

## Attendance Policy

Published:	Autumn 2025
Review Date:	Autumn 2026
Committee Responsible:	Learning and Welfare
Status & Review Cycle:	Annual

### Statement of Intent

St James C of E 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.

St James C of E Primary School, along with Surrey County Council, firmly believes that all pupils benefit from regular school attendance. Full and regular attendance at school is crucial for a child's future life chances and establishes a positive work ethic early in life. To this end we will do all we can to encourage parents/carers to ensure their children achieve maximum possible attendance and that any problems that prevent full attendance are identified and acted on promptly. Pupils will be expected to achieve **100%** attendance but when absence is unavoidable, parents/carers will be required to inform the school immediately and give the reason for absence.

We will also support parent/carers to perform their legal duty to ensure their children of compulsory school age attend regularly, and will promote and support punctuality in attending lessons. Parents/carers, whose children are of compulsory school age (the term after the child's 5<sup>th</sup> birthday or the summer term for Summer born children) and are registered at a school, are responsible for ensuring that their children attend school regularly. If they do not do so, they may be committing an offence under the Education Act 1996 and could be liable to prosecution or to be served with a penalty notice.

In line with the Education (Pupil Registration) Regulations 2006 and amendments in 2016, all unexplained absences of 10 days or more are required to be reported to the Local Authority. Schools are therefore required to report all absence figures to the local authority and the Department for Education (DfE) and to ensure they are recorded on a child's annual report. Rates of absence are also taken into account by Ofsted as part of a school's inspection.

The Governors, Headteacher and Staff in partnership with parent/carers have a duty to promote full attendance at St James.

### Legislation and guidance

This policy meets the requirements of the [working together to improve school attendance](#) 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](#)

It also refers to:

- [School census guidance](#)
- [Keeping Children Safe in Education](#)
- [Mental health issues affecting a pupil's attendance: guidance for schools](#)

## Parental Responsibility

Parents/carers have a legal duty to ensure that their children attend school regularly and arrive on time. Regular attendance is essential to the all-round development of the child and they should be allowed to take full advantage of educational opportunities available to them in order to make good progress in their learning. Poor attendance undermines their educational attainment and progress and, sometimes, puts pupils at risk by encouraging anti-social behaviour.

**It is the parents/carers' 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. Parent/carers should update the school each day the child is absent and inform the school when their child is returning.**

Pupils are expected to arrive by 8:45am. All pupils that arrive late must report, with their parent/carer, to the school office where the reason for lateness is recorded.

## The Role of the School Staff

At St James C of E Primary School there is a whole school approach for improving school attendance, with specific staff taking individual responsibilities.

**Mrs Murphy** has overall responsibility for monitoring attendance issues.

In addition to this, the School has the following responsibilities:

### Governors

. The governing board is responsible for:

- Promoting the importance of school attendance across the school's policies and ethos
- Making sure school leaders fulfil expectations and statutory duties
- Regularly reviewing and challenging attendance data
- Monitoring attendance figures for the whole school
- Making sure staff receive adequate training on attendance
- Holding the headteacher to account for the implementation of this policy

### Headteacher

The Headteacher is responsible for:

- Implementation of this policy
- Monitoring school-level absence data and reporting it to governors
- Supporting staff with monitoring the attendance of individual pupils
- Taking responsibility for ensuring appropriate pupils are identified and supported to improve attendance
- Referring to relevant agencies without delay
- Safeguarding children to support their access to education
- Ensuring children receive rewards as appropriate
- Arranging calls and meetings with parent/carers to discuss attendance issues
- Liaising as necessary with the attached Inclusion Officer termly
- Determining whether there are exceptional circumstances for any leave of absence request

## Headteacher, Staff and Governors:

All staff and Governors:

- adopt the whole policy
- ensure that the registration procedures are carried out efficiently in line with current legislation and that appropriate resources are provided
- ensure that all absences are coded correctly in line with DfE guidance
- initiate a scheme for contacting parents/carers on the first day of absence
- initiate contact with parents/carers in cases of unexplained absence and lateness before referring to the Inclusion Officer
- work in close collaboration with the attached Inclusion Officer during their termly register analysis ensuring agreed action is carried out
- monitor and evaluate attendance with the attached Inclusion Officer

## Attendance Admin staff member:

The attendance admin staff member's role is:

