



St Peter's School

Attendance Policy

(Absent Children and Attendance Policy)

Written by:	Headteacher	This version	September 2024
Approved by:	Governors	Next review due:	September 2025

Children Absent from Education

The welfare of all of our children at St Peter's School is our paramount responsibility. A child absent from education, particularly on repeat occasions, is a potential indicator of abuse or neglect, including child sexual and/or criminal exploitation and county lines. It may indicate mental health problems, risk of substance abuse, risk of travelling to conflict zones, risk of female genital mutilation, so called 'honour'-based abuse or risk of forced marriage. Every adult who works at the school has been trained to appreciate that he or she has a key responsibility for helping to keep all of the children safe at all times.

This includes the importance of effective information sharing to ensure our children are safe and receiving suitable education. Early intervention is necessary to identify the existence of any underlying safeguarding risk and to help prevent the risks of a child going missing in future. Where staff have concerns that a child is missing from school, this policy should be followed.

Every member of our staff who works with children has read Part 1 of Keeping Children Safe in Education (KCSIE). Our staffing ratios are generous and are deliberately designed to ensure that every child is supervised the whole time that he or she is in our care.

This policy was drawn up having had regard to the Independent School Regulatory Requirements (paragraph 7 and 15), Early Years Statutory Framework (paragraph 3.73) and Department for Education guidance Children Missing Education (September 2016).

Information for parents

All pupils on roll are expected to attend every day, when the school is in session, as long as they are fit and healthy enough to do so. We believe that the most important factor in promoting good attendance is the development of positive attitudes towards school. To this end, we strive to make our schools happy and rewarding environments for all pupils.

Under the Education (Pupil Registration) Regulations 1995, the Governing body is responsible for making sure the school keeps an attendance register that records which pupils are present at the start of both the morning and the afternoon sessions of the school day. This register will also indicate whether an absence was authorised or unauthorised.

Authorised absence

An absence is classified as authorised when a pupil has been away from school for a legitimate reason and the school has received notification from a parent or guardian. For example, if a pupil has been unwell, the parent writes a note or telephones the school to explain the absence.

Only the school can make an absence authorised. Parents and guardians do not have this authority. Consequently, not all absences supported by parents and carers will be classified as authorised. For example, if a parent takes a pupil out of school to attend to personal business, this will not mean it is an authorised absence.

Unauthorised absence

An absence is classified as unauthorised when a pupil is away from school without the permission of the school. Therefore, the absence is unauthorised if a pupil is away from school without good reason, even with the support of a parent.

If a pupil is absent

When a pupil is absent without explanation the absence is recorded in the register on BromCom.

If there is any doubt about the whereabouts of a pupil, the Form teacher should enter the 'N' register mark and the school office will take immediate action, by contacting the parent or guardian, in order to check on the safety of the pupil.

A note may be sent/phone call made to the school prior to the day of absence, e.g. if a pupil has a medical appointment. The School Office must be kept informed of any planned forthcoming absence, in order to keep the register up-to-date .

Requests for leave of absence

The education (pupil registration) (England) (amendment) regulations 2013, which came into force on 1 September 2013, removed references to family holidays and extended leave as well as the notional threshold of ten school days. The amendments made clear that Headteachers may not grant any leave of absence during term time unless 'exceptional circumstances' exist. The regulations also stated that Headteachers should determine the number of school days a pupil can be away from school if leave is granted for 'exceptional circumstances'.

The DfE advice on school attendance (November 2013) should also be considered and read in conjunction with the 2013 regulations.

Pupils need to be in school for all sessions, so that they can make the most progress possible. However, it is understood that there are circumstances under which a parent may legitimately request leave of absence for a pupil to attend.

The decision to authorise absence is at the Head's discretion based on their assessment of the situation.

Circumstances vary from school to school and so there can be no absolute rules on this subject.

Term time is for education. This is the priority. Pupils have 18 weeks off school to spend time together with family, including weekends and school holidays. Heads will rightly prioritise attendance. The default school policy should be that absences will not be granted during term time and will only be authorised in exceptional circumstances.

If an event can reasonably be scheduled outside of term time then it would not be normal to authorise absence.

Absence during term time for holidays/vacations is therefore not considered an exceptional circumstance.

Absences to visit family members are also not normally granted during term time if they could be scheduled for holiday periods or outside school hours. Pupils may however need time to visit seriously ill relatives.

Absence for a bereavement of a close family member is usually considered an exceptional circumstance but for the funeral service only, not extended leave.

Absences for important religious observances are often taken into account but only for the ceremony and travelling time, not extended leave. This is intended for one off situations rather than regular or recurring events.

Schools may wish to take other circumstances into consideration:

- Families of service personnel if they are returning from long operational tours that prevent contact during scheduled holiday time.
- Reasonable adjustments for students with special educational needs or disabilities.
- Families may need time together to recover from trauma or crisis.
- It is acceptable to take a student's previous record of attendance into account when making decisions.

It is important to note that Heads can determine the length of the authorised absence as well as whether absence is authorised at all.

The examples cited above are illustrative rather than exhaustive. The fundamental principles for defining 'exceptional' are rare, significant, unavoidable and short. 'Unavoidable' is considered an event that could not reasonably be scheduled at another time.

School response to poor attendance

Absence from school is a contributing factor in low pupil achievement. Whilst individual circumstances may be considered as special cases, 95% attendance and above is considered a standard that all children should achieve.

97% and above: Excellent

95% – 97%: Good

90% – 95%: Fair

80% – 90%: Concern. Action may be required. Headteacher to consult with the pastoral team to determine if a referral to the local authority is needed.

Parents of pupils who have not arrived at school by the time the register closes and for whom no reason for absence has been given to school, will be contacted by school staff to ascertain the pupil's whereabouts.

Attendance data can be shared with parents at any time and will be shared on all school reports.

An attendance log is held on BromCom which records all pupil absence due to illness. Patterns of recurring absence are monitored by the Headteacher and will be raised with parents if the school becomes concerned. An attendance log is held on BromCom which records all incidents of unauthorised absences. Again, these will be monitored for patterns of absence or prolonged absence and parents will be contacted if the school becomes concerned.

Parents can expect to be contacted by the school when a pupils' attendance rate drops.

Parents will receive a letter notifying them that their child's attendance is being monitored and has become cause for concern.

If there is no improvement within 2-4 weeks, parents will be invited to meet with the Headteacher to discuss matters.

If there is still no improvement, it will be deemed that the child is 'missing from education' and a referral may be made to the local authority.

Pupils who arrive after lessons have commenced are marked as 'Late'; pupils who arrive more than 30 minutes after the morning or afternoon session begins, are marked as absent for the session. The school will contact the parents of pupils who are regularly late, so as to ensure their child's punctuality improves.

The Governors, supported by Northamptonshire Council, reserve the right to consider taking legal action against any parents or guardians who repeatedly fail to accept their responsibility for sending their child to school on a regular basis.

Action to be followed by staff if a child fails to attend first day of school

All new pupils are placed on the School's admission register at the beginning of the first day on which the School has agreed that the pupil will attend the School. If a child fails to attend on the agreed date, staff will inform the Headteacher/Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL) (or their deputy) without delay. The Headteacher/DSL will consider notifying the local authority at the earliest opportunity.

Where there are changes affecting the child (including a change of address or school), these will be reflected in the admission register. This will assist the School and external agencies when making enquiries to locate any missing children.

Long-term absence

When pupils are absent and are unable to come into school, access to learning resources will be provided via Google Classroom, where possible. However, it should be recognised that the best place for learning is in school.

The School will inform the local authority of any pupil who fails to attend school regularly, or has been absent without the school's permission for a continuous period of 10 school days or more without permission. A referral will be made under the term 'Child Missing from Education (CME)

Where a pupil has been continuously absent without authorisation for a period of not less than 20 school days (and there are no reasonable grounds to believe the pupil is unwell or unable to attend because of any unavoidable cause), and the School and local authority have failed, following reasonable enquiry, to ascertain where the pupil is, the School may delete the pupil's name from the admission register. The school will inform the local authority of such deletion no later than the time at which the pupil's name is deleted from the register.

The school also recognises its wider reporting duties following deletions from the admission register, in accordance with the Education (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2006, to help identify children who are missing education and/or otherwise at risk of harm.

Long Term Sickness

Where a pupil has a long-term illness, after a period of 21 school days, this should be confirmed by a medical/mental health practitioner. Regular contact will be kept between the school and student and/or parents and every effort will be made to ensure the student is supported back to education at an appropriate time.

Where a student is not well enough to attend school but is deemed well enough to continue their education from home, the school will make every effort to provide an appropriate amount of work to facilitate a phased return to education. The school will be mindful of the student's needs and will work with parents to ensure the student is not overwhelmed. This will be reviewed regularly by the Headteacher/DSL.

