

St. James' Church of England Primary Academy

ATTENDANCE PROCEDURES

Our Attendance Staff

All school staff are committed to ensuring that every pupil meets the 95%+ attendance rate set by the Trust.

- Designated Attendance Officer - Miss Cordingley
- Designated Attendance Champion - Miss Cordingley
- Designated staff who work with parents on attendance issues - Miss Cordingley and Mrs Weston
- Attendance Governor - Reverend Wright

Attendance Procedures Rationale

It is the law that all children of compulsory school age must receive fulltime education in order for them to flourish academically both socially and emotionally.

A child reaches compulsory school age at the beginning of the term after their fifth birthday.

We believe that having a good education will help to give children the best possible start in life. If children do not attend school regularly, they miss out on key aspects of learning, will acquire gaps in their understanding and will not be able to keep up with subsequent work that follows missed school days.

The minimum percentage we set for attendance for each pupil is 95%. Parents and school have a moral responsibility to support and encourage regular attendance.

It is the parent/carer who is actually responsible in law for ensuring that their child:

- Attends and remains at school
- Arrives on time
- Is suitably dressed for school
- Is emotionally and physically in good condition to learn (i.e. not over-tired, upset or unwell)

Our Daily Attendance Routine

All pupils are expected to attend school regularly and punctually.

In the morning, school gates open at 8.40am. Upon arrival, pupils walk themselves into the building and after depositing their coats, bags and packed lunch boxes, report straight to their classroom.

The school gates 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.

Any pupil who arrives after 9.30am will be marked with a U, which will show as an unauthorised absence for the session. From the Autumn term of 2025, a U mark 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.

How parents and carers should request an absence from school

Only the Headteacher, on behalf of the Governors, can authorise pupil absence. The likelihood of being granted an authorised absence is highly unlikely.

Parents must write to the Headteacher explaining reasons behind their request for their child to miss school and the Headteacher will respond in writing according to the school and Local Authority attendance policies.

The Headteacher can only grant permission for an authorised absence in cases of exceptional circumstances such as an unexpected family bereavement, unexpected serious accident etc.

What parents and carers should do if a child cannot attend school due to illness

Parents and carers should contact the school before 9.30am on the first day of illness so that we know children not at school are absent with parental knowledge. Contact can be made by:

- Telephone on 01634 270341
- Email at office@stjames.medway.sch.uk
- Absence facility on Arbor

This absence phone call must be followed up with a written note of explanation when the child returns to school.

If a child is missing school due to recommended medical advice, written medical evidence is required upon return, to explain why pupils have missed school.

Where no communication about an absence through illness is received in school, the absence will be recorded on the child's file as unauthorised and a letter asking for medical proof of absence will be sent out to parents after three days.

All notes explaining absence will be retained on the pupil's record folder.

What parents and carers should do if a child has to miss school due to a medical appointment

Parents should avoid booking medical appointments during the school day if at all possible.

If an appointment during the school day is unavoidable, parents should send a letter in advance to the school office to explain the absence. A letter from the hospital/dentist/doctors should be submitted to the office with this letter to be copied.

Children should not have the whole day off if they have a medical/dental appointment: they should be collected from the school office in time to travel to the appointment and then returned to school when their appointment has finished.

What parents should do if they wish to request an absence from school due to a family holiday

Parents should ask in writing for permission to take their child out of school for a holiday.

The school will **NOT** grant any leave of absence during term time for family holidays unless there are exceptional circumstances – see above.

A child's absence during term time can seriously affect their learning. Not only do they miss the teaching provided on the days they are away, but they are also less prepared for subsequent lessons and their confidence and emotional wellbeing can suffer as a result of this.

The Headteacher will consider each request individually and take into account the circumstances, including the nature of the event for which leave is sought.

If a written application for holiday leave is refused and the child is absent without permission, then it will be classified as an unauthorised absence and the case will be referred to The Attendance Advisory Service who monitor school attendance. They may issue a penalty notice (fine) to parents. (Amounting to £160.00 per child per adult, which is reduced to £80.00 if paid within 21 days of the notice being served.)

If a parent is issued with two penalty notices over a period of three years, the fine will be a flat £160 per child per adult. However if a third penalty notice is served within three years, this could lead to a prosecution or other attendance legal interventions.

| First Offence |
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| 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 |
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| 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 |
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| 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 |

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.

How the Attendance Advisory Service is used by the school

If there is a high amount of absence for a pupil, either unauthorised or authorised, the school AAP becomes involved and will liaise with the school to:

- Speak with the parent/carer to ascertain why the child(ren) are not meeting the school's expected attendance percentiles of 95%.
- Send a court warning letter if the absence has not improved by a review date or an acceptable reason been given (i.e. medical notes received) advising the parents of possible court action and that they may also be invited to an attendance panel.
- Continued, unauthorised absence will result in the case being referred to a legal panel for court prosecution consideration.

Penalty notices can be issued by Local Education Authorities, Headteachers, authorised Deputy and Assistant Headteachers, the police, community support officers and accredited persons.

Circumstances in which a penalty notice might be issued include:

- Parentally condoned truancy.
- When a high number of term time absence applications are refused by the Headteacher and recorded in the register as unauthorised absence.
- When 10 unauthorised absences are listed for a child within a 10-week rolling period.
- As a follow-up to a truancy sweep.

Our Attendance Advisory Practitioner visits the school on a termly basis to inspect the class registers and follow up cases of pupil absence concerns.

