



## Pupil Attendance Policy

Adopted by the Governors of  
Starcross Primary School  
on 18 September 2024

To be reviewed and updated as required  
and no later than September 2025

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## 1.0 Aim of Policy

We want your child to thrive at Starcross Primary School. We strive to build strong and enduring relationships because we firmly believe that these provide the foundation our pupils need to fully engage in our community, feel a sense of belonging and to succeed in their education. Every child has a legal right to access an education, and schools and families are jointly responsible for supporting and promoting excellent pupil attendance and punctuality. Our school is committed to providing the highest quality of education for all of our pupils.

The aim of this Attendance Policy is to enable our school to work towards providing a consistent approach that actively encourages and supports the regular attendance of all of our pupils (wherever possible). Our school takes a whole-school approach to encouraging, supporting and maintaining the highest possible levels of attendance. We recognise that some barriers to education arise through the school environment and that others can stem from the circumstances of families and the community. We will endeavour to develop a non-judgemental and supportive approach, working in partnership with families and other organisations to achieve this. We will do our best to try to ensure that any problems or barriers to pupil attendance are identified early and that the right attention and support can be explored at the earliest opportunity.

This policy is supported by our policies on Safeguarding, SEND, Anti-Bullying, Inclusion and Behaviour.

Regular attendance is important for your child because those who attend regularly:

- make better progress, both socially and educationally
- find school routines, schoolwork and friendships easier to manage
- find learning more satisfying and valuable
- settle in and feel more connected with friends, teachers and the school as a whole
- often enjoy improved wellbeing, social, educational, and future work opportunities.

Research by the Department for Education (DfE) supports common sense and reinforces that there is a strong link between regular attendance and good attainment. Recent research (UCL and Anna Freud, 2023) also highlights that those pupils who are regularly absent (Persistent and Severe Absence in particular) are twice as likely to also struggle with their wellbeing.

Regular attendance and good collaborative working between the family and the school can also help prevent unhelpful avoidance habits becoming entrenched and difficult to change later on. With this in mind, and in support of the new [DfE Guidance \(Working](#)

[Together to Improve School Attendance, February 2024](#)), our school will be working hard to improve Early Identification and to share attendance concerns with our families at the earliest opportunity, so that together we can explore appropriate Early Intervention.

## **1.1 Scope of Policy**

This policy applies to all school leaders, staff, parents, and pupils.

- 1.1a For the purposes of this policy, references to 'teachers' include all paid staff responsible for the supervision of pupils.
- 1.1b For the purposes of this policy, references to 'pupils' include all learners in our school.
- 1.1c For the purposes of this policy, references to 'school' refers to all education settings, regardless of type.
- 1.1d For the purposes of this policy and our attendance procedures, we refer to Section 576 of the Education Act which defines the 'parent' of a pupil or young person as:
- both of their natural parents, whether they are married or not.
  - any person who, although they are not the natural parent, has parental responsibility for the pupil or young person, as defined in the Children Act (1989).
  - any person who, although not the natural parent, has the care of the pupil or person i.e. a person with whom the pupil lives, irrespective of their relationship to the pupil.

## 2.0 The Law requires 'regular' attendance. What is 'regular' attendance?

Attending 'regularly' has been defined by the Supreme Court (Isle of Wight Council v Platt [2017] UKSC 28) as attending in accordance with the rules of the school.

**This means that your child is expected to attend on all of the days that the school is open to them.**

Our school is dedicated to complying with the legal requirements of The Education Act (1996).

### 2.1 The Attendance Legal framework

The Education Act (1996)

#### [Section 7 - Duty of parents to secure education of children of compulsory school age](#)

The parent of every child of compulsory school age shall cause him to receive efficient full-time education suitable—

(a) to his age, ability and aptitude, and

(b) to any special educational needs he may have,

either by regular attendance at school or otherwise.

**Direct extract from 1996 Education Act.**

This means that if your child is registered at a school, then as parents/carers, you have a legal duty to ensure that your child attends punctually every day that the school is open to them (unless the absence is recognised as unavoidable).

### 3.0 Categories of absence and procedure for reporting absences

When a child is to be absent from school without prior permission, parents/carers should inform the school office at the earliest opportunity on the morning of each day of absence (and certainly before 09:00). The school should be provided with the reasons for the absence and the expected date of return. This contact is a safeguarding requirement to protect your child. If prior school permission has been granted and a pupil has been authorised to leave the school grounds within the school day, then for safeguarding reasons the parent/carer must sign the pupil out with the school office.

