



St. Peter's Catholic Primary School

Attendance Policy

The school is committed to safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children and young people and expects all staff, volunteers and visitors to share the same commitment. We follow Gloucestershire Safeguarding Children Partnership. For more information go to <https://www.gloucestershire.gov.uk/gscp/>

This policy must be read in conjunction with the Safeguarding Incorporating Child Protection Policy and the Equal Opportunities Policy.

Approved by:

Local Governing
Committee (Chair)

Date: 7th February 2025

Next review due by:

September 2027

Introduction:

At St. Peter's Catholic Primary School, we believe that all children have the right to a full-time education regardless of age, aptitude and ability. St. Peter's Catholic Primary School takes seriously its responsibility to monitor the regular attendance of all pupils, acknowledging that irregular attendance can seriously disrupt continuity of learning, can lead to underachievement and low attainment and impedes the child's ability to develop friendship groups within school.

Establishing a policy which actively promotes attendance and punctuality amongst pupils, forms part of our commitment to respect the right of every child, under the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child, to a quality education. **(Article 28)**

In promoting the belief that attendance and punctuality are important values, we will be helping to equip our children for life and potentially impacting upon their futures as employees and employers.

We believe that:

- School absence of any kind or persistent absence, in any year group, affects access to the curriculum and ultimately impacts on progress and outcomes
- Repeated and consistent lateness is an unsettling start to the school day for both the child and school

For pupils with learning difficulties this factor is even more important, as underdeveloped retention skills are often an obstacle to pupil progress.

The intention of the school is for all pupils to achieve their maximum possible attendance. **This means we expect all children to attend every session in which the school is open.**

As a school we aspire for all of our children to attend every available session, in line with expectations set out by the Department for Education (DfE).

Good attendance is important because:

- Research shows a direct link between under-achievement and absence below 95%
- Regular attenders make better progress, both socially and academically
- Regular attenders find school routines, school work and friendships easier to cope with
- Regular attenders find learning more satisfying
- Regular attenders are more successful in transferring between primary and secondary school

What the Law says about attendance:

Parents have a legal obligation to ensure their children receive a full time education. This is achieved by regular attendance at school. Section 444 Section 7 of the Education Act 1996 states that 'the parent of every child of compulsory school age shall cause him / her to receive efficient full time education suitable to:

- Age, ability and aptitude, and,
- Any special educational needs he/ she may have either by regular attendance or otherwise.

Section 175 of the Education Act 2002 places a duty on local authorities and governing bodies to have regard to guidance issued by the Secretary of State with regard to safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children and students under the age of 18.

Legislation and guidance:

This policy meets the requirements of the 'Working Together to Improve School Attendance' (Feb

2024) and the 'Summary Table of Responsibilities For School Attendance' which are both from the Department for Education (DfE). 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

Roles and Responsibilities:

We follow the DfE's Summary Table of Responsibilities for School Attendance (May 2022) which highlights roles and responsibilities for Parents, Schools, Academy Trustees and LGCs and LAs – see Appendix 1.

The Headteacher is the school's designated **Attendance Champion** and will oversee the Attendance Team; this requires them to co-ordinate the school's work in promoting regular and good attendance. The school is responsible for the accurate recording and monitoring of attendance and ensuring that the policy is consistently used. The Attendance Team will ensure that issues are identified as quickly as possible so that support can be offered and put in place prior to attendance becoming an issue.

Roles and responsibilities are allocated as follows:

a) Parents/Carers

The school always tries to work in partnership with parents. If pupils are not in school it is the parents' responsibility to inform the school on the first day of absence. If a pupil is absent, and no message has been received, the school will try to contact the parents to discover the reason as soon as possible.

If there is a specific problem with attendance caused by factors within school, this can usually be resolved quickly and informally between parents and school. If the problem is caused by domestic circumstances the school can assist parents by engaging the support of other agencies (e.g. Education Inclusion Service or Social Care).

Parents will be informed regularly about their child's current attendance percentage at parent/ carer meetings. The attendance of all children will be monitored weekly and a structured range of generic/ individual support/ intervention strategies will be applied as deemed necessary to any children with persistent absence (falling below 90%).

