

Little Stoke Primary School



Attendance Policy

Review Details

Date reviewed	September 2023
Next review due	September 2025
Document location	Teachers Shared Drive - Policies

Signed	Dan Ross	Mick Kew	Key changes
			Updates in light of DfE 2022 guidance and EEF evidence. Section 4 updated to include current strategies used to support good attendance.

1. Rationale

Regular attendance and excellent punctuality are the foundations for academic achievement and personal development. They establish a responsible attitude towards the opportunities available at school and underpin the basis for the world of work. Attendance and punctuality are strongly linked to students' achievement, attainment, well-being and safety. The processes and procedures at Little Stoke Primary school are based upon recent educational research and documents: Attendance Interventions: Rapid Evidence Assessment (Education Endowment Foundation, March 2022) and Working together to improve school attendance (Department for Education, May 2022). In this document, the DfE state that 'pupils with the highest attainment at the end of key stage 2 and key stage 4 have higher rates of attendance over the key stage compared to those with the lowest attainment.'

2. Guiding Principles

We are committed to ensuring that all students benefit from the opportunities available at Little Stoke Primary School. Our expectation is that students arrive on time and attend regularly; we will actively promote this ethos throughout the school community and encourage our students to achieve this. Where this expectation is not met we will identify and address the barriers that prevent this. At Little Stoke Primary School **excellent regular attendance is considered to be 98%** or higher.

We will set a minimum attendance target for the school community each academic year (currently 96%) as we work with families to reduce absence and raise attendance.

3. Responsibilities

The Education Act 1996 states that **parents/carers** have the primary responsibility for ensuring that registered pupils of school age attend school regularly and punctually and that they receive an education suitable for their aptitude and ability. Where this is not the case school will provide ongoing support as needed or may, in some cases, request Penalty Notices or legal proceeding in conjunction with the Local Authority.

The school have a legal responsibility for maintaining school registers and taking the register twice a day. The school also has a responsibility for reporting absence to the Local Authority. We also have safeguarding responsibility and duty of care to all our students.

Pupil responsibilities – we encourage our pupils to become independent young people as they grow older and encourage them to improve their attendance and punctuality.

4. Supporting Good or Better Attendance

Recent research suggests that the best way to support good attendance is through a range of approaches, from the individual to broad approach (EEF: Attendance Interventions: Rapid Evidence Assessment March 2022, DfE: Working together to improve school attendance Guidance for maintained schools, academies, independent schools, and local authorities Published: May 2022). At Little Stoke, we endeavour to use a range of approaches and strategies to support good attendance including:

- We will share attendance levels with classes during assemblies focusing on the link between attendance, achievement and enjoyment of learning. Classes will be rewarded weekly, as a whole, for achieving our target of at least 96%.
- We will promote the importance of high attendance and punctuality through assemblies, displays and class discussions, always reinforcing the link between attendance, achievement and enjoyment of learning.
- The school will communicate attendance matters to parents via text; telephone; email; the Arbor App; letter and through the school website.
- We will talk to pupils about their attendance as they move through the school and discuss reasons for any late arrivals with both pupils and parents.
- Through the Arbor App, parents will have access to 'real time' attendance data for their child.
- We will provide personalised support on an individual family/child basis. This will include, but is not limited to; free Bridge breakfast club to support with transition into school in the morning; adjusted start times to miss the busy period in the morning; home/school timetable support for parents and referrals to other agencies for support implementing routines at home.

5. Absence from school

There are only two categories of absence from school:

Authorised – approved

Unauthorised – not approved

Only the Headteacher or Deputy Head (as delegate) can approve an absence from school. That is the law.

Absence will be recorded using the code recommended by the Department for Education Guidance on School Attendance.

Authorised (approved) absence – types of authorised absence that may be approved:-

- Leave of absence – requests must be put in writing to the Head Teacher via e-mail and will be considered on a case by case basis. The school does not provide forms for completion in these circumstances.
- Medical absence for appointments – at Hospital or Orthodontic appointments. (Non urgent, routine check-up appointments should be made for after 3.30pm or during the 12 weeks of school holidays over the year.) Students are expected to be absent for the minimal amount of time and not absent for the whole day.
- Illness – Parents can use the NHS toolkit if they are unsure about whether their child is well enough to attend school: <https://www.nhs.uk/live-well/is-my-child-too-ill-for-school/>.

Parents/carers to contact office via phone/e-mail on each day of absence. If your child is absent due to illness for a sustained period of 4 or more days during term time, medical evidence should be provided in order that this absence be authorised (appointment letters, doctor note etc.)

- Religious observance – the Head Teacher must be informed of this in advance.
- If a student is excluded from school for a behaviour related incident, this is an authorised absence.

