Sir John Offley CE (VC) Primary School

Attendance Policy

'With God, all things are possible.'

Key Details

Date written/updated: November 2026
Date of next review: November 2027

Key Details

Headteacher: Mrs L Brown Headteacher
Chair of Governors: Mr O Warman

This policy will be reviewed at least annually. It will also be revised following updates to national and local guidance or procedures.

Sir John Offley CE (VC) Primary school is committed to safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children and young people/vulnerable adults and expect all staff and volunteers to share this commitment.

Version Control			
Version	**Date Approved**	**Page**	**Reason for Alterations**
1	November 2026		Update to DfE and LA guidance

Headteacher: _____

Chair of Governors: _____

Introduction

At Sir John Offley CE (VC) Primary School we are committed to working together to ensure all pupils receive the best education possible to enable them to make progress and do as well as they can. For this to happen, pupils need to be in school to access the valuable teaching and learning opportunities.

This policy aims to make clear what is expected of parents and pupils and to assure parents of our willingness to work positively with them if problems arise.

Principles

Promoting excellent attendance is the responsibility of the whole school community. The school will promote the importance of good attendance through the curriculum and personal/social opportunities. The attendance champion for the school is the Headteacher.

Good attendance by pupils will be recognised appropriately. All pupils should be at school, on time, every day the school is open, unless the reason for the absence is unavoidable. We have adopted the Staffordshire Heroes campaign (Here every day ready on time) to support with the promotion of good attendance and punctuality.

We will ensure that parents are aware that attendance matters and work with them to ensure good attendance and punctuality.

Pupils are sometimes reluctant to attend school. Any problems that arise with attendance are best resolved between the school, the parents, and the pupil. If a pupil is reluctant to attend, it is never better to cover up their absence or to give in to pressure to excuse them from attending. This gives the impression that attendance and education does not matter and may make things worse. Permitting absence from school without a good reason is an offence by the parent.

Registration

School opens at 8.45am and closes at 3.15pm. Nursery 8.45-3pm.

Schools are required by law to take an attendance register twice a day and this shows whether the pupil is present, engaged in an approved educational activity off-site, or absent. If a pupil is absent,

every half-day absence from school must be classified by the school as either **AUTHORISED** or **UNAUTHORISED**. Only school can authorise the absence, not parents. Therefore, information about the cause of each absence is always required.

Authorised absences are mornings or afternoons away from school for a good reason e.g., illness, medical appointments, or other unavoidable cause.

Unauthorised absences are those which the school does not consider reasonable and for which no "leave" has been given. This includes:

- parents keeping pupils off from school unnecessarily
- truancy before or during the school day
- absences which have never been properly explained or evidenced
- pupils who arrive to school after the close of the register
- school refusal
- any leave taken during term time that have not been authorised by the head teacher

When completing the register, school follow the DFE school attendance guidance to determine which relevant code to use: Working together to improve school attendance (August 2026) (publishing.service.gov.uk)

The register will be taken twice a day, at the start of the morning and the afternoon.

Morning registration.

The morning register is taken at 8:55 am. Pupils arriving after the register has been taken but before 9:15 am are recorded as late – L.

Registration closes at 9:15am. Pupils arriving to school after this time are late - after registration closes, and this will be recorded as an unauthorised absence unless there is an acceptable reason for the lateness – U.

Afternoon registration

The afternoon register is taken at 1.15 pm.

Late procedures

Parents are requested to contact the school office if their child is going to be late and provide a reason for lateness.

If lateness is a cause for concern, the following procedures will be followed.

1. Parents will receive an email informing them that their child has been late to school.
2. Parents will receive a letter informing of the concern.
3. If no improvement, school will contact parents to further discuss and offer support and advice to improve punctuality.
4. If still no improvement, parents and pupils will be invited to a meeting to discuss the reasons for lateness and to offer support. Referrals to wider support services may be offered if needed. The discussion held will be documented and an action plan to improve school attendance will be devised with parents and the pupil during the meeting and a review date set if needed.
5. If no improvement is seen after the meeting has taken place, the school may follow Staffordshire Local Authority Code of Conduct for issuing penalty notices for persistent lateness.

Reporting Absence

Parents whose children are experiencing difficulties should contact the Headteacher at an early stage and work together with the staff in resolving any problems.

