



## St Peter at Gowts CE Primary School

<b>Policy</b>	<b>Attendance</b>
<b>Date adopted</b>	<b>February 2020</b>
<b>Date reviewed</b>	<b>September 2020 in line with COVID-19</b>

St Peter at Gowts CE School is committed to providing a full education for all pupils in all areas. A good education helps to give children the best possible start in life and poor school attendance damages educational achievement and the future progress of young people. We will strive to ensure every child has good attendance and accesses the whole curriculum in order to make sustained and rapid progress across their schooling.

### AIMS

Our school aims to ensure that:

- All pupils of statutory school age have an equal right to access an education in accordance with the National Curriculum regulations
- Reducing absence, including persistent absence.
- No pupil should be deprived of their opportunity to receive an education that meets their needs and personal development
- Supporting families to understand the importance and legal duty that parents have to ensure children of compulsory school age attend regularly and punctually.

It is recognised that:

- The vast majority of pupils want to attend school to learn, to socialise with their peer group and to prepare themselves fully to take their place in society as well-rounded and responsible citizens with the skills, knowledge and understanding necessary to contribute to the life and culture of their communities
- In the first instance, it is the responsibility of pupils and their parents to ensure attendance at school as it is required by law
- Many pupils and their parents may need to be supported and rewarded at some stage in meeting their attendance obligations and responsibilities
- Situations beyond the control of pupils and/or parents may impact on attendance. We will, with the agreement and support of parents, work in partnership with external agencies to resolve these.

### EXPECTATIONS

At St Peter at Gowts CE School, we expect that all our pupils will:

- Attend school regularly
- Arrive on time – to be in the classroom before 9am
- Inform a member of staff about any problem or reason that may prevent them from attending school

Our school expects that all our parents will:

- Fulfil their legal responsibility and ensure their child attends school regularly and punctually
- We expect that parents communicate any COVID-19 related illness and follow the Government guidelines.
- Contact the school on the first morning of absence, giving reason for this
- Ensure that their child arrives in school well prepared for the school day and to check that they have done their homework
- Endeavour to keep health appointments out of school hours when possible
- Inform a member of staff of any reason or problem that may hinder their child from attending school
- Seek permission for any leave of absence. The Headteacher has the right to refuse authorised absence in accordance with national regulations (Sept 2013)

Parents and pupils can expect the following from our school:

- School will communicate and support parents/carers whose child/ren present with symptoms of COVID-19 whilst in school and ensure the LCC Health Protection Team are informed.
- Regular, efficient and accurate recording of attendance
- Recognition and reward for good attendance
- Early contact with parents when a pupil is absent without explanation
- Action on any attendance problem notified by school
- Review of each child's attendance each half term, taking action where necessary.
- Voice Of the Child
- Involvement of support agencies (Parent Support Advisor) to provide support and guidance to parents to address attendance issues.

### **ATTENDANCE REWARDS**

Attendance will be encouraged in the following ways:

- Key stage 1 and 2 class attendance trophies (weekly)
- Good attendance stickers and letters - individual certificates for pupils and letters to parents for improved attendance
- 100% attendance reward presented at the end of each academic year (annual)
- Parents/carers will receive positive improvement letters

### **CATEGORISING ABSENCE**

Only the school in the context of the law can authorise absence. A note or explanation from parents does not guarantee authorisation. If a class teacher does not accept the explanation offered as a valid reason then the matter must be referred to the Headteacher. Emerging patterns of all absence are reported to the Attendance Officer, Parent Support Worker and Headteacher. The main way of teachers sharing their concerns will be shared through the Friday 'Safe and Well' meetings. Reasons for absence will be entered in the register by the appropriate code symbol.

#### **Authorised and Unauthorised Absence:**

**Authorised absence** is where the school has either given approval in advance for a pupil to be away or has accepted an explanation offered afterwards as a satisfactory reason for absence.

All other absence will be regarded as **unauthorised**. Parents/carers must notify the school on the first day of absence by **8.40am**.

The following may be reasons for **authorising** absences:

- Illness - It is wholly appropriate for parents to keep children away from school when they are not well enough to attend lessons. However, it is equally inappropriate for parents to keep children away from school for trivial ailments, particularly ailments which would not keep parents away from work. The school will monitor the reasons that children are not in school due to illness. If we have concerns that a pupil has been unnecessarily absent, we will challenge the parents' explanation and seek evidence of the illness.
- Family bereavements

- Medical and dental appointments where proof is available. Although parents are asked to take children to appointments outside of the school day wherever possible.
- Day of religious observance
- Fixed term exclusion
- Permanent exclusion until removed from roll or re-instated

