

THE STOKE POGES SCHOOL

Attendance Policy

Date Approved	September 2023
Recommended Review Period	Biannual
Date of Next Review	September 2025
Person Responsible for the Policy	Headteacher

1. Introduction

Regular school attendance is essential if children are to achieve their full potential.

The Stoke Poges School believe that regular school attendance is the key to enabling children to maximise the educational opportunities available to them and become emotionally resilient, confident and competent adults who are able to realise their full potential and make a positive contribution to their community.

The Stoke Poges School values all pupils. As set out in this policy, we will work with families to identify the reasons for poor attendance and try to resolve any difficulties.

The Stoke Poges School recognises that attendance is a matter for the whole school community. Our Attendance Policy should not be viewed in isolation; it is a strand that runs through all aspects of school improvement, supported by our policies on safeguarding, bullying, behaviour and inclusive learning. This policy also considers the Human Rights Act 1998 and the Equality Act 2010.

2. Legal framework

Section 7 of the 1996 Education Act states that parents must ensure that children of compulsory school age receive efficient full-time education suitable to their age, ability and aptitude and to any special educational needs they may have, either by regular attendance at school or otherwise.

A child is of compulsory School Age at the beginning of the term following their 5th birthday. A child ceases to be of compulsory school age on the last Friday in June of the school year in which they reach the age of 16.

Under the Education Act 1996, the Local Authority has a statutory responsibility to ensure that parents secure education for children of compulsory age and where necessary, use legal enforcement.

3. Roles and responsibilities

The Stoke Poges School believes that improved school attendance can only be achieved if it is viewed as a shared responsibility of the school staff, governors, parents, pupils and the wider school community.

3.1 The governing board

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

3.2 The headteacher

The headteacher is responsible for:

- Implementation of this policy at the school
- Monitoring school-level absence data and reporting it to governors
- Supporting staff with monitoring the attendance of individual pupils
- Monitoring the impact of any implemented attendance strategies
- Issuing fixed-penalty notices, where necessary

3.3 The designated senior leader responsible for attendance

The designated senior leader is responsible for:

- Leading attendance across the school
- Offering a clear vision for attendance improvement
- Evaluating and monitoring expectations and processes
- Having an oversight of data analysis
- Devising specific strategies to address areas of poor attendance identified through data
- Arranging calls and meetings with parents to discuss attendance issues
- Delivering targeted intervention and support to pupils and families

The designated senior leader responsible for attendance is Amanda Benians and can be contacted via office@stokepoges.school

3.4 The attendance officer

The school attendance officer is responsible for:

- Monitoring and analysing attendance data
- Benchmarking attendance data to identify areas of focus for improvement
- Providing regular attendance reports to school staff and reporting concerns about attendance to the designated senior leader responsible for attendance and the headteacher
- Working with education welfare officers to tackle persistent absence
- Advising the headteacher/deputy headteacher (authorised by the headteacher) when to issue fixed-penalty notices

The attendance officer is Janice Palmer and can be contacted via the school office.

3.5 Phase leaders and SENDCo

Phase leaders will:

- Actively promote the importance and value of good attendance to pupils and their parents
- Form positive relationships with pupils and parents
- Contribute to a whole school approach which reinforces good school attendance; with good teaching and learning experiences that encourage all pupils to attend and to achieve
- Analyse attendance data to identify causes and patterns of absence
- Contribute to the evaluation of school strategies and interventions
- Work with other agencies to improve attendance and support pupils and their families

3.6 Class teachers

Class teachers are responsible for recording attendance on a daily basis, using the correct codes, and submitting this information to the school office in the morning and afternoon.

