



# **SCHOOLS' ATTENDANCE POLICY**

**January 2025**

**APPROVED POLICY**

POLICY TITLE:	Schools' Attendance
LEAD OFFICER:	Headteachers
DATE APPROVED:	PAB 20/02.2025
DATE FOR NEXT REVIEW:	20/02.2026
APPROVED BY:	ESE PAB
ADDITIONAL GUIDANCE:	Attendance guidance
TEAMS AFFECTED:	Primary and Secondary Schools
THIS POLICY REPLACES WITH IMMEDIATE EFFECT:	N/A

### DOCUMENT PROCESS

STATE IF NEW POLICY OR AN UPDATE OF EXISTING POLICY (TITLE OF POLICY)	Update of existing Policy
VERSION NUMBER	1
NEXT STEPS – ACTION TO BE TAKEN AND BY WHOM	
Position	Process
Position	Process
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Position	Process

# 1. Aims

This policy aims to show our commitment to meeting our obligations with regards to school attendance, through our whole-school culture and ethos that values good attendance, including:

- Setting high expectations for the attendance and punctuality of all pupils
- Promoting good attendance and the benefits of good attendance
- Reducing absence, including persistent and severe absence
- Ensuring every pupil has access to the full-time education to which they are entitled
- Acting early to address patterns of absence
- Building strong relationships with families to make sure pupils have the support in place to attend school

We will also promote and support punctuality in attending lessons.

## 2. Guidance

This policy is based on the St Helena Ordinance 2008 and with reference to the UK's Keeping Children Safe in Education guidance around attendance.

- [Keeping Children Safe in Education](#)
- [Mental health issues affecting a pupil's attendance: guidance for schools](#)

Under Section 38 of the St Helena Education Ordinance 2008, parents are responsible for making sure that their children of compulsory school age receive full time education. Parents have a legal responsibility to ensure their child's regular attendance at school.

If a child of compulsory school age fails to attend regularly at school then the parent is guilty of an offence under Section 38 of the Education Ordinance 2008.

## 3. Roles and responsibilities

### 3.1 Education Skills & Employment

The ESE is responsible for:

- Setting high expectations of all school leaders, staff, pupils and parents
- Making sure school leaders fulfil expectations and statutory duties, including:
  - Making sure the school records attendance accurately in the register, and shares the required information with the ESE Portfolio and relevant SHG services
  - Making sure the school works to help remove barriers to attendance, and keeps tParents, guardians and relevant SHG services informed regarding specific pupils, where appropriate
- Recognising and promoting the importance of school attendance across the school's policies and ethos
- Making sure the school's attendance management processes are delivered effectively, and that consistent support is provided for pupils who need it most by prioritising staff and resources

- Making sure the school has high aspirations for all pupils, but adapts processes and support to pupils' individual needs
- Regularly reviewing and challenging attendance data and helping school leaders focus improvement efforts on individual pupils or cohorts who need it most
- Working with school leaders to set goals or areas of focus for attendance and providing support and challenge
- Monitoring attendance figures for the whole school and repeatedly evaluating the effectiveness of the school's processes and improvement efforts to make sure they are meeting pupils needs
- Where the school is struggling with attendance, working with school leaders to develop a comprehensive action plan to improve attendance
- Making sure all staff receive adequate training on attendance as part of the regular continued professional development offer, so that staff understand:
  - The importance of good attendance
  - That absence is almost always a symptom of wider issues
  - The school's legal requirements for keeping registers
  - The school's strategies and procedures for tracking, following up on and improving attendance, including working with partners and keeping them informed regarding specific pupils, where appropriate
- Making sure dedicated training is provided to staff with a specific attendance function in their role, including in interpreting and analysing attendance data

### 3.2 The Headteacher

The Headteacher is responsible for:

- The implementation of this policy at the school
- Monitoring school level absence data and reporting it to ESE via SIMS
- Supporting staff with monitoring the attendance of individual pupils
- Monitoring the impact of any implemented attendance strategies
- Working with the parents of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) to develop specific support approaches for attendance for pupils with SEND, including where school transport is regularly being missed, and where pupils with SEND face in-school barriers
- Communicating with ESE when a pupil with an education, health and care (EHC) plan has falling attendance, or where there are barriers to attendance that relate to the pupil's needs
- Communicating the school's high expectations for attendance and punctuality regularly to pupils and parents and guardians through all available channels

### 3.3 The Deputy Headteacher

The Deputy Headteacher supports the Headteacher by:

- Championing and improving attendance across the school
- Building close and productive relationships with parents to discuss and tackle attendance issue
- The Secondary School Deputy Headteacher Student Services is responsible for:
  - Leading, championing and improving attendance across the secondary school.
  - Setting a clear vision for improving and maintaining good attendance.
  - Evaluating and monitoring expectations and processes
  - Having a strong grasp of attendance data and oversight of absence data analysis
  - Establishing and maintaining effective systems for tackling absence, and making sure they are followed by all staff.