Unauthorised (not approved) absence – types of absence that will not be approved

- Absence due to birthday, shopping for uniform, looking after family members.
- Holiday in term time unless there are exceptional circumstances agreed to by the Headteacher – in line with changes to the law implemented in 2013.
- Late arrival to school after the register has closed at 9.15 am has to be recorded as an unauthorised absence.
- Sustained period of illness (4 or more days) without medical evidence.

This is not an exhaustive list but just gives examples of unauthorised absences. Only the Head Teacher or Deputy Head Teacher (as delegate) can authorise an absence from school. That is the law. All absence – authorised and unauthorised (including lateness) – will be analysed and subject to challenge to ensure that any concern regarding frequency, pattern or validity is acted upon swiftly.

Parents/Carers are expected to contact the school on the first day of absence (01454866522) and each day thereafter informing the school of the reason for absence and the expected date of return to school.

6. How our policy works in practice

Punctuality

- Pupils who arrive late to registration after 8.55am are recorded as L (late before registration closes.) Frequent late arrival will be challenged by the attendance team and letters sent to parents. Persistent late arrival will result in parents and pupils being asked to attend a meeting with the Education Welfare Consultancy.
- If a pupil arrives after the register has closed at 9.15am, this is recorded as U (unauthorised late arrival.) More than ten unauthorised sessions over a 7 week period can result in a Penalty Notice being issued by the Local Authority.
- We will at times operate a late arrivals/check at school with the Education Welfare Consultant. Parents will be challenged about the reason for the late arrival of their children, this is followed up with a daily telephone call to parents whenever possible.

Medical appointments

- We monitor the amount of lessons missed due to medical appointments carefully.
- We acknowledge that hospital and specialist clinic appointments, including orthodontic and on-going dental treatment may require a student having time out of school. Our expectation is that the minimum amount of learning is lost. We will seek an explanation from parents where a whole day is missed for this reason. Proof of unavoidable medical appointments in school time must be provided for the school.
- Routine, non-urgent appointments must be made after 3.30pm and during the 12 weeks of school holiday during the year.

Illness

- Pupils are likely to experience bouts of illness from time to time. Some pupils will be managing chronic or more serious medical conditions that impact on their attendance. We will support pupils in these circumstances to ensure they do not miss out on their education.
- When a pupil is identified as having frequent absence for reasons of minor illness, or a more serious longer term illness, a meeting will be arranged to discuss this with the Deputy Head teacher and provide any support required.
- When absence for pupils has been high due to illness we will also ask for evidence to show medical advice has been sought.

Holiday absence in term time

- If a parent feels there are exceptional circumstances that support a request for leave of absence in term time; they must put the request in writing to the Head Teacher. The Head teacher or Deputy Head Teacher will respond to these requests.
- Each case will be considered individually and the decision communicated to the parents. Governors have adopted a zero tolerance to absence in term time for holidays and agreed that where parents ignore the policy, cases will be referred to the Local Authority for the issuing of a Penalty Notice. Any pupil who does not meet 'excellent regular attendance' expectations (98%+) and has more than 10 unauthorised absences in any 7 week period may be subject to a Penalty Notice.(see Appendix 2.)
- Absence either side of the holiday will be included as unauthorised holiday and will count towards the 10 unauthorised absence in 7 weeks.

Children missing education

- We have a duty to inform the Local Authority of any pupil who is on the school roll, not in attendance and whose whereabouts we have not been able to establish. This particularly applies to students who move to another authority or country but are not yet in education but may also apply to pupils whose parents have not contacted us to explain why their child is not in school.

See Children Missing Education Policy

Home education

- Parents have a right to educate their children other than at school. If a parent wishes to withdraw their child from school to pursue this option, this decision must be put in writing to the Headteacher. The school will then complete a form with the students' details and send to the Local Authority.

7. Procedure

Concerns about absence from school and the likely impact on a pupils' progress will be communicated to both pupils and parents through our attendance procedures. Please see Appendix I.

Daily

- ✓ School Attendance Officer collates messages left by parents/carers regarding absence and enters correct code in register
- ✓ Teacher takes attendance register and enters present or absent code
- ✓ Class teacher takes register in mornings and afternoons.
- ✓ School Attendance Officer enters late arrival marks in register
- ✓ School Attendance Officer contacts parent/carer to follow up reasons for school not being informed of pupil absence and adds notes to system.
- ✓ School Attendance Officer updates registers

Weekly

- ✓ Attendance for all students is monitored by Deputy Head Teacher in consultation with the School Attendance Officer and SG Education Welfare Consultancy. Particular focus is on those pupils below 95%, those pupils who have a high number of broken weeks and pupils who are identified as being part of a vulnerable group
- ✓ Attendance issues shared with staff team where needed.
- ✓ Attendance will be a standing issue at SLT meetings.

