



# **St Peter's Methodist Primary School**

## Attendance and Punctuality Policy

Written: September 2013

Agreed at Pupil and Curriculum Committee: October 2013

Revised: November 2017

Reviewed by Pupil and Curriculum Committee: December 2017

Next Review Date: November 2020

This Policy has been written in consultation with Kent Attendance Service.

## **Statement of Intent**

St Peter's Methodist Primary School is committed to the continuous raising of achievement of all our pupils. Regular attendance is critical if our pupils are to be successful and benefit from the opportunities presented to them.

One of our basic principles is to celebrate success. Good attendance is fundamental to a successful and fulfilling school experience. We actively promote 100% attendance for all our pupils and we use a variety of weekly, termly and annual awards to promote good attendance and punctuality.

The Governors, Headteacher and Staff in partnership with parents have a duty to promote full attendance at St Peter's Methodist Primary School.

## **Parental Responsibility**

Parents have a legal duty to ensure that their child(ren) attend school regularly and arrive on time. Full attendance is essential to the all round development of the child and they should be allowed to take full advantage of educational opportunities available to them by law. Poor attendance undermines their education and sometimes, puts pupils at risk, encouraging anti-social behaviour.

**It is the parents' responsibility to contact the school every day their child is absent. This is a safeguarding issue requirement so that all parties know that your child is safe and their whereabouts is known. Parents should regularly update the school and inform the school when their child is returning.**

Pupils are expected to arrive by 8:45am and by 8:55am at the very latest. All pupils that arrive late must report, with their parent to the school office where the reason for lateness is recorded.

## **The Role of the School Staff**

At St Peter's Methodist Primary School, there is a whole school responsibility and approach for improving school attendance, with specific staff taking individual responsibility.

The Headteacher has overall responsibility for attendance and must be kept informed where a child's attendance is causing concern.

Class teachers complete a register at the beginning of each morning and afternoon session. Marking the attendance registers twice daily is a legal requirement. Teachers mark pupils present, absent or late. The class teacher, Family Liaison Officer (FLO) and Office Manager liaise regarding children whose attendance is causing concern.

It is the responsibility of the Office Manager to ensure:

- Attendance and lateness records are up to date
- If no reason for absence has been provided, parents are contacted on the first day of absence
- Where there has been no communication, letters are sent to parents requesting reasons for absence with a seven day reply deadline before the absence is unauthorised
- The appropriate attendance code is entered into the register (National Attendance Codes)
- Parents informed termly of child's attendance figure where the school have concerns.

### **Timeline of School Action for Low Attendance**

- 95 - 97% attendance - FLO to investigate.
- 90 - 95% attendance - FLO intervention letters/meeting with parents.
- Where the level of absence has not improved and there are unauthorised absences, the school will make a referral to the KCC Inclusion and Attendance Service using the Digital Front Door. If it is not clear a referral to the Service is appropriate, the school will consult with the Local Authority School Liaison Officer for advice.
- For the cases that require intensive family support, the school may make an Early Help Notification.

### **Children Missing Education**

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

Where a child is missing from education, Local Authority guidance will be followed, by completing a Child Missing Education referral for the following circumstances:-

- If the whereabouts of the child is unknown and the school has failed to locate him/her.
- The family has notified the school that they are leaving the area but no Common Transfer Form (pupil file) has been requested by another school.

### **Lateness**

At St Peter's Methodist Primary School the register is taken at 8:55am and 1:15. Pupils arriving after these times must enter school by the main entrance and report to reception where their name and reason for lateness will be recorded. The pupil will be marked as late before registration has closed (Code 'L').

The register will close at 9:25am and 1:45pm. Pupils arriving after the register has closed will be marked as late after registration (Code 'U') and this will count as an unauthorised absence.

Any child frequently arriving late will result in a meeting being held to discuss with parents the reasons and will result in unauthorised absences being recorded. This can provide grounds for prosecution or Penalty Notice. This may also result in referrals to the Education Welfare Officer (EWO).

