St Stephen's
CE Primary School

Promoting Good Attendance at St. Stephen's

This model policy is based on the DfE's 'Working together to improve attendance' guidance (August 2024). The policy will need to be personalised to reflect each school's culture and procedures to promote positive attendance. The policy also references Ofsted's report (February 2022) 'Securing good attendance and tackling persistent absence.'

Date: September 2026
Date of Review: September 2027

I have come that they may have life and have it to the full. John 10:10

My command is this: Love each other as I have loved you. John 13:34



"Learning, loving and growing; together as God's children"

Introduction

We are proud to be a nurturing, inclusive, diverse church school at the centre of our community, where all children and staff are encouraged to continue 'learning, loving and growing; together as God's children'.

Our Vision

Our vision is about **celebrating the uniqueness of every individual**, **inspiring a lifelong love of learning** and **experiencing life in all its fullness.** It is rooted in John 13:34:

"I give you a new commandment, that you love one another. Just as I have loved you, you also should love one another."

Our school will be a place where:

- everyone feels safe, welcome and valued.
- everyone feels excitement, joy and challenge through developing their God-given gifts to achieve.
- everyone flourishes and excels, grows in character, faith and wisdom and develops hope and aspiration.
- everyone is equipped to move on in their journey with confidence, resilience and motivation.
- In partnership with others we seek to serve and make a valuable contribution to God's world.

Our Core Christian Values

Thankfulness – Love – Respect – Forgiveness – Kindness – Friendship

Our Trust Values

Inclusion – Compassion – Aspiration – Resilience – Excellence

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1. Introduction

1.1 At St Stephen's CE Primary School, we expect all pupils to:

- Attend every school day
- Attend school punctually
- Attend school prepared for the day

1.2 We believe that attending school, on time, is key to enabling children to make the most of the opportunities we offer to prepare them for their future.

1.3 We will work in partnership with our families to identify the reasons for poor attendance supporting them in addressing any barriers to attendance for their child.

1.4 Promoting good attendance is a matter for the whole school community. This policy sets out our expectations and our approach. Our approach is in line with the Department for Education's guidance 'Working together to improve school attendance' which applies from August 2024.

1.5 Our approach to securing good attendance, in line with Ofsted's research, can be summarised as 'Listen, understand, empathise and support – but do not tolerate.'

1.6 Every pupil should be able learn in an enjoyable and safe environment and be protected from harm. Attending school regularly promotes the welfare and safety of children whilst they are not in the care of their parents/carers.

1.7 In the case of specific illnesses that require pupils to be kept off school, parents should follow public health advice to ensure the wellbeing of the whole school community. These illnesses are Chickenpox, Diarrhoea and Vomiting, Impetigo, Measles, Mumps, Scabies, Scarlet Fever and Whooping Cough – see 'How long should you keep your child off school – checklist poster'

1.8 This policy will be applied consistently and fairly. In applying this policy, we will take into account the needs of individual pupils.

1.9 This policy is supported by other school policies and procedures e.g., admissions, safeguarding and child protection, anti-bullying, behaviour and inclusive practice.

1.10 This policy takes into account the Human Rights Act 1998, the Equalities Act 2010, the Race Relations Act 2000 and the 1996 Education Act.

2 Expectations

2.1 It is our responsibility to maintain a culture that promotes good attendance which is supported by consistently applied systems.

2.2 Our dedicated senior leader with overall responsibility for attendance is Mrs Sally Denney, Headteacher.

2.3 Other staff in school who champion and improve attendance on a day to day basis are Mrs Rachael Murfitt and Mrs Joanne Mason.

2.4 Staff who can provide support on attendance are class teachers and teaching assistants.

2.5 Parents/ carers 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, by regular attendance at school or otherwise.

2.6 We are committed to working with parents to promote positive attendance. We expect all our parents to:

- Maintain effective routines at home to support good attendance
- Contact the school as soon as possible if your child is absent to let us know the reason for the absence and the expected date of return. This should be followed up with a written note as soon as possible
- Avoid unnecessary absences. For example, pre-planned medical/ dental appointments should take place outside of school hours. Proof of medical appointment will be shared with school via email. Proof of other appointments / reasons for absence will also be shared with the attendance team.
- Provide a medical note of illness (where attendance is a concern <90%).
- Inform us of any change in circumstances that may impact on your child's attendance.
- Support us by becoming involved in your child's education, acknowledging the value of education and the importance of children receiving the same messages from home and school
- Work with us to address any barriers to attendance for your child including attending all meetings requested to discuss attendance issues.

