STOCKPORT
METROPOLITAN BOROUGH COUNCIL

MODEL ATTENDANCE POLICY FOR SCHOOLS

SEPTEMBER 2024

This model policy has been written by the Education Welfare Service following the implementation of Statutory Guidance Working together to improve school attendance (August 2024) and for use by all Stockport schools, including Academies. Schools may use this template for their attendance policy and amend/adapt to reflect the school's aims, values and approach to attendance.

Schools should pay particular attention to areas highlighted in blue, which indicate where information needs to be added/deleted, and update the table of contents (if including it) before publication.

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The model policy serves to provide information and guidance to schools. It has been written in line with other Stockport Policies, DFE guidance and legislation:

Working together to improve attendance – August 2024
Table of responsibilities for school attendance – August 2024
Elective Home Education Guidance for parents – April 2019
Keeping Children Safe in Education – September 2024

INTRODUCTION:

2. At St Winifred's we believe that all children and young people have a right to an education as enshrined in the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child and in UK Law. The opportunities provided by education are fundamental to enabling all children and young people to reach their potential and lead happy and rewarding lives.
3. Evidence shows that there are clear links between good attendance and high achievement in school. Pupils who attend school regularly are more likely to feel settled in school, maintain friendships, make progress and gain the greatest benefit from their education as well as develop a strong sense of belonging. For the most vulnerable pupils, regular attendance is also an important protective factor and being in school gives the pupil the best opportunity for needs to be identified and support provided. We will work with families to ensure pupils engage in education and maximise their full potential.
4. This policy outlines our approach to attendance and summarises the legal duties and expectations of the whole school community. It reflects the key principles of the Department for Education's attendance guidance for maintained schools, academies, independent schools, and local authorities: Working together to improve school attendance - GOV.UK (www.gov.uk) , Summary Table of Responsibilities for School Attendance and locally agreed processes.
5. Throughout this document, 'parents' should be taken to include all those with parental responsibility, as defined in law and may include guardians and legal carers.

SCHOOL ATTENDANCE AND THE LAW

Parents

6. The law entitles every child of compulsory school age to an efficient, full-time education suitable to their age, aptitude, and any special educational needs they may have.
7. Parents have a legal responsibility to make sure their child receives that education either by attendance at a school or by education otherwise than at a school.
8. For children receiving full time education at a school, parents have an additional legal duty to ensure their child attends that school regularly. Regular attendance means their child must attend every day that they are expected to attend, except in a small number of allowable circumstances.
9. If a child of compulsory school age fails to attend regularly at the school at which they have been registered the parents may be guilty of an offence and can be prosecuted by the local authority.

Schools

10. Schools are required by law to:
    - Carry out all their functions with a view to safeguarding and promoting the welfare of all pupils at the school.
    - Maintain and preserve accurate attendance registers as required under regulations 10 withing the. School Attendance (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2024 and make them available for inspection by the local authority.
    - Comply with legal requirements regarding adding or removing pupils' names to or from the admissions register, ensuring that:
        - Pupils' names are added to the school roll on the expected date of attendance.

- Pupils' names are removed from roll only when one of the legal grounds in the Education (Pupil Registration) England Regulations 2006 is satisfied.
- All removals from roll are reported to the local authority.
- Information is shared and enquiries made jointly with the local authority to locate missing pupils.

- Complete Attendance and Sickness returns to the local authority.

Legal Sanctions

11. Regular school attendance is a legal duty on parents and carers. If a parent fails to ensure their child attends school regularly, they are guilty of an offence under section 444(1) or (1A) of the Education Act 1996.

12. A parent who commits this offence may be liable to prosecution in the Magistrates' Court and, depending on which offence they are convicted of, may be liable to a fine of up to £2500 or a term of imprisonment of up to three months.