### **Penalty Notice Proceedings for Lateness**

**Penalty Notices are issued in accordance with Kent County Council's Education Penalty Notices Code of Conduct effective from January 2016, as revised in April 2017, when:**

- 10 incidents of late arrival after the registers have closed during any possible 100 school sessions leads to a Penalty Notice Warning Letter.
- The Penalty Notice Warning Letter sets out 15 school days during which no unauthorised absence is to be recorded
- If unauthorised absence is recorded during the 15 day period, a Penalty Notice(s) will be issued (one per parent per child)
- Where a Penalty Notice is not paid within 28 days of issue the Local Authority will instigate court proceedings

### **Authorising Absence**

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

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

Absence (for example leave for holidays) during term time can only be approved in "exceptional circumstances". The following reasons are examples of absence that will not be authorised:

- Persistent nonspecific illness e.g. poorly/unwell
- Absence of siblings if one child is ill
- Oversleeping
- Inadequate clothing/uniform
- Confusion over school dates
- Medical/dental appointments of more than half a day without very good reasons
- Child's/family birthday
- Shopping trip
- Family Holidays (with some rare exceptions)

Persistent unauthorised absence (10% or more of the school year) may result in an AS1 referral to the Local Authority School Liaison Officer for consideration of prosecution. The school will follow procedures prior to referral and parents will be notified in writing.

When a referral is made, the child's Registration Certificate, copies of all letters sent to parents and minutes of any meetings **need to** be attached to the completed AS1 referral form with any other relevant information.

### **Local Authority Action may include:-**

- Attendance Improvement Meeting
- Home visits
- Liaison with other agencies
- Fast Track to Prosecution

### **Penalty Notices Proceedings for Poor Attendance**

**Penalty Notices are issued in accordance with Kent County Council's Education Penalty Notices Code of Conduct effective from January 2016 and revised in April 2017.**

- A Penalty Notice can only be issued in cases of absence for 10 or more half day sessions (5 school days) without authorisation during any 100 possible school sessions or period of 50 days of schooling – these do not need to be consecutive.
- A Penalty Notice can also be issued where an excluded child is found in a public place during school hours.
- After the appropriate request for a Penalty Notice is received, the KCC Inclusion and Attendance Service will issue a warning letter setting out 15 school days during which no unauthorised absence is to be recorded
- If unauthorised absence is recorded during the 15 day period a Penalty Notice will be issued (one per parent per child)

### **Exceptional circumstances could include:**

- Service personnel returning from a tour of duty abroad where it is evidenced the parent will not be in receipt of any leave in the near future that coincides with school holidays.
- Where an absence from school is recommended by a health professional as part of a parent's or child's rehabilitation from a medical or emotional issue.
- The death or terminal illness of a person close to the family.
- To attend a wedding or funeral of a person close to the family.
- Any strong personal reasons why a family might need to take a child away from school for a short break.

Any examples provided are illustrative rather than exhaustive. It is acceptable to take a pupil's previous record of attendance into account when the school is making decisions. The fundamental principles for defining 'exceptional' are rare, significant, unavoidable and short. And by 'unavoidable' it implies that an event could not reasonably be scheduled at another time. It is important to note that Headteachers can agree the absence of a child in exceptional circumstances and this discretion can be used also to determine the length of the authorised absence.

Where Penalty Notices are imposed, the regulations state that the penalty will be £120 to be paid within 28 days, reduced to £60 if paid within 21 days. Penalty Notices are issued to each parent of each child. Failure to pay the penalty in full by the end of the 28 day period will result in prosecution by the Local Authority.

Section 444 of the Education Act 1996 says that parents are **guilty** of an offence of failing to secure regular attendance at school unless they can prove that the child was absent:

- with leave (the school has given permission)
- due to sickness or any unavoidable cause (the sickness or unavoidable cause must relate to the child, not the parent)
- religious observance
- failure by the Local Authority to provide transport

In law, these are the only acceptable reasons for a child being absent from school.

The Headteacher may authorise absence in “exceptional circumstances” but this must be requested in advance and agreement to each request is at the discretion of the Headteacher, acting on behalf of the Governing Body (Education (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2006). Each case will be judged on its merits and the Headteacher’s decision is final. Once the decision not to authorise leave is taken, it cannot be authorised retrospectively.

If the absence is not authorised and the holiday is taken anyway, the case may be referred to the Inclusion and Attendance Service who may issue a Penalty Notice to each parent for each child taken out of school.

Failure to pay the penalty in full by the end of the 28 day period will result in prosecution by the Local Authority.

## **Attendance and Lateness**

If a new pupil has a history of poor attendance at their previous school, there will be a pre-start attendance meeting held with a member of the SLT and the FLO. The school has a 'five-step' approach to monitoring absence and lateness. It will not always be appropriate to progress through all of these steps or even to carry them out in the order listed. Responsible staff will use discretion and discuss each case carefully.