Monitoring and review

The Governors are accountable for overall attendance at the schools, with the Headteacher being responsible for the day-to-day implementation of this policy. The Governors will therefore examine closely the information provided to them, and seek to ensure that our attendance figures are as high as they should be.

The school will keep accurate attendance records on file for a minimum period of three years.

The rates of attendance will be reported to Governors' in Head's Reports.

Class teachers will be responsible for monitoring attendance in their class, and along with the office staff, following up absences in the appropriate way. If there is concern about a pupil's absence, they will contact the school office immediately. If there is a longer-term general worry about the attendance of a particular pupil, this will be reported to the Head, who will contact the parents or guardians.

Children Who go Missing from School/Trips

The enhanced supervisory arrangements for outings involving our youngest children are set out in a detailed policy document: the Educational Visits policy. This document is available on our website and can be provided to parents on request. We review these policies regularly (at least once a year) in order to satisfy ourselves that they are robust and effective. All new staff receive a thorough induction into the importance of effective supervision of very young children and read at least Part 1 of KCSIE.

Actions to be followed by staff if a child goes missing from School during the school day (8.45am-4:15pm)

St Peter's School takes the safety of pupils very seriously and will take every precaution necessary to ensure that the pupils in their care do not leave a session unaccompanied. The chances of finding a missing pupil safe are greatest if the pupil's absence is soon discovered. Our missing child procedures are:

- We will quickly find out how many pupils should be present and make someone responsible for regular counted checks.
- Inform office to initiate register/medical appointment check
- Inform Headteacher/DSL
- Office/Duty SLT member to print pupil information sheet with photograph
- Initiate site search with all available staff
- If pupil not found, consider initiating 'lock down'
- Initiate crisis procedure

A record is kept by the School of any instances in which a pupil is missing from school without satisfactory permission and documentation, including the action taken and the pupil's explanation.

Search systematically

If the pupil is missing at the end of the day, the first incidence will be to check the class timetable, this will identify where the pupil was supposed to go at the end of the school day. We are responsible for the missing pupil and also for the other pupils in the school.

Without alarming them, we will ask the pupils whether they have seen the pupil who is missing.

We will check with the staff to find out who last saw the pupil, when this was and what they were doing and try to prepare a checklist of possible hiding-places in and around the premises. We will check every room in the buildings and also any accessible outside area. If the situation occurs during the end of the day change-over we will inform Late Club and, if appropriate, seek their cooperation.

Parents

Alarming them as little as possible, we will call the child's parents to warn them that their child may be attempting to get home. If they are out or at work, we will have an alternative number to call in emergencies.

If the child lives within walking distance of the school, one adult should make the journey on foot in order to catch up with or intercept the child if possible. We will be in continuous contact with the parents during the search.

Police

If the above steps do not locate the pupil, the police will be called. They have the resources to conduct a search and speed is important.

Informing other people

The Headteacher/DSL will contact the relevant services

A student may be identified as missing when:

- In lessons, the staff registers the class on BromCom and they are listed as N. An email is sent to the School Office
- The absence at morning registration is not confirmed by School Office contact with home
- School Office notified by a fellow student or member of staff

If a child was found to be missing from School, we would immediately notify the School Office who will:

- Contact and make the necessary checks such as the teacher to assess whether the absence is expected
- Check with members of SLT E.g. Pastora Lead or SENDCo
- Check all lists of trips out of School and signing out books
- Check Sports, Music, or Co Curricular commitments
- If the student is still found to be missing, The School Office will immediately:
 - Inform the Headteacher or SLT members, who will initiate and oversee a search of the site
 - Advise all teachers due to teach the student later that day that they must immediately inform the School Office if the student appears
 - Set off the school fire alarm

If student still missing after fire alarm – the Headteacher and parents of the student will be informed; and

- At the Head's discretion, the police to be informed

If the student is then found, or the incident is otherwise resolved:

- The Headteacher will be directly informed by the School Office
- The Police will be informed if they have been involved
- The Headteacher will initiate a full inquiry, and provide a written report. This report and the incident log will be kept on the student's file

If the child is still missing (after the fire alarm if appropriate), the following steps would be taken without delay:

- Inform the Head
- Call the child's parents and ask them to attempt contact (for older students) or come to the School at once
- The Headteacher would immediately notify the Police

- The Headteacher will arrange for staff to search the rest of the wider School premises and grounds
- If the child's home is within walking distance, a member of staff may be asked to check to see if the child has gone home. They would set out on foot to attempt to catch up with the child
- The DSL will inform the Northamptonshire Safeguarding Children Partnership and the Local Authority Designated Officer (LADO)
- The School will cooperate fully with any Police investigation and any safeguarding investigation by the local authority.
- Inform the Chair of Governors

During the course of the investigation into the missing child, the school, in consultation with the LADO, will decide what information should be given to other parents, staff and other pupils and how press enquiries are to be dealt with.

A full record of all activities taken up to the stage at which the child was found would be made for the incident report. If appropriate, procedures would be adjusted.

The School will always consider the wider circumstances around a children going missing from School and whether there are wider safeguarding concerns that may need to be addressed in line with the School's Child Protection policy.

Actions to be followed by staff if a child goes missing on a school trip

- An immediate Headteacher count will be carried out in order to ensure that all the other children were present
- An adult will search the immediate vicinity
- Immediately inform the Headteacher by mobile phone
- The remaining students will be taken back to school as soon as reasonably practicable
- Ask the Headteacher to ring the child's parents as soon as reasonably practicable to explain what has happened, and what steps have been set in motion. Ask them to attend to the venue/ the School at once
- Contact the venue manager and arrange a search (where relevant)
- Immediately contact the Police
- The DSL (or their deputy) will inform the Local children's Safeguarding Partnership and the school's LADO without delay
- The School will cooperate fully with any Police investigation and any safeguarding investigation by the local authority
- Inform the Chair of Governors and the Safeguarding Governor without delay
- The School's insurers would be informed as soon as reasonably practicable
- If the child is injured and is taken directly from the scene of the accident to hospital for treatment a report would be made under RIDDOR to the Health & Safety Executive (HSE) as soon as reasonably practicable and no later than 15 days of the accident.

A full record of all activities taken up to the stage at which the child was found will be made for the incident report. The school will review its procedures and, if appropriate, these would be adjusted.

Actions to be followed by staff once the child is found

- Talk to, take care of and, if necessary, comfort the child
- Inform parents
- Inform the Headteacher/DSL
- The Headteacher will speak to the parents to discuss events and give an account of the incident (having discussed this beforehand with the LADO if necessary)
- The Headteacher or member of senior staff will initiate a full investigation
- Media queries should be referred to the Headteacher (after discussion with the LADO if appropriate)
- The investigation will involve all concerned providing written statements
- The report will be detailed covering: time, place, numbers of staff and children, when the child was last seen, what appeared to have happened, the purpose of the outing, the length of time that the child was missing and how s/he appeared to have gone missing, as well as lessons for the future.
- Consider whether actions need to be taken in line with the School's Child Protection policy where there are concerns about the welfare of the child.

Procedures to be followed by staff when a child is not collected on time

If a child is not collected within half an hour of the agreed collection time, the School will call the contact numbers for the parent or carers. Where reasonably possible the School will hold more than one emergency contact number for each pupil. If there is no answer, staff will begin to call the emergency numbers for this child. During this time, the child will be safely looked after by the School. If there is no response from the parents' or carers' contact numbers or the emergency numbers within a one hour period, the Headteacher will contact the Social Care Duty Officer. Social Care will make emergency arrangements for the child and will arrange for a visit to be made to the child's house and will check with the Police. The School will make a full written report of the incident.

The School will look after the child safely throughout the time that they remain under the School's care, until such a time as they have been collected by a parent, guardian or carer, or until appropriate alternative care arrangements have been made with Social Care and/or the Police in order to prioritise the child's safety.

In urgent circumstances where a parent or suitable guardian cannot be contacted, it may be possible on a short-term basis, for the child to remain at school under the care of a teacher or SLT. This must be agreed by the Head, the Police and the local authority children's social care.

The School's DSL will keep a record of incidents where parents/carers do not collect a child from school or are late for no explanation or good reason, or where there are repeated incidents. If any concerns about the child's safety and welfare result, these will be dealt with in accordance with the School's Safeguarding policy and procedures detailed in its Staff Code of Conduct.

After School Clubs

Attendance by a pupil at a club is recorded on BromCom and parents receive a Clubs List if their child is due to attend a club. However, unlike during the school day (see above) parents/guardians are not contacted if a student is absent from a club.

Review

This policy is monitored, reviewed and updated regularly and its effectiveness evaluated by the Headteacher.