13. Although school will offer support in addressing attendance issues, it will also refer pupils whose attendance fails to improve due to non-engagement of the parent, or who take leave of absence from school without agreement, to the Education Welfare Service within Stockport Council. This can take several routes:

14. **Education Penalty Notice**:
Education Penalty Notices are fixed penalty notices issued by Stockport Council. The amount of the fine depends on whether any previous Education Penalty Notices have been issued to the parent for the same child for unauthorised absences which took place after 19/08/2024 but within a period of three years from the current fine. For the first such Education Penalty Notice, the fine is £80 if paid within 21 days or £160 if paid between 22 and 28 days. For the second such Education Penalty Notice, the fine is at a single rate of £160 payable within 28 days. If third or subsequent offences occur within a rolling three year period which would otherwise result in a fine, the Local Authority is not allowed to issue a further fine, and instead the parent is likely to prosecuted in the Magistrates' Court.

15. **Education Penalty Notices for Irregular Attendance**
Before being issued with an Education Penalty Notice, parents will receive a written warning from Stockport Council. This gives them an opportunity to avoid a fine by ensuring that no unauthorised absences – including late after the close registration marks – are recorded against their child during the next 15 school days. The minimum criteria for sending such a warning is - 10 sessions of unauthorised absence in a 10 week period.

16. **Education Penalty Notices for unauthorised leave of absence**
Education Penalty Notices may also be issued where a pupil is taken out of school for five days or more without the school's consent – such as for a term time holiday. In these cases, the fine is sent by the Council without an initial warning being issued.

17. **Attendance Contracts**
A Parent Contract is an agreement which usually involves the school, parents, members of Stockport Council's Education Welfare Service and, in some cases, the pupil. The agreement sets out the actions required by all parties to overcome the barriers to improved attendance. Compliance with the contract and the progress of improving attendance are reviewed regularly at Parent Contract Review Meetings. If a parent fails to participate and/or fails to ensure that attendance improves, they may be prosecuted in the Magistrates' Court.

18. **Education Supervision Order**
An Education Supervision Order (ESO) is an order granted in the Family Proceedings Court requiring a parent and child to follow directions made in the Order and work alongside a Supervising Officer to improve the child's school attendance. The Supervising Officer will be put in place by Stockport Council and may be a Social Worker, Education Welfare Officer or other Family Help professional. Where parents persistently fail to comply with the directions given under an ESO, they may be prosecuted in the Magistrates' Court. ESOs usually last for a year, but can be extended to up to three years.

OUR VISION FOR ATTENDANCE:

19. At St Winifred's, we know that **attendance is everyone's business**. We recognise that the foundation of securing good attendance is to develop good patterns of attendance and ensuring that it is integral part of the school ethos and culture. We will work with pupils and parents to remove any barriers by building strong and trusting relationships and work together to put the right support in place.

School

20. As a school, we will:
    - Have a name senior leader with the responsibility for Attendance
    - Make sure attendance support and improvement is appropriately resourced including the effective use of Pupil Premium funding
    - Make improving attendance integral to our wider school improvement efforts, recognising how it connects with the quality of the school's curriculum, behaviour, safeguarding, and our approach to inclusion, well-being and support for disadvantaged pupils.
    - Have a school strategy for reducing persistent and severe absence, including access to wider support services and when support will be formalised work in conjunction with the local authority.
    - Promote the importance of good attendance and set high expectations for every pupil's attendance and punctuality at school.
    - Communicate these expectations clearly, strongly and consistently to parents and to pupils.
    - Record attendance accurately and follow up absences with parents in a timely manner.
    - Make sure staff have a good understanding of attendance-related matters and attendance support is appropriately resourced.
    - Listen carefully to parents about the reasons why children are not attending regularly.
    - Support parents to understand what is expected of them and work together to identify and understand the barriers to attendance.
    - Offer support and make reasonable adjustments where needed to overcome barriers to attendance under the Equality Act 2010 and the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child.
    - Where appropriate, work with a range of services and alternative provisions when additional support is needed.
    - Work closely with support services and agencies where pupils and families need additional support.
    - Analyse attendance information to identify patterns and trends, and use this analysis to target our actions for individual pupils, groups of pupils and at a whole-school level.
    - Regularly review our attendance-related messaging, processes and strategies with a view to continued whole-school improvement.
    - Proactively manage lateness and first day calling to ensure each reason for not being in school and on time is challenged and supported appropriately.
    - Carry out regular home visits for children who are struggling to attend to ensure that children maintain their sense of belonging to school – this could be someone from the pastoral team, senior leader or someone the child is familiar with. These checks are also important to ensure the school has 'eyes on the child' and don't have any safeguarding concerns. During these visits the communication between school and home will aim to be curious about reasons for absence and look at ways to improve attendance and support the child in attending.
    - Work with the Stockport Council on legal intervention is support is not successful or not engaged with.