- Liaising with pupils, parents/carers and external agencies when needed.
- Building close and productive relationships with parents to discuss and tackle attendance issues
- Creating intervention or reintegration plan in partnership with pupils and their parents/ carers.
- Delivering targeted intervention and support to pupils and families.

### 3.4 Class teachers

Class teachers are responsible for recording all attendance, using the correct codes (see Appendix 1).

- Be a good role model for students
- Give attendance a high profile:
- Praise students for high levels of attendance
- Celebrate pupils who achieve 94% attendance over a half term.
- Be positive and proactive in encouraging those with low attendance
- Take prompt action where students are late or absent without explanation
- Keep an accurate register
- Inform the Primary Headteacher / the Secondary School Deputy Headteacher Student Services when absence is causing concern

### 3.6 School office staff

School secretary will

- Take calls from parents/carers about absence on a day-to-day basis and record it on the school system
- Transfer calls from parents/carers to student services where appropriate, in order to provide them with more detailed support on attendance
- Track attendance and inform the Headteacher of areas of concern.

### 3.7 Parents

Where this policy refers to a parent, it refers to the adult the school decides is most appropriate to work with, including:

- All natural parents, whether they are married or not
- All those who have parental responsibility for a child or young person
- Those who have day-to-day responsibility for the child (i.e. lives with and looks after them)

Parents are expected to:

- Make sure their child attends every day / timetabled session on time
- Call the school to report their child's absence before time, e.g. 8.45am on the day of the absence and each subsequent day of absence), and advise when they are expected to return
- Provide the school with more than 1 emergency contact number for their child
- Ensure that, where possible, appointments for their child are made outside of the school day
- Keep to any attendance plans that they make with the school and or ESE
- Seek support, where necessary, for maintaining good attendance, by contacting the

school.

### **3.8 Pupils**

Pupils are expected to:

- Attend school every day, on time
- Attend every timetabled session, on time

## **4. Recording attendance**

### **4.1 Attendance register**

We will keep an electronic attendance register, and place all pupils onto this register.

We will take our attendance register at the start of the school day and immediately after lunch break. It will mark, using the appropriate national attendance and absence codes from the School Attendance (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2024, 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 attendance codes.

We will also record:

- Whether the absence is authorised or not
- The nature of the activity, where a pupil is attending an approved educational activity.
- The nature of circumstances, where a pupil is unable to attend due to exceptional circumstances

We will keep every entry on the attendance register for 6 years after the date on which the entry was made.

### **4.2 Unplanned absence**

The pupil's parent must notify the school of the reason for the absence on the first day of an unplanned absence by 8.45, or as soon as practically possible, by calling the school office staff.

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

Where the absence is longer than 3 days, or there are doubts about the authenticity of the illness, the school will ask for 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.

### **4.3 Planned absence**

Attending a medical or dental appointment will be counted as authorised as long as the pupil's parent notifies the school in advance of the appointment.

However, 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.

The pupil's parent must also apply for other types of term-time absence as far in advance as possible of the requested absence. Go to section 5 to find out which term-time absences the school can authorise.

### **4.4 Lateness and punctuality**

A pupil who arrives late:

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

### **4.5 Following up unexplained absence**

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

- Call the pupil's parent on the morning of the first day of unexplained absence to ascertain the reason. If the school cannot reach any of the pupil's emergency contacts, the Headteacher may contact Children Services.
- Identify whether the absence is approved or not
- Identify the correct attendance code to use and input it as soon as the reason for absence is ascertained – this will be no later than 3 working days after the session(s) for which the pupil was absent
- Call the parent on each day that the absence continues without explanation, to make sure proper safeguarding action is taken where necessary. If absence continues, the school will consider involving the Assistant Director of Schools.
- Where appropriate, offer support to the pupil and/or their parents to improve attendance
- Identify whether the pupil needs support from wider partners, as quickly as possible, and make the necessary referrals

### **4.6 Reporting to parents**

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

## **5. Authorised and unauthorised absence**

### **5.1 Approval for term-time absence**

The Headteacher will allow pupils to be absent from the school site for certain educational activities, or to attend other schools or settings.

The Headteacher will only grant a **leave of absence** to a pupil during term time if the request meets the specific circumstances. These circumstances are:

- Taking part in a regulated performance e.g. Island Games / Island Teams, on regulated employment abroad or medical referrals abroad (normally approved when there is no responsible adult to look after the child / young person)
- Attend an interview
- Study leave
- A temporary, time-limited part-time timetable
- Exceptional circumstances

A leave of absence is granted at the headteacher's discretion, including the length of time the pupil is authorised to be absent for.

