry, the reason for the amendment, the date of amendment and the name and role of the person who made the amendment.

Every entry received into the attendance register will be preserved for six years.

## **7. Authorising Parental Absence Requests**

Parents and carers cannot authorise any absence, only the Headteacher can do this. However, parents/carers can provide reasons for absence for the school to consider. Parents will be required to request certain types of absence in advance. All requests for absence will be handled by the Headteacher – the decision to grant or refuse the request will be at the sole discretion of the Headteacher, taking the best interests of the pupil and the impact on the pupil’s education into account. The Headteacher’s decision is not subject to appeal.

## Leave of Absence

The school will only grant a pupil a leave of absence in exceptional circumstances. In order to have requests for a leave of absence considered, the school will expect parents to contact the Headteacher in writing at least two weeks prior to the proposed start date of the leave of absence, providing the reason for the proposed absence and the dates during which the absence would be expected to occur.

Any requests for leave during term time will be considered on an individual basis and the pupil's previous attendance record will be taken into account. Where the absence is granted, the Headteacher will determine the length of time that the pupil can be away from school. The school is not likely to grant a leave of absence for the purposes of family holidays.

Holidays are periods of recreation and leisure and will include individual days e.g. visit to an event or attraction. Each request for leave during term time is considered on an individual basis, with any exceptional circumstances taken into consideration.

Any holiday-related absence taken that includes 10 sessions in 10 weeks, may result in a Penalty Notice. In this instance, a 'Notice to Improve' notification will not be issued beforehand. The Local Authority may proceed the case to court if a Penalty Notice is not paid in the time set.

### First Offence

Parent/carers are required to pay this penalty notice (£80 per parent per child) within 21 days, or the amount will increase (£160 per parent per child) and is expected to be settled within 28 days. Any non-payment of the penalty notice may be referred to the Magistrates Court.

### Second Offence

If a parent receives a second penalty notice for the same child within any three-year period, the charge will be a flat rate of £160 per parent per child; there will be no reduction if paid within 21 days. Penalty notices for absence before the 2024-25 school year do not count. Any non-payment of the penalty notice may be referred to the Magistrates Court.

### Third Offence

A parent cannot receive more than two penalty notices for the same child within any three-year period. Once this limit has been reached, prosecution will be considered. The Magistrates Court can order fines up to £2,500 per parent per child

Requests for leave will not be granted in the following circumstances:

- Immediately before and during statutory assessment periods
- When a pupil's attendance record shows any unauthorised absence
- Where a pupil's authorised absence record is already above 10 percent for any reason

If term-time leave is not granted, taking a pupil out of school will be recorded as an unauthorised absence and may result in sanctions, such as a penalty notice. The school cannot grant leaves of absence retrospectively; therefore, any absences that were not approved by the school in advance will be marked as unauthorised.

We will refer via the AASSA 2025-2026 referral form, providing evidence of letters and emails, medical evidence, meeting notes, evidence of attendance meetings, Notice to Improve and a registration certificate showing 10+ unauthorised sessions of absence.

## Illness and healthcare appointments

Parents will be expected to make medical or dental appointments outside of school hours wherever possible. Where this is not possible, parents will be expected to obtain approval for their child's absence to attend such appointments as far in advance as is practicable. Parents will be responsible for ensuring their child misses only the amount of time necessary to attend the appointment.

### **Performances and activities, including paid work**

The school will ensure that all pupils engaging in performances or activities, whether they receive payment or not, which require them to be absent from school, understand that they will be required to obtain a licence from the local authority which authorises the school's absence(s).

Additional arrangements will be made by the school for pupils engaging in performances or activities that require them to be absent from school to ensure they do not fall behind in their education.

These arrangements will be approved by the Local Authority who will ensure that the arrangements are suitable for the pupil.

The pupil will receive education that, when taken together over the term of the licence, amounts to a minimum of three hours per day that the pupil would be required to attend a school maintained by the local authority issuing the licence. This requirement will be met by ensuring a pupil receives an education:

- For not less than six hours a week; and
- During each complete period of four weeks (or if there is a period of less than four weeks, then during that period), for periods of time not less than three hours a day; and
- On days where the pupil would be required to attend school if they were attending a school maintained by the Local Authority; and
- For not more than five hours on any such day.