### **'Five Steps'**

1. Where there has been no contact from parents, first day calling for all pupils and FLO / SLT visits as appropriate.
2. Discussion with SLO or Attendance Service Duty Staff to identify pupils with attendance below 90%, monitoring trends in pupil attendance and lateness, allocation of FLO support.
3. Invitation to meet with school staff
4. Initiate a referral to Early Help
5. Referral to Attendance Service

Reasons for absence are recorded and retained by the school. When a referral to the Attendance Service is made, the child's Registration Certificate, copies of all letters sent to parents and minutes of any meetings MUST be attached to the completed AS1 referral form with any other relevant information.

### **Local Authority Action**

Where there is no improvement in a pupil's attendance and/or there is at least 10 sessions (5 days) absence in a term the school will consider the following:

### **Leave of Absence/Holiday**

As from 1<sup>st</sup> September 2013, amendments to the 2006 regulations remove references to family holiday and extended leave as well as the statutory threshold of ten school days. The amendments make clear that headteachers may not grant any leave of absence during term time unless there are exceptional circumstances. Headteachers should determine the number of school days a child can be away from school if the leave is granted.

Applications for Leave of Absence MUST be made at least 4 weeks in advance of the requested date in writing to the Headteacher.

Agreement to any request for exceptional leave is at the discretion of the Headteacher, acting on behalf of the Governing Body (Education (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2006). The Headteacher's decision is final and once the decision to not authorise the leave is taken, it cannot be authorised retrospectively.

If the absence is not authorised and the leave is taken anyway, the case will be referred to the Attendance Service who will issue a Penalty Notice for £120 (or £60 if paid within 28 days) to each parent for each child taken out of school.

Schools in the EduCant collaboration will consider exceptional leave for the following reasons. There is no automatic right that these will be authorised. Each case will be considered individually.

- Bereavement
- Weddings/Civil Partnerships-1 day only
- Medical appointments-not routine, proof of appointment will be required
- Religious observance
- Auditions and performing arts, music examinations etc.

### **Penalty Notice Proceedings for Unauthorised Holiday/Leave Absence**

- Penalty Notices are issued in accordance with the Attendance Service Code of Conduct.
- AS receives a request for an unauthorised holiday of 10 or more school sessions (5 days)
- AS issue Penalty Notice(s) (one per parent per child)
- If Penalty Notice(s) is/are not paid within 42 days of issue, AS may instigate court proceedings



**Appendix 1 Late letter (Code L)**

**Appendix 2 Late letter (Code U)**

**Appendix 3 Absence Letter**

**Appendix 4 School Attendance Meeting Letter**

**Appendix 5 School Letter Warning re: Penalty Notice Referral**

**Appendix 6 Unauthorised absence confirmation of PN request**

**Appendix 7a Response to Leave Request (Not Authorising)**

**Appendix 7b Response to Leave Request submitted retrospectively (Not Authorising)**

**Appendix 8 Unauthorised leave confirmation of PN request**

**Appendix 9 School letter where they believe a holiday was taken**

**Appendix 10 Traveller Attendance letter**

**Appendix 11 Traveller Absence due to travelling**

**Appendix 12 School Referral Pathway**

## Appendix 1

«addressee»

«address\_block»

«date\_of\_printing»

Dear «salutation»

**Re «forename» «surname»**

I am writing to express my concern over the number of occasions that «forename» has been arriving late at school. Below for your information is a summary of attendance indicating the days «forename» was late (Code L):

«dates\_of\_lates\_before»

Total lates before registration closed: «total\_lates\_before» half day sessions

At our school the register is taken at ?? am and at ?? pm.

A pupil's lateness will seriously disrupt their learning and can be embarrassing for your child.

I am sure you share my concern and would wish to work with the school to improve punctuality. If we can help in any way, perhaps via our School Nurse or Family Liaison Officer, please do not hesitate to contact us.

Yours sincerely

Headteacher

## Appendix 2

«addressee»

«address\_block»

«date\_of\_printing»

Dear «salutation»

**Re «forename» «surname»**

I am writing to express my concern over the number of occasions that «forename» has arrived after the register has been closed. Below for your information is a summary of attendance indicating the days «forename» was late (Code U):

«dates\_of\_lates\_after»

Total lates after registration closed: «total\_lates\_after» half day sessions

At our school the register is taken at ?? am and is closed at ?? am for the morning session and taken again at ?? pm and closed at ?? pm for the afternoon session. Pupils arriving after the register has closed will be marked 'U' which records the absence as unauthorised for that session.

Arriving after the register has closed is seriously disrupting your child's learning and is impacting on their overall attendance.

Persistent late arrival may lead to a referral for a Penalty Notice or a referral to the Local Authority School Liaison Officer for further action and possible prosecution.