### **Other Absences Including Family Holidays**

- Our school **does not** authorise term time leave of absence for holiday except in exceptional circumstances.
- Requests for absence during term time **MUST** be put in writing using an exceptional circumstances request for absence form, which is available from the academy office. The form should be returned to school for the attention of the headteacher at least two weeks before the planned date of absence so that current attendance data and other factors can be considered. The headteacher will consider each request on an individual basis. Parents will be informed of the decision by letter. Any requests not received in advance will automatically be deemed unauthorised.
- Should the Headteacher not agree to grant leave of absence and the parents take their child out of school regardless then this will be counted as unauthorised absence. Unauthorised absence could result in a fixed penalty fine of up to £60 per parent per child under section 444B of the Education Act 1996 for failing to ensure regular attendance at school. In these cases parents will receive a warning regarding the possibility of a fine when they remove their child from school without authorised consent.
- Parents may be subject to fining procedures when unauthorised absence for their child exceeds 15% (below 90%) or more in a six week period (4.5 days or 9 sessions).
- Should leave be granted but the child remains absent for longer than agreed then this extra time will also be recorded as unauthorised absence. Should a child fail to return to school within 2 days of the agreed return date and there is no contact from the parents the matter will be referred to the Attendance Officer. If every effort is made to trace the child the matter will be discussed with the CME Officer (Child Missing Education) and this may result in the child's name being removed from the school roll. In these circumstances the parents would be responsible for ensuring that their child was registered at and attended another school. (In such circumstances parents would not be entitled to receive any assistance with regard to transport)

### **Legal Sanctions**

What is considered as poor attendance? Anything below 94% is weak, under 90% is poor and if attendance dips below this, we will have serious concerns. Below 90% is regarded as persistent absence by the DFE. In this St Peters at Gowts School are aiming for every pupil to achieve attendance levels of at least 95%. St Peter at Gowts School monitor attendance and provide termly reports on each pupil's attendance. At the end of each half term St Peter at Gowts School will identify all those pupils whose attendance has fallen below 95% and issue a courtesy letter or send a Parentmail informing parents. St Peter at Gowts School then monitor the pupils' attendance on a weekly basis and hope to see a pattern of unbroken weeks developing. If there is no change in improved attendance the following could occur:

Schools can fine parents for the unauthorised absence of their child from school, where the child is of compulsory school age.

If issued with a penalty notice, parents must pay £60 within 21 days or £120 within 28 days. The payment must be made directly to the local authority.

The decision on whether or not to issue a penalty notice ultimately rests with the headteacher, following the local authority's code of conduct for issuing penalty notices. This may take into account:

- A number of unauthorised absences occurring within a rolling academic year
- One-off instances of irregular attendance, such as holidays taken in term time without permission
- Where an excluded pupil is found in a public place during school hours without a justifiable reason 6

If the payment has not been made after 28 days, the local authority can decide whether to prosecute the parent or withdraw the notice.

### **Lateness:**

St. Peter at Gowts actively discourages late arrival by challenging the parents of children who are persistently late or arrive late without reasonable explanation.

Our school policy is that the register remains open until 9.00am, fifteen minutes from the beginning of registration. In the event of bad weather, this period will be extended.

Where a pupil arrives during the period when the register is open, they will be marked as present.

When a pupil arrives after the closure of the register without a good reason, they should be marked with an unauthorised absence. Time of arrival and reasons for lateness will be kept for monitoring purposes.

Parents will be notified by letter if their child persistently arrives late. If this continues after the letter then legal advice will be sought by the school, which could result in a **£60 fine** per parent per child.

### **SCHOOL ORGANISATION**

In order for this policy to be successful, every member of the staff must make attendance a high priority and should convey to pupils the importance and value of education. This means ensuring that all staff arrive to lessons on time and well prepared.

In addition to these there may be specific responsibilities allocated to individual staff groups. These are:

#### **Headteacher**

- To oversee and demonstrate ownership of the whole policy
- Ensure that our attendance policy meets the requirements of the School Attendance Guidance <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/school-attendance> from the Department for Education (DfE) and refers to the DfE's statutory guidance on School Attendance Parental Responsibility Measures [https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/581539/School\\_attendance\\_parental\\_responsibility\\_measures\\_statutory\\_guidance.pdf](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/581539/School_attendance_parental_responsibility_measures_statutory_guidance.pdf)
- To regularly report progress on attendance to governors, pupils and parents
- To set challenging but achievable targets to reduce levels of absence
- To liaise with the attendance officer, attendance governor and PSA
- To attend School Attendance Panel (SAP) meetings where necessary with the PSA
- To ensure communication to parents about their child's attendance is paramount, especially to parents of children who have under 90% attendance
- To oversee the efficient operation of the attendance system and the collation and analysis of attendance data
- To oversee the work of administrative staff

#### **Class Teacher**

- To complete registers accurately and on time
- To challenge suspicious or inappropriate reasons for absence and report them to the Headteacher
- To record all reasons for absence accurately