Where a licence has been granted by the Local Authority and it specifies dates of absence, no further authorisation will be needed from the school. Where an application does not specify dates and it has been approved by the Local Authority, it is at the discretion of the Headteacher to authorise the leave of absence for each day. The Headteacher will not authorise any absences which would mean that a pupil's attendance would fall below 96 percent. Where a licence has not been obtained, the Headteacher will not authorise any absence for a performance or activity.

### **Religious observance**

Parents will be expected to request absence for religious observance at least two weeks in advance.

The school will only accept requests from parents for absence on grounds of religious observance for days that are exclusively set apart for religious observance by the relevant religious body. The school will define this as a day where the pupil's parents would be expected by an established religious body to stay away from their employment to mark the occasion.

The school may seek advice from the religious body in question where there is doubt over the request.

### **Gypsy, Roma and Traveller absence**

Where a pupil's parent belongs to a community covered by this code and is travelling for occupational purposes, the parent will be expected to request a leave of absence for their child at least two weeks in advance. Absences will not be granted for pupils from these communities under this code for reasons other than travel for occupational purposes.

## **8. SEND and Health-Related Absences**

The school recognises that pupils with SEND and/or health conditions, including mental health issues, may face greater barriers to attendance than their peers. We will maintain high aspirations for their attendance. We will incorporate robust procedures to support pupils who find attending school difficult.

In line with the SEND Policy and Supporting Pupils with Medical Conditions Policy, the school will ensure that reasonable adjustments are made for disabled pupils to reduce barriers to attendance, in line with any EHC plans or IHCPs that have been implemented. The school will secure additional support from external partners to help bolster attendance where appropriate.

Where the school has concerns that a pupil's non-attendance may be related to mental health issues, parents will be contacted to discuss the issue and whether there are any contributory factors to their child's lack of attendance. Where staff have a mental health concern about a pupil that is also a safeguarding concern, they will inform the Designated Safeguarding Lead and the Child Protection and Safeguarding Policy will be followed. All pupils will be supported with their mental health in accordance with the school's Social, Emotional and Mental Health (SEMH) Policy.

If a pupil is unable to attend school for long periods of time due to their health, the school will:

- Inform the Local Authority if a pupil is likely to be away from the school for more than 15 school days.
- Provide the Local Authority with information about the pupil's needs, capabilities and programme of work.
- Help the pupil reintegrate at school when they return.
- Make sure the pupil is kept informed about school events and clubs.
- Encourage the pupil to stay in contact with other pupils during their absence.

The school will incorporate an action plan to help any pupils with SEND and/or health issues cope with the stress and anxiety that attending school may cause them. Such plans will be regularly monitored and reviewed until the pupil is attending school as normal and there has been signs of significant improvement.

To support the attendance of pupils with SEND and/or health issues, the school will consider:

- Holding termly meetings to evaluate any implemented reasonable adjustments.
- Incorporating a pastoral support plan.
- Carrying out strengths and difficulties assessment.
- Identifying pupils' unmet needs through the Common Assessment Framework.
- Using an internal or external specialist.
- Enabling a pupil to have a time-limited reduced timetable which is regularly reviewed.
- Ensuring a pupil can have somewhere quiet to spend lunch and breaktimes.
- Implementing a system whereby pupils can request to leave a classroom if they feel they need time out.
- Temporary late starts or early finishes.
- Time limited phased returns to school where there has been a long absence.
- Small group work or on-to-one lessons.
- Tailored support to meet their individual needs.

## **9. Leave During Lunch Times**

Parents may be permitted to take their child away from the school premises during lunch times with permission from the Headteacher – it is at the Headteacher's discretion as to whether a pupil will be allowed to leave the premises.

Parents will submit a written request, outlining the reasons for their child to leave the premises during lunch time – this request will be submitted to the Headteacher. The Headteacher will consider the request and will invite the parent into the school for a discussion regarding any concerns, as well as the timely return of their child at the end of lunch time and their child's behaviour when not on the school premises. The Headteacher reserves the right to grant or refuse a request and will inform the parent in writing of their decision within one week of the request.

Where permission has been granted, the Headteacher will ensure a lunchtime pass is printed for the pupil and will include the pupil's name on the off-site register.

Pupils will leave the school premises within 5 minutes of the start of lunch and will return no later than 5 minutes before the end of lunch.

Parents will be required to meet their child at the school office when taking them off the premises – the pupil will be signed out and back in using the lunch time register at the school office. A member of staff will be available at the school office before the pupil leaves the premises and upon their return to sign them back in. No pupil will leave the premises before the member of staff at the school office has given their permission.