- to oversee the registration process and ensure that registers are completed accurately and punctually
- to monitor attendance data across the school and at an individual pupil level and share with Headteacher
- to share with the Headteacher any concerns expressed about attendance or disaffection that might lead to non-attendance
- to record all reasons for absences and lateness in the register
- to ensure attendance and lateness records are up to date
- If no reason for absence has been provided, parent/carers are contacted on the first day of absence by phone call/Truancy call.
- Where there has been no communication, letters are sent to parent/carers requesting reasons for absence.
- The appropriate attendance code is entered in the register (see National Attendance Codes)

## Teaching Staff

Teaching staff are responsible for:

- completing registers accurately and punctually at least twice daily, marking pupils present, absent or late
- following up any unexplained non-attendance or lateness with the Headteacher
- informing the Headteacher of concerns
- alerting to signs of disaffection that may lead to non-attendance and report them to the Headteacher

## Timeline for Managing Poor Attendance

- 95-100% attendance – the class teacher will notify the school Attendance Admin Assistant of concerns, who would then contact parent/carer if appropriate.
- 90-95% attendance - school intervention letters/meeting with parent/carers
- Where the level of absence has not improved after school intervention, and if there are unauthorised absences, the school will make a referral to the Surrey Inclusion Service. If it is not clear a referral to the Service is appropriate, the school will consult with the Local Authority Inclusion Officer for advice.
- For the cases that require intensive family support or Early Help, the school may make a request for support via Surrey C-Spa.

## Children Missing Education

No child should be removed from the school roll without consultation between the Headteacher and the Inclusion Service when appropriate.

Where a child is missing from education, Local Authority guidance and [DFE guidance](#) will be followed, by completing a Child Missing Education referral for the following circumstances:

- If the whereabouts of the child is unknown and the school has failed to locate him/her.
- 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.

## Lateness

At St James the register is taken at 8.45am and 1:10pm. Pupils arriving after these times must enter school by the main entrance and report to Reception where their name and the reason for lateness will be recorded. The pupil will be marked as late before registration has closed (Code 'L').

The register will close at 9.15am and 1.30pm. Pupils arriving after the register has closed will be marked as late after registration (Code 'U') and this will count as an unauthorised absence.

Parents and carers are asked to fill in the reason for lateness so must accompany their child into school.

Frequent lateness after the register has closed (U) will be discussed with parent/carers and could provide grounds for prosecution or a Penalty Notice.

## Authorising Absence

Only the Headteacher can authorise absence using a consistent approach. The Headteacher is not obliged to accept a parent/carer's explanation. A letter or telephone message from a parent/carer does not in itself authorise an absence. If absences are not authorised, parent/carers will be notified.

If no explanation is received, absences will not be authorised.

### Categorisation of Absence

The school will follow up any absences to:

- Ascertain the reason;
- Ensure that proper safeguarding action is taken if necessary;
- Identify whether the absence is authorised or not;
- Identify the correct code to use before entering it on to the school's electronic register, or management information system which is used to download data to the School Census

Any student who is on roll but not present in school must be recorded.

If no explanation is received, absences will not be authorised.

### Unauthorised absence

This is for students where no reason has been provided or where a reason for absence is deemed not to be valid.

Persistent unauthorised absence (10% or more of the school year) may result in a referral to the Local Authority Inclusion Officer. The school will follow procedures prior to referral and parent/carers will be notified in writing.

When a referral is made, the child's Registration Certificate, copies of all letters sent to parent/carers and minutes of any meetings **need to** be attached to the completed referral form with any other relevant information.

Local Authority Action may include:

- Attendance Improvement Meeting
- Home visits
- Liaison with other agencies
- Issue penalty notices for unacceptable attendance
- Fast Track to Prosecution

## Requests for leave of absence during term time

No parent/carer can demand leave of absence during term-time for their child as a right and authorisation cannot be given retrospectively. Permission for absence during term time is at the school's discretion and will only be granted in exceptional circumstances.

If a family needs to request absence in term-time as a result of an **exceptional circumstance** then this must be submitted in writing, using the form attached (Appendix 1) and sent to the school office on [office@stjames-weybridge.surrey.sch.uk](mailto:office@stjames-weybridge.surrey.sch.uk) and should, wherever possible, be completed at least two weeks prior to the leave date.

The Headteacher will then decide whether or not to authorise the absence requested. Each request will be considered separately and a decision made based on the reasons for each request.

## Family holidays

St James C of E Primary School will not authorise any holidays during term time unless there are exceptional circumstances. The school holiday dates are published a year in advance and are available from the school office and on the school's website. We expect that parents/carers will book their family holidays within the school holiday dates.