If a pupil is absent from school, we ask parents/carers to:

- Contact the school office before 8:45am on the first morning of absence and leave a message on the answerphone.
- Reply promptly to any request or inquiry concerning an absence.

If parents do not contact the school on the morning of the first day of absence, a member of the administration staff will try to contact them to find out the reason for absence. This ensures that the parent is aware their child is not in school enabling the parent, where necessary, to establish that their child is safe. There may also be a home visit from the Headteacher, where appropriate.

Children Missing in Education

Schools have a duty by law to refer any absence of 20 days or more to Staffordshire Local Authority Children Missing in Education department where they have been unable to establish contact with the parent/pupil or have general concerns about the absence.

To avoid any referrals, parents are requested to inform the school if they are moving house/area or country and to provide a forwarding address, contact number and the name of the new school if known.

Medical Absence

Schools have the responsibility to decide whether an absence can be authorised on medical grounds. If the school has concerns about the level of medical absence that a pupil has incurred, they will contact the parents to discuss it further and to find out whether their GP or other health professional has been contacted.

Parents may be asked to provide evidence that their child is too unwell to attend school, especially, but not limited to, occasions of prolonged absence. This can be done by providing evidence from a medical professional (note, appointment card/text message/letter) or a copy of any prescribed medication. If the school do not receive medical evidence, the absences may be unauthorised.

For pupils with a mental health issue affecting attendance, Sir John Offley CE VC Primary School follow the DFE guidance: Summary of responsibilities where a mental health issue is affecting attendance (publishing.service.gov.uk)

For more information on medical absence – Illness and your child's education - GOV.UK (www.gov.uk)

Medical and Dental Appointments

We expect parents to make medical and dental appointments for their children before or after school or during the school holidays whenever possible. If this is not possible, confirmation of the appointment will be required prior to authorising the absence and an M code used on the register to record when the child has attended the appointment.

Children are expected to attend school prior to the appointment and parents are expected to return their children to school following the appointment.

Monitoring attendance procedures

The school aims to achieve at least 97% attendance each year. To help with this, we monitor attendance regularly, through daily register checks, analysis of absence data, analysis of absence for different groups.

The Headteacher and the office regularly monitor every pupil's attendance, with regard to percentages and absence concerns, patterns or trends. If your child has less than 95% attendance, which means 9 days off, a 'yellow' letter is sent to parents stating the actual percentage attendance of the child, outlining the need for this to improve due to the impact on their child's education. Similarly, if your child has 90% attendance or less a 'red' letter will be sent to parents, as this percentage equates to missing 19 days of school and is regarded as persistent absence. Severe absence is categorised as 50% or lower.

Where there is no improvement after a letter has been sent, the following procedures are applied:

- If school attendance continues to decline, a further concern letter is sent to parents.
- If no improvement is seen, parents and pupils, where appropriate, will be invited into a meeting to discuss the concerns and to offer support around any possible barriers or problems at home or at school which may be contributing to low attendance.
- Referrals to wider support services may be offered where appropriate.
- If school attendance does not improve, the school follows the Local Authorities Code of Conduct for issuing penalty notices for pupils with persistent absence.

Requests for leave of absence

Amendments to the Education Regulations 2006 make it clear that head teachers should only grant a leave of absence during term time if there are exceptional circumstances to justify this.

If a parent wishes to request leave for their child for any reason, they must email school in advance.

Where a child does not reside with both parents, it is the responsibility of the parent making the request to inform the other parent. The school will send a letter to the parent making the request informing them if the absence will be authorised or unauthorised.

If a request for leave has not been received and we have reason to believe a pupil is on holiday, a letter will be sent to parents requesting medical evidence. If no medical evidence can be provided, the absence may be recoded as unauthorised, and a penalty notice request sent to the Local Authority.

Changes to Penalty Notices for School Absence from August 2024

The new National Framework introduces consistency in the use of Penalty Notices across England by introducing a new national threshold at which they are considered. The framework increases the amount of the Penalty Notice and introduces a new national limit of 2 Penalty Notices within a 3-year rolling period to break cycles of repeat offending.

In line with the guidance, Staffordshire County Council will prioritise the 'support first' approach expecting that support will have been offered to families in cases where it is appropriate. However,

Penalty Notices can be issued without a Notice to Improve in cases where support is not appropriate (such as leave of absence in term time) or when support has not been engaged with.