The Headteacher reserves the right to withdraw their permission at any time – this may occur, for example, where there are attendance concerns. Any decision to withdraw permission will be in writing, explaining the reasons for the Headteacher's decision. If permission is withdrawn, parents will not be entitled to appeal the decision. Parents will be able to withdraw their request at any time – the request will be submitted in writing to the Headteacher.

Permission will be updated on a termly basis – letters will be sent to parents at the beginning of each term to confirm whether they would like their request to continue.

## **10. Truancy**

Truancy will be considered as any absence of part, or all, of one or more days from school, during which the school has not been notified of the cause behind such absence.

All staff will be actively engaged in supporting the regular attendance of pupils, and understand the importance of continuity in each pupil's learning.

All pupils are expected to be in their classes by 9:00am and 1:15pm, where the teacher will record the attendance electronically. Any pupil with permission to leave the school during the day must sign out at the school office and sign back in again on their return.

Immediate action will be taken when there are any concerns that a pupil might be truanting. If truancy is suspected, the Headteacher is notified, and they will contact the parent in order to assess the reasons behind the pupil not attending school.

The following procedures will be taken in the event of a truancy:

- In the first instance, a letter of warning will be sent to the parents of the pupil, informing them of the truancy and stating that any future occurrences could result in further action being taken.
- If any further truancy occurs, then the school will consider issuing a penalty notice.
- A penalty notice will be issued where there is overt truancy, inappropriate parentally-condoned absence, excessive holidays in term-time and persistent late arrival at school.
- Penalty notices will be issued in accordance with the National Penalty Framework.

The Designated Safeguarding Lead will be involved where an instance of truancy may be linked to a safeguarding concern. Any safeguarding concerns will be dealt with in line with the Child Protection and Safeguarding Policy.

## 11. Absent Pupils

Pupils will not be permitted to leave the school premises during the school day unless they have permission from the school. The following procedures will be taken in the event of a pupil going missing whilst at school:

- The member of staff who has noticed the absent pupil will inform the Headteacher immediately
- The office staff will also be informed as they will act as a point of contact for receiving information regarding the search
- A member of staff will stay with the rest of the class, and all other available members of staff will conduct a thorough search of the school premises as directed by the Headteacher
- The following areas will be systematically searched:
  - All classrooms
  - All toilets
  - Changing rooms
  - The library
  - Any outbuildings
  - The school grounds
- Available staff will begin a search of the area immediately outside of the school premises, and will take a mobile phone with them so they can be contacted.
- If the pupil has not been found after 10 minutes, then the parents of the pupil will be notified
- The school will attempt to contact parents using the emergency contact numbers provided
- If the parents have had no contact from the pupil, and the emergency contacts list has been exhausted, the police will be contacted.
- The absent pupil's teacher will fill in an incident form, describing all circumstances leading up to the pupil going missing
- If the absent pupil has an allocated social worker, is a looked-after child, or has any SEND, then the appropriate personnel will be informed
- When the pupil has been located, members of staff will care for and talk to the pupil to ensure they are safe and well
- Parents and any other agencies will be informed immediately when the pupil has been located

The Headteacher will take the appropriate action to ensure that pupils understand they must not leave the premises, and sanctions will be issued if deemed necessary. Appropriate disciplinary procedures will be followed in accordance with the Behaviour Policy.

The Headteacher will carry out a full investigation and will draw a conclusion as to how the incident occurred. A written report will be produced, and policies and procedures will be reviewed in accordance with the outcome where necessary.

## 12. Attendance Intervention

The school has used [Working together to improve school attendance - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/guidance/working-together-to-improve-school-attendance) to implement supportive interventions to improve attendance. This guidance emphasises a 'Support First' ethos, and recognises that '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.

It is essential for pupils to get the most out of their school experience, including their attainment, wellbeing, and wider life chances. All of this is necessary to ensure that they can flourish. In order to ensure the school has effective procedures for managing absence, the pastoral attendance team, supported by the senior lead attendance, will:

In order to ensure the school has effective procedures for managing absence, the pastoral attendance team, supported by the senior lead attendance, will:

- Establish a range of evidence-based interventions to address barriers to attendance.
- Monitor the implementation and quality of escalation procedures and seek robust evidence of the escalation procedures that work.
- Attend or lead attendance reviews in line with escalation procedures.
- Establish robust escalation procedures which will be initiated before absence becomes a problem by:
  - Sending letters to parents.
  - Having a two weekly review with the pupil and parents.
  - Engaging with LA attendance teams.
  - Using fixed penalty notices.
  - Convening attendance clinics.
  - Notice to improve attendance with targets and reviews over an agreed time of 3-6 weeks

The school will use attendance data, in line with the '[Monitoring and analysing absence](#)' section of this policy, to develop specific strategies to improve attendance where patterns of absence are emerging. These strategies will be developed on a case-by-case basis, and will consider the particular needs of the pupils whom the intervention is designed to target.