#### **Attendance Officer/PSA**

- To follow up immediately any unexplained absence by contacting parents and complete a safe and well home visit where necessary and possibility of initiating a CME
- Produce updates from weekly registers
- To follow the Flow chart of Intervention termly
- To recognise and inform parents/carers of improved attendance
- To ensure all termly data and actions are recorded
- To produce the absence data for governors each term
- On the request of the Headteacher, produce weekly, monthly, termly and annual attendance information if appropriate.
- Ensure parents/carers complete a leave of absence under 'exceptional circumstances'
- Inform class teachers of absences reported by telephone from parents.
- Monitor late arrivals and report to the Headteacher.
- Maintain a late book
- Inform Headteacher of any pupil leaving the school/removal from roll

## **Governors**

- Governors can play a valuable role through representation at school attendance panels
- Request regular attendance progress reports for Governors meetings
- To be proactive in its policy making to increase the attendance in school
- To appoint a named attendance governor who oversees the attendance policy implementation in detail

## **LIAISING WITH EXTERNAL AGENCIES THROUGH THE PARENT SUPPORT WORKER**

Good relations and working practices are essential. Agencies have difficult roles in that they endeavour to support both the school in meeting its legal obligations as well as the home and pupil in ensuring that the latter's educational opportunities are maximised. Some parents need the support of these agencies so that they can fulfil their legal obligations to their children.

Our Parent Support Advisor complements the work of the school and supports it in a variety of ways:

- Liaising with identified school staff
- Supporting parents/carers in achieving good attendance for their child/ren and maintaining it
- Undertaking home visits, either pre-arranged or without notice as considered necessary
- Through group work with identified groups of pupils and collecting individual voice of the child.
- Where necessary, instigating legal proceedings on behalf of the school including parental prosecutions in the Magistrates' Court and applying for Education Supervision Orders through the Family Court
- Initiating contact with parents or carers and undertaking assessments, initiating TAC where appropriate.
- Planning and delivering SAP meetings with parents/carers
- Providing feedback to the Headteacher and any other staff members where necessary
- Offering strategic/policy advice and support in relation to matters of attendance, any changes to be made
- Advises the Headteacher when to issue fixed-penalty notices

**Other agencies** to be used where appropriate in individual cases.

- Educational Behavioural and Support Services
- Educational Psychologists
- Additional Needs Service
- Social Services
- Local Police
- Parent Support Agencies

## **Data Protection Act**

The Data Protection Act places obligations on all agencies that process, store and share information on any individual. It is important to have full regard for the requirements of the Act. Each school has a Data Protection Notification, which details the circumstances under which data is managed. Nothing in the legislation prevents a school sharing information with the police or social services where it is believed that a child or young person under the age of 18 is at risk of harm or is in need of safeguarding.

This policy will be reviewed every two years.

**Signed:**

**Date:**

**St Peter at Gowts CE Primary School**

**Guidance for Parents on Exceptional Circumstances**

**What do we mean by 'exceptional circumstances'?**

The fundamental principles of defining 'exceptional' are rare, significant, unavoidable and short. By 'unavoidable' we mean an event that could not reasonably be scheduled at another time.

It is not possible to create a definitive list of circumstances under which absence may be authorised, however the academy has agreed the following circumstances may be considered exceptional. Requests for leave of absence which do not fall under these conditions will be considered on a case by case basis in consultation with the headteacher. Parents may be requested to provide supporting evidence in addition to the submission of a request for absence form.

**What are Exceptional Circumstances?**

This is under the discretion of the Headteacher and Governing Body. Exceptional circumstances are rare, significant, unavoidable and short. Examples of circumstances that will be considered include

- Up to 2 days for the wedding of a close family member—parent or sibling
- Absence for bereavement of a close family member
- An educational event, which happens on a specific day and cannot be altered
- Visiting seriously ill relatives
- Religious observance
- Adjustments for SEN children and those with disabilities

Please note that NO leave of absence will be authorised during National Testing weeks, or if attendance is already below 95%.

## Flow chart of Intervention

### **Whole School Letter to highlight attendance**

**Concern letter** – **Concern letter 1** – Highlighting concerns and informing parent you are monitoring attendance

If attendance improves after time monitored –improvement has been made send – Improvement letter 2

**Improvement Letter** – **Improvement letter 2- Positive Improvement -Letter**

If no improvement send Concern letter 3 to invite for School attendance Panel

**No Improvement** – **Concern letter 3– No improvement – invite to SAP meeting**

After School attendance panel send School Attendance Panel Meeting letter 4 and Action Plan set review date even if parent does not attend meeting.

**Concern letter 4- School Attendance Panel meeting and action**

If attendance improves send Improvement letter 5

**Improvement after panel** – **Improvement letter 5 -Positive Improvement -Letter**

If not improved send concern letter 6

**No Improvement - **Concern letter 6 – Formal Warning****

If not improved sent concern letter 7

**No Improvement - **Concern letter 7 – No improvement - Final warning****

