St. Nicholas School Canterbury

PUPIL ATTENDANCE AND ABSENCE POLICY

Policy Created	**November 2023**
Governing Body Committee	**Finance and Resource Committee**
SLT responsibility	**Stephen King**
Date Reviewed by Governing Body	**Adopted by Chairperson's action on 20 April 2023**
Date of Next Review	**July 2023**

PUPIL ATTENCANCE AND ABSENCE POLICY

INTRODUCTION

St Nicholas School is committed to the continuous raising of achievement of all our pupils, providing them with opportunities to develop and grow in a safe and happy environment. 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.

The Governors, Headteacher and staff in partnership with parents have a duty to promote full attendance at St Nicholas School.

St Nicholas School has adopted the guidance and recommendations of the 2019 DFE School Attendance - Guidance for Schools and apply the recommendations relating to pupil registers and attendance codes.

We also follow the Canterbury City and Country Local Children's Service Partnership Attendance Policy. Our school has set an annual target for pupil attendance is 90%; our challenge target is 95% (the national average). We accept that our attendance figures differ from that of mainstream schools due to the complex learning needs of our pupils including health, respite and other challenges. Attendance is reviewed by the Senior Leadership Team, in conjunction with the local Educational Welfare Officer, three times per year.

The school adopts informal strategies to support attendance, such as home tutoring and support, inclusion and integration programmes, individual timetables and family support worker input as well as working with multi-agency colleagues.

Where pupils' attendance falls below our 90% target they are considered as a Persistent Absentee and their attendance is monitored weekly. Where absence is due to ill-health the school will remain in contact to monitor and support the pupil and family. More formal strategies, such as LA Attendance Service referral (using form AS1) or social services referral and even penalty notices, may be considered for families where support has not been accepted or has proven unsuccessful. If a pupil stops attending and/or is believed to have been taken away from the home, a Child Missing from Education Notice is completed and registered with the Local Authority.

ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

The aim of this policy is to promote the most effective education for all pupils at St Nicholas School. In order to achieve this it is vital that pupils attend school consistently and punctually. In order that pupils and parents cooperate with this policy and pupils gain their full entitlement to education, parents will be informed of the requirement on attendance.

At St Nicholas School there is a whole school responsibility and approach for improving school attendance, with specific staff taking individual responsibility.

The Senior Leadership Team have overall responsibility for monitoring attendance issues.

Class teachers complete a register at the beginning of each morning and once during the afternoon session. Marking the attendance registers twice daily is a legal requirement. (The

Education (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2006). Teachers mark pupils present, absent or late. They notify the SLT of children whose attendance is causing concern.

It is the responsibility of the class teacher 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 by phone call.
- Where there has been no communication, letters are sent to parents requesting reasons for absence.
- The appropriate attendance code is entered into the register (see National Attendance Codes)
- Parents are informed termly of the child's attendance figure

PARENTAL RESPONSIBILITY

Parents/carers have a legal duty to ensure that their children attend school regularly and arrive on time. Regular 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 in order to make good progress in their learning. Poor attendance impedes their educational attainment and progress and, sometimes, put them at risk.

It is the parents' responsibility to contact the school on the first 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.

Contact between parents/carers and School is encouraged in order to account for absences. This may take the form of verbal messages through letters, emails, and telephone calls. Office (or class staff) will call or text home on the first day of an absence to notify the class teacher who can then complete their register.

Parents are notified regularly via letters and newsletters about the importance of attendance and timekeeping, and their responsibility in ensuring regular attendance and the importance of notifying absences to school.

Timeline of the Staged Approach for Managing Poor Attendance

- Less than 95 - 100% attendance – the class teacher to investigate and notify their AHT of concern. Class Teacher to contact parent if appropriate.
- 85-90% attendance - school intervention letters/meeting with parents. A member of the SLT (DHT or AHT) or the EYFS/14-19 lead, will directly monitor the student's case as their allocated case worker. Where the level of absence has not improved and/or there are unauthorised absences. The allocated caseworker will monitor the student's case directly on a daily basis.
- 85% or below – the allocated caseworker 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. Regular attendance meetings (at least 2 per term) will take place with the family.
- For the cases that require intensive family support, the school may make an Early Help Notification.

AUTHORISED AND UNAUTHORISED ABSENCES

It is for the school, not the parent, to decide whether or not to authorise any absences. The school will not authorise absences in the following circumstances:

- Where no parental/carer explanation is given.
- For extended visits overseas where no approval has been given.
- For holidays in term time without agreement (unless there are exceptional circumstances.)
- For shopping trips.
- For leisure days out.
- Where it is believed a parent/carer is condoning an unnecessary absence.
- In other cases where it is deemed there is no reasonable explanation.

Leave of Absence

Requests for Leave of Absence must be made in writing to the Headteacher. In the case of absence for family holidays these will be authorised where there are exceptional circumstances. Leave of absence forms should be obtained from the main office and be completed and sent into school before any arrangements are made.

