



Stoke Mandeville Combined School Governing Board

Attendance Policy

Adopted - September 2020

Next Review Date - September 2023

Author – to Be Confirmed

Contents

Aims

At Stoke Mandeville Combined School we 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.

Our school aims to meet its obligations with regards to school attendance by:

- Promoting good attendance and reducing absence, including persistent absence
- Ensuring every pupil has access to full-time education to which they are entitled □ Acting early to address patterns of absence

We will also support parents to perform their legal duty to ensure their children of compulsory school age attend regularly, and will promote and support punctuality in attending lessons. By 'regularly' we mean that children should attend between 96 and 100% of the time.

Legislation and Guidance

This policy meets the requirements of the [school attendance guidance](#) 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:

[The Education Act 1996](#)

[The Education Act 2002](#)

[The Education and Inspections Act 2006](#)

[The Education \(Pupil Registration\) \(England\) Regulations 2006](#)

[The Education \(Pupil Registration\) \(England\) \(Amendment\) Regulations 2010](#)

[The Education \(Pupil Registration\) \(England\) \(Amendment\) Regulations 2011](#)

[The Education \(Pupil Registration\) \(England\) \(Amendment\) Regulations 2013](#)

[The Education \(Pupil Registration\) \(England\) \(Amendment\) Regulations 2016](#) [The Education \(Penalty Notices\) \(England\) \(Amendment\) Regulations 2013](#)

This policy also refers to the DfE's guidance on the [school census](#), which explains the persistent absence threshold.

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 school age and where necessary, use legal enforcement.

School Procedures

Attendance register

By law, all schools (except those where all pupils are boarders) are required to keep an attendance register, and all pupils must be placed on this register. The attendance register will be taken at the start of the first session of each school day and once during the second session. It will mark whether every pupil is:

- Present
- Attending an approved off-site educational activity
- Absent
- 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.

Every entry in the attendance register will be preserved for three years after the date on which the entry was made.

Pupils must arrive in school at 8.45am on each school day.

The register for the first session will be taken at 9.05am and will be kept open until 9.15am. The register for the second session will be taken at 13.15pm.

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
- 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

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

Unplanned Absence

Parents must notify the school by telephone or by email on the first day of an unplanned absence – for example, if their child is unable to attend due to ill health – by 9.30am or as soon as practically possible (see also Attendance Monitoring).

Absence due to illness will be 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 parents 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 will be notified of this in advance.

Medical or Dental Appointments

Missing registration for a medical or dental appointment is counted as an authorised absence; advance notice is required for authorising these absences using the school's leave of absence form and where possible and appointment letter, email or text message.

We encourage parents to make medical and dental appointments out of school hours where possible. Where this is not possible, the pupil should be out of school for the minimum amount of time necessary.

Lateness and Punctuality

A pupil who arrives late but before the register has closed will be marked as late, using the code 'L'.

A pupil who arrives after the register has closed will be marked as late, using the code 'U'. The absence will not be authorised unless a satisfactory explanation for the late arrival can be provided, for example, attendance at a medical appointment. Unsatisfactory explanations include waking up late for waiting for uniform to dry.

Registration begins at 9.05am and the register closes at 9.15am. On arrival after the close of register, pupils must be signed into the Passtab system by their parent or carer immediately to ensure that we can be responsible for their health and safety whilst they are in school.

Following Up Absence

The school will follow up any absences to ascertain the reason, ensure proper safeguarding action is taken where necessary, identify whether the absence is approved or not and identify the correct attendance code to use.

For safeguarding reasons, if a child is absent and no reason is provided by 9.30am, the parent/carers (and if necessary other listed contacts) will be contacted to ensure the child is safe. Where contact cannot be made a home visit may be carried out. If contact can still not be made First Response may be informed if appropriate.

Reporting to Parents

Parents are informed on an annual basis in their child's end of year report the percentage attendance for the year.

Authorised and Unauthorised Absence

Granting Approval for Term-time Absence

Headteachers may not grant any leave of absence to pupils during term time unless they consider there to be 'exceptional circumstances'. We define 'exceptional circumstances' as circumstances where absence cannot be taken outside of term-time.

Parents wishing to take their child out of school during term time must send a written request, using the school's Leave of Absence Request form (Appendix 2), to the Headteacher before arrangements are made. Documentary evidence of leave and return dates may be required in order to process the request. Retrospective requests will not be considered and therefore will result in the absence being categorised as unauthorised.

The school considers each application for term-time absence individually, taking into account the specific facts, circumstances and relevant context behind the request. A leave of absence is granted entirely at the Headteacher's discretion, taking into consideration the following factors:

- Purpose of the leave
- Circumstances of the request
- Length of the proposed leave
- The pupil's general absence/attendance record
- Proximity of SATs
- Previous term time holidays taken
- When the request was made
- The timing of the absence e.g. at the beginning of a term absences will not be authorised.