3.7 School admin staff

School admin staff will:

- Take calls from parents about absence on a day-to-day basis and record it on the school system
- Transfer calls from parents to Mrs Palmer in order to provide her with more detailed support on attendance

3.7 Parents/carers

Parents/carers are expected to:

- Talk to their child about school and what goes on there. Take a positive interest in their child's work and educational progress
- Instil the value of education and regular school attendance within the home environment
- Encourage their child to look to the future and have aspirations
- Contact the school if their child is absent to let them know the reason why and the expected date of return. Avoid unnecessary absences. Wherever possible make appointments for the doctors, dentists etc outside of school hours
- Ask the school for help if their child is experiencing difficulties
- Inform the school of any change in circumstances that may impact on their child's attendance
- Support the school; take every opportunity to get involved in their child's education, form a positive relationship with school and acknowledge the importance of children receiving the same messages from both school and home
- Encourage routines at home, for example, bed times, homework, preparing school bag and uniform the evening before
- Not keep their child away from school to go shopping, to help at home or to look after other members of the family
- Avoid taking their child on holiday during term-time. Where this is unavoidable, send a written leave request to the Headteacher in advance of booking the holiday

3.8 Pupils

Pupils are expected to:

- Attend school every day on time

4. Categorising absence

4.1 Attendance register

The Education (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2006, require schools to take an attendance register twice a day, once at the start of the morning session and then again during the afternoon session.

The register must record whether the pupil was:

- Present
- Absent
- Present at approved educational activity
- Unable to attend due to exceptional circumstances

Any amendment to the attendance register will include:

- The original entry
- The amended entry
- The reason for the amendment
- The date on which the amendment was made
- The name and position of the person who made the amendment

See appendix 1 for the DfE attendance codes.

We will also record:

- [For pupils of compulsory school age] Whether the absence is authorised or not
- The nature of the activity if a pupil is attending an approved educational activity
- The nature of circumstances where a pupil is unable to attend due to exceptional circumstances

We will keep every entry on the attendance register for 3 years after the date on which the entry was made.

Pupils must arrive in school by 8.50am on each school day. The register for the first session will be taken at 8.50am and will be kept open until 9.20am. The register for the second session will be taken at 1pm (Reception and Key Stage 1) and 1.15pm Key stage 2 and will be kept open until 1.25pm.

4.2 Absence

Where pupils of compulsory school age are recorded as absent, the register must show whether the absence is authorised or unauthorised.

Absence can only be authorised by the school and cannot be authorised by parents. All absences will be treated as unauthorised unless a satisfactory explanation for the pupil's absence has been received.

The pupil's parent/carer must notify the school of the reason for the absence on the first day of an unplanned absence by 9am or as soon as practically possible via the School Gateway App or via the school number on 01753 643319, selecting option 1 'to report an absent child'. If it is not possible to use either of these methods, parents should email office@stokepoges.school with reasons for non-attendance.

We will mark absence due to illness as authorised unless the school has a genuine concern about the authenticity of the illness.

If the authenticity of the illness is in doubt, the school may ask the pupil's parent/carer to provide medical evidence, such as a doctor's note, prescription, appointment card or other appropriate form of evidence. We will not ask for medical evidence unnecessarily.

If the school is not satisfied about the authenticity of the illness, the absence will be recorded as unauthorised and parents/carers will be notified of this in advance.

4.3 Planned absence

Attending a medical or dental appointment will be counted as authorised as long as the pupil's parent/carer notifies the school in advance of the appointment. Parents should request leave of absence for medical appointments by notifying the school office via the School Gateway App or via an email, in advance of the appointment. A copy of the hospital letter or appointment card should be presented to the school office, where possible. We encourage parents/carers to make medical and dental appointments out of school hours. Where this is not possible, the pupil should be out of school for the minimum amount of time necessary.

The pupil's parent/carer must also apply for other types of term-time absence as far in advance of the requested absence. Parents/carers should use the Leave of Absence form which can be downloaded from the website or a copy obtained via the school office.

4.4 Lateness and punctuality

A pupil who arrives late:

- Before the register has closed will be marked as late, using the appropriate code
- After the register has closed will be marked as absent, using the appropriate code

On arrival after the close of register, pupils must immediately report to the school office to ensure that we can be responsible for their health and safety whilst they are in school.

