

Stifford Clays Primary School

Pupil Attendance Policy



**Stifford Clays
Primary School**

Last reviewed August 2026

Next review due August 2028 unless relevant legislation changes

Teacher Responsible for Attendance – Head Teacher

This policy should be read in conjunction with the national guidance: *Summary table of responsibilities for school attendance - Guidance for maintained schools, academies, independent schools, and local authorities* May 2022 and *Working together to improve school attendance: Statutory guidance for maintained schools, academies, independent schools and local authorities* published 29 February 2024.

STIFFORD CLAYS PRIMARY SCHOOL

Pupil Attendance Policy

Introduction

At Stifford Clays Primary we strive to provide the best possible learning opportunities for children and prepare them for the future. As part of this we have high expectations of attendance and punctuality. As well as celebrating good attendance through our Tuesday assemblies and termly/annual rewards, we have a system of support and monitoring in place for families who do not meet the attendance expectations.

All children of compulsory school age have the right to full-time education, regardless of age, aptitude, ability and any special needs s/he may have. Regular school attendance is essential if a child is to make the most of the educational opportunity available to them. Stifford Clays Primary School takes seriously its responsibility to monitor and promote the regular attendance of all its pupils. It acknowledges that irregular attendance seriously disrupts continuity of learning, undermines educational progress, can lead to underachievement and low attainment and impedes the child's ability to develop friendship groups within school.

This policy seeks to ensure that all parties involved in the practicalities of school attendance are aware and informed of attendance matters in school and to outline the school's commitment to attendance matters. It details the responsibilities of individuals and groups involved and the procedures in place to promote and monitor pupil attendance.

Strategies used to promote good attendance and punctuality

- Class teacher will ensure that the curriculum is delivered within a culture of inclusion and in such a way that pupils feel that they have and can succeed.
- Individual pupils whose attendance has been a cause for concern will be encouraged to set and achieve personal attendance goals and a CAF form for attendance will be completed as relevant.
- Pupil attendance figures will be published with the annual academic reports.
- Positive verbal reinforcement is given to pupils who have been absent from school for a period of time and a plan to support them to catch up with any missed curriculum and promote future attendance improvements will be implemented. .
- All children with 100% attendance for each year they have been at Stifford Clays Primary School will receive a special attendance certificate when they leave at the end of Year 6.
- The class with the highest attendance each week holds the attendance trophy and are celebrated in the newsletter.
- Each half term the classes which are 1st, 2nd and 3rd for attendance receive extra playtime as a reward.

- The class with the best attendance over the year has a class celebratory reward at the end of the year.
- In each term, all pupils achieving at least 98% attendance are entered into a draw to win a bike or scooter of their choice.
- Members of the leadership team periodically monitor the gate for latecomers.
- All children arriving after 8.40 a.m. are admitted through the school office and parents are asked to record and explain the late arrival. This is monitored and SLT will address the issue with parents if it is persistent.
- Individual circumstances are taken into consideration such as long term proven illness.

What is expected of parents?

Parents have the prime responsibility for ensuring that their child attends school regularly and punctually. They have a legal responsibility to ensure that their children attend school regularly, and stay in school for every lesson after they have registered. Parents may be issued with a fixed penalty notice or prosecuted if a child does not attend school regularly and punctually under Section 7 of the Education Act 2006 and the amendments made to the Act which came into force on 1st September 2013.

If a child is in the care of foster parents or in a residential home, it is important that the carers recognise their parenting role where attendance to school is concerned. They will be supported by close co-operation between the school, education welfare services and the social services where such a child's attendance is irregular.

Parents and carers are expected:

- To offer a reason for any period of absence, preferably before the absence or on the first day of absence.
- To ensure that their child arrives at school on time, properly dressed, with the right equipment and in a condition to learn. A reason should be offered for any lateness.
- To work closely with the school and Education Engagement Officer (EEO) to resolve any problems that may impede a child's attendance.
- To take family holidays during school holiday periods and be aware that all requests for absences during term time will be refused except in exceptional circumstances. Family holidays are not considered exceptional.
- To be aware of curriculum requirements and be especially vigilant with regards to attendance during important academic times such as SATS and other statutory testing.
- Children should only be kept at home if they have a serious illness or injury. If a child is absent, school must be notified by 9.00am on the first day of absence, and each subsequent day thereafter, unless an expected date for return has been notified. This can be by telephone, informing a member of office staff, or by a written note delivered to the office. Alternative arrangements can be agreed for non-English speaking parents/carers.

What is expected of the school?

The school will endeavour to provide an environment that is conducive to educating every individual pupil. School attendance will be positively supported wherever possible and the promotion of good communication and co-operation between all parties involved will be paramount. The school has a statutory responsibility to record and monitor the punctuality and attendance of pupils for both the morning and afternoon sessions. A register of attendance has to be taken once at the start of the morning session and once during the afternoon session. The register has to record whether a pupil is present, engaged in an approved educational activity off site or absent. If a pupil is absent the register must record whether the absence was authorised or unauthorised.