A summary of how attendance concerns are escalated can be found in Appendix 1

How the school rewards good attendance

We keep our attendance records on the school's management information system.

At the end of every week, 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:

- 94% or more by the end of Term 2 - Bronze pin
- 94.5% or more by the end of Term 4 - Silver pin
- 95% 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.

How the school monitors attendance

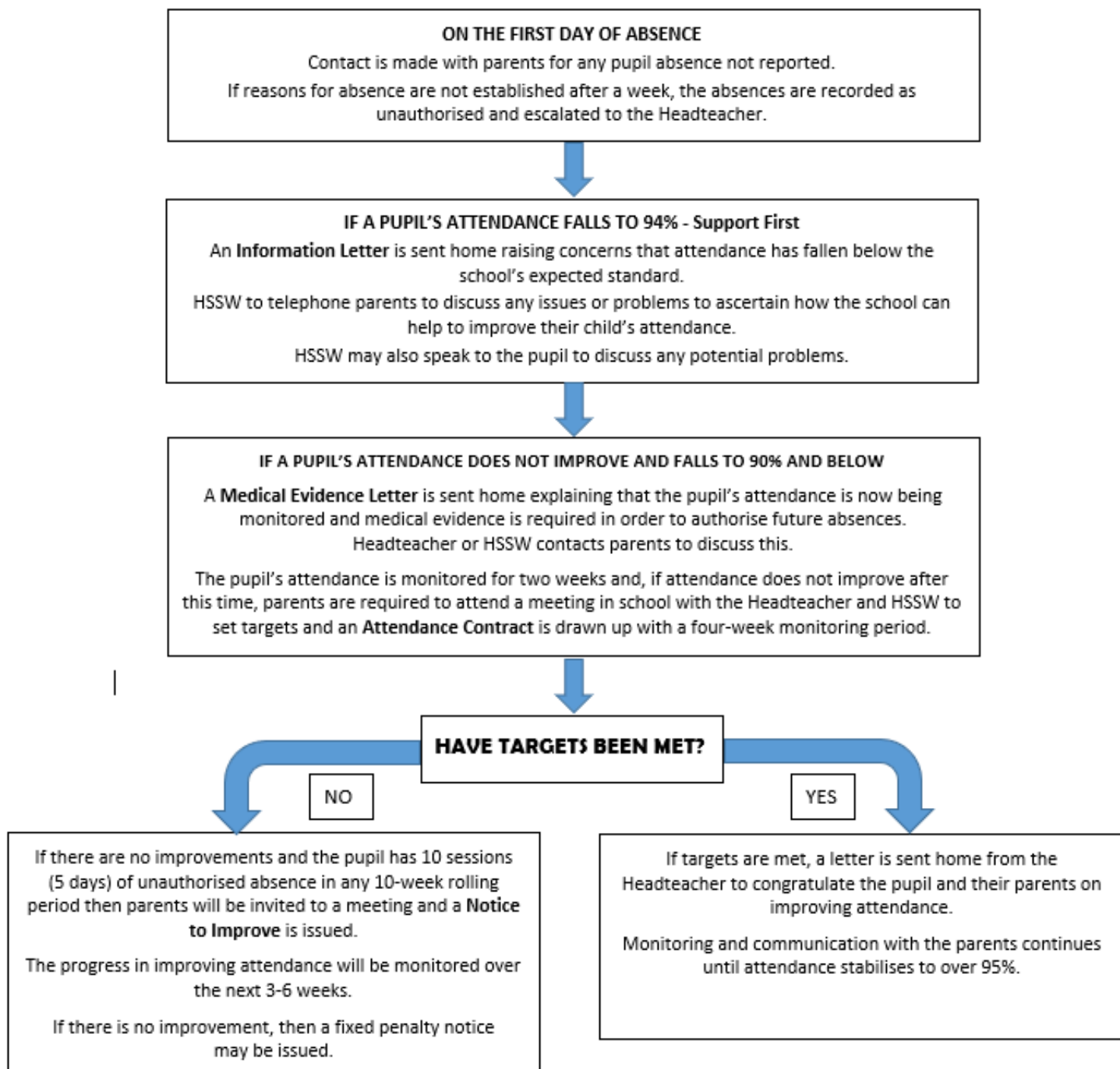
We take the following steps to monitor pupil attendance and lateness:

- Telephoning parents on the first day of absence to find out where children are.
- Contacting parents via text/email if they do not respond via phone.
- Paying doorstep visits to parents to make sure children are being safeguarded and find out why they are not at school.
- Logging all interventions to do with attendance as part of our monitoring procedures.
- Sending letters of concern about persistent absence (less than 90% per term) to parents relating this directly to how this is disadvantaging their child's learning.
- Sending letters of lateness concern to parents relating this directly to how this is disadvantaging their child's learning.
- Sending letters asking for medical evidence to parents.
- Inviting parents to attendance meetings with the Home School Support Worker who can advise them on putting a routine in place.
- Referring attendance and lateness concerns to the AAP.
- Sharing attendance reports with the Headteacher so persistent absenteeism and lateness across pupil groupings can be tracked and compared with national and local.
- Prosecuting parents for poor school attendance in accordance with Medway's Attendance Advisory Service to Schools and Academies.

Statement of Equality

This policy serves to ensure that all members of our school family, whatever their background, disability, ethnicity, gender, learning difficulty, nationality, religion or sexual orientation are welcomed, dealt with fairly and are treated with dignity and respect.

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.