The absence will only be authorised if a satisfactory explanation for the late arrival can be provided, for example, attendance at a medical appointment (Code M).

The absence will be recorded as **unauthorised** if the pupil has arrived late after the registers close without justifiable cause, for example, if they woke up late or were waiting for their uniform to dry (Code U).

The designated senior leader for absence will ensure that lateness is analysed and followed-up, in the first instance, with a phone call when a pattern is emerging to offer support to the parent.

4.5 Unauthorised absence

Absence will not be authorised unless parents have provided a satisfactory explanation that has been accepted as such by the school.

Examples of unsatisfactory explanations include:

- A pupil's / family member's birthday
- Shopping for uniform or clothes
- Having their hair cut
- Closure of a sibling's school for INSET (or other) purposes
- 'Couldn't get up'
- Illness where the child is considered well enough to attend school
- Holidays taken without the authorisation of the school

4.6 Following up unexplained absence

Where any pupil we expect to attend school does not attend, or stops attending, without reason, the school will:

- Call the pupil's parent/carer on the morning of the first day of unexplained absence to ascertain the reason. If the school cannot reach any of the pupil's emergency contacts, the school may contact police or a child's social worker (where applicable)
- Identify whether the absence is approved or not
- Identify the correct attendance code to use and input it as soon as the reason for absence is ascertained – this will be no later than 5 working days after the session
- Call the parent/carer on each day that the absence continues without explanation to ensure proper safeguarding action is taken where necessary. If absence continues, the school will consider involving the County Attendance Team

4.7 Reporting to parents/carers

The school will regularly inform parents about their child's attendance and absence levels via termly absence reports.

Teachers will also discuss the importance of regular attendance with parents, where necessary.

5. Authorised and unauthorised absence

5.1 Approval for term-time absence

Parents do not have an automatic right to remove their child from school during term time for the purpose of a holiday and are strongly advised not to do so. Parents should be aware that if their child is absent for 10 school days they will miss 5% of their education during that academic year.

The headteacher will only grant a leave of absence to a pupil during term time if they consider there to be 'exceptional circumstances'. A leave of absence is granted at the headteacher's discretion, including the length of time the pupil is authorised to be absent for.

Schools should consider each application for 'leave of absence' during term time individually, with consideration of specific facts, circumstances and relevant background context. Headteachers are unable to authorise absence during term time unless they are satisfied that there are 'exceptional circumstances'; the fundamental principles for defining 'exceptional' are rare, significant, unavoidable and short, by 'unavoidable' it implies that an 'event' could not reasonably be scheduled at another time.

Each request will take the following into account:

- Length of the proposed leave
- Age of the pupil
- The pupil's general absence/attendance record

- Proximity of SATs and public examinations
- Pupil's ability to catch up the work missed
- Pupil's educational needs
- General welfare of the pupil
- Circumstances of the request
- Purpose of the leave
- Previous term time holidays taken
- When the request was made

Any request should be submitted on the Leave of Absence form as soon as it is anticipated and, where possible, at least 4 weeks before the absence. The request should be addressed to the headteacher, who may require evidence to support any request.

All requests for leave of absence will receive a written response. Where a request has been granted, the letter should state:

- The expected date of return
- That parents must contact the school should any delays occur

If the permission to take leave is not granted and the pupil is absent, the absence will be **unauthorised**. In such cases the school may refer the matter to the County Attendance Team who may issue a Penalty Notice.

5.2 Suspension (no alternative provision made)

Suspension from attending school is counted as an authorised absence. The child's class teacher will make arrangements for work to be sent home.

5.3 Religious Observance

The Stoke Poges School acknowledges the multi-faith nature of British society and recognises that on some occasions, religious festivals may fall outside school holiday periods or weekends and that this necessitates a consideration of authorised absence or special leave for religious observance (Code R).