2.7 We expect all our pupils to:

- Attend school each day and be aware of when they should attend school. E.g. minor ailments such as cold, cough and headaches will still enable the children to attend school but they may require a reasonable adjustments to their care plan or indoor play.
- Attend school each day, on time and be ready to learn
- Speak to a member of staff if they are experiencing difficulties at school or at home which may impact on their attendance
- Follow the school procedure if they arrive late

3 Daily routines

3.1 At St Stephen's CE Primary School our staff meet and greet our pupils each day. This starts when pupils begin their slow start to the day at 8:45am as they are met by members of SLT. Pupils are then greeted by their class teachers and assistants when they arrive in school and complete their wellbeing scale.

3.2 Attendance registers are taken at the start of each morning session of each school day and once during each afternoon session.

3.3 Our school day begins at 8.55am. The morning register will open and be taken at 8.55am by the class teacher or support staff. Any pupil arriving after 8.55am is required to report to the main school office to sign in and provide a reason for lateness, this is due to the gate being locked.

3.4 If arrival is 8.55am - 9.00am, then the pupil will be recorded as late (Late before the close of register) this will be recorded on Arbor.

3.5 The school register will officially close at 9.30am. Any pupil arriving on or after this time will be marked as having an unauthorised absence for the morning session (Late after the close of register) this will be recorded as a U code on Arbor.

3.6 Parents will be contacted to discuss any patterns of late arrival. Repeated arrival after the close of registration will result in further action being taken to support improved attendance

3.7 Our afternoon session begins at 12:30pm for EYFS, 12:45am for KS1, 1:00pm for KS2. A register is taken at this time.

3.8 Our normal school day ends at 3.30pm.

4 Reporting Absence

4.1 If a child is absent from school, parents should contact the school office by telephone or email on the first day of absence before 9:15am, providing the reason/details/symptoms of illness for the absence. If absences are not reported, the children's mark will be 'unauthorised'.

4.2 If the absence continues longer than a day, parents/carers must contact the school office each day of absence to update with reason/details/symptoms for absence and the expected date of return. If absence updates are not reported each day, the children's mark will be 'unauthorised'.

4.3 If a child is absent, and we have had no contact from the parent/carers to provide a reason for the absence, we will:

- Activate first day absence procedures. E.g. email contact from Arbor.
- If there remains no contact then a telephone call will be made later that morning to the parent/carer and, if still no response, a call may be made to the pupil's other emergency contacts.
- If we cannot contact a parent/carer and are concerned about the pupil then, a home visit may be carried out. If the family is supported by a social worker then the social worker will be informed of the absence.
- If we are unable to make contact on the home visit and have concerns around a pupil's safety, we may request a welfare check to be made by the police.

4.4 We will telephone home and the police if a pupil leaves school without permission.

5 Appointments within the school day

5.1 We understand that there may be occasions where a child will have to attend appointments within the school day. However, where possible appointments must be made after school, weekends or in school holidays.

5.2 If appointments do fall within the school day, the school should be made aware at the earliest opportunity. Evidence must be shared with the school office - i.e. letter, email, text, where they will take a copy. If evidence is electronic, please email a copy to the school's email address - ststephens@thesycamoretrust.co.uk. This evidence must have the child's name, with the date and details of the appointment. A copy of the evidence will be stored on the child's records.

5.3 If evidence for appointments are not provided, we may not be able to authorise the absence, this will affect the child's overall attendance.

6 Requesting Leave of absence

6.1 A leave of absence will only be granted (authorised) under exceptional circumstances. It is therefore unlikely that a leave of absence

will be granted for the purposes of a family holiday. In making our decision we will take into account the specific circumstances and context behind the request. If a leave of absence is granted, the head teacher will determine the length of the time the pupil can be away from school. Requests for a leave of absence should be made in writing to the head teacher giving as much notice as possible. Please check the guidelines from the Department of Education and the Local Authority shared on the School Jotter app. A leave of absence request form is available from the school office or school website.

7 Managing Attendance

7.1 We will regularly inform parents about their child's attendance, highlighting any amount of time missed and the impact on learning. This will be done termly or more frequently through letters if it is of concern. We use a standardised Red/Amber/Green (RAG) system to inform parents and this is used throughout The Sycamore Trust.