The school acknowledge attendance at the end of every week when the class with the best attendance is announced in a whole school assembly and they are awarded Attendance Ted.

We also recognise good attendance over the academic year and children are awarded badges three times a year:

- 95% or more by the end of Term 2 - Bronze pin
- 96% or more by the end of Term 4 - Silver pin
- 97% or more by the end of Term 6 - Gold pin

In addition to this, we celebrate good punctuality at the end of Term 2, Term 4 and Term 6 when all children who are in school on time are entered into a draw for a chance to win a special prize.

The school will develop strategies for ensuring that pupils with health needs or home circumstances that result in additional absences are not unfairly excluded from attendance rewards, e.g. by setting individualised targets.

### **13. Working with Parents to Improve Attendance**

The school will work to cultivate strong, respectful relationships with parents and families to ensure their trust and engagement. Open and honest communication will be maintained with pupils and their families about the expectations of school life, attendance and performance so that they understand what to expect and what is expected of them. The school will liaise with other agencies working with pupils and their families to support attendance, e.g. social services.

The school will ensure that there are two sets of emergency contact details for each pupil to ensure the school has additional options for getting in touch with adults responsible for a pupil where the pupil is absent without notification or authorisation.

The school will ensure that parents are aware of their legal duty to ensure that their child attends school regularly and to facilitate their child's legal right to a full-time education – parents will be made aware that this means their child must attend school every day that it is open, save for in certain circumstances, e.g. sickness or absences that have been authorised by the Headteacher in advance. The school will regularly inform parents about their child's levels of attendance, absence and punctuality, and will ensure that parents are aware of the benefits that regular attendance at school can have for their child educationally, socially and developmentally.

If a pattern of absence becomes problematic, the pastoral attendance team will work collaboratively with the pupil and their parents to improve attendance by addressing the specific barriers that prevent the pupil from being able to attend school regularly. The school will always take into consideration the sensitivity of some of the reasons for pupil absence and will approach families to offer support rather than immediately reach for punitive approaches.

Where these barriers are related to the pupil's experience in school, e.g. bullying, the attendance team will work with the Headteacher and any relevant school staff, e.g. the Designated Safeguarding Lead and SENDCO, to address this. Where the barriers are outside of the school's control, e.g. they are related to issues within the pupil's family, the pastoral attendance team will liaise with any relevant external agencies or authorities, e.g. children's social care or the local authority, and will encourage parents to access support that they may need.

#### **14. Persistent Absence (PA)**

There are groups of pupils who may be vulnerable to high absence and PA, such as:

- Children in need
- Looked after child
- Young carers
- Pupils who are eligible for free school meals
- Pupils with English as an additional language
- Pupils with SEND
- Pupils who have faced bullying and/or discrimination

The school will use a number of methods to help support pupils at risk of persistent absence to attend school. These include:

- Offering catch-up support to build confidence and bridge gaps.
- Meeting with pupils and parents to discuss patterns of absence, barriers to attendance, and any other problems they may be having.
- Establishing plans to remove barriers and provide additional support.
- Leading weekly check-ins to review progress and the impact of support.
- Making regular contact with families to discuss progress.
- Assessing whether an EHC plan or IHP may be appropriate.
- Considering what support for re-engagement might be needed, including for vulnerable groups.

The school will focus particularly on pupils who have rates of severe absence over 50 percent, and will work with the local authority and other partners to engage all relevant services needed to identify and address the wider barriers to attendance these pupils are facing.

Where a pupil at risk of persistent absence is also at increased risk of harm, the school will work in conjunction with all relevant authorities, e.g. social services, to support the pupil in line with the school's duty of care. The school will also bear in mind that the continuation of severe and persistent absence following intervention may, in itself, constitute neglect, and will escalate any concerns in this regard in line with the Child Protection and Safeguarding Policy.