In addition to this we ask parents to:

- Ensure their child attends school regularly and is properly equipped and in a fit state to learn every day that school is open
- Ensure their child arrives ready for the start of the school day, which is 8:45am. School gates open at 8:25am.
- Notify the school of any absences before 9.20am. All absences will be recorded as 'O'

unauthorised until an explanation or evidence is provided. The onus is on the parent to inform the school and provide appropriate evidence if required

- Book medical and dental appointments outside of the school day whenever possible
- Provide explanation of absences on the first day a pupil returns to school if this has not already been done
- Provide the school with up to date contact details and telephone numbers for every adult with parental responsibility. If contact details change then we must be informed of new details within 24 hours
- Complete a 'Leave of Absence' request form for any time required off school that is not due to illness or medical appointments i.e. exceptional circumstances. This must be made in writing (using the application form available from the school office) to the Headteacher 15 days in advance of the proposed start date of the absence. The circumstances you consider 'exceptional' must be detailed
- Collect their children on time
- Avoid taking holidays in term time
- Avoid requesting non-urgent leave of absence
- Work with the school to improve matters if attendance becomes a problem;
- Keep school fully informed on all matters that might affect attendance and their child in school

b) Pupils

We ask pupils to:

- Attend school regularly and promptly
- Arrive at school on time
- Attend morning and afternoon registration promptly
- Understand the value of good attendance

b) Teachers

Teachers will:

- Set a good example of punctuality and good attendance
- Ensure that registers are taken at the appropriate times, are accurate and up to date
- Take appropriate action when pupils are late
- Monitor class and individual attendance patterns
- Inform the Headteacher/ SLT of any concerns about attendance or where attendance is impacting on a pupils' achievements
- Discuss individual pupil attendance at parent-teacher consultations
- Praise pupils for good punctuality and good attendance

c) Senior Leadership Team

Senior Leaders will:

- Have an identified member of the Senior Leadership Team who is responsible for attendance: **Kurt Doyle (Headteacher and Attendance Champion)**
- Set clear and challenging attendance targets as part of school self- review
- Ensure that all school personnel, pupils and parents are aware of this policy
- Monitor trends and arrange for letters to be sent when required
- Provide target intervention and support for families whose children have been highlighted as having poor attendance
- Utilise the support of available specialists in relation to attendance if required
- Have a system in place for parents to report a child's absence
- Report to the Local Governing Committee attendance figures and trends

- Promote the importance of good attendance through assemblies/ collective worship
- Celebrate and reward good attendance during assemblies/ collective worship both at individual and class level
- Be responsible for making a referral to Gloucestershire County Council (GCC) Education Inclusion Team (EIT).
- Monitor individual, class and year group attendance
- Work with the Little Way Catholic Educational Trust (LWCET) to tackle low school attendance

d) Administrative staff/ Attendance Team

Administrative staff / Attendance Team will:

- Make first day calling for children absent without explanation
- Call all numbers on the contact list in order until an answer is received
- Leave a voice message, if there is a voicemail option
- Notify SLT if an overseas ring tone is noted and no leave of absence has been requested. This may result in EIT being contacted in line with Children Missing in Education procedures.
- Call the contact list at least twice
- Notify **Kurt Doyle** and **Amanda Desando** if a child with a social worker is not present
- Monitor late entrants into school and adjust SIMS accordingly along with the time of arrival
- Forward phone messages to class teachers regarding absences and record reasons on SIMS
- Contact parents when school has not been provided with a reason for absence
- Record medical appointments on SIMS and state whether medical evidence has been seen if required
- Monitor register coding and alert staff of inconsistencies
- Produce reports as requested by EIT or SLT
- Produce attendance figures for end of year reports
- Update/notify SLT of any concerns

Education Inclusion Team (EIT):

The school uses the statutory GCC EIT provision to respond to significant 'Unauthorised' absence concerns. There is a 'tiered' system of interventions, leading up to legal proceedings, to protect the pupil's educational development.

The school also makes use of additional Education Inclusion Advisor time to support cases where attendance becomes a serious concern but may not have reached the criteria for statutory Local Authority intervention, particularly in cases where children are deemed missing in education.

Attendance below 90% may result in a referral to the Education Inclusion Team at Gloucestershire County Council.

Strategies used to promote good attendance and punctuality with Pupils and Parents:

School attendance is monitored by the school office. Attendance levels are discussed at Safeguarding Strategy Meetings with the safeguarding team, staff meetings, INSET days and reported back to School Governors at allocated times.

New Intake:

For those parents whose children are beginning their school life at St. Peter's Catholic Primary School, they receive an introductory talk with the school administration team which includes the subject of attendance. Good habits are promoted from the children's' first year of school in Reception Class and are continued to be encouraged right the way through to Year 6.

Sanctions:

Sanctions for non-attendance are not deemed appropriate within school unless the pupil has been persistently absent for no known / unacceptable reason. This is because the school's first priority is to be motivating, and this would be undermined if the first thing that happened to an absentee pupil or their parents was punishment on return to school. In the case of unauthorised persistent absence, sanctions would be applied judiciously based upon individual merit.