It is reasonable for a parent to allow their children not to attend school on any day of religious observance if recognised by the parent's religious body.

Parents are requested to give advance notice to the school if they intend their child to be absent.

However, in the interests of fulfilling the academic requirements of the school and limiting the authorised absence rate of the school, it is identified as reasonable that no more than one day be designated for any individual occasion of religious observance/festival and no more than three days in total in any academic year. Absence in excess of this will be categorised as unauthorised.

5.4 Traveller Absence

The aim for the attendance of Traveller children, in common with all other children, is to attend school as regularly and as frequently as possible.

To protect Traveller parents from unreasonable prosecutions for non-attendance, the Education Act 1944, section 86, states that a Traveller parent is safe from prosecution if their child accrues 200 attendances (i.e. 200 half days) in a year. Traveller absence (Code T) is acceptable only when the family is engaged in a trade or business that requires them to travel and when the child is attending school as regularly as that trade permits.

It does not mean that part-time education for Traveller children is legally acceptable, nor does it relieve parents of their duties to ensure that their children are receiving suitable education when not at school.

When in or around Buckinghamshire, if a Traveller family can reasonably travel back to their base school then the expectation is that their child will attend full-time.

The Stoke Poges School will be regarded as the base school if it is the school where the child normally attends when they are not travelling. However, the pupil must have attended in the last 18 months. Traveler children can register at other schools temporarily whilst away from their base school. In such

cases, the pupil's school place at The Stoke Poges School will be kept open for them whilst travelling. This is to protect them from unfairly losing their place at their school of usual attendance.

The Stoke Poges School can operate effectively as the child's base school only if we are engaged in on-going dialogue with Traveller families. This means that parents must:

- Advise of their forthcoming travelling patterns before they happen
- Inform the school regarding proposed return dates

The Stoke Poges School will authorise absence of Traveller children if we are satisfied that a family is travelling and has given indication that they intend to return.

Traveller children will be recorded as attending an approved educational activity when:

- The child is on roll and attending another visiting school
- Undertaking supervised educational activity under the jurisdiction of another LA's Traveller Education Service
- The child is undertaking computer based distance learning that is time evidenced

Where Traveller children are registered pupils at a school and are known to be present either at a site (official or otherwise) or in a house and are not attending school, the absence will be investigated in the same way as for any other pupil.

6. Deletions from the register

In accordance with the Education (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2006, pupils will be deleted from the register only when one of the following circumstances applies:

- The school is replaced by another school on a School Attendance Order
- The School Attendance Order is revoked by the Local Authority
- The pupil has ceased to be of compulsory school age
- Permanent exclusion has occurred and procedures have been completed
- Death of a pupil
- Transfer between schools
- When a parent informs the school in writing that the pupil is to be withdrawn to be educated outside the school system
- Failure to return from an extended holiday after both the school and the local authority have tried to locate the pupil
- A medical condition prevents their attendance and return to the school before ending compulsory school-age
- In custody for more than four months (in discussion with the Youth Offending Team)
- 20 days' continuous unauthorised absence have elapsed and both the Local Authority and school have tried to locate the pupil
- A pupil has left the school but it is not known where he/she has gone after both the school and the Local Authority have tried to locate the pupil

The Stoke Poges School will follow Buckinghamshire County Council's Children Missing Education Protocol when a pupil's whereabouts is unknown.

7. Using attendance data

All pupils' attendance will be monitored and will be shared with the Local Authority and other agencies if a pupil's attendance is a cause for concern.

Regular school attendance is essential if children are to achieve their full potential. We will work with families to identify reasons for poor attendance and try to resolve any difficulties.

The School Attendance Officer will closely monitor attendance and punctuality by using the data generated from Sims Attendance, recorded twice daily for am and pm registration. This data is processed and parents will receive a termly letter generated from Sims. A traffic light system is used:

Green – safety zone – 96% to 100%
Amber – at risk zone – 91% to 95%
Red – danger zone – 90% and below

This pupil level data will be closely monitored and used to trigger school action (see appendix 2).