The school will:

- Create a school ethos that pupils want to be part of
- Meet the legal requirements set out by Government
- Give a high priority to punctuality and attendance
- Have procedures that enable the school to identify, follow up and record unauthorised absence, patterns of absence and parent condoned absence with effective monitoring and intervention
- Consistently record authorised and unauthorised absences within the guidance of the 1995 education act
- Have a range of effective strategies to follow up intermittent and long term absenteeism and promote good attendance
- Encourage open communication channels between home and school
- Have procedures for the reintegration of long term absentees
- Have procedures leading to a formal referral to the SAST (School Attendance Support Team).
- Adequately provide for pupils with difficulties, within the bounds of resources available, and ensure the appropriate delivery of the curriculum
- Follow up with social care on any safeguarding concerns which may be related to a child's attendance or punctuality.

Details of expectations of schools for attendance are available on this link:

Published May 22.

https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/1073619/Summary_table_of_responsibilities_for_school_attendance.pdf

What is expected of the Local Authority?

The Local Authority (LA) has a responsibility to provide education and promote regular attendance of all statutory school age children. Through the School Attendance Support Team (SAST) the Local Authority provides support to schools and parents to fulfill their legal duty. The SAST is the enforcement agency of the LA and as well as providing guidance and support through its officers may take a parent to court for not fulfilling their duty under section 444 of the Education act 1996.

School Procedures for Recording and Monitoring Attendance

Recording

The class teacher will take a register recording who is present and absent from school by 9 am. Any late pupils must enter the school through the main entrance. If any pupil arrives late the office staff will record the name, class, time and reason for lateness in a late book. Parents and carers **MUST** bring late children into the office. If a child arrives unaccompanied by a parent, the office staff will complete the record asking the pupil to offer a reason. This may then be checked via a telephone call home. All staff need to be aware that any child arriving late **MUST** register at the office for purposes of fire regulations.

The register officially closes at 8.50 am and 1:05 pm. and any pupil arriving after this will be marked late for the session. For the morning session, when pupils arrive after 9.15 a.m. they will be marked as 'U' in the register as an unauthorised late.

If a child does not arrive at school, the following procedures are followed:

- As soon as possible and no later than 9.45am, the office will send a 'first day' text to or call the child's parent/carers.
- If the parent/carer is unreachable, the school will continue by calling those on the contact lists, including emergency contacts.
- If contact cannot be made, a home visit may be made by the school to determine the welfare of the pupil.
- If a home visit is not successful and still no contact can be made, the pupil will be classed as a 'missing pupil' and the school has a legal responsibility (Education Act 436A - chapter 2 part 6) to involve external agencies.

Reasons for absence may be offered verbally by phone. You must provide the school with the appointment card or letter if the child will be absent for a medical appointment. The school may then decide whether to authorise the absence or record it as an unauthorised absence. This decision will be made within the guidance set out in the 1996 Education act, which identifies the following reasons as acceptable reasons for an authorised absence.

- The child is ill or is prevented from attending by unavoidable cause
- The child is absent on days exclusively set apart for religious observance in their particular faith

A reason for a period of absence is always required. The school will contact parents who have not offered a reason and will mark the absence as unauthorised if no reason is provided. If contact cannot be made with the family, a referral will be made to the education welfare service as the child is 'missing from education'. This procedure forms part of the safeguarding protocols in school. Where an absence causes concern re welfare of a child and no answer can be obtained by telephone, a police welfare check may be requested as part of our duty to safeguard children.

Attendance codes

A set of standard codes is used consistently within the register. These codes are input into the electronic register twice daily as required and are used to give depth of meaning to the register and provide statistical meaning to the absences.

Code

/ Present (AM)
\ Present (PM)
B Educated off site (Not dual registration)
C Other authorised circumstances
D Dual registration
E Excluded
G Family holiday (not agreed)
H Family holiday (agreed)
I Illness (not med/dental etc. appointments)
J Interview
L Late (before reg closed)
M Medical/Dental appointments
N No reason yet provided for absence
O Unauthorised absence
P Approved sporting activity
R Religious observance
S Study leave
T Traveller absence
U Late (after registers closed)
V Educational visit or trip
W Work experience
Y Enforced closure
School closed to pupils and staff
* DfES Z: Pupil not on roll
-All should attend / No mark recorded

Understanding types of absence:

Authorised absences are sessions absent way from school for a legitimate reason, such as illness. Children should not come to school if they are unwell. However, simply 'not feeling right' or absences due to being tired will not be authorised.