If «forename» continues to arrive late after the register has closed we will contact you to arrange a meeting at the school.

Yours sincerely

Head Teacher

### Appendix 3

«addressee»

«address\_block»

«date\_of\_printing»

Dear «salutation»

**Re «forename» «surname»**

I am writing to express my concern over the number of occasions that «forename» has been absent from school. I attach for your information a summary of attendance indicating the days «forename» was absent.

A pupil's absence can seriously disrupt their learning, not only do they miss out on teaching while they are away but they are less prepared for future lessons when they return.

I am sure you share my concern and would wish to work with the school to improve «forename»'s attendance. If we can help in any way, perhaps via our School Nurse or Family Liaison Officer, please do not hesitate to contact us.

Yours sincerely

Head Teacher

## Appendix 4

«addressee»  
«address\_block»

«date\_of\_printing»

Dear «salutation»

**Re: «forename» «surname»**

Despite previous warnings, I note with concern that your child's attendance at school has made no significant improvement. «forename»'s attendance at school is currently «percentage\_attendance»% which means «he\_she» has missed «total\_authorised\_absences» half day sessions for authorised absence and «total\_unauthorised\_absences» half day sessions for unauthorised absence. This will have an impact on your child's education which we cannot ignore.

As there has been no improvement in «forename»'s attendance, I must advise you that further absences from school as a result of illness may require medical evidence (e.g. copy of a prescription, Doctors/Dentist appointment card). If medical evidence is not provided when required, further absences will be marked as unauthorised.

I am inviting you to attend a School Attendance Meeting. The time and date have been set for ?? at ?? It is important that you and «forename» attend this meeting for us to explore the issues around poor attendance. The meeting will be attended by:

??

If this appointment is inconvenient, I would be grateful if you could contact me so that an alternative time can be arranged.

If you do not attend this meeting and «forename»'s absence continues to deteriorate, a referral may be made to the Local Authority School Liaison Officer for further action and possible prosecution.

Thank you for your co-operation.

Yours sincerely

Head Teacher  
The School

## Appendix 5

«addressee»

«address\_block»

«date\_of\_printing»

Dear «salutation»

Re «forename» «surname»

At our school we consider attendance of utmost importance and I am therefore bringing this information to your attention.

Our monitoring process has shown that «forename» has been absent from school for a total of «total\_unauthorised\_absences» unauthorised half day sessions. I refer you to legislation regarding Penalty Notices.

*‘As from 2005, Kent Local Authority (LA) introduced Penalty Notices for unauthorised absence from school of at least 10 sessions (5 days) during any 100 possible school sessions.’* A separate Penalty Notice can be issued to each parent and for each child.

*On receipt of the Notice, the penalty will be £120, reduced to £60 if paid within 21 days. Failure to pay the penalty in full at the end of the 28 day period may result in prosecution by the LA.*

Please note this is a warning letter that a Penalty Notice could be requested if a total of 10 unauthorised sessions (5 days) are reached.

Should you wish to discuss this matter further please do not hesitate to contact me.

If further unauthorised absence occurs you will be contacted and invited in for a meeting at the school.

Yours sincerely

Head Teacher

## Appendix 6

«addressee»

«address\_block»

«date\_of\_printing»

Dear «salutation»

**Re «forename» «surname»**

With reference to our letter dated ??, «forename» has now reached a total of «total\_unauthorised\_absences» half day sessions of unauthorised absence. As a result we will now be requesting a Penalty Notice from the Local Authority.

A separate Penalty Notice can be issued to each parent and for each child.

Yours sincerely

Head Teacher

## Appendix 7a

«addressee»

«address\_block»

«date\_of\_printing»

Dear «salutation»

### **Request for leave during Term-Time**

**For the attention of the parents of «forename» «surname»**

I have received your request to take «forename» out of school for a family holiday between ??date and ??date, a total of ??Number of school sessions.

From September 2013 the Department for Education has amended the Education (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2006 removing the Head Teacher's ability to authorise leave of absence for a family holiday. Requests for holidays in term-time will not be authorised as the Regulations only allow me to authorise absence (leave) in "exceptional circumstances".

The School's Attendance Policy confirms that:

- agreement to each request is at my discretion, acting on behalf of the Governing Body
- each case will be judged on its merits
- my decision is final
- leave cannot be authorised retrospectively

I have considered your request but I am writing to confirm that on this occasion the leave will not be authorised. If you decide to take «forename» out of school I will be making a request for a Penalty Notice to be issued.