Registration:

School start time: 8:45am
Afternoon session start time: 1:30pm
School finish time: 3:15pm

All pupils are registered by the class teacher by 9.05am. These registers are then submitted on SIMS by 9.20am. A second register is open from 1.30pm and closes at 1.50pm and taken by their class teacher, applying the current LA/ DfE code guidelines.

Pupils are marked late if they arrive after 9:05am (L). Registers are officially closed at 9:20am and pupils are then marked as 'Unauthorised absence' (U) if they arrive after this time during the morning session, unless an acceptable authorised reason is given.

Late arrivals report to the office and telephone messages indicating that pupils will not be attending are recorded on the SIMS register.

Attendance Targets:

All pupils

The school's aim is to get full attendance from all pupils. Attendance of individuals and classes will, however, be monitored in an attempt to provide information useful in monitoring the consistent application of this policy and improving levels of attendance.

If there are concerns regarding a pupil's attendance and/ or where there are no known reasons, we may raise this as a concern and work in partnership with parents/carers and other agencies to resolve problems and improve attendance. Your child cannot make their best progress at school if they do not attend punctually and regularly.

Pupils at risk of becoming persistently absent

Pupil attendance is monitored closely by the Senior Leadership Team. This forms part of a fortnightly review with the whole Senior Leadership Team. Where pupil attendance is identified as declining and is considered at risk of becoming Persistent Absence, the respective Phase Leader and/ or Pastoral Leader) will seek to address the reasons for absence, including any in-school barriers to attendance. This will be shared with the leadership team and serious concerns will be shared immediately with the Headteacher and Attendance Champion.

Where out of school barriers are identified, signpost and support access to any required services

in the first instance.

If the issue persists, take an active part in the multi-agency effort with the local authority, the school's attendance officer, and other partners. Act as the lead practitioner where all partners agree that the school is the best placed lead service. Where the lead practitioner is outside of the school, continue to work with the local authority and partners.

If a child's attendance falls below 90% this is classed as 'Persistent Absence' and has serious consequences.

The class teachers are initially responsible for monitoring the attendance of the pupils in their class. They inform Kurt Doyle (Headteacher and Attendance Champion) or a member of the Senior Leadership Team if there is any cause for concern. These may include:

- Regular periods of unexplained non-attendance
- Patterns of non-attendance (e.g. every Monday morning)
- Regular late arrival in the mornings
- Attendance falling below that deemed acceptable
- Anecdotal evidence from the pupil or other pupils
- Absences coinciding with known domestic disruptions

Raw data, the overall figures for the school without identifying individual pupils, are passed on to GCC and the DfE termly for statistical analysis.

Parents and pupils can have access to their own child's attendance data whenever requested.

Authorised and Unauthorised Absence:

The definitions accepted by the school are those laid out in the DfE documents, "*School Attendance: guidance for maintained schools, academies, independent schools and local authorities*" (August 2020) and *Working together to improve school attendance* (May 2022). These include clarification on authorised absences including hospital and medical appointments, sickness, etc.

If children have a medical/dental/specialist appointment they are normally expected to attend school on the morning or afternoon not affected by the appointment.

Many absences are authorised retrospectively when a pupil returns to school after illness, although the school is not obliged to give authorisation if there are doubts about the nature of the absence. **It is the decision of the school whether or not to authorise an absence.** However, it should be noted that updated guidance published in August 2024 clearly states that only exceptional circumstances should be considered.

If we have concerns about the number of absences due to illness or medical appointments etc. we may ask you to provide some form of evidence (e.g. an appointment card or letter, Doctor's note, copy of a prescription, copy of the label from a prescription medicine etc.) before we are prepared to authorise absences.

Persistent and severe absence:

Where absence escalates and pupils miss 10% or more of school (equivalent to 1 day or more a fortnight across a full school year), this is termed **Persistent Absence**.

Schools and local authorities are expected to work together to put additional targeted support in place to remove any barriers to attendance and reengage these pupils. In doing so, schools should sensitively consider some of the reasons for absence and understand the importance of school as a place of safety and support for children who might be facing difficulties, rather than reaching immediately for punitive approaches in the first instance. There is an expectation that families will work positively with the school to remove barriers to attendance.

When pupils are absent from school for greater than 50% of the sessions provided, this is termed **Severe Absence**. The school places particular focus on these pupils and a more targeted and robust approach is implemented with the aim of significantly improving school attendance.