7.1 Monitoring attendance

The school will:

- Monitor attendance and absence data half-termly, termly and yearly across the school and at an individual pupil level
- Identify whether or not there are particular groups of children whose absences may be a cause for concern
- 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.

7.2 Analysing attendance

The school will:

- Analyse attendance and absence data regularly to identify pupils or cohorts that need additional support with their attendance, and use this analysis to provide targeted support to these pupils and their families
- Look at historic and emerging patterns of attendance and absence, and then develop strategies to address these patterns

7.3 Using data to improve attendance

The school will:

- Provide regular attendance reports to class teachers and other school leaders, to facilitate discussions with pupils and families
- Use data to monitor and evaluate the impact of any interventions put in place in order to modify them and inform future strategies

7.4 Reducing persistent and severe absence

Persistent absence is where a pupil misses 10% or more of school, and severe absence is where a pupil misses 50% or more of school.

The school will:

- Use attendance data to find patterns and trends of persistent and severe absence
- Hold regular meetings with the parents of pupils who the school (and/or local authority) considers to be vulnerable, or are persistently or severely absent, to discuss attendance and engagement at school
- Provide access to wider support services to remove the barriers to attendance

The Stoke Poges School will share attendance data with the Local Authority as required. All information shared will be done so in accordance with the Data Protection Act 1998.

8. Support systems

The Stoke Poges School recognise that poor attendance is often an indication of difficulties in a child's life. This may be related to problems at home and/or in school. Parents should make school aware of any difficulties or changes in circumstances that may affect their child's attendance and/or behaviour in school, for example, bereavement, divorce/separation. This will help the school identify any additional support that may be needed.

The Stoke Poges School also recognises that some pupils are more likely to require additional support to attain good attendance, for example, those pupils with special educational needs, those with physical or mental health needs, migrant and refugee pupils and looked after children.

The school will implement a range of strategies to support improved attendance. Strategies used will include:

- Discussion with parents and carers
- Attendance report cards
- Referrals to support agencies
- Learning mentors
- Friendship groups
- Reward systems
- Additional learning support
- Behaviour support
- Inclusion units
- Reintegration support packages

Support offered to parents will be child centred and planned in discussion and agreement with both parents and pupils.

9. Legal sanctions

Where intervention fails to bring about an improvement in attendance, The Stoke Poges School will notify the County Attendance Team of the irregular attendance.

The County Attendance Team or school, may invite parents to attend a Parenting Contract Meeting and issue a formal warning of a Penalty Notice.

Parenting Contracts (Anti-Social Behaviour Act 2003)

A Parenting contract is a voluntary agreement between the Local Authority, school and the parent. It can also be extended to include the child and any other agencies offering support to resolve any difficulties leading to improved attendance.

The contract will outline attendance targets and will detail agreed actions that will help to achieve the target. The contract will be reviewed regularly.

The contract can be used as evidence in a prosecution should irregular attendance continue.

Penalty Notices (Anti-Social Behaviour Act 2003)

Penalty notices will be considered when:

- Intervention has failed to bring about improvement and further unauthorised absence has occurred following written warning to improve
- A pupil has taken leave of absence i.e. for the purpose of a holiday in term time and the absence has not been authorised by the school

A Penalty Notice gives the parent the opportunity to avoid a prosecution. A £60 fine, per parent/carer, per child must be paid within 21 days. The fine increases to £120 per parent/carer, per child if paid after 21 days but within 28 days of the date the Notice was issued.

Failure to pay the Penalty Notice may result in a prosecution under Section 444 of the Education Act 1996.

Prosecution

The school will provide the Local Authority with evidence required for a prosecution under Section 444 of the Education Act 1996. This is to ensure that parents realise their own responsibilities in ensuring attendance at school and most importantly about returning children to education.