7.2 We value and recognise the importance of good attendance. We use the following to promote and celebrate good attendance:

- Weekly class attendance trophy for the class with the highest attendance.
- Letters for children with excellent attendance half-termly
- Weekly shout-outs in assembly for top-attending classes
- Weekly rewards (e.g., extra playtime, special activity, toast day) for classes with highest attendance.
- Attendance stickers, for pupils on individualised support plans.
- Parent information shared regularly on newsletters about the importance of good attendance.
- Support packages for families who need help improving attendance (early help, attendance support).
- Attendance targets displayed weekly in newsletters and in celebration Friday worship, helping children see progress and celebrate success.

7.3 We will regularly analyse attendance data to identify pupils who have consistently high attendance, those who have shown improvements in their attendance and identify pupils who may be vulnerable. We will also analyse specific groups, classes or year groups to inform our strategy in promoting good attendance.

7.4 Our approach to attendance management is based on prevention, early intervention and targeted support (including attendance contracts). We will regularly analyse attendance data to identify pupils who are at risk of poor attendance, have poor attendance or are identified as being either persistently absence or severely absent.

0 – 4 days missed	98 – 100% attendance	**PREVENTION** Whole school approach/ celebrating good attendance
5 – 9 days missed	95– 97.9% attendance	**PREVENTION** Pupils at risk of poor attendance
10– 19 days missed	90.1 –94.9% attendance	**EARLY INTERVENTION** Pupils with poor attendance
20 or more days missed	90% or below attendance	**PERSISTENTLY ABSENT** 10% or more absence **SEVERELY ABSENT**

7.5 Our strategy for using data to target our work on attendance, including reducing persistent absence (pupils who are absent for 10% or more sessions) and severe absence (pupils who are absent for 50% or more sessions) is based on the table below:

PREVENTION of poor attendance through good whole school attendance management	**ALL PUPILS** Developing good attendance patterns through effective whole school approach to attendance
	PUPILS AT RISK OF POOR ATTENDANCE Using attendance and absence data rigorously to support pupils with increasing levels of absence, arriving at school late or taking leave in term time without permission before it becomes a regular pattern
EARLY INTERVENTION to reduce absence before it becomes habitual	**PUPILS WITH POOR ATTENDANCE** Intervening as early as possible and agreeing an action plan for pupils with high levels of absence and those demonstrating growing disengagement with school
TARGETED reengagement of persistent and severely absent pupils	**PERSISTENTLY ABSENT AND SEVERELY ABSENT PUPILS** Put additional targeted support in place, where necessary working with partners, and agree a joint approach with local authorities for all severely absent pupils

7.6 We will regularly analyse attendance data to identify pupils or cohorts of pupils that need support. We will focus staff efforts on developing targeted actions for those cases.

7.7 If we have concerns about a pupil's attendance and/or their punctuality then we will work in partnership with parents to support improvements. This may involve a meeting in school to support the family in identifying, and addressing, the barriers to attending school and/or attending school on time.

7.8 We recognise that poor attendance can be an indication of difficulties and trauma 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, for example, bereavement, divorce/separation, incidents of domestic abuse. This will help us to identify any additional support that may be needed. It is expected that the child and their family work collaboratively with us to identify the most appropriate support.

7.9 We recognise 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.

7.10 We will hold regular meetings with the parents of pupils who the school (and/or local authority) consider to be vulnerable to discuss attendance at, and engagement with, school. This will include pupils who are classed as being persistently absent (10% or more absence), those who are severely absent (50% or more absence), those with patterns of absence and pupils who show an unexpected or unexplained dip in attendance.

7.11 Working with parents, we will identify pupils who need support from wider partners and will make the necessary referrals as quickly as possible. With parental consent, this may include exploring Early Help support through the completion of the 'Story So Far' tool, or through discussion within a team around the school meeting.

7.12 We will support pupils back into school following a lengthy or unavoidable period of absence to build confidence and bridge gaps.

7.13 If we have any concerns about the welfare and wellbeing of a pupil then, in line with our safeguarding responsibilities, we will make any necessary referrals.

7.14 If we have been unable to contact the family, and have not seen the pupil, then we will inform the Local Authority so that joint enquiries can be

made to establish the whereabouts of the child through Children Missing Education procedures

7.15 Attendance contracts will be established and reviewed regularly with parents of children who have severely low attendance and need further support.