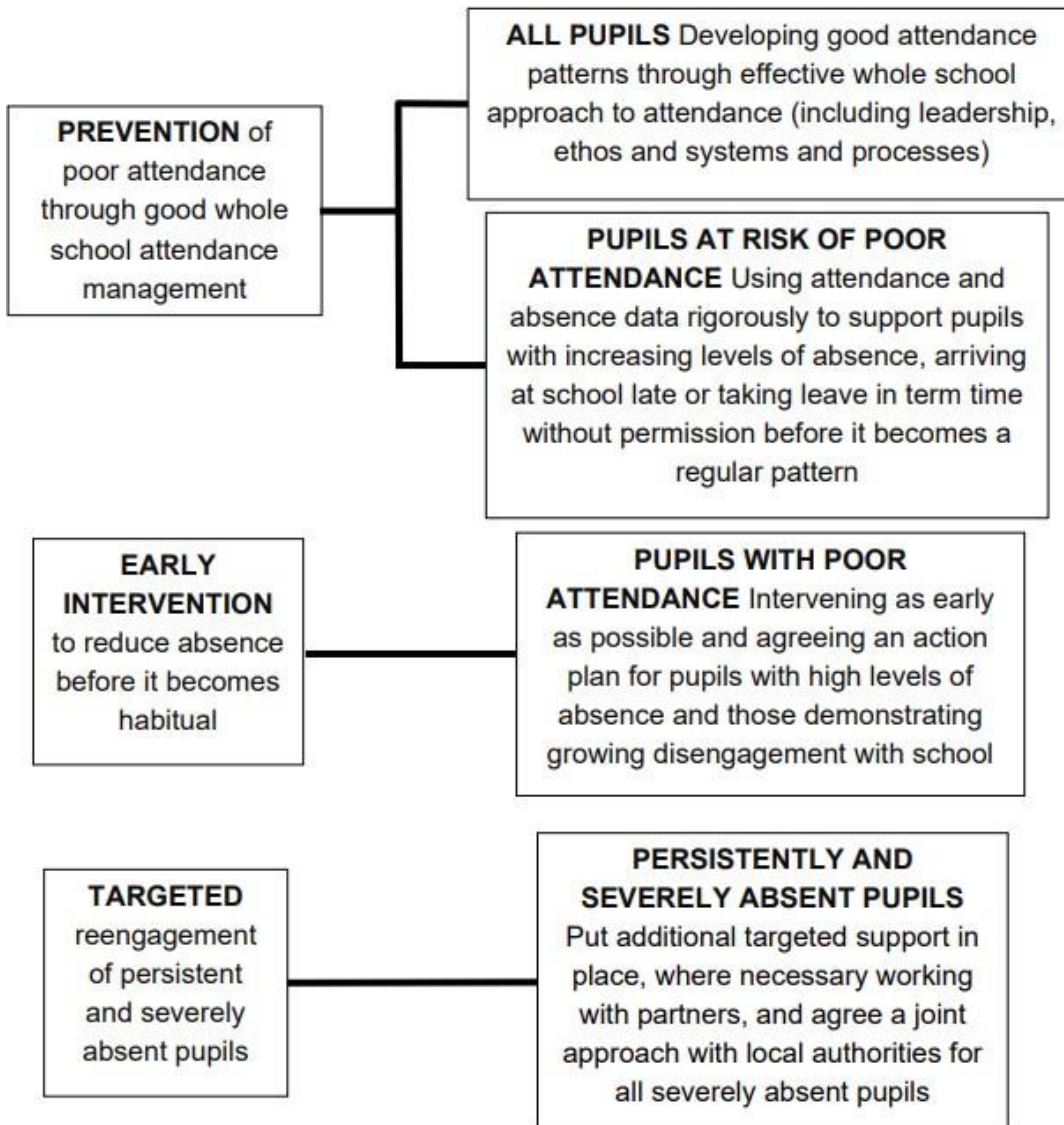
The school acknowledges that, often, severely absent pupils may find it more difficult to be in school or face bigger barriers to their regular attendance and as such are likely to need more intensive support across a range of partners. A concerted effort is therefore needed across all relevant services to prioritise them. At this point, the school will work with GCC and other external partners/agencies.

All partners will work together to make this group the top priority for support – this may include specific support with attendance or a whole family plan, but it may also include consideration for an education, health and care plan or an alternative form of educational provision where necessary to overcome the barriers to being in school.