### **3.1 Illness**

Most cases of absence due to illness are short term. As previously mentioned, for safeguarding reasons, parents/carers will need to contact the school office before 09:00 on each day of absence. In order to make informed decisions about their child's fitness to attend school, parents/carers are encouraged to refer to the [NHS guidance 'is my child too ill for school?'](#).

For prolonged absence due to illness, it is suggested that parents/carers provide the school with as much information or evidence that is readily available or easily obtained. Providing this will support the Headteacher (or their delegate) to make an informed decision as to whether it is appropriate to authorise absence or not. It can also help support the school in exploring further options for support. If the reason given for the absence is not considered genuine or appropriate, then the Headteacher (or their delegate) may decide not to authorise the absence.

### **3.2 Medical or dental appointments**

Parents/carers should make every effort to ensure that these appointments are made outside of school hours. Where this cannot be avoided, children should attend school for as much of that day as possible. The latest DfE 'Working Together' Guidance (Page 81) advises that schools can only authorise such an absence if the absence was agreed in advance and the time out of school is the minimum amount of time necessary.

To help the Headteacher (or their delegate) decide if it is appropriate to authorise the absence, it is recommended that an appointment card (or similar) is passed to the school.

### **3.3 Exclusion**

Absences for formal exclusions and suspensions will be authorised.

### **3.4 Authorising absence**

In the first instance, absences will usually be treated as authorised unless the Headteacher (or their delegate) feels it is inappropriate to do so. An authorised absence is one where the school considers the circumstances to be unavoidable and exceptional in nature. Only a Headteacher (or their delegate) can authorise an absence.

There are some instances where the school may decide it appropriate to authorise a term time absence. This should (if possible) be requested in advance using an S2 form. This will allow the school to consider whether the DfE criteria of exceptional circumstances is appropriately evidenced and can authorise as appropriate. The S2 form can be obtained from the school.

If a child is not attending 'regularly' then the school will explore the reasons and barriers to attendance with the family further. If at this stage the school feels that the reasons given are avoidable (or are perhaps not a genuine reflection of the circumstances for the absence) then the school will make a decision as to whether it is appropriate to authorise the absence.

### 3.5 Requesting term time absence

#### [The School Attendance \(Pupil Registration\) \(England\) Regulations 2024](#)

##### **Regulation 11 - Leave of absence**

**11. (1)** Leave of absence from a school maintained by a local authority or a special school not maintained by a local authority may only be given by a person who the school's proprietor has authorised to do so (an "authorised person").

**11. (11)** This paragraph applies if -

- (a) an appropriate person has asked for the leave in advance; and
- (b) the authorised person thinks that leave should be given because of the exceptional circumstances of the request.

**11. (12)** In this regulation, in relation to leave of absence for a pupil, "appropriate person" means—

- (a) a parent who the pupil normally lives with; and

**Direct extract from The School Attendance (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2024**

This means that the request must come from the parent or carer that the child normally lives with and it must be made in advance. The Law does not grant parents/carers a right to take their children out of school during term time. The Law only allows Headteachers (or their delegates) to authorise a request when they are satisfied that there is evidence of a suitable Exceptional Circumstance. The Government is very clear that a family holiday is NOT an Exceptional Circumstance.

This School has adopted the [Local Authority Code of Conduct](#) in respect of leave of absence in term time. Any parents/carers who need to take their child out of school during term time should complete a Leave of Absence request form (S2). Wherever possible this must be submitted at least three weeks in advance. The S2 form can be obtained from the school.

If the S2 request is refused and the parents/carers proceed with the leave of absence, the school will have no choice but to refer the absence to the Local Authority. The Local Authority could then (in line with their Code of Conduct) issue a Penalty Notice to both parents/carers for each child who is absent. Failing to pay a Penalty Notice can lead to a Court Summons. Retrospective applications will not be considered and these periods of absence will be marked as unauthorised.

If an S2 request has not been completed by parents/carers or the school have been given a reason for an absence that it feels is not genuine (example – the school was advised that the absence was related to illness when a family holiday is suspected) then the Headteacher (or their delegate), will unauthorise the absence and may refer to the Local Authority.