21. The designated senior leader with overall responsibility for championing and improving attendance at St Winifred's is Alicia Duffy, Headteacher.

Governing Body

22. To support our vision for attendance, the governing body will:

    - Ensure regular ongoing support for the child or parent, guidance, and challenge in relation to attendance, recognising the importance of good attendance and promoting it across the school's ethos and policies.

- Ensure that there is a named senior leader responsible for the strategic approach to attendance in school.
- Ensure that the school's leadership team fulfil their expectations and the relevant statutory duties as set out in attendance related legislation and guidance.
- Regularly review attendance data, discuss and challenge trends with vulnerable groups or year groups, and help the school leadership team focus improvement efforts on the individual pupils or groups of pupils who need it most.
- Ensure school staff receive adequate training on attendance.

Parents

23. The law entitles every child of compulsory school age to an efficient, full-time education suitable to their age, aptitude, and any special educational need they may have. It is the legal responsibility of every parent to make sure their child receives that education either by attendance at a school or by education otherwise than at a school.

24. Where parents decide to have their child registered at school, they have an additional legal duty to ensure their child attends that school regularly. This means their child must attend every day that the school is open, except in a small number of allowable circumstances such as being too ill to attend or being given permission for an absence in advance from the school.

25. Parents are expected to support the school to improve and maintain high standards of attendance by:
    - Ensuring their child attends regularly as required by law.
    - Ensuring the school has up to date contact information including home address, telephone numbers, email addresses and emergency contacts. Where reasonably possible there should be more than one emergency contact number (KCSiE 2024 pt 101).
    - Ensuring that, in the event of a house move, the school has been informed about the new address and possible school details at the earliest opportunities and no later than the last day they attend.
    - Supporting the school's absence procedures:
        - ✓ Telephoning school every day that their child is unable to attend school due to illness (except where a doctor's report has already been provided indicating an expected return date).
        - ✓ Providing medical or other evidence in relation to absence if required by the school.
        - ✓ Arranging medical or dental appointments to take place outside school hours wherever possible.
        - ✓ Not taking family holidays in term time or any leave of absence for any reason without prior agreement.
        - ✓ Requesting leave of absence only in exceptional circumstances and in advance.
    - Raising any issues or concerns affecting attendance with school staff at the earliest opportunity.
    - Attending raising attendance meetings with school staff to discuss concerns and plan support, if requested by the school.
    - Working in partnership with school and other agencies to address any attendance problems.
    - Encouraging good routines at home to ensure children are prepared for school each day.

ABSENCE PROCEDURES

Parents:

26. If a pupil is absent from school, **parents are expected to**:
    - Contact school on the first day their child is absent, giving the reason for absence, and on every further day of absence (except where a doctor's report has already been provided indicating an expected return date).
    - Parents are expected to telephone the school office on 0161 432 5782 by 8:30am and leave a voicemail on the dedicated pupil absence line
    - Ensure that their child returns to school as soon as possible.
    - Provide any medical evidence, if requested, to support the absence.
    - Proactively contact school for support where they are concerned about their child's attendance by speaking to the class teacher, learning mentor or a member of the Senior Leadership Team.
    - Attend raising attendance meetings to plan action and outcomes when attendance is a concern.