Absence for the observance of a religious festival will be authorised for a maximum of two days per school year.

Approval for extended holidays abroad, in the family's home country, will only be considered on receipt of a written request and completion of the school's Holiday Request Form, where there are exceptional circumstances. The Governing Body has delegated this responsibility to the Headteacher. If consent is given it will be for a maximum period of 6 weeks with an agreed return date. If the pupil fails to attend after this period, this absence will be recorded as unauthorised and will be referred to the Wellbeing Team.

CHANGE OF ADDRESS AND OTHER CONTACT DETAILS

Parents must inform the school immediately if they, or the named emergency contacts have a change of address, phone number or email address. In case of emergency we must be able to contact the parents, carers or a third named person. Parents must provide this information when they first register their child and keep information including telephone numbers up to date.

SCHOOL PROCEDURES

Morning registers close at 9.30 am except on days of particularly inclement weather or very bad traffic (affecting KCC SEN transport), when the Head Teacher will declare that the school should close registers at 1O am. Afternoon registers close 5 minutes after the start of the afternoon session.

Class teachers should carry out ongoing monitoring of both attendance and punctuality.First day absence calls are made by office staff as soon as the registers have been completed. The register is amended to show the reason for the absence. A message will be left on the home phone/mobile phone if we are unable to speak to parents about their child's absence. If no contact is made with the parents by the second day a "Safe and Well" home visit from the Well-Being Team may be made. If no one is at home every attempt will be made to find further information from neighbours and Emergency Contacts.

If no progress is made for 10 consecutive days we will contact the KCC Children Missing Education Team and report the child as missing. If a child returns to school where no contact has been able to have been made during the absence, the parents will receive a letter from the Executive Head Teacher reiterating the school procedures for pupil absence.

A weekly report is produced by the office to be taken to the SLT/DSL/AHT attendance meetings. All unauthorised absences are discussed and appropriate action is agreed at this meeting. In cases of frequent or long term absences a decision will be made on appropriate next steps.

Where children are admitted to hospital for an extended period, the teacher will make contact with the hospital staff on a regular basis, and this may include a visit. Our staff will also contact the family and will provide liaison to enable the pupil to return to school as soon as they are well enough todo so.

Pupils who arrive late at school because of difficulties with organised transport (taxi or minibus) will be marked as present. Where patterns of consistent late running by contractors occur, KCC SEN transport will be informed.

Pupils who arrive late in school will report to the school office where their late mark will be recorded. When classes go off site during school time details must be recorded in the office.

CHILDREN OUT OF SCHOOL FOR LONG PERIODS DUE TO ILL HEALTH

Some pupils at St Nicholas School have some specific/complex health needs (including mental health needs). These needs may result in the pupil having an extended period out of school. For theses pupils a range of interventions take place, which may include – direct family support work with the family (such as the Wellbeing Team), home learning programmes (implementing the EHCP), home visits from class staff and, in rare occasions, home tuition from specialist staff.

The aim of these interventions are to work with the families and the children to successfully enable them to come back to school as soon as possible on a phased return towards a full-time placement.

CHILD PROTECTION CONCERNS

If there are any Child Protection concerns these will be discussed with the Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL) on the first day of absence. The DSL will decide on the appropriate steps.

ATTENDANCE PLANS

Where a pupil's attendance falls below 90% the school will decide on the next step. This will probably be in the form of an Attendance Plan, with communications to the parents using model letters from the KCC attendance service.

MONITORING AND REVIEW

The Senior Leadership Team are responsible for monitoring attendance within school on a weekly basis and reporting concerns to the headteacher at the SLT meeting. The headteacher is also responsible for monitoring overall attendance within the school and will report to the Governing Body.

This policy will be reviewed on an annual basis by the Deputy Headteacher and approved by the Governing Body.

EQUALITY, SAFEGUARDING AND EQUAL OPPORTUNITIES STATEMENT

St Nicholas School, in all policies and procedures, will promote equality of opportunity for students and staff from all social, cultural and economic backgrounds and ensure freedom from discrimination on the basis of membership of any group including gender, sexual orientation, family circumstances, ethnic or national origin, disability (physical or mental), religious or political beliefs.

As part of our commitment to meet the Public Sector Equality Duty (PSED), St Nicholas School aims to:

- Provide equal opportunity for all
- Foster good relations, and create effective partnership with all sections of the community
- Only take actions which does not discriminate unlawfully in service delivery, commissioning and employment
- Provide an environment free from fear and discrimination, where diversity, respect and dignity are valued.

All aspects of Safeguarding will be embedded into the life of the school and be adhered to and be the responsibility of all staff.

LINK TO OTHER POLICIES

- Child Protection
- Internet Safety
- Acceptable Use of Technology
- Home Learning
- Managing Allegations of Abuse Against Staff
- Anti-Bullying
- PSHE
- Relationships And Sex Education
- Wellbeing
- Staff Code of Conduct
- Community Cohesion
- Premises Management