### **3.6 Religious observance**

Our school recognises that there may be times where children of different faiths observe religious festivals that fall outside of school holidays and weekends. Absence will be authorised when a pupil is absent on a day that is exclusively set apart for religious observance by the religious body the parent(s) belong to.

The latest DfE Guidance 'Working Together' (page 85) describes 'a day exclusively set apart for religious observance' as a day when the pupil's parents/carers would be expected by the religious body to which they belong to stay away from employment in order to mark the occasion.

If there is doubt, schools are expected to seek advice from the parent's religious body about whether it has set the day apart for religious observance or not.



### **3.7 Parent/carer travelling for occupational purposes**

In line with page 85 of the latest DfE Guidance 'Working Together', where a pupil is a mobile child and their parent(s) is travelling in the course of their trade or business and the pupil is travelling with them, the school can choose to authorise the absence.

A mobile child is a child of compulsory school age who has no fixed abode and whose parent(s) is engaged in a trade or business of such a nature as to require them to travel from place to place. When their parent(s) is travelling for occupational purposes in England, it is expected that the pupil should attend a school where their parent(s) is travelling and be dual registered at that school and their main school. If a pupil's attendance was to fall below an acceptable level consideration may be given to attendance enforcement.

### **3.8 The School Day and Late arrival**

#### **AM Registration starts at 08:45**

Pupils who arrive after this time but within the formal registration period will be marked as late (L Code). Reminder: The school gates will open at 8:40 and close at 8:50 and late arriving pupils will need to enter through the school office.

#### **AM registration ends at 09:15**

Pupils who arrive after the formal registration period has ended should go straight to the school office to sign in and give a reason for their lateness. In line with DfE Guidance, pupils arriving after the register closes will be marked as excessively late (U Code) and the absence will be recorded as unauthorised for the whole of the session. Persistent excessive lateness may result in a referral to the Local Authority for attendance enforcement.

#### **PM registration starts at 13:00**

Pupils will be collected from the playground and taken back for registration at the end of lunch. Should a pupil be returning from off-site with a parent or carer, and arrive after this time but within the formal registration period, they will be marked as late (L Code).

#### **PM registration ends at 13:30**

In line with DfE Guidance, pupils arriving after the register closes will be marked as excessively late (U Code) and the absence will be recorded as unauthorised for the whole of the session.

#### **The school day ends at 15:15**

## **4.0 School Action: following up absences**

School Registers are taken electronically (and shared with the DfE and the Local Authority). Where there are unexplained absences, the school will contact the parents/carers (or on occasions emergency contacts) to establish the reason or their whereabouts.

If after a reasonable time, no contact with the school is made or where it is not possible to establish the reason, the absence will be unauthorised. If the school has grounds to believe that the reasons for an absence given are not genuine, then the Headteacher (or their delegate) may choose to unauthorise the absence.

Where there has been no contact and where there is concern over the wellbeing of the pupil, the school may make a welfare visit to the home (or where necessary may request a welfare visit from Social Care or the Police).

### **4.1 Attendance data and monitoring**

All schools are expected to monitor and analyse attendance and punctuality regularly throughout the year. We recognise that certain groups of pupils may be more at risk of poor attendance and we will strive to provide support and assistance wherever possible. Pupil level absence data is collected regularly by the DfE and published at National and Local Authority level through the DfE's Absence National Statistics First Releases. We regularly compare our attendance data to both National and Local averages.

Specific measures are taken to monitor attendance. These processes are embedded and regularly checked to ensure the effective safeguarding of all pupils through specific tailored interventions. Data on attendance is collected and regularly analysed by the school.

The DfE recommends that regular analysis is made of:

1. Patterns of absence
2. Patterns of lateness
3. Patterns of medical appointments
4. Correct and consistent use of Absence Codes
5. Trends in reasons for absence.
6. Trends within particular groups of pupils. Examples include pupils with:
  - Special Educational Needs and Disability (SEND)
  - Pupil Premium and Free School Meals

- Social Care involvement
- English as an Additional Language
- and any others considered appropriate.

Attendance data informs action planning and supports the identification of key priorities in our School Development Plan and will be considered for future revisions of this policy. The attendance data will be regularly reported to the Headteacher and all other appropriate and relevant staff, to facilitate Early Identification and Early Intervention discussions with pupils and families.

Data will also be used by the school to monitor the impact of any interventions put in place to modify them and inform future strategies.