## Dental and medical treatments

Unless it is an emergency, parents/carers are encouraged, whenever possible, to book medical and dental appointments outside of the school day. When appointments during school hours are unavoidable, the school office should be notified in advance in writing, of the date and time of the appointment and when the child will be collected and/or returned to school. Evidence of the appointment will be requested.

## Attendance monitoring

The Headteacher, Mrs Murphy, at St James C of E Primary School monitors pupil absence on a weekly basis supported by the Attendance Admin Assistant.

A pupil's parent/carer is expected to call the school in the morning if their child is going to be absent before 8:45am or as soon as is practically possible. The pupil's parent/carer is expected to contact the school each day their child is ill. If a pupil's absence continues to rise after contacting their parent/carer, we will consider a referral to Surrey's Inclusion 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.

## Responding To Non-Attendance

When a pupil does not attend school without an acceptable reason provided, we will respond in the following manner:

- On the first day of absence, if no note or telephone call is received by St James from the parent/carer, the school will endeavour to contact them that day by phone/ text/ email.
- If there is no response, the school will continue to try to contact the parent/carer throughout the day and inform the Headteacher.
- If by the end of the second day there has still been no contact made, the school will send a letter of concern to parents/carers and invite them into school to discuss their concerns and the reasons for the absence. The Headteacher will endeavour to make other enquiries to ascertain that the child/ren is/are safe.
- Parent/carers will be informed that if the absence persists a referral will be made to Surrey's Inclusion Service.
- Any pupil who is absent without an explanation for 10 consecutive days will be notified to the Local Authority, by submitting a referral to the Inclusion Service. This is a legal requirement. The school will include details of the action that they have taken.

## Reporting to parents/carers

Attendance is reported to parent/carers twice annually. Once at a mid-year parent/carers report, given out at Consultation meetings and on the annual end of year report.

If attendance is noted as falling, parent/carers will be informed in writing and invited to discuss strategies to improve.

## Penalty Notices

The Surrey Attendance Service, acting on behalf of Surrey County Council may issue a Penalty Notice as an alternative to the prosecution of a parent/carer for their child's unauthorised absence from school and require the recipient to pay a fixed amount.

### Circumstances when a Penalty Notices may be issued

1. Pupils identified by police and Surrey Attendance Advice Officers engaged on Truancy Patrols and who have incurred unauthorised absences.
2. The Education (Pupil Registration)(England)(Amendment) Regulations 2013, state that Head teachers may not grant any leave of absence during term time unless there are exceptional circumstances. The Head teacher is required to determine the number of school days a child can be away from school if leave is granted.
3. Where a child is taken out of school for 10 sessions or more and the 'leave of absence' is without the authority of the head teacher, each parent is liable to receive a penalty notice for each child who is absent. In these circumstances, a warning will not be given where it can be shown that parents had previously been warned that such absences would not be authorised and that they will be liable to receive a Penalty Notice if the leave of absence is taken.
4. The issue of a Penalty Notice will also be considered where a pupil has incurred 10 or more unauthorised sessions during the preceding 10 school weeks. The parents' failure to engage with supportive measures proposed by the school will be a factor when considering the issue of

a Penalty Notice. Unauthorised absence will include late arrival after the close of registration without good reason.

5. Section 103 of the Education and Inspections Act 2006 places a duty on parents to ensure that their child is not in a public place without justifiable cause during school hours when they are excluded from school. This duty applies to the first five days of each exclusion. Failure to do so will render the parent liable to a Penalty Notice. If the Penalty Notice is not paid, the recipient will be prosecuted for the offence under Section 103. Alternative education provision will be made from the sixth day of any exclusion and failure to attend such provision without good reason will be treated as unauthorised absence.

**With the exception of unauthorised leave of absence taken in term time (Paragraph 2 above) parents will be sent a 'Notice To Improve' their child's attendance, warning them of their liability to receive such a notice before it is issued.**

#### **Amount Payable Under a Penalty Notice: The Education (Penalty Notices) (England) (Amendment) Regulations 2024**

1. If a parent/carer has not incurred a penalty notice relating to the relevant child/children since 19 August 2024, then the penalty notice will be charged at the rate of £160.00, **per parent/carer per child**, if paid within 28 days. This will be reduced to £80.00 if paid within 21 days of receipt of the notice. Failure to pay the Penalty Notice will result in Surrey County Council considering legal proceedings against you in the Magistrates Court.