If all avenues of support have been facilitated by schools, local authorities, and other partners, and the appropriate educational support or placements (e.g. an education, health and care plan) have been provided but severe absence for unauthorised reasons continues, it is likely to constitute neglect. St. Peter's Catholic Primary School and GCC are especially conscious of any potential safeguarding issues in these cases and where these remain, will conduct a full children's social care assessment. This will be consistent with the guidance provided in Keeping Children Safe in Education 2024, or a later version if available.

Please see over for the school's approach for tackling absence.

The school's approach to tackling absence:



Working together to improve school attendance. Department for Education (2022)

Leave of Absence Request:

It is necessary, for all parents to seek 'Leave of Absence' at least 15 school days before you are intending to take your child out of school. This can be done by completing a 'Leave of absence' form. A leave of absence request must be made by the parent/primary carer with whom the child normally resides and given to the Headteacher. There is no automatic right for approval to be granted. **The school will decide whether or not to authorise the request and cases will be considered on their individual merits.**

Requests for authorised 'Leave of Absence' will NOT usually be approved if:

- The child's attendance in the previous school year was less than 96%
- The child's attendance at the time of the request is less than 96%

Parents/Carers will be informed of the school's decision as soon as possible.

Other reasons for extended absence and requests for leave in term time

a) Female Genital Mutilation (FGM)

All staff are trained and made aware about possible reasons for extended absence from school. One of these could be Female genital mutilation (FGM), which is a form of child abuse common to some African, Asian and Middle Eastern communities in the UK. The age at which girls are subject to FGM varies greatly from shortly after birth to any time up to adulthood. Victims are usually aged between four and ten, primary school age. It is illegal in the UK to subject a child to female genital mutilation (FGM) or to take a child abroad to undergo the procedure – Female Genital Mutilation Act 2003.

Any information or concern that a child is at immediate risk of or has undergone FGM or forced marriage will result in a child protection referral under school procedures to the Designated Safeguarding Lead in the first instance and then to Children and Families Team/ MASH and Gloucestershire Police Service. Records of all incidents will be kept following the same procedure as for all other child protection concerns in school in line with current policy.

Please note that teachers and members of staff with teaching responsibilities have a specific legal duty to act with regards to concerns about female genital mutilation and must personally report to the police a disclosure that FGM has been carried out, in addition to liaising with the DSL/ Children's social care.

b) Children Missing in Education (CME)

Knowing where children are during school hours is an extremely important aspect of Safeguarding. Missing school can be an indicator of abuse and neglect and may also raise concerns about other safeguarding issues, including the criminal exploitation of children. This is why we will always follow up with parents/carers when pupils are not at school.

In response to the guidance in Keeping Children Safe in Education (2024) the school has:

- Staff who understand what to do when children do not attend regularly
- Appropriate policies, procedures and responses for pupils who go missing from education (especially on repeat occasions).
- Procedures to inform GCC when we plan to take pupils off-roll when they:
 - leave school to be home educated
 - move away from the school's location
 - are permanently excluded

We will ensure that pupils who are expected to attend the school but fail to take up the place will be referred to GCC. When a pupil leaves the school, we will record the name of the pupil's new

school and their expected start date.

Where children have poor attendance or are regularly missing then the school works in close liaison with the Local Authority CME officer, admissions team and Gloucestershire Safeguarding Children's Partnership.

Further information can be found in 'Children Missing Education: statutory guidance for local authorities' – September 2016.

Religious Observance:

'Religious Observance' requests will usually be granted for a maximum of three days during a year for, "a day exclusively set apart for religious observance by the religious body to which the parent belongs" (Pupil Registration Regulations 2006). These days should relate to significant festivals in the relevant faith calendar. Where equivalent religious observation is possible in the locality of Gloucestershire or neighbouring counties, approved absence is likely to be denied.

Again, the school will decide whether or not to authorise requests and cases will be considered on their individual merits. Parents/Carers will be informed of the school's decision as soon as possible.

Poor attendance:

When concerns have been raised the school's first course of action is to contact the parents to see if there are specific problems, either at home or in school, that can be easily remedied. The attendance rate is then monitored by the school and if attendance improves significantly no further action is taken.

If the problems persist then the Headteacher and the Education Inclusion Team will consider other strategies, depending on the individual case. These may include a specific contract system within school, the issuing of a fixed penalty notice, notification of concern regarding the pupil's welfare to Social Services or even, in extreme cases, legal action.