The school considers each application for term-time absence individually, taking into account the facts, circumstances and relevant background context behind the request.

Any request for term-time absence should be submitted as soon as it is anticipated.

Other valid reasons for **authorised absence** include (but are not limited to):

- Illness (including mental-health illness) and medical/dental appointments (see sections 4.2 and 4.3 for more detail)
- Religious observance – where the day is exclusively set apart for religious observance by the religious body to which the pupil's parent(s) belong(s). If necessary, the school will seek advice from the parent's religious body to confirm whether the day is set apart
- If the pupil is currently suspended from school (and no alternative provision has been made)

Other reasons the school may allow a pupil to be absent from the school site, which are not classified as absences, include (but are not limited to):

- Attending an offsite approved educational activity, sporting activity or visit or trip arranged by the school
- Attending work experience
- If there is any other unavailable cause for the pupil not to attend school, such as disruption to travel caused by an emergency, a lack of access arrangements, or because the school premises are closed.

## 5.2 Approaches

Our school will make use of the full range of potential approaches– including, but not limited to, those listed below – to tackle poor attendance. Decisions will be made on an individual, case-by-case basis.

- Attendance falls below the school target of 94% - Class Teacher / Form Teacher to speak to student and / or parent regarding the importance of attendance and work together to improve attendance.
- Attendance falls below 90% - Headteacher or delegated member of staff works with the family

- Attendance falls below 85% - Headteacher or delegated member of staff to work with student, family and external agencies to improve attendance. A referral may be made at this point.
- Attendance continues to fall below 75% – Headteacher or delegated member of staff to report to ESE

## 6 Attendance Monitoring

### 6.1 Monitoring attendance

The school will monitor attendance and absence data (including punctuality) half-termly, termly and yearly across the school and at an individual pupil, year group and cohort level.

Specific pupil information will be shared with the ESE on request.

### 6.2 Analysing attendance

The school will:

- Analyse attendance and absence data regularly to identify pupils, groups or cohorts that need additional support with their attendance, and
- Identify pupils whose absences may be a cause for concern, especially those who demonstrate patterns of persistent or severe absence
- Conduct thorough analysis of half-termly, termly, and full-year data to identify patterns and trends
- Look at historic and emerging patterns of attendance and absence, and then develop strategies to address these patterns

### 6.3 Using data to improve attendance

The school will:

- Develop targeted actions to address patterns of absence (of all severities) of individual pupils, groups or cohorts that it has identified via data analysis
- Provide targeted support to the pupils it has identified whose absences may be a cause for concern, especially those who demonstrate patterns of persistent or severed absence, and their families
- Provide regular attendance reports to class teachers form tutors, to facilitate discussions with pupils and families and school leaders (including special educational needs co-ordinators, designated safeguarding leads and pupil premium leads)
- Use data to monitor and evaluate the impact of any interventions put in place in order to modify them and inform future strategies
- Provide regular attendance reports to facilitate discussion with pupils and families and relevant professionals if required.

### 6.4 Reducing persistent and severe absence

Persistent absence is where a pupil misses 10% or more of school, and severe absence is where a pupil misses 50% or more of school. Reducing persistent and severe absence is central to the school's strategy for improving attendance.

The school will:

- Use attendance data to find patterns and trends of persistent and severe absence
- Consider potential safeguarding issues and, where suspected or present, address them in line with Keeping Children Safe in Education
- Hold regular meetings with the parents of pupils who the school considers to be vulnerable or at risk of persistent or severe absence, or who are persistently or severely absent, to:
  - Discuss attendance and engagement at school
  - Listen, and understand barriers to attendance
  - Explain the help that is available
  - Explain the potential consequences of, and sanctions for, persistent and severe absence
  - Review any existing actions or interventions

Provide access to wider support services to remove the barriers to attendance, in conjunction with SHG services.

Consider alternative support that could be put in place to remove any barriers to attendance and re-engage these pupils. In doing so, the school will sensitively consider some of the reasons for absence.

## **7. Monitoring arrangements**

This policy will be reviewed as guidance from ESE, and as a minimum once per year. At every review, the policy will be approved by the Portfolio Advisory Board.

## Appendix 1: attendance codes

Code	Definition
/	Present (AM)
\	Present (PM)
B	Education off site
C	Sick & covered with a Doctor's certificate
D	Place in another lesson
E	Excluded
G	Extended form session / activities
H	Annual family holiday (agreed)
I	Place in the isolation room
L	Late (before reg closed)
M	Medical / dental
N	No reason yet provided for absence
O	Unauthorised circumstances
P	Permission granted by Headteacher / SLT
R	School Closure
S	Study Leave
T	Sick and covered with a telephone message
V	Exam
W	Work experience
X	Non-compulsory school age absence
Y	Unable to attend due to exceptional circumstances