2. If you have incurred a penalty notice relating to this child/children since 19 August 2024, the rolling 3 year period will be activated from the date of the first penalty notice and the second penalty notice will be charged at the flat rate of £160.00, **per parent/carer per child**, if paid within 28 days. There will be no reduction for payment within 21 days. Failure to pay the Penalty Notice will result in Surrey County Council considering legal proceedings against you in the Magistrates Court.

3. If you have incurred 2 penalty notices relating to this child/children in the rolling 3 year period since the first penalty notice was issued, then you will NOT receive a third penalty notice – Surrey County Council will have no option but to consider a prosecution, **per parent/carer per child**, in the Magistrates Court under s 444 Education Act 1996.

## **Changing School**

It is important that if families decide to send the child in their care to a different school that they inform the Headteacher as soon possible. A pupil will not be removed from the school roll until the following information has been received:

- the dates the pupil will be leaving this school and starting the next (if known)
- the address of the new school (if known)
- the new home address
- the full name of the parent/carer with whom the pupil will live (if different to current)

School staff will then confirm with the parent/carers the leaving date for their child. Following this date the pupil's school records will be sent on to the new school as soon as possible and within ten days of the child leaving. School will inform Surrey Admissions about the change of school.

## **School Organisation**

In order for the school's Attendance Policy to be successful, every member of staff must make attendance a high priority and convey this to pupils at all times. Parents/carers should also support these views in the home to ensure that children are receiving corresponding messages about the value of education.

## **Links with other policies**

This policy links to the following policies:

- Child protection and safeguarding policy
- Behaviour policy

## Resources

For further information regarding school attendance please see Surrey County Council website:

<https://www.surreycc.gov.uk/schools-and-learning/schools/at-school/attendance-and-absence>

## **Appendix 1 Application for leave of absence form**

## **Appendix 1**

### **Application for leave of absence for exceptional circumstances**

Please read the following guidance carefully.

As parents, you have a legal responsibility to ensure your child's attendance at school. During the academic year, pupils are at school for 190 days and at home for 175 days.

**Please be aware that The Education (Pupil Registration)(England)(Amendment) Regulations 2013, state that Headteachers may not grant any leave of absence during term time unless there are exceptional circumstances. The Headteacher is also required to determine the number of school days a child can be away from school if leave is granted.**

Please complete and submit this form if you want the Headteacher to consider your request for your child's leave of absence for exceptional circumstances. We may ask for proof to validate your request.

#### **Unauthorised absence of 5 days or more will result in the following action being taken:**

1. If you have not incurred a penalty notice relating to this child/children since 19 August 2024, then the penalty notice will be charged at the rate of £160.00, **per parent/carer per child**, if paid within 28 days. This will be reduced to £80.00 if paid within 21 days of receipt of the notice. Failure to pay the Penalty Notice will result in Surrey County Council considering legal proceedings against you in the Magistrates Court.
2. If you have incurred a penalty notice relating to this child/children since 19 August 2024, the rolling 3 year period will be activated from the date of the first penalty notice and the second penalty notice will be charged at the flat rate of £160.00, per parent/carer per child, if paid within 28 days. There will be no reduction for payment within 21 days. Failure to pay the Penalty Notice will result in Surrey County Council considering legal proceedings against you in the Magistrates Court.
3. If you have incurred 2 penalty notices relating to this child/children in the rolling 3 year period since the first penalty notice was issued, then you will NOT receive a third penalty notice – Surrey County Council will have no option but to consider a prosecution, per parent/carer per child, in the Magistrates Court under s 444 Education Act 1996.

The Headteacher will consider the reasons for the request carefully and will notify you of the decision. In the absence of a decision, parents/carers cannot assume that permission for the absence has been given.

For further information, please refer to our School Attendance Policy.

<b>Name of child:</b>	<b>Class:</b>
I am applying for leave of absence for my child for .....	
from:	to:
<b>Number of school days:</b>	
The exceptional circumstances for which leave is requested:	
Has your child/children already had any leave of absence since 01 September 2024 resulting in a penalty notice being issued to you (applicant) or any other parent/carer? YES / NO	
If YES, please give dates and details:	
<b>I also have children at...</b>	
Signed: (Parent/Carer)	Date:
Address :	

<b>To be completed by the Headteacher</b>		
Having considered your request carefully, my decision is that leave of absence is:		
Approved		The absence will be recorded as authorised.
Not approved		The absence will be recorded as unauthorised and we will be requesting the Surrey County Council to issue a penalty notice per parent/carer per child.
Explanatory notes:		
Signed:	(Headteacher)	Date: