

The St. Christopher School Attendance Policy

<http://thestchristopherschool.co.uk/>



The
St Christopher
School Academy Trust

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LGB

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Learning Outside the Classroom



Southend-on-Sea



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THE ST. CHRISTOPHER SCHOOL

Academy Trust - Special School

Mountdale Gardens, Leigh-on-Sea, Essex SS9 4AW

Headteacher: Mr. Dan Woodman

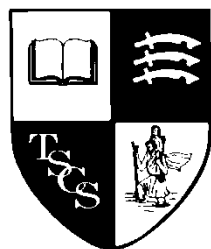
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SEN Trust Southend



The St. Christopher School Attendance Policy

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The St. Christopher School

Attendance Policy

For the attention of staff, parents, governors and volunteers.

Rationale

At The St. Christopher School we recognise the importance of whole school attendance. Improving attendance is everyone's business. We recognise the barriers to accessing education are wide and complex, both within and beyond the school gates, and are often specific to individual pupils and families. Some pupils find it harder than others to attend school and therefore at all stages of improving attendance, we endeavour to work closely with other professionals, pupils and parents to collaboratively remove any barriers to attendance by building strong, trusting relationships, and working together to put the right support in place.

Every child of compulsory school age is entitled to an efficient, full-time education suitable to their age, aptitude and any special educational needs they may have. It is the legal responsibility of every parent to make sure their child receives that education, and at The St. Christopher School we will work collaboratively with the parents to facilitate this taking place.

As a school we expect the highest possible attendance from all our pupils. This is essential for pupils to get the most out of their school experience, including wellbeing, attainment and wider life chances.

Principles

- Receiving a full-time, suitable education is a child's legal entitlement.
- It is the parents /carers' legal responsibility to ensure this happens.
- Attending school regularly aids intellectual, social, and emotional development and is essential if children are to benefit fully from their school life.
- Attending school regularly safeguards the welfare of children whilst they are not in the care of their parents.
- All children whose attendance is poor will be treated as vulnerable.

The aim of this policy

To ensure that every pupil receives a full-time education and so maximise their opportunity to reach their full potential.

The St. Christopher School promotes the regular attendance of all pupils to ensure that they receive their legal entitlement and can benefit from full-time education and their school experience. This includes attainment, well-being, social development, wider life chances and offers the best opportunity for their needs to be identified and support provided.



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Promoting Regular Attendance

This section sets out the measures in place at The St. Christopher School to promote regular attendance.

- Treat all pupils and parents/carers with dignity. Our staff will always seek to model respectful relationships to build a positive relationship between home and school that can be the foundation of good attendance.
- Set out expectations of attendance and reporting in the home-school agreement and communicate procedures clearly in admissions meetings.
- Regularly inform parents about their child's attendance and absence levels and also the impact of this on learning when absence becomes a concern.
- Hold regular meetings with the parents of pupils who the school (and/or local authority) consider to be vulnerable or are persistently or severely absent to discuss attendance and engagement at school.
- Identify pupils who need support additional support and work with the parents/carers and other professionals to put this in place.
- Make the necessary statutory data returns to the local authority.
- Support pupils back into school following a lengthy or unavoidable period of absence and provide support to build confidence and bridge gaps. If well enough to do so, pupils will be provided with 'Continuity of Learning' work when absent, which means that they are able to continue to learn.
- Endeavour to make contact on the first day of absence, if no email, note or telephone call is received by the school office from the parent/carer by 9.30am that day. If the family is not available on the telephone a message will be left, where possible. Emails may also be used. The office will keep a record of contact made and responses.
- If there is no response from either of the 2 emergency contacts nominated by the parent/carer and this is considered a cause for concern, the school may decide to notify the police in the interests of safeguarding the pupil concerned.
- Continue to try to contact the parents/ carers if there is no response. If by the end of the second day there has still been no contact made (third day if waiting for a response to a letter), the school will endeavour to make face to face contact with the parent/carer. A referral may be made to the Southend Children's Single Point of Access (C-SPOC) if the Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL) thinks this is appropriate.
- Follow up on all unexplained absences to obtain explanations from parents. Although parents may offer a reason, only the school can authorise the absence. In the case of long-term or frequent absence due to medical conditions, verifications from a GP or other relevant body may be requested.
- Make initial enquiries of parents/carers of pupils who are not attending regularly, express their concern and clarify the school's and the LA's expectations with regard to regular school attendance. School will send formal letters when applicable.

Pupils are not allowed to leave the premises without prior permission from the school.

- Whenever possible, parents should try to arrange medical and other appointments outside of school time.
- Parents are requested to confirm in writing the reason for any planned absence, the time of leaving, the expected return time and when the pupil is being collected.