Valid reasons for authorised absence include:

- Illness and medical/dental appointments – as explained in specific sections above
- Religious observance – where the day is exclusively set apart for religious observance by the religious body to which the pupil's parents belong. If necessary, the school will seek advice from the parents' religious body to confirm whether the day is set apart
- Traveller pupils travelling for occupational purposes – this covers Roma, English and Welsh Gypsies, Irish and Scottish Travellers, Showmen (fairground people) and Circus people, Bargees (occupational boat dwellers) and New Travellers. Absence may be authorised only when a Traveller family is known to be travelling for occupational purposes and has agreed this with the school but it is not known whether the pupil is attending educational provision
- Bereavement and/or the funeral of a close family member or friend
- A week-day term-time wedding (one day only)
- A term-time holiday where the holiday is due to unavoidable parental work commitments (a signed supporting letter from the employer should be included with the request) □ Exclusion. The child's class teacher will send work home for the child.

Examples of unsatisfactory explanations include:

- A pupil's/family member's birthday
- Shopping for uniforms
- 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 e.g. a sore throat or cough □
Holidays taken without the authorisation of school

All requests for leave of absence will receive a written response.

If the permission to take leave is not granted and the pupil is absent, the absence will be unauthorised.

Where a leave of absence is taken, whether authorised or unauthorised, the class teacher will not provide work to be completed during the absence.

Legal Sanctions

Where a pupil's attendance falls persistently below the expected level a referral is made to the County Attendance Team and a parenting contract is drawn up. 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. A flow chart illustrates this in Appendix 3.

Schools can request that the Local Authority 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 and is not paid to the school.

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

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

Strategies for Promoting Attendance

Stoke Mandeville Combined School recognises 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 required.

Stoke Mandeville Combined 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 pupils
- Referrals to support agencies
- Learning mentors
- Friendship groups
- Reward systems
- Time limited part time time-tables
- Additional learning support
- Behaviour support
- Inclusion units
- Reintegration support packages

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

Attendance Monitoring

Every half term the attendance administrator will provide the Headteacher with attendance data for the previous five weeks for each pupil.

If a pupil's attendance goes below 90% we will contact the parents in writing to alert them that the child's attendance has been flagged and offering support to the family if they feel it necessary.

If after contacting parents a pupil's absence continue to rise, we will consider involving an education welfare officer. 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 is 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. We compare our attendance data to the national average, and share this with governors.

Attendance data is also used to identify emerging patterns and trends to inform whole school strategies to improve attendance and attainment. This information is communicated with the governing board on a termly basis.

Roles and Responsibilities

The Governing Board

The Governing Board is responsible for monitoring attendance figures for the whole school on at least a termly basis. It also holds the Headteacher to account for the implementation of this policy.

The Headteacher

The Headteacher is responsible for ensuring this policy is implemented consistently across the school, and for monitoring school-level absence data and reporting it to Governors. The Headteacher also supports other staff in monitoring the attendance of individual pupils and refers parents/carers to the Local Authority to issue fixed-penalty notices, where necessary.

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.

Office Staff

- Office staff are expected to take calls from parents about absence and record it on the school system.
- They also call parents if their child has not arrived by 9.30am and no reason has been provided.
- Monitors attendance data at the school and individual pupil level
- Reports concerns about attendance to the Headteacher
- Works with education welfare officers to tackle persistent absence
- Arranges calls and meetings with parents to discuss attendance issues
- Advises the Headteacher when to issue fixed-penalty notices

Monitoring Arrangements

This policy will be reviewed every four years by the John Colet Liaison Group Headteachers. At every review, the policy will be shared with the Governing Board for ratification.

Links With Other Policies

This policy is linked to our Child Protection and Safeguarding policies.

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 halfterm/bank holiday/INSET day

Appendix 2 - Leave of Absence Request Form



STOKE MANDEVILLE COMBINED SCHOOL APPLICATION FOR LEAVE OF ABSENCE

(This must be submitted at least four school weeks before the proposed absence)

I request permission from the School's Governing Body for my child:

Name:	Class:
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to be granted Leave of Absence for the dates below:

From:	To:
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The reason for the request is (please complete the appropriate section):

Exceptional Circumstances

Please give details as to why it is an exceptional circumstance.

Holiday is due to unavoidable parental work/ military commitments Please provide a supporting letter from employer or an assignment order.

I can confirm that the information that I have given above is correct and has no factual omissions. I understand that any authorised absence may be unauthorised at a later date if it is found that I provided inaccurate information; this may jeopardise any future Leave of Absence requests.

Signature of parent/carer:	Date:
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LEAVE OF ABSENCE REQUEST – RESPONSE FORM

This absence request has been accepted.....

☐

OR

This absence request has been refused because: ☐ The absence is for more than ten days

- ☐ Your child has already had one leave of absence request this school year
- ☐ The request covers all/part of an internal/external assessment period
- ☐ Insufficient notice has been given (four school weeks)
- ☐ Attendance is less than 90%
- ☐ There are lateness issues
- ☐ The request covers all/part of Work Experience or Focus Week
- ☐ The reason is not exceptional
- ☐ Insufficient reasons provided for the absence request
- ☐ The holiday is not due to unavoidable parental work/ military commitments

Signed:	Date:
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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 Education Welfare Service

The Education Welfare Service will invite you to attend a Parenting Contract Meeting and may issue a Warning of a Penalty Notice.

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

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 Education Welfare Service 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.