The following sequence illustrates the monitoring and intervention procedures followed by the school:

1. Morning and afternoon register entries by class teacher
2. Received absence messages noted on register log
3. Daily register check for uninformed absences
4. 1st day of absence if no message: Phone parent/carer (and leave message if no reply)
5. 2nd day of absence if no message: Phone again, and try emergency contacts, send text message/ email.
6. If a message is received, enter it into log and update register code
7. If no message is received after 3 days, school to carry out a home visit
8. If no message is received after a week, refer to EIT/ possible referral to MASH
9. If 12 'Unauthorised' sessions in the last 6 school weeks, or 10 consecutive days absence without contact from Parent/Carer, a referral will be made to the EIT for statutory involvement, this may include a referral made to the Child Missing in Education Team (CME).
10. Regular contact with parent/ carer during prolonged absences.

Stages 2-6 are usually implemented by Office staff and Pastoral Lead. Stage 7 to 9 by a DSL. Stage 1 is the legal responsibility of class teachers

Prior to a referral to Education Inclusion Team (EIT):

- School will inform parents of their concerns in relation to their child's attendance in writing, offering them to contact the school to discuss reasons impacting on their attendance.

- School will invite parents/ carers into school for an Attendance Improvement Meeting (AIM) where an attendance plan is drawn up.
- If there has been no improvement, the school will write to parents informing them that a referral to GCC's EIT will be made and may result in a Fixed Penalty Fine or legalaction if unauthorised absences continue to occur.

Attendance and legal intervention:

As absence is so often a symptom of wider issues a family is facing, St. Peter's Catholic Primary School will endeavour to work positively with pupils, families, and local partners to understand the barriers to attendance and provide support. Where that is not successful, or is not engaged with, the law protects pupils' right to an education and provides a range of legal interventions to formalise attendance improvement efforts, and where all other avenues have been exhausted, enforce it through prosecuting parents.

Attendance legal intervention can be used for pupils of compulsory school age and decisions will be made on an individual case by case basis.

St. Peter's Catholic Primary School and GCC will work together and make use of the full range of legal interventions rather than relying solely on fixed penalty notices or prosecution. If determined to be a strategy for improving attendance, St. Peter's Catholic Primary School or GCC may decide to use a range of additional legal interventions. These are:

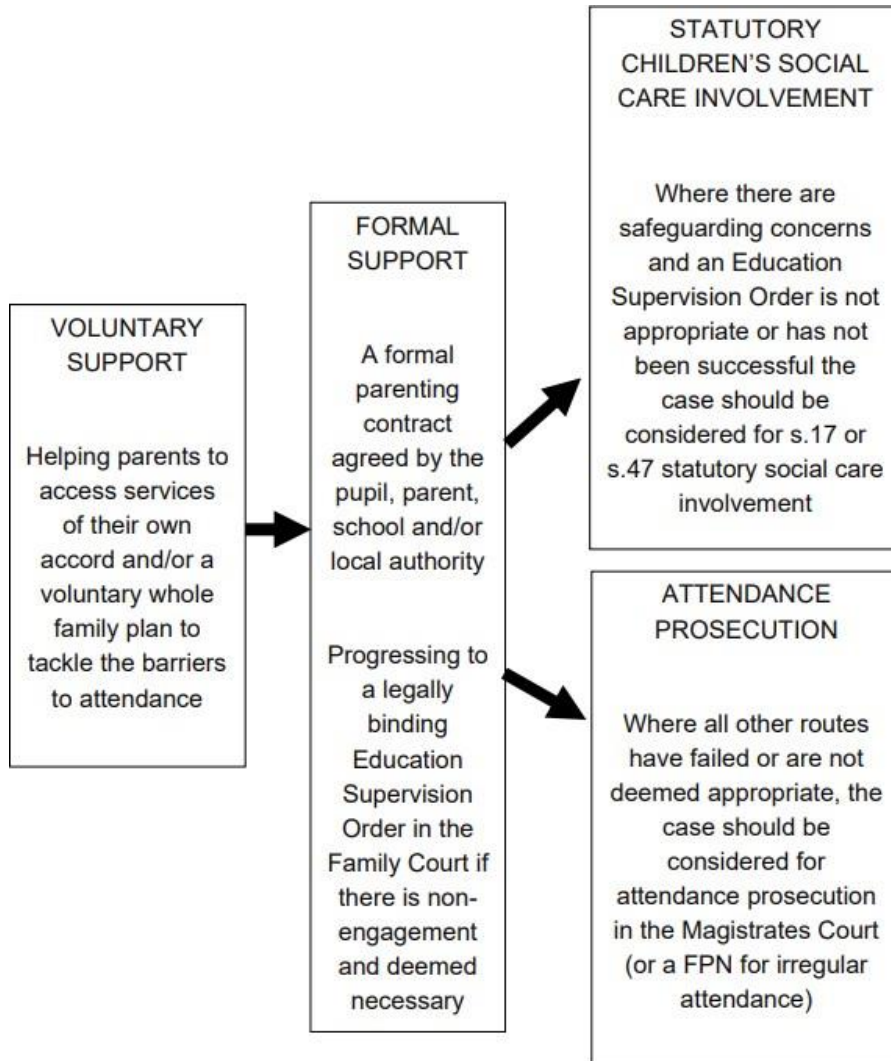
- Parenting contracts
- Education supervision orders
- Attendance prosecution
- Parenting orders
- Fixed penalty notices
- Notice to improve