There are clear links from this policy to our safeguarding and child protection duties as set out in Keeping Children Safe in Education (DFE 2024). Our Safeguarding policy can be found on the school website.

The Admissions Register (or “school roll”)

The school is responsible for keeping the Admissions Register up to date. This contains specific personal details of every pupil along with the date of admission or readmission to the school, information regarding parents and carers, and details of the last school attended. We also hold emergency contact numbers for each pupil. It is our policy to hold more than one such number, so that we have options to contact a responsible adult should the need arise. A pupil's name can only be lawfully deleted from the admissions register in very limited circumstances and we follow the DFE guidance on this.

The Attendance Register

The register will be taken at the start of each morning session of each school day and once during the afternoon session. On each occasion, the school will record whether every pupil is present, attending an approved educational activity, absent, or unable to attend due to exceptional circumstances. These records will be kept electronically to ensure accuracy and the timely sharing and analysis of information – all of which is critical to ensure good attendance.

Punctuality and Regular Attendance

The school day starts 8.45 am and finishes at 3.00pm every day (unless otherwise specified in the calendar)

Lateness

Pupils at The St. Christopher School are expected to be on time as each day starts with a settling period. Registers are kept open until 9.30am each morning and then at this point, any pupil not present is marked absent.

Absence

Parents must contact the school when their child is absent to explain that absence. This can be done by calling the school phone number of (01702) 524193, option 1, and leaving a message, or by emailing office@tscs.southend.sch.uk with the following details:

- Full name of the pupil and class
- Full name of person reporting absence and relation to child;
- Reason for absence.

Where a reason for the absence is not received by 9.30am on the day of the absence, the school will contact the parents on the same day to ascertain the reason for the absence. Where further unexplained absences occur, the school will make further contact with the parent/ carer (including social workers where appropriate). This should be with the aim of understanding why the absence has occurred, and when the pupil will return.

The correct absence code will be inputted into the Attendance Register as soon as the reason is ascertained and within five working days of the absence. Where a pupil is on a school visit or trip, this will be coded correctly and will count positively towards attendance.

Granting a leave of absence will only be made in exceptional circumstances. Each application will be considered individually considering the specific facts and circumstances and relevant background context behind the request. If a leave of absence is granted it is for the Headteacher (Dan Woodman) to determine the length of the time the pupil can be away from school.

To request a leave of absence please complete the online form (on the website) at least two weeks before the intended absence, except in the case of an emergency

Pupils with medical conditions and special educational needs and disabilities

The St. Christopher School recognises that some pupils face greater barriers to attendance than their peers. These can include pupils who suffer from long-term medical conditions or who have special educational needs and disabilities. Their right to an education is the same as any other pupil and therefore the attendance ambition for these pupils is the same as they are for any other pupil. We ask all staff to reinforce messages about the importance of attendance and create a welcoming environment which encourages pupils to attend. In working with their parents to improve attendance, we will be mindful of the barriers these pupils face and put additional support in place where necessary to help them access their full-time education. This will include:

- Having sensitive conversations and developing good support for pupils with physical or mental health conditions. For example, making reasonable adjustments where a pupil has a disability or putting in place an individual healthcare plan where needed.
- Considering whether additional support from external partners (including the local authority or health services) would be appropriate, making referrals in a timely manner and working together with those services to deliver any subsequent support.

- Establishing strategies for removing the in-school barriers pupils may face, including considering support or reasonable adjustments for uniform, transport, routines, access to support in school and lunchtime arrangements.
- Ensuring data is regularly monitored and discussed at LGB Governing body meetings and in meetings with the local authority so that additional support from other agencies is accessed where necessary. Pupils with long term illnesses or other health needs may need additional support to continue their education, such as alternative provision provided by the local authority. Local authorities are responsible for arranging suitable education for children of compulsory school age who, because of health reasons, would otherwise not receive suitable education.

Part-time timetables

All pupils of compulsory school age are entitled to a full-time education. In very exceptional circumstances, where it is in a pupil's best interests, there may be a need for a temporary part-time timetable to meet their individual needs. For example, where a medical condition prevents a pupil from attending full-time education and a part-time timetable is considered as part of a re-integration package for a short period of time only. A part-time timetable must only be in place for the shortest time necessary and not be treated as a long-term solution. Formal arrangements will also be put in place for regularly reviewing it with the pupil and their parents/carers. In agreeing to a part-time timetable, a school has agreed to a pupil being absent from school for part of the week or day and therefore will treat such absence as authorised. We will of course consider how best to support learning when a child is working on a part time timetable using a blended approach.

Particular Responsibilities

This section outlines responsibilities of particular members of staff in relation to attendance.

This section sets out the action to be taken by staff if a registered pupil fails to attend the school regularly.