School:

27. The school will:
    - Contact parents by text, telephone or complete a home visit on the first day of absence and further days of absence (if we haven't already been notified of the absence)
        - If we are unable to make contact this way, we will attempt to reach parents by email, letter, use of all emergency contacts and additional home visits where necessary.
    - Complete an Attendance Return for any child with a continuous period of ten school days where their absence has been recorded as unauthorized using with one or more of the codes G,N,O and/or U.
    - Complete a sickness return to Stockport Council for a child who has been recorded with code I (Illness) and who we have reasonable grounds to believe will miss 15 days consecutively or cumulatively because of sickness. This is to help the school and Stockport Council to agree any provision needed to ensure continuity of education, in line with education for pupils who cannot attend because of health needs, in line with statutory guidance.
    - Make a MASSH referral to Stockport Council where there are concerns about the welfare of a child who is not attending school.
28. Children are expected to be in school by 8:45am and registers are taken at 9am. Pupils will receive a late mark 'L' in the register if they are not in school by that time.
29. Children arriving after 9am are required to enter through the main office and the parent/carer signs them in on our electronic system.
30. The registers will be closed at 9:30am. In accordance with the School Attendance (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2024, any pupils arriving after that time will be marked as 'U - late after the registers have closed' in the register for that session. This is classed as an unauthorised absence.
31. Parents will be contacted in cases where pupils are regularly late to discuss the reasons for lateness and offer support where appropriate.
32. Parents should note that if their child is regularly late, after the registers close, it will significantly impact on their child's attendance. School will monitor this and offer support to improve attendance. However, where this is not successful or parents don't engage with the offer of support, it could lead to the school making a referral to the local authority for legal proceedings.

RECORDING OF ABSENCES

All absences must be recorded in the school register and categorised as either authorised or unauthorised.

Present Codes		
/ \	present during registration	
B	educated off site and taster days and do not fit K, V, P or W codes	Mandatory explanation needs to be recorded
K	attending provision arranged by the local authority	Mandatory explanation needs to be recorded
L	arrived after the register has started but before it has closed	
P	sporting activity with prior agreement from school	
V	educational visit or trip	
W	work experience	
Absent Codes		
Authorised Absences		
C	exceptional circumstances	
C1	in a regulated performance/undertaking regulated employment abroad	
C2	absent due to part-time timetable	
D	dual registered	
E	suspended or permanently excluded	
I	illness (not medical or dental appointments)	
J1	job/school/college interview	
M	medical or dental appointment	
Q	unable to attend because of a lack of access arrangements	
R	religious observance (only 1 day allowed, any more coded as C if agreed)	
S	study leave	
T	parent travelling for occupational purposes	
X	non-compulsory school age pupil not required to attend school	
Y1	unable to attend due to transport provided not being available	
Y2	unable to attend due to widespread transport disruption	
Y3	unable to attend due to part of the school premises being closed	
Y4	unable to attend due to whole school closure	
Y5	unable to attend as pupil is in criminal justice detention	
Y6	unable to attend in accordance with public health guidance or law	
Y7	unable to attend due to other avoidable cause (must affect the pupil NOT the parent)	Mandatory explanation needs to be recorded
Unauthorised Absence		
G	holiday (not agreed)	
N	reason for absence not yet established (must be corrected within 5 days)	
O	absent in other or unknown circumstances	
U	late after register has closed	
Z	pupil not yet on register	
#	planned whole school closure (eg holidays, insets and polling station days)	

Authorised absence from school

33. Authorised absence is an absence agreed by the school. Examples of authorised absence:

34. **Illness**

- Parents are asked to contact school each day their child is unable to attend school due to illness, except where information from a health professional has been provided indicating an expected return date (see section 3 – absence procedures)
- Where a child or young person has frequent absence due to illness, parents may be asked to attend a meeting in school to agree a medical action plan this may include support from the school nurse.
- Parents may also be asked for medical evidence, particularly where absences due to illness are frequent or result in the pupil having long periods of time off school.
- Where pupils are likely to miss more than 15 days of school due to illness, they may be entitled to educational provision from their home local authority. In most cases, the school would make a referral where appropriate. We will work in partnership with parents and health professionals to identify and refer pupils entitled to this provision in line with the relevant local authority's policy for children who cannot attend school due to health reasons.