Where used, it will be clear that it will change parental behaviour and in making the decision to use an intervention, the Headteacher and Local Authority officers have given due regard to their safeguarding duties as set out in the statutory guidance in Keeping Children Safe in Education.

At this point, St. Peter's Catholic Primary School and GCC will decide which parent(s) to involve in attendance legal intervention, but generally this will be all parents who have day to day responsibility for the child.

Where a pupil attends school in a different local authority to GCC, the local authority for the area where the child attends school normally take the lead in any action to improve attendance.

Please see over for the various levels of support and intervention.



Working together to improve school attendance. Department for Education (2022)

Long Term Sickness Absence

St. Peter's Catholic Primary School or GCC may seek to issue fixed penalty notices for any unauthorised leave which is greater than 10 consecutive sessions, or for Persistent Absence. Please see below for more information.

Attendance Prosecution:

If a child of compulsory school age fails to attend regularly at a school at which they are registered, or at a place where alternative provision is provided for them, their parents may be guilty of an offence and can be prosecuted by GCC.

Prosecution in the Magistrates Court is the last resort where all other voluntary and formal support or legal intervention has failed or where support has been deemed inappropriate in the circumstances of the individual case. Where it is decided to pursue prosecution, only local authorities can prosecute parents and they must fund all associated costs, including in the preparation of court documentation.

Local authorities have the power to prosecute:

- Parents who fail to comply with a school attendance order issued by the local authority to require a parent to get their child registered at a named school (under section 443 of the Education Act 1996). This may result in a fine of up to level 3 (£1,000).
- Parents who fail to secure their child's regular attendance at a school, for which there are 2 separate offences: section 444(1) where a parent fails to secure the child's regular attendance; and section 444(1A) where a parent knows that the child is failing to attend school regularly and fails to ensure the child does so. The section 444(1) offence may result in a fine of up to level 3 (£1,000) and the section 444(1A) offence may result in a fine of up to level 4 (£2,500), and/or a community order or imprisonment of up to 3 months.
- Parents who fail to secure the regular attendance of their child at a place where the local authority or governing body has arranged alternative provision (under sections 444 and 444ZA). This may result in a fine of up to level 3 (£1,000), or if the parent is found to have known the child was not attending regularly and failed to ensure that they did so, a fine of up to level 4 (£2,500), and/or a community order or imprisonment of up to 3 months.
- Parents who persistently fail to comply with directions under an Education Supervision Order (under Schedule 3 to the Children Act 1989) or breach a Parenting Order or directions under the order (under section 375 of the Sentencing Act 2020). These may result in a fine of up to level 3 (£1,000).
- This guidance may be superseded by any legal changes and guidance, at the discretion of the Department for Education.

The decision to prosecute rests solely with the LA as an independent prosecuting authority, but in deciding whether to prosecute the local authority may wish to consider:

- The level of engagement from the parent and whether prosecution is the only avenue left to demonstrate the severity of the issue to the parent and/or cause parental engagement with the support they require.
- Whether all other legal interventions have been considered and are not appropriate or have been tried and have not worked.

- Whether statutory children's social care intervention would be more appropriate in the case (including a Child in Need or Child Protection Plan), especially where absence is severe.
- The parent(s)' response to formal warning(s) and/or evidence given in the interview under caution – including any statutory exemptions to prosecution that might apply
- The Attorney General's guidelines for public prosecutors, including public interest tests and equalities considerations.

The 1996 Act also sets out the circumstances in which a pupil has not failed to attend school regularly and therefore the parent has not committed an offence under section 444(1) or (1A) of the Act (the statutory defences). These are:

- The parent proves the pupil was prevented from attending by their ill health or any unavoidable cause, including exclusion.
- The pupil has been granted leave of absence by the school or, in the case of alternative provision, by a person authorised to do so.
- The absence was on a day set aside for religious observance by the religious body to which the pupil's parent(s) belong.
- The parent proves the local authority were under a duty to provide transport to the school and have failed to do so.
- If the school is an independent school, the parent proves that the school is not in walking distance of the pupil's home and the local authority have not made suitable arrangements for the child to either board at the school or be admitted to a state funded school closer to home.
- If the absence was from certain types of alternative provision, the parent proves the child is receiving education otherwise than by regular attendance.
- If the absence was from alternative provision, the parent had not been notified about the provision in writing before the absence.
- If the child has no fixed abode and the parent can prove that their trade / business requires them to travel, and the child has attended school as regularly as the nature of the trade or business permits, and (if the child is 6 or over) the child has attended school for at least 200 sessions during the preceding 12 months up to and including the date on which the proceedings were instituted.