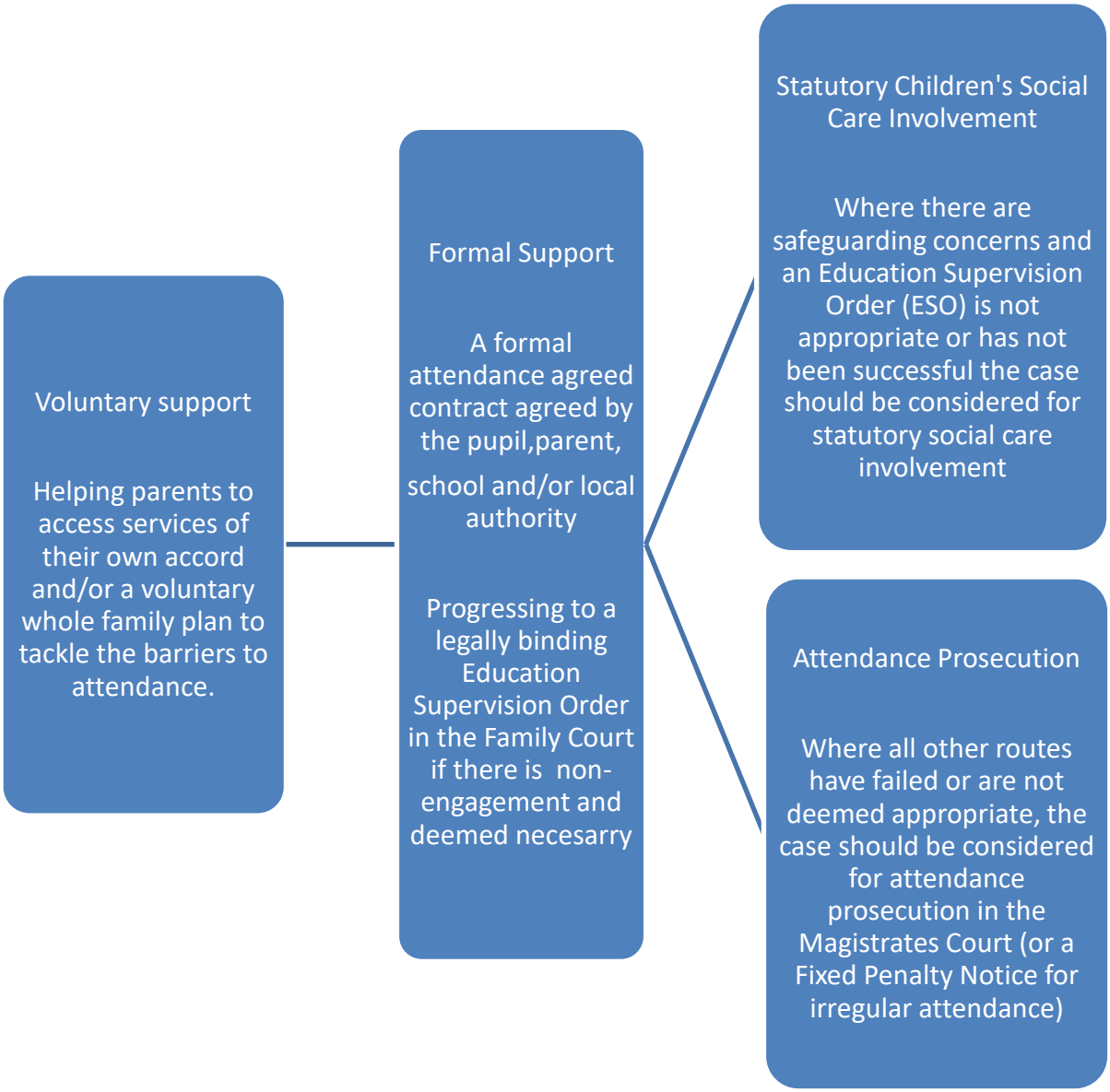
8. Voluntary support, formal support and statutory action

8.1 We will implement a range of strategies to support improved attendance. These may include:

- Discussion with parents and pupils
- Discussion with the Virtual School where the child is looked after and/ or has a social worker
- Working with attendance professionals, internal and/ or external to the school
- Attendance panels
- Attendance support plans, including Attendance Contracts
- Attendance report cards
- Referrals to support agencies
- Voice of the Child Activities
- Friendship groups
- Personal, social and health education
- Anxiety-based school avoidance resources
- Trauma-informed approaches
- Early help referral options
- Family learning
- Reward systems
- Time limited part-time timetables, in agreement with the Local Authority
- Additional learning support
- Behaviour support
- Inclusion resources
- Reintegration support packages

8.2 Support offered to families, both internally and externally, will be child-centred, trauma informed and inclusive; planned in discussion and agreement with both parents and pupils.