Penalty Notices are issued by the Local Authority to the parents/carers of statutory school age children, per parent, per child. For example: two children in a family, absent from school for a leave of absence, may result in each parent receiving a Penalty Notice for each child at the below rates:

• First offence - The first time a Penalty Notice is issued the amount will be: £80 per parent, per child paid within 21 days. This increases to £160 per parent, per child if paid after day 21, until day 28. Any non-payment of the Penalty Notice may be referred to the Magistrates Court.

• Second Offence (within 3 years) - the second time a Penalty Notice is issued the amount will be £160 per parent, per child paid within 28 days. Any non-payment of the Penalty Notice may be referred to the Magistrates Court.

• Following the second offence **every new offence within the 3-year period will be prosecuted** under s.444 of the Education Act (1996). This reflects the seriousness of unauthorised absences from school. The Magistrates' Court can order fines up to £1000 per parent, per child.

Leave of Absence Penalty Notices will apply for leave of absence in term time for 5 or more days. This can be consecutive absence, or non- consecutive. In line with the National Framework, the Local Authority retains the discretion to issue a Penalty Notice before the threshold is met.

For example, when parents/carers are deliberately avoiding the national threshold by taking multiple term time holidays below threshold, or for repeated absence for birthdays or other family events, or a combination of non-attendance due to leave of absence and unauthorised absence.

Unauthorised Absence Penalty Notices are when there have been 10 sessions of unauthorised absence in a 10-week period. In these circumstances a Notice to Improve may be sent by the Local Authority on behalf of the school, this will stipulate the support that has already been implemented and the ongoing support that is available to the parent and child to improve school attendance. The Notice to Improve will also detail the expected improvements that must be made over a set time frame to prevent the Penalty Notice being issued. Further information on the National Framework can be found within Working Together to Improve Attendance 2024. The National Framework comes into effect from 19th August 2024. Working together to improve school attendance (applies from 19 August 2024) (publishing.service.gov.uk)

A penalty notice may also be issued where parents allow their child to be present in a public place during school hours without reasonable justification during the first 5 days of a fixed period or permanent exclusion. Sir John Offley CE VC Primary School will notify the parents of the days the pupil must not be present in a public place. This type of penalty notice is not included in the National Framework and therefore not subject to the same considerations about support being provided or count towards the limit as part of the escalation process in the case of repeat offences for non-attendance. A session is equivalent to half a day in school.

Elective Home Education

If school receives written notification from parents that they wish to home educate their child, school will contact the parent and discuss their reasons in more detail, offering support to deal with any issues raised. If after this time the parent still wishes to home educate their child, the school will inform the Local Authority of the decision to remove the child's name from the admissions register.

Whilst school will not seek to prevent parents from choosing to home educate their child, neither will

they seek to encourage them to do this – particularly as a way of avoiding exclusion or due to a poor attendance record.

Prior to deciding to home educate, parents are requested to contact Staffordshire Local Authority Elective Home Education department.

Summary

It is vital to a child's progress that they attend school as often as possible and that they are on time. Children who do not attend school regularly can also find it difficult to maintain friendships and fall behind in class. Regularly being absent from school can lead to a significant loss of learning opportunities, potentially putting your child at a disadvantage later in life.

There are strong and proven links between pupil attendance and educational achievement. If your child has 90% attendance, missing 19 days of school, this can cause your child's academic performance to drop by 50%.
'Make every day count'

Impact of absence:

Attendance during one school year	Equals this number of days absent	Which is approx. these many weeks absent
95%	9	2 weeks
90%	19	4 weeks
85%	29	6 weeks
80%	38	8 weeks

Impact of lateness:

Over a school year –

5 minutes late every day = 3 days absent
15 minutes late every day = 10 days absent
30 minutes late every day = 19 days absent

If parents have any concerns relating to attendance or lateness that they wish to discuss, they should contact the office in the first instance or the Headteacher.

School staff are committed to working with parents to ensure any problems are dealt with straight away in order for pupils to feel happy and safe at Sir John Offley CE VC Primary School and achieve to the best of their ability. Equally, parents have a duty to make sure that their children attend school and are on time.