Unauthorised absences are sessions away from school which the school deems unreasonable. This type of absence can lead to referral to the School Attendance Support Team (SAST) which may result in a Penalty Notice of legal proceedings. Unauthorised absences may include:

- Absences which have not been properly explained
- Children who arrive too late to get a mark (i.e. after 9.15am)
- Shopping, looking after other children or birthdays
- Day trips and holidays
- Attending the medical appointment of another family member

Please be aware that arrival in school after 9.15am results in an unauthorised absence being recorded.

Persistent Absenteeism is a classification used when a pupil has missed 10% or more schooling across the school year for any reason, both authorised and unauthorised. Persistent absence triggers an attendance panel meeting and possibly a referral to the School Attendance Support Team (SAST). Pupils who are close to becoming persistent absentees will be supported to improve attendance.

Penalty Notices

The school adheres to the Thurrock Code of Conduct for issuing penalty notices for unauthorised absence and refers to this in all cases. Persistent lateness may also be a trigger. Penalty notices may be issued by the SAST (School Attendance Support Team) for any unauthorised absence in the following circumstances, not just unauthorised absence for holidays.

- Irregular attendance – at least 12 sessions of any unauthorised absence are recorded against the child's name within the previous 120 sessions. One session is half a day. Parents will receive a warning letter giving them a chance to improve attendance before a Penalty Notice is issued.
- If the head teacher does not authorise a request from a parent for term time leave of absence, including holidays, and the parent takes leave. There must be at least 10 sessions of unauthorised term time leave. In such circumstances, the school must advise parents of this and how the action conforms to the school's attendance policy.
- Where a pupil of compulsory school age, who has been excluded from school, has been found in a public place during school hours without reasonable justification. This is explained when a child is excluded from school, and in writing to parents.

In the case of irregular attendance, parents will receive a warning letter giving the parents a chance to improve attendance before a Penalty Notice is issued.

Monitoring and action to be taken

The Head Teacher, Head of School, Pastoral Manager, Leadership team will review the attendance of all the school's pupils on a termly basis and any pupils identified as being a cause for concern or less than 96% attendance on a more regular basis.

A Stage 1 letter will be sent to the parents of any pupil identified as having regular non-attendance informing them of the school's concerns. This letter would normally be triggered by an attendance % of less than 96%. The child's attendance will then be monitored very closely.

If no improvement is seen, the school will write to the parent and require them to attend a meeting which will offer support to resolve any problems that may be impeding a child from attending this will form Stage 2 of our attendance policy.

The pupil's attendance will be closely monitored and after a period of supportive measures this will escalate to a Stage 3 which will lead to a parent contract and at this stage a Penalty Notice could be issued.

If after this there is no improvement in attendance, and the support offered has had little impact or has not been engaged with the case will be formally referred to the Local Authority for statutory action to be considered after all stages have been processed. Application for a penalty Notice to be issued OR referral made for Prosecution. Parents will be sent a letter notifying them of this action.

Medical Evidence

At Stage 2 of our attendance policy, parents will be asked to provide medical evidence so that the school can track patterns of absence and offer relevant support. Medical evidence could be a prescription, appointment card from the hospital or surgery or a note/phone call from the surgery. Where a child has a recurring medical condition we will strive to support to ensure good attendance. This can be done in partnership with families and medical practitioners.

Requests for leave of absence

If a parent wishes to request a period of leave they are required to write to the head teacher, and must complete the relevant application form but may add supporting information. If the request is denied the school will inform the parent of the reason in writing and the request will be noted in the electronic register. Leave of absence will **not** be offered to pupils for family holidays. Only exceptional circumstances will be considered on a case-by-case basis. If the activity leading the absence request could be reasonably done outside of termtime then it will not be authorised.

Examples of circumstances **NOT** considered exceptional:

- Holidays taken in term time due to lower costs/parental work commitments
- Holidays abroad to visit a sick relative
- Pilgrimages by parents
- Holidays booked by surprise by relatives
- To attend weddings

Categories of “concern” and what our school will do in response:

Pupils at risk of becoming persistently absent

- Proactively use data to identify pupils at risk of poor attendance.
- Work with each identified pupil and their parents to understand and address the reasons for absence, including any in-school barriers to attendance.
- Where out of school barriers are identified, signpost and support access to any required services in the first instance.
- If the issue persists, take an active part in the multi-agency effort with the local authority and other partners. Act as the lead practitioner where all partners agree that the school is the best placed lead service. Where the lead

practitioner is outside of the school, continue to work with the local authority and partners.

Persistently Absent pupils – less than 90% attendance

- Continued support as for pupils at risk of becoming persistently absent and:
- Where absence becomes persistent, put additional targeted support in place to remove any barriers. Where necessary this includes working with partners.
- Where there is a lack of engagement, hold more formal conversations with parents and be clear about the potential need for legal intervention in future.
- Where support is not working, being engaged with or appropriate, work with the local authority on legal intervention.
- Where there are safeguarding concerns, intensify support through statutory children's social care.
- Work with other schools in the local area, such as schools previously attended and the schools of any siblings

Severely absent pupils – less than 50% attendance

- Continued support as for persistently absent pupils and:
- Agree a joint approach for all severely absent pupils with the local authority.

Support for cohorts of pupils with lower attendance than their peers

- Proactively use data to identify cohorts with, or at risk of, low attendance and develop strategies to support them.
- Work with other schools in the local area and the local authority to share effective practice where there are common barriers to attendance.

Support for pupils with medical conditions or SEND with poor attendance

- Maintain the same ambition for attendance and work with pupils and parents to maximise attendance.
- Ensure join up with pastoral support and where required, put in place additional support and adjustments, such as an individual healthcare plan and if applicable, ensuring the provision outlined in the pupil's EHCP is accessed.
- Consider additional support from wider services and external partners, making timely referrals.
- Regularly monitor data for such groups, including at board and governing body meetings and with local authorities.

Support for pupils with a social worker

- Inform the pupil's social worker if there are any unexplained absences and if their name is to be deleted from the register.

Exceptional Leave of Absence Application

Please complete this form and return it to the school for the attention of the Head Teacher no later than two weeks before your requested period of absence.

Leave of absence for exceptional circumstances will only be recognised if certified approval is given by the Head Teacher, on behalf of the Trust.

Please note that it is Trust and school policy not to authorise term time absence, except for exceptional circumstances. A family holiday does not constitute as an exceptional circumstance.

I Parent/Carer

Of (Child(s) name) Class.....

Hereby make application for leave of absence in term time, date follows:

Date: First date of absence from:

Date: Last date of absence to:

Number of.....school day/s

For the following reason:

.....
.....
.....
.....

Signed: (Parent/Carer) Date:

FOR OFFICE USE ONLY:

Authorised:

☐

Unauthorised:

☐

.....

This section is to be returned to Parent/Carer by the school office.

Child's Name.....Class.....

This is to certify that your request for leave of absence from to

Has been:

Authorised:

☐

Unauthorised:

☐

Signed Head Teacher on
behalf of the Trust.

STIFFORD CLAYS PRIMARY SCHOOL

Exceptional Leave of Absence Application

Please consider the following points before applying for leave of absence.

- Thurrock Local Authority is active in addressing the problem of persistently poor pupil attendance. They have a clear policy and focus on enforcement and have restricted and improved the School Attendance Support Team (SAST) and reformed the interface with courts to secure pupil attendance at the school.

The Trust remind you of the importance of ensuring child's regular, uninterrupted school attendance.

- Absence during term time interrupts the continuity of teaching and learning, disrupts the educational progress of individual children, and impacts negatively on overall performance.

Please Note:

If leave is taken without authorisation it will be recorded as an unauthorised absence and the matter may be referred to the School Attendance Support Team, for consideration of further action. (This action is on behalf of Thurrock Local Authority and is not a reflection of Stifford Clays Primary School)

Stifford Clays Attendance Monitoring Stages

Stage 1 Letter	•Letter will bring to the attention of Parent/Carer that their child's attendance has fallen below 96%. •An opportunity for Parent/Carer to discuss any barriers to their child's full attendance at school. •If improvement occurs an attendance colour chart will be sent. If there is no improvement a Stage 2 letter will be sent.
Stage 2 Letter and Meeting	•Letter to Parents/Carers this will highlight that attendance has not improved and a meeting will be arranged. •This meeting will discuss the barriers to attendance and an offer of support. Targets will be set and additional services discussed possibly leading to a CAF. Support from Family Support/Pastoral Team.
Stage 2 Review	•Review attendance and actions of support taken since the last meeting. •If attendance has improved a letter will acknowledge this. Set a further review as required or if non engagement with targets escalate to Stage 3.
Stage 3	•Letter will set out re the ongoing attendance issues and include a formal warning of the risk of statutory action. •Meeting with Head of School - Parenting Contract to be completed and failure to comply with the contract will see escalation to the Local Authority. Targets will be set within the contract. •A penalty notice will also be considered at this stage and Parent/Carer will receive a warning letter detailing this.
Stage 3 Review	•Review the targets set out in the contract with Parents/Carers and discuss how further to proceed. •If improvement this will be acknowledged in a letter. If there is no improvement then matters will proceed to a Stage 4. Any review or outcomes to proceed to prosecution will be recorded.
Stage 4 Referral to Local Authority	At this Stage if attendance has not improved and the support offered has not made an impact then the child's Parent/Carer will be informed that statutory action is now being considered. This could be an application for a Penalty Notice OR referral made for prosecution.