10. Monitoring arrangements

This policy will be reviewed as guidance from the local authority or DfE is updated, and as a minimum biannually by the headteacher. At every review, the policy will be approved by the full governing board.

11. Links with other policies

This policy links to the following policies:

- Child protection and safeguarding policy
- Behaviour policy

Headteacher		Date	
Chair of Governing Board		Date	

Appendix 1: attendance codes

The following codes are taken from the DfE's guidance on school attendance.

Code	Definition	Scenario
/	Present (am)	Pupil is present at morning registration
\	Present (pm)	Pupil is present at afternoon registration
L	Late arrival	Pupil arrives late before register has closed
B	Off-site educational activity	Pupil is at a supervised off-site educational activity approved by the school
D	Dual registered	Pupil is attending a session at another setting where they are also registered
J	Interview	Pupil has an interview with a prospective employer/educational establishment
P	Sporting activity	Pupil is participating in a supervised sporting activity approved by the school
V	Educational trip or visit	Pupil is on an educational visit/trip organised, or approved, by the school
W	Work experience	Pupil is on a work experience placement

Code	Definition	Scenario
Authorised absence		
C	Authorised leave of absence	Pupil has been granted a leave of absence due to exceptional circumstances
E	Excluded	Pupil has been excluded but no alternative provision has been made
H	Authorised holiday	Pupil has been allowed to go on holiday due to exceptional circumstances
I	Illness	School has been notified that a pupil will be absent due to illness

M	Medical/dental appointment	Pupil is at a medical or dental appointment
R	Religious observance	Pupil is taking part in a day of religious observance
S	Study leave	Year 11 pupil is on study leave during their public examinations
T	Gypsy, Roma and traveller absence	Pupil from a traveller community is travelling, as agreed with the school
Unauthorised absence		
G	Unauthorised holiday	Pupil is on a holiday that was not approved by the school
N	Reason not provided	Pupil is absent for an unknown reason (this code should be amended when the reason emerges, or replaced with code O if no reason for absence has been provided after a reasonable amount of time)
O	Unauthorised absence	School is not satisfied with reason for pupil's absence
U	Arrival after registration	Pupil arrived at school after the register closed

Code	Definition	Scenario
X	Not required to be in school	Pupil of non-compulsory school age is not required to attend
Y	Unable to attend due to exceptional circumstances	School site is closed, there is disruption to travel as a result of a local/national emergency, or pupil is in custody
Z	Pupil not on admission register	Register set up but pupil has not yet joined the school
#	Planned school closure	Whole or partial school closure due to half-term/bank holiday/INSET day

Intervention Flow Chart

School will notify parent of the child's irregular school attendance and offer them the opportunity and support to improve.

If you receive a letter informing you of concerns regarding your child's attendance you should

- Speak with your child to see if there are any reasons why they are reluctant to attend
- Contact the school to discuss any difficulties you or your child may be experiencing.
 - Ensure your child attends school regularly

If there is no improvement and the parent has not provided a good reason for the absence, the school may refer to the County Attendance Team

Whilst your involvement in a Parenting Contract is voluntary, if you fail to engage with the support offered and your child's attendance remains irregular, the County Attendance Team may issue a Penalty Notice or begin legal proceedings in the Magistrates' Court.

If you are issued with a Penalty Notice of £60 per parent/carer, per child this must be paid in full within 21 days otherwise the Penalty will increase to £120 per parent/carer, per child. If you fail to pay the Penalty by the 28th day, the Education Welfare Service may instigate legal proceedings against you.

If you are found guilty of this offence you can be fined up to £2500 and/or be imprisoned for a period of three months.

A Parenting Contract is a voluntary agreement between you and the Local Authority aimed at supporting you in improving your child's school attendance.

The County Attendance Team will invite you to attend a Parenting Contract Meeting and may issue a Warning of a Penalty Notice.