Monthly/Termly

- ✓ Meetings between Deputy Head, School Attendance Officer and Education Welfare Consultants regarding interventions with students below 95%, with high number of broken weeks and particular groups of students where no improvement is shown. School Attendance Meetings are set up with students, parents and the Attendance Manager
- ✓ Standard letters to parents of pupils with below 90%
- ✓ Standard letters to parents of pupils with high number of broken weeks
- ✓ Standard letters to parents of pupils with 10 or more late arrivals
- ✓ School attendance meetings with parents as agreed
- ✓ Report for Governing Body and Senior Leadership Team

School Attendance Meetings with parents follow a staged process with the aim being to investigate the reasons for low level of attendance and to look at what is needed to secure and sustain an improvement. Formal procedures are implemented when this intervention does not bring about change. Please see Appendix I

8. Personnel

Attendance Manager

At Little Stoke Primary School, this will be the Deputy Head Teacher, supported by the Head Teacher.

Key roles will include:

- Meeting weekly with the School Attendance Officer to monitor attendance over the last week and respond to any concerns.

- Having informal conversations with parents when attendance is declining or where there is regular lateness
- Responding to any requests for absence in term time
- Preparing attendance data in liaison with the Attendance Officer
- Meeting with the Education Welfare Consultants termly
- Reporting back to the Head Teacher on attendance concerns and data.

School Attendance Officer

At Little Stoke Primary School this is the Administrative Assistant.

Key roles include:

- collating messages left by parents/carers regarding absence and enters correct code in register
- Entering late arrival marks in register
- Contacting parent/carer to follow up reasons for school not being informed of pupil absence and adding relevant notes to the system.
- Updating registers
- Collating weekly attendance data for Celebration Assembly – whole school and individual class %
- Reporting concerns to Deputy Head Teacher / Head Teacher

SG Education Welfare Consultancy

Key roles include:

- Providing professional support and guidance, including necessary legal processes, in a package of support to ensure good attendance at our school
- Provision of casework, consultation and awareness sessions, so staff can identify, track and improve attendance to better-support pupils' learning outcomes
- Casework support is designed to ensure that no attendance issues drift but are appropriately addressed and handled in a timely fashion
- Keeping schools informed and staff trained on new and emerging initiatives to help promote and maintain good attendance
- The consultant will attend school to monitor school attendance, hold attendance meetings with parent/carers for individual pupils with poor attendance, track and monitor attendance, and suggest ways to improve attendance. The consultant may also advise, make recommendations on the school attendance policy in line with government legislation.
- Further sessions may take place to promote awareness during new pupil intake times, school assemblies, as drop-in surgeries, at parent's evenings, on INSET days, and for new staff to ensure effective first day contact.
- Informing staff of new and emerging support – including attendance punctuality and initiatives, register sweeps, early bird, and late gate initiatives.

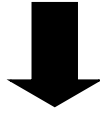
9. Formal guidance informing this policy

- ❖ Education Act 1996 & 2002.
- ❖ Pupil Regulations 2006 amended April 2013
- ❖ Parental responsibility measures – regarding Penalty Notices (Fines)
- ❖ Working Together to Safeguard Children DFE 2013 – keeping children safe.
- ❖ Educating Children with Health Needs – DFE Jan 2013 – Ensuring children with health needs do not miss out
- ❖ Supporting pupils at school with medical conditions – June 2014
- ❖ Children missing education – children who are not on roll of school
- ❖ Working Together to Improve School Attendance – DfE May 2022
- ❖ Parental Responsibility Measure - Nov 2013
- ❖ South Gloucestershire Council local code of conduct with regards to issuing of Penalty Notices – updated April 2017

APPENDIX I

Flow-Chart of Actions

LETTER 1 – Cause for concern AMBER	Attendance and/or punctuality is a cause for concern
---	---



LETTER 2 – Invite to SAM AMBER	No improvement after 4 weeks – invite both Parents/Carers to School Attendance Meeting (SAM)
---	---



During the School Attendance Meeting (SAM)	If appropriate: Medical Letter/Medical Action Plan completed and Medical Consent form signed by Parent/Carers. 4 School weeks from date of SAM review of attendance and/or punctuality to take place. If no Parent/Carer attends then the Education Welfare Officer will complete the Attendance Action Plan and ensure a copy is sent home
---	--



EITHER

LETTER 3A GREEN If attendance and/or punctuality has improved since SAM	LETTER 3B AMBER Invite to SAM Review If no improvement has been made since SAM then Parents/Carers invited to a review meeting.
--	--

	<p>At this meeting an appropriate attendance target will be set and reviewed for next 4 school weeks.</p>
--	---



IF NO IMPROVEMENT

School invite Parent/Carers to Attendance Panel Meeting	
<p>LETTER 4 – Invite to Attendance Panel Meeting</p> <p>RED</p>	<p>School invite Parents/Carers to Attendance Panel Meeting - 6 school weeks given to improve attendance and/or punctuality</p>



<p>LETTER 5 – Invite to Attendance Panel Review Meeting</p> <p>RED</p>	<p>Local Authority send Attendance Panel Review meeting invitation letter to Parents/Carers and invite a representative of the school.</p>
--	--



REVIEW MEETING TAKES PLACE



EITHER

<p>Improvement in attendance and/or punctuality since Review Meeting.</p> <p>Further review meeting maybe set</p> <p>or</p> <p>School continues to monitor if Improvement to attendance and/or punctuality is not sustained prepare for prosecution</p>	<p>No improvement in attendance and/or punctuality since last review meeting</p> <div style="text-align: center; margin-top: 20px;"> <p>PREPARE PROSECUTION</p> </div>
---	--

Penalty Notices - information for parents and carers

South Gloucestershire Council

What is a Penalty Notice?

Penalty Notices were introduced under Section 23 (1) of the Anti Social Behaviour Act 2003 to address unauthorised absence from school. It is a fine issued by South Gloucestershire Council to parents/carers of a child who has failed to attend school regularly and whose absence is unauthorised.

It does not require the parent to attend court but is an alternative to prosecution in the magistrate's court. Parents/carers who pay the fine in full within the time limits cannot later be prosecuted for the offence to which the Penalty Notice relates (Section 444 of the Education Act 1996).

Why have Penalty Notices been introduced?

Reducing absence from school is a key priority of the government and local authority because missing school may limit a pupil's attainment, disrupt school routines and the learning of others, and can leave a pupil vulnerable to anti-social behaviour and youth crime.

When might a Penalty Notice be issued?

A Penalty Notice may be issued to a parent in one or more of the following circumstances where more than 10 sessions of absence are recorded in 7 school weeks (ie 70 sessions). There are 2 sessions per day, one in the morning and one in the afternoon:

1. where unauthorised absences are recorded
2. where more than 10 sessions of unauthorised holiday are recorded, and:
 - a) the parent has not informed the school; or
 - b) the leave was not authorised; or
 - c) the child did not return on the agreed date
3. where the child is persistently late arriving at school after registers have closed
4. where a combination of more than 10 sessions of a) to c) above have been recorded.

How much is the fine?

The fine is £60 (per parent, per child) if paid within 21 days of receipt of the notice; rising to £120 if paid after 21 days but within 28 days.

For example a two - parent family taking 2 children out of school for an unauthorised holiday would be liable for a total of £240 if paid within 21 days or £480 between 21 and 28 days.

The payment must be made in full – part payments will not be accepted - details of how to pay are printed on the Penalty Notice.

What can you do to avoid receiving a Penalty Notice?

- ensure your child attends school every day and on time
- make sure your child knows that they cannot have odd days off school - 'Every Lesson Counts'
- speak to the class teacher or tutor if your child is beginning to miss odd days
- don't take family holidays in term time.

Is there an appeal process?

There is no right of appeal against the Penalty Notice but if you believe it to be incorrectly issued to you, you should contact the Senior Education Officer immediately (number below). If you believe you are not guilty of the offence and therefore decide not to pay the Notice, you have the right to represent your case at the Magistrates Court but you should seek legal advice before making this decision.

What happens if I do not pay?

If you have not paid the Penalty Notice in full before the 28 days allowed, the authority is required to commence legal proceedings in the Magistrates Court for the original offence of failure to ensure regular attendance at school.

If proven, this could result in a fine of up to £1000 under Section 444 (1) or up to £2500 and/or three months imprisonment under Section 444 (1A), a Parenting Order or other sanctions at the Magistrates' disposal. You are strongly urged to seek legal advice if you are considering not paying the Penalty Notice.

Further information and advice

The council have produced a parents and carers guide to [Penalty Notices](#).

See also The Department for Education guidance [-Working together to improve school attendance](#)

The following organisations can also provide advice:

- [Coram Children's legal centre](#)
- [Citizen's Advice](#)
- [ACE Education](#)

South Gloucestershire Council contact details:

Claire Dunwell - Senior Education Officer

Tel: [01454 866441](tel:01454866441)

Email: claire.dunwell@southglos.gov.uk

South Gloucestershire Council

Department for People

PO Box 1955

South Gloucestershire

BS37 0DE