Where a pupil or family needs support with attendance, it is important that the best placed person in the school works with and supports the family. Wherever possible, we will keep this person consistent. Where a pattern of absence is at risk of becoming, or becomes, problematic the school will draw on these relationships and listen to and understand the barriers to attendance the pupil or family is experiencing. In doing so, the school will take into consideration the sensitivity of some of the reasons for absence and understand the importance of school as a place of safety and support. In the first instance, the school will support pupils and parents by working together to address any in-school barriers to attendance. Where barriers are outside of the school's control, we endeavour to work together with all partners to support pupils and parents to access any support they may need.

As a minimum, this will include meeting with pupils and parents at risk of persistent or severe absence to understand barriers to being in school, agreeing actions or interventions to address them and keeping those actions under regular review in discussion with pupils and families. This may include referrals to services and organisations that can provide support.

Duties and responsibilities

The Governing Body

- Promoting the importance of school attendance across the school's policies and ethos
- Making sure school leaders fulfil expectations and statutory duties
- Regularly reviewing and challenging attendance data
- Monitoring attendance figures for the whole school
- Making sure staff receive adequate training on attendance
- Holding the headteacher to account for the implementation of this policy

Headteacher

- To have overall responsibility for whole school attendance and leading attendance across the school
- Offering a clear vision for attendance improvement
- Implementation of this policy at the school, evaluating and monitoring expectations and processes
- Having an oversight, monitoring school-level absence data and reporting it to governors
- Devising specific strategies to address areas of poor attendance identified through data
- Building relationships with parents/carers to discuss and tackle attendance issues
- Creating intervention reintegration plans in partnership with pupils and their parents/carers
- Delivering targeted intervention and support to pupils and families
- Monitoring the impact of any implemented attendance strategies
- Issuing fixed-penalty notices, where necessary, in accordance with Southend City Council's Code of Conduct under the Provision of the Education (Penalty Notices) regulation 2004

The St. Christopher School understands that as poor attendance can be habitual, prevention and early detection is crucial. The Headteacher will therefore undertake regular data analysis to:

- both identify and provide immediate additional support to pupils that need it;
- look at historic and emerging patterns across the school and develop strategies to address them.

The St. Christopher School will typically carry out the following analysis:

- Daily monitoring of attendance.
- Monitoring and analysing weekly attendance (including punctuality) patterns and trends, including whether there are particular issues for some children on certain days.
- Half-termly, termly and full-year data analysis of patterns and trends, including analysis of pupils, identifying patterns in use of certain codes, days where attendance is typically poor

Teachers

- To keep accurate attendance registers at the beginning of each morning and afternoon.
- To identify pupils with poor or irregular attendance and inform a member of the SLT.

Admin Team

- To contact the families of pupils who have unexplained absence and inform the Headteacher or a member of the SLT.

Parents/Carers

We expect parents to:

- Provide up-to-date contact numbers and changes of address.
- Provide details of at least two contacts for emergency use.
- Notify the School when their child is unable to attend, with a reason, on the first day of the absence.
- Contact the School after the first day of absence to advise the school if the absence is continuing.
- Keep the School well informed, in cases of lengthy absence. Parents/carers will be encouraged to keep absences to a minimum. A note or explanation from a child's home does not mean an absence becomes authorised. The decision whether to authorise an absence will always rest with the Headteacher (Dan Woodman).
- Provide medical evidence indicating attendance at the dentist, doctor, or optician before the arranged appointment unless an emergency has arisen, this could be a letter/appointment card.
- Ensure that their child arrives at school on time each day.
- Let the School know if their child is going to be late, e.g., if a car breaks down; or if an urgent appointment has been made.
- Understand the importance of good attendance and punctuality and promote this with their child.
- Provide written explanation or telephone the school office and provide medical evidence for whole-day appointments as well as medical evidence for persistent absence from school due to alleged illness.

- Only request leave of absence if it is for an exceptional circumstance.

References

This policy meets the requirements of the working together to improve school attendance from the Department for Education (DfE) and refers to the DfE's statutory guidance on school attendance parental responsibility measures. These documents are drawn from the following legislation setting out the legal powers and duties that govern school attendance:

Part 6 of The Education Act 1996

Part 3 of The Education Act 2002

Part 7 of The Education and Inspections Act 2006

The Education (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2006 (and 2010, 2011, 2013, 2016 amendments)

The Education (Penalty Notices) (England) (Amendment) Regulations 2013

It also refers to:

School census guidance

Keeping Children Safe in Education

Mental health issues affecting a pupil's attendance: guidance for schools

Southend City Council's Code of Conduct under the Provision of the Education (Penalty Notices) Regulation 2004

Ratified by: The Governing Body

Reviewed by: Dan Woodman – January 2026

Next review date: September 2026