#### **4.2 School Action: managing pupil absence**

The latest DfE Guidance 'Working Together' states that absence issues are best prevented and managed through effective Early Identification and Early Intervention. To support Early Intervention, the latest DfE Guidance also indicates that schools should regularly and routinely communicate with parents to raise the awareness of a pupil's attendance and punctuality levels.

The school has in place rigorous systems for monitoring pupil safety and absence. These systems are designed to pick up on early signs or patterns of absence. If the school considers your child's absence levels to be of concern, then the following supportive actions may be taken by the school:

- To support early intervention, the school will contact parents/carers by phone, text, email or letter to bring attendance concerns to the attention of parents/carers at the earliest opportunity.
- To support raising attendance awareness (as required by the latest DfE Guidance), families will regularly receive communications from the school advising them of their child's attendance and punctuality data.
- Parents/carers may be invited into the school to discuss concerns, explore barriers to attendance, explore the appropriateness of reasonable adjustments and the school will seek to agree an action plan to improve the situation.
- Parents/carers may be encouraged to sign up to a Parenting Agreement to commit to making the changes necessary to bring about the regular attendance of their child. This is entirely intended to be supportive and is voluntary.
- School may make referrals to Early Help or other agencies that might be able to provide support.

- Where there are safeguarding concerns, ALL schools have a legal requirement to share information with their Local Authority Safeguarding and Social Care Team.
- School may make a home visit to perform a welfare check to the family home after 5 days of continuous absence.
- Where the attendance drops below 90% (the DfE Persistent Absence threshold), the school is expected to inform the Local Authority.
- Where there are UNAUTHORISED absences, the school is expected to inform the Local Authority.
- Where the school has exhausted its processes for supporting attendance and there has not been satisfactory improvement, the school is expected to refer the pupil to the Local Authority Attendance Improvement Team.
- Where the attendance drops below 50% (the DfE Severe Absence threshold), the school is expected to consider whether a referral to the Local Authority Social Care Team is appropriate.

### **4.3 Who to contact with attendance concerns**

The first port of call for parents/carers when looking to discuss pupil absence is the **Attendance Team based in the school office on [admin@starcross-primary.devon.sch.uk](mailto:admin@starcross-primary.devon.sch.uk)**

The Senior Attendance Champion for this school is **Tara Trail (Head Teacher)**

### **4.4 Local Authority Action: potential legal penalties for absence**

Our school operates a support first approach to managing attendance and will strive to work with our families to bring about improvement. However, if absences continue and the absences are considered by the school to be avoidable, then schools are expected to refer unauthorised absences to the Local Authority for the consideration of attendance enforcement. This could include a Notice to Improve, Attendance Contract, Penalty Notice, an Education Supervision Order (ESO) or a summons from the Magistrates Court.

**Penalty Notice.** Penalty Notices will be issued in line with the Local Authority Code of Conduct. If a Penalty Notice is issued, each Penalty Notice will be for £80 and should be paid within 21 days. The Penalty Notice increases to £160 if paid from day 21 through til day 28. If a Penalty Notice goes unpaid after 28 days a Magistrates summons may be issued by the Local Authority.

If a second Penalty Notice is issued by the Local Authority, it will be issued at a higher rate of £160 to be paid within 28 days.

**Education Supervision Order.** This is where the Local Authority applies to the Family Court for a Court Order to support and manage improved regular attendance.

**Magistrates Summons.** For a first offence the maximum fine issued by the Court could be £1000 per parent/carer. If the matter returns to the Magistrates Court on a subsequent occasion the fines can extend to a maximum of £2500 per parent/carer and/or a custodial sentence of up to 3 Month.

**Notices to Improve and Attendance Contracts.** The latest DfE Guidance makes reference to both of these. The Local Authority are currently considering how these will be issued. Families will be informed by the school, once the Local Authority puts these measures in place.

#### **POLICY AMENDMENT RECORD**

<b>Date</b>	<b>Reviewed by</b>	<b>Nature of Change</b>	<b>Next Review Due</b>
07.09.2024	WW	New Policy to reflect changes in legislation and guidance from Sept 2024.	As required and no later than September 2025.