35. **Medical/Dental appointments**

- Parents are requested wherever possible to make routine medical or dental appointments outside of the school day. However, we understand that hospital appointments and specialist clinic appointments often occur during the school day. Pupils should only be out of school for the minimum amount of time necessary for the appointment.
- Parents are asked to provide a copy of their appointments to the school office.

36. **Other leave of absence** may only be granted in **exceptional circumstances**

- Parents must put their request in writing in advance to the head teacher. Term time holidays are unlikely to be agreed.
- If the absence is not authorised by the head teacher and the child does not attend school, we may request that Stockport Council issues an Education Penalty Notice (see Section 8 - legal sanctions).

37. **Other examples of authorised circumstances** include:

- Part-time timetables may be agreed only in exceptional cases, for example where medical issues prevent a pupil from attending full time or as part of a re-integration package. Any part-time timetable agreed should only be used as a temporary arrangement, with full consent of parents and be regularly reviewed with a view to increasing attendance to full-time as quickly as possible.
- Where a pupil is absent from school because of a suspension or permanent exclusion.
- Absence to take part in any day set aside exclusively for religious observance by the religious body to which the parents belong, including religious festivals.
- When traveller families are known to be travelling for occupational purposes and have agreed this with school, but it is not known whether the pupil is attending another school. (In order to fulfil legal requirements, in such cases, pupils must attend school for at least 200 sessions in every 12 months).

Unauthorised Absence from School

38. Unauthorised absences are absences from school for which the school has not given permission, including arriving late at school after the registers have closed. Absence will not be authorised unless parents have provided a satisfactory explanation that has been accepted by the school.

UNDERSTANDING BARRIERS TO ATTENDANCE

39. At St Winifred's, we recognise that poor attendance is often a sign of wider difficulties in a child's life whether at home or at school. Parents should make school aware of any difficulties or changes in circumstances that may affect their child's attendance or behaviour at school. This may include bereavement, divorce/separation, or other family difficulties; friendship issues; concerns relating to special educational needs and disabilities (SEND), medical needs or mental health/anxiety. This will help the school identify any additional support that may be required.

40. Additionally, we recognise that some pupils face greater barriers to attendance than their peers and are more likely to require additional support to attain good attendance, for example, pupils with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND), those with physical or mental health needs, young carers and children with Social Workers. We still maintain high expectations of attendance, but we will be mindful of the way in which additional barriers may affect attendance. Reasonable adjustments will be made and additional support from other services sought where appropriate.

41. Pupils with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND) – the special educational needs and disabilities coordinator (SENDCO) will ensure that reasonable adjustments are made where appropriate to support good attendance and that attendance issues are addressed in all assessment and review processes.

42. Pupils with a Social Worker – we will notify the Social Worker of any unauthorised absences and concerns about attendance/punctuality, and will support them in addressing attendance issues as part of the child or family plan.

43. Children in our Care – the designated teacher will ensure that attendance issues are addressed in Personal Education Plans (PEPs) and in regular looked after review meetings. The Social Worker will be notified of any unauthorised absences and we will contact the relevant Virtual School Headteacher for more support where necessary.

ATTENDANCE INTERVENTION STAGED PROCESS

44. St Winifred's uses a range of methods to identify pupils whose attendance is causing concern including:

- Regular analysis of whole school and group attendance data by attendance staff, the leadership team and governing body, including vulnerable pupils and pupils with SEND (this data will be anomynised)
- Regular attendance monitoring meetings between the school's attendance officer and relevant teachers/pastoral staff/SENDCO.
- Termly meetings with the local authority's Education Welfare Service to discuss cases where persistent absence is a concern.

45. We use Stockport Council's **Attendance Intervention Staged Process** as a framework for our work with individual pupils with low attendance. We recognise that, in most cases, improvement in attendance can be brought about by good communication and strong partnership working between parents, pupils and the school, identifying and addressing the barriers to attendance.

46. Offering early help and involving early help services is also an integral part of the staged process in cases where more support is needed to help improve attendance.