8.3 Our approach to attendance management is based on the principles of prevention, early intervention and targeted support. At all stages we aim to work in partnership with parents/carers to address any barriers to attendance and/ or punctuality together. Where support is not successful, or is not engaged with, the law protects pupils' right to an education and provides a range of legal interventions to formalise attendance improvement efforts, and where all other avenues have been exhausted, enforce it through prosecuting parents.



8.4 We will work with Bury local authority to use the full range of legal interventions available to us to protect our pupils' right to an education. These are:

- Attendance contracts
- Education supervision orders
- Attendance prosecution
- Parenting orders
- Fixed penalty notices (see section 8)

8.5 Decisions on which intervention to take will be made on a case-by-case basis after considering the individual circumstances of the family.

9 Fixed penalty notices

9.1 School and the local authority will have regard to our safeguarding duties as set out in the statutory guidance in Keeping Children Safe in Education.

9.2 Fixed penalty notices will be served on parents as an alternative to prosecution where parents have failed to ensure that their child regularly attends the school. Fixed penalty notices will be used where the pupil's absence has not been authorised by the school and the absence constitutes an offence. Fixed penalty notices can be issued to each parent liable for the attendance offence/s, which should usually be the parent or parents with day to day responsibility for the pupil's attendance.

9.3 We will only use a fixed penalty notice, in line with the Education (Penalty Notices) (England) Regulations 2007, where support to secure regular attendance has not been successful. Fixed penalty notices will be issued for unauthorised holiday in term time or if attendance fails to improve following the attendance support procedure.

9.4 Fixed penalty notices can be issued where parents allow their child to be present in a public place during school hours without reasonable justification during the first 5 days of a fixed period or permanent exclusion. The parents must have been notified by the school at the time of the exclusion the days that the child must not be present in a public place.

9.5 If a pupil takes unauthorised term-time leave for 10 consecutive sessions or more (generally 5 days) they will be subject to a Penalty Notice. The fine for a penalty notice is £80 per child, per parent/carer, increasing to £160 if not paid within 22 days to 28 days for pupils who are of statutory school age. If a penalty notice remains unpaid, parents may be the subject of court proceedings for failing to ensure the regular school attendance of their child and this could result in a fine of up to £2,500 and/or a term of imprisonment of up to 3 months per parent. For second offences of unauthorised term-time leave (10 consecutive sessions or more) within a three-year rolling period (from 19th August 2024), the fine is a flat £160 per parent, per child. For the third offence in a three-year rolling period (from 19th August 2024), the referral will be automatically considered for prosecution concerning Section 444 Education Act 1996.

https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/working-together-to-improve-school-attendance

Appendix 1 Flow chart showing how schools, and local partners, work with families to improve attendance

EXPECT

Aspire to high standards of attendance from all pupils and parents and build a culture where all can, and want to, be in school and ready to learn by prioritising attendance improvement across the school



MONITOR

Rigorously use attendance data to identify patterns of poor attendance (at individual and cohort level) as soon as possible so all parties can work together to resolve them before they become entrenched



LISTEN AND UNDERSTAND

When a pattern is spotted, discuss with pupils and parents to listen, to understand barriers to attendance and to agree how all partners can work together to resolve them



FACILITATE SUPPORT

Remove barriers in school and help pupils and parents to access the support they need to overcome the barriers outside of school. This might include an early help or whole family plan where absence is a symptom of wider issues



FORMALISE SUPPORT

Where absence persists and voluntary support is not working or not being engaged with, partners should work together to explain the consequences clearly and ensure support is also in place to enable families to respond. Depending on the circumstances this may include formalising support through an attendance contract or education supervision order



ENFORCE

Where all other avenues have been exhausted and support is not working or not being engaged with, enforce attendance through statutory intervention or prosecution to protect the pupil's right to an education.