## **15. Legal Intervention**

The school will allow sufficient time for attendance interventions and engagement strategies to improve pupils' attendance; however, where engagement strategies to improve attendance have not had the desired effect after one term, the senior lead attendance officer will consider:

- Holding a formal meeting with parents and the school's point of contact in the Medway Attendance Advisory Service.
- Working with the local authority to put an attendance contract; notice to improve or education supervision order in place.
- Engaging children's social care where there are safeguarding concerns.

Where the above measures are not effective, the Headteacher will issue a fixed penalty notice in line with the National Penalty Notice Framework and Medway code of conduct.

Where attendance still does not improve following a fixed penalty notice, the school will work with Medway Local Authority to take forward attendance prosecution as a last resort.

### **Education Supervision Orders (ESOs)**

Where interventions have not been successful, an ESO can be an alternative to provide formal legal intervention without criminal prosecution. ESOs are made through the Family or High Court and give the local authority a formal role in supporting the pupil and parents to improve their attendance. Medway will issue parents with a notice of the intention to consider an ESO, set up a meeting to discuss with the parent and pupil, and decide whether the case will be taken forward.

Once an ESO is secured, a supervisor from Medway local authority will decide any actions or requirements. These may include:

- Requiring the parents to attend support meetings.
- Requiring the parents to attend a parenting programme.
- Requiring the parents to access support services.
- Requiring an assessment by an educational psychologist.
- Review meetings involving all parties to be held at least every 3 months.

Failing to comply with an ESO will result in a fine and decisions will be made about whether further action is required.

## **16. Monitoring and Analysing Absence**

The Senior Lead Attendance Officer will monitor and discuss the analysis of attendance data termly to ensure that intervention is delivered quickly to address habitual absence at the first signs. The pastoral attendance team, will carry out analysis of the data and engage with parents and staff to alert them to patterns of behaviour and concerns at the earliest possible opportunity, as the operational team for attendance.

The school will collect data regarding punctuality, truancy, and authorised and unauthorised absence for:

- The school cohort as a whole.
- Individual year groups.
- Individual pupils.
- Demographic groups, e.g. pupils from different ethnic groups or economic backgrounds.
- Other groups of pupils, e.g. pupils with SEND, LAC and pupils eligible for FSM.
- Pupils at risk of persistent absence.

The senior lead attendance officer will convene and lead a thorough analysis of the above data on a termly and full-year basis to identify patterns and trends. This will include identifying, for each group:

- Patterns in uses of certain codes.
- Particular days of poor attendance.
- Historic trends of attendance and absence.
- Barriers to attendance.

The pastoral attendance team will provide regular reports to staff across the school to enable them to track the attendance of pupils and to implement attendance procedures. The pastoral attendance team will also be responsible for monitoring how attendance data changes in response to any interventions implemented to increase attendance in future. The senior lead attendance officer will be responsible for evaluating the impact of the strategies on improving and sustaining better attendance.

The Local Governing Body will regularly review attendance data, including examinations of recent and historic trends, and will support each senior leadership team in setting goals and prioritising areas of focus for attendance support based on this data.

The school will also benchmark its attendance data against local, regional and national-level data to identify areas of success and areas for improvement and will share practice which has been shown to be effective with other schools.

The Trust Board will ensure staff from different schools within the trust regularly share expertise and collaborate on interventions. The CEO will lead these meetings and report to Board.

## **17. Training of Staff**

The school will recognise that early intervention can prevent poor attendance. As such, staff will receive training in identifying potentially at-risk pupils as part of their induction and refresher training.

The Local Governing Body will ensure that teachers and support staff receive training in line with this policy as part of their induction. Following this initial training, staff will receive regular and ongoing training as part of their development.

Training will cover at least the following:

- The importance of good attendance
- That absence is almost invariably a result of wider circumstances
- The legal requirements on schools, e.g. the keeping of registers
- The school's strategies and procedures for monitoring and improving attendance
- The school's procedures for multi-agency working to provide intensive support for pupils who need it

The Local Governing Body will provide dedicated and enhanced attendance training to the senior lead attendance officer, pastoral attendance team and other staff with specific statutory attendance functions in their role – this will include training regarding recording, interpreting and analysing attendance data and supporting pupils to overcome barriers to attendance.

Staff will receive training to ensure they understand that increased absence from school could indicate a safeguarding concern, and know how such concerns should be managed.