## **Appendix 1. Roles and Responsibilities**

### **School Governing body**

As part of our whole-school approach to maintaining high attendance, the governing body will:

- ensure that the importance of attendance is made clear by promoting the relevant school policies and guidance directed at parents/carers and staff
- review the school's attendance policy and ensure that all provisions are in place to allow school staff, parents/carers and pupils to follow the policy effectively
- nominate or identify a member of the governing body who will take the lead role in monitoring attendance and coordinating provision and policies for attendance
- ensure that all legislation regarding attendance is complied with and that up-to-date guidelines are communicated to parents/carers, pupils and staff
- take time at governor's meetings to review and discuss attendance issues that have arisen in order to stay on top of expected attendance targets for the year
- ensure that the school is implementing effective means of recording attendance and organising that data, including pupils who are educated off-site
- ensure that they are clear on how to analyse attendance data, including vulnerable groups, and how to communicate the findings effectively to parents/carers and staff
- use any data gathered to explore solutions to problems, make the proper adjustments to attendance coordination and target set for the future
- ensure that data is used within the school to measure the impact of strategies used to improve attendance.

## School Leadership Team

As part of our whole-school approach to maintaining high attendance, the school leadership team will:

- be active in their approach to promoting good attendance to pupils and their parents, which includes forming positive relationships with families
- ensure that the school's teaching and learning experiences encourage regular attendance and that pupils are taught the value of high attendance for their own progression and achievement
- coordinate with the governing body to monitor the implementation of the attendance policy and its effectiveness
- ensure that all staff are up to date with the school's attendance policy, DfE Guidance and legislation, and that staff are trained to recognise and deal with attendance issues
- ensure that government legislation on attendance is complied with and that they (the leadership team) are up to date with any legislation changes and how to implement them
- nominate or appoint a senior leader to take the responsibility of overseeing and monitoring attendance provision and that this person has sufficient time and resources to dedicate to this job
- report to the governing body each term and the lead governor for attendance half-termly on attendance records, data and provision
- ensure that systems to record and report attendance data are in place and working effectively
- develop multi-agency relationships to help with poor attendance and support families who are having difficulties getting their child to attend
- ensure that families are referred to appropriate support and Early Help
- document all specific interventions or steps taken to work with families to improve their child's attendance in case of future legal proceedings
- ensure that the local authority is informed in a timely manner if pupils struggle to regularly attend or accrue more than 10 unauthorised absences.

## Teachers and Support Staff

As part of our whole-school approach to maintaining high attendance, the school's teachers and support staff will:

- be active in their approach to promoting good attendance to pupils and their parents/carers, which includes forming positive relationships with families
- ensure that the school's teaching and learning experiences encourage regular attendance and that pupils are taught the value of high attendance for their own personal progression and achievement
- ensure that they are fully aware and up to date with the school's attendance policy and government legislation and that they will speak to another member of staff or seek support if they are unsure how to deal with an attendance issue
- ensure that they are following the correct systems for recording attendance and that pupil registration is taken in line with legal expectations
- contribute to strategy meetings and interventions where they are needed
- work with external agencies to support pupils and their families who are struggling with regular attendance.



## Parents and carers

As part of our whole-school approach to maintaining high attendance, we request that parents:

- engage with their children's education, support their learning and take an interest in what they have been doing at school
- promote the value of a good education and the importance of regular school attendance at home
- encourage and support their children's aspirations
- follow the set school procedure for reporting the absence of their child from school, and include an expected date for return
- do everything they can to prevent unnecessary school absences, such as by making medical and dental appointments outside of school hours
- use the school as a support when they or their child are having difficulties, and work to form a positive relationship with the school so that there is easy communication when a problem arises
- keep the school informed of any circumstances which may affect their child's attendance
- enforce a regular routine at home in terms of homework, bedtime, mobile devices etc. so that the child is used to consistency and the school day becomes part of that routine. It is vital that the child receives the same message at home as they do at school about the importance of attendance
- do not take their children out of school for holidays during term time. If parents would like to make a special request for this, they may do so to the Headteacher.

## Pupils

As part of our whole-school approach to maintaining high attendance, we request that pupils:

- be aware of the school's attendance policy and when and what they are required to attend. This will be communicated to them through school communications, staff, and their school timetable
- speak to their form tutor or another member of staff if they are experiencing difficulties at school or at home which may impact on their attendance
- attend all lessons ready to learn, with the appropriate learning tools requested and on time for the class. Lesson times will be made clear through their school timetable
- follow the correct set school procedure if they arrive late. Pupils are held responsible for this. This will help the school to monitor attendance and keep accurate records for the child's individual attendance and help the school safeguard its pupils.