Penalty Notices are issued to each parent of each child and the amount of the penalty will be £120 to be paid within 28 days, reduced to £60 if paid within 21 days. Failure to pay the penalty in full at the end of the 28 day period may result in prosecution by the Attendance Service.

Yours sincerely

Head Teacher



## Appendix 7b

«addressee»

«address\_block»

«date\_of\_printing»

Dear «salutation»

### **Request for leave during Term-Time**

**For the attention of the parents of «forename» «surname»**

You failed to apply in advance for permission for «forename» to be absent from school.

From September 2013 the Department for Education has amended the Education (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2006 removing the Head Teacher's ability to authorise leave of absence for a family holiday. Requests for holidays in term-time will not be authorised as the Regulations only allow me to authorise absence (leave) in "exceptional circumstances".

The School's Attendance Policy confirms that:

- agreement to each request is at my discretion, acting on behalf of the Governing Body
- each case will be judged on its merits
- my decision is final
- leave cannot be authorised retrospectively

As stated above, I am unable to authorise leave retrospectively and I will be making a request for a Penalty Notice to be issued.

Penalty Notices are issued to each parent of each child and the amount of the penalty will be £120 to be paid within 28 days, reduced to £60 if paid within 21 days. Failure to pay the penalty in full at the end of the 28 day period may result in prosecution by the Attendance Service.

Yours sincerely

Headteacher

## Appendix 8

«addressee»

«address\_block»

«date\_of\_printing»

Dear «salutation»

**Name: «forename» «surname» DOB: «date\_of\_birth»**

With reference to our letter dated **??date**, the leave of absence taken between **??date** and **??date** has now been recorded as Unauthorised Absence and as a result a Penalty Notice has been requested.

A separate Penalty Notice can be issued to each parent and for each child.

Yours sincerely

Headteacher

## Appendix 9

«addressee»

«address\_block»

«date\_of\_printing»

Dear «salutation»

**Re «forename» «surname»**

You failed to apply in advance for permission for «forename» to be absent from school.

From September 2013 the Department for Education has amended the Education (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2006 removing the Head Teacher's ability to authorise leave of absence, except in exceptional circumstances. ***(State why you are treating this absence as a family holiday and/or why there are no exceptional circumstances)***

Requests for holidays in term-time will not be authorised as the Regulations only allow me to authorise absence (leave) in "exceptional circumstances".

I am unable to authorise leave retrospectively therefore this absence will be recorded as unauthorised absence, where a child has 10 unauthorised sessions within 100 school session a Penalty Notice may be issued.

The Penalty Notice gives you the opportunity to pay a penalty instead of being prosecuted for failing to secure your child's regular attendance at school. The amount of the penalty is £120 per parent, per child, but if payment is made by you within 21 days of receipt of this Notice it will be £60 per parent, per child. If you pay this penalty within the time limits, no further action will be taken against you in connection with the offence, i.e. your liability for the offence will be discharged.

Yours sincerely

Head Teacher

## Appendix 10

«addressee»  
«address\_block»

«date\_of\_printing»

Dear «salutation»

### **Traveller Absence** **«forename» «surname»**

I am writing to say how concerned I am over the number of times «forename» has been absent from school. This academic year «forename» has missed «total\_authorized\_absences» authorised half day sessions and «total\_unauthorised\_absences» unauthorised half day sessions achieving an overall attendance rate of «percentage\_attendance»%.

Traveller children have to attend school for 380 sessions (190 days) each year, which is the same for all children and you are at risk of being referred to the Local Authority School Liaison Officer if «forename»'s attendance falls below 90%. I am unable to authorise any absence during term time unless there are exceptional circumstances or if you will be travelling for occupational purposes and agree this with the school in advance.

If you would like to speak to me about «forename»'s attendance, please telephone the school to make an appointment.

Yours sincerely

Head Teacher

## Appendix 11

«addressee»

«address\_block»

«date\_of\_printing»

Dear «salutation»

### **Traveller Absence**

**«forename» «surname»**

Thank you for contacting me to say that «forename» will be absent from school from **??Date** as you will be travelling due to your work.

The law allows me to authorise «forename»'s absence if your trade or business means that you have to travel from place to place. However, you have not let me know when «forename» is likely to return to school. Unless you contact me during the next 10 school days to confirm a date, I will refer «forename» to the Local Authority as a Child Missing Education.

After 20 days absence, there may be grounds to take «forename»'s name off the school roll and you will have to re-apply for a school place when you return.

Yours sincerely

Head Teacher

## Appendix 12

### Kent School Referral Pathway – Pupil Attendance