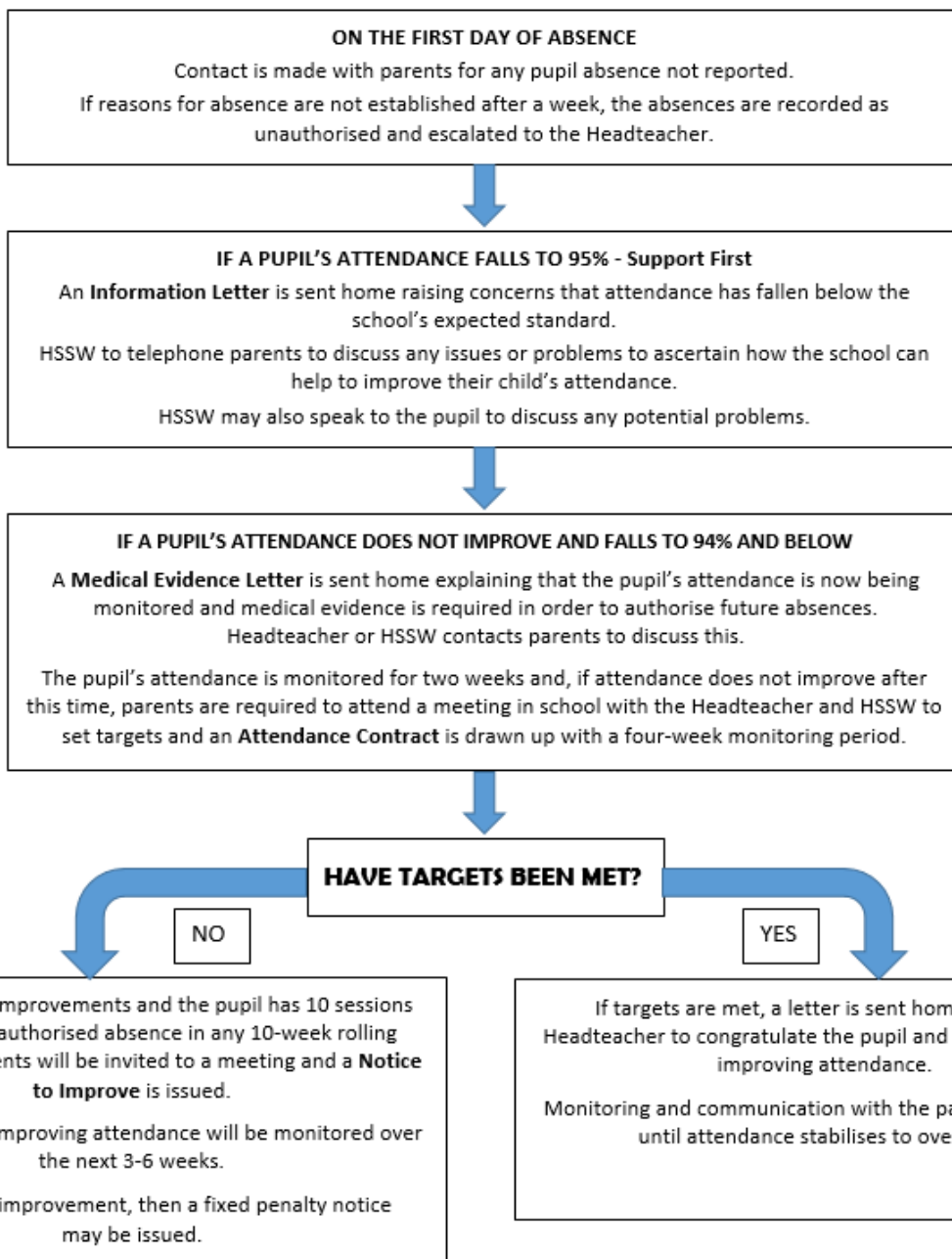
## **18. Monitoring and Review**

Attendance and punctuality will be monitored throughout the year. The school's attendance target is 97 percent – information about the school's absence levels can be found on the school website.

This policy will be reviewed annually by the Headteacher. The next scheduled review date for this policy is August 2025.

Any changes made to this policy will be communicated to all relevant stakeholders.

**St. James' Church of England Primary Academy  
Attendance Monitoring Procedures**



**HOLIDAYS TAKEN IN TERM TIME**

If absence is due to unauthorised holidays, the school will follow the National Penalty Framework and is likely to issue a penalty notice. This is £80 for the first absence of the child and increases to £160 for a second period of absence within any three-year rolling period.

The school will monitor attendance across terms and school years when calculating absence. If the pupil is absent for a third time due to unauthorised absence then the school is likely to refer to the local authority for prosecution.