Fixed Penalty Notices

What is a Fixed Penalty Notice?

A Penalty Notice is a fixed fine which may be issued as an alternative to prosecution. If it is paid, it does not require a court appearance and does not result in a criminal record. Payment of a Penalty Notice means you avoid the potential danger of prosecution and subsequent conviction.

What is a Notice to Improve?

You may receive a Notice to Improve notification in your email from the Local Authority (LA) when your child's absence has been marked as unauthorised for 10 sessions within 10 weeks. The sessions do not need to be consecutive. The weeks may be in different terms.

The Notice to Improve will set out the school's expectations with regards to your child's attendance during the notification period.

When Might a Penalty Notice be Issued?

You may face a Penalty Notice for the following reasons:

- If your child is absent from school, without authorisation from the Headteacher, for the purposes of a holiday.
- For a holiday taken in term time, there is no requirement for a school to issue a Notice to Improve notification or warning notice.
- If your child is persistently late for school, after the register has closed and does not have authorisation from the Headteacher.
- If your child is absent from school and the school has been unable to find out the reason for the absence.
- If your child is absent from the school (5 days within a 10 week period) and there are no exceptional circumstances for the Headteacher to authorize the absence.
- If your child, following an exclusion, is found in a public place, without a justifiable reason for being there, during school hours on a school day during the first five days of a fixed term exclusion or a permanent exclusion. The school will have sent you a letter at the time of the exclusion detailing your responsibilities during this period. For this penalty notice, the cost will be £80 for the 21 days after it is issued. If you pay after the 21 day period, but within 28 days, the fine to pay is £160.

How is a Penalty Notice Issued?

Penalty Notices are issued by the LA at the request of the school. Fines are usually issued to each parent for each child. (This is subject to the parent who is responsible for not ensuring the child's regular attendance). A parent is defined in Education Law as:

- All natural parents, whether married or not
- Any person who, although not a natural parent, has parental responsibility for a child or young person
- Any person who, although not a natural parent, has care of a child or young person. The fact that you do not live with the child is not a defence against securing their attendance at school.

You will receive the Penalty Notice by post to your home address with instructions on how to pay.

What is the cost of the fine?

For the first offence within a rolling three-year period, the Penalty Notice allows you 21 days to pay an £80 fine. If you pay after the 21 day period, but within 28 days, the fine to pay is £160. If the fine remains unpaid at this stage, the LA will usually initiate legal proceedings against you.

For a second offence within a rolling three-year period, there is no opportunity to pay the fine at the lower amount. Instead, the fine will be at £180.

If there is a request for a third penalty notice, prosecution will be considered if two penalty notices have been served in any rolling three-year period.

What happens if I do not pay the fine?

You will have 28 days to pay the Penalty Notice in full. If you fail to pay the fine in this timeframe, the LA will usually initiate legal proceedings against you for failing to secure regular attendance for your child registered at a school. If you are convicted of this offence, there are several possible sentences, including a fine of up to £1,000.

Is there an appeal process?

There is no right of appeal. Once a Penalty Notice has been issued, it can only be withdrawn if it can be shown that it was issued in error.

What happens if the Penalty Notice is paid, but my child still misses school?

Parents/carers are not liable for prosecution for their child's school attendance for the period in question once the Penalty Notice is paid. However, prosecution may be considered for further periods of absence not covered by the notice.

Monies collected through fixed penalty notices can only be used by GCC for the administration of the fixed penalty notice system or for prosecuting for the original offence in cases of non-payment. Any surplus at the end of the year must be returned to the Secretary of State.

Partnership and multi-agency work:

The school may utilise the expertise of local partnerships and agencies for the benefit of improving attendance. This list may include, but is not exhaustive of: Children's Services, the Police, Early Help, the School Nurse, the National Health Service, including the designated School Nurse..

Hospital education and attendance:

If a child needs to be hospitalised for 3 days or more we can make a referral to the Hospital Education Service so that they work with your child whilst they are not in school. This would be coded as 'D' which means that your child would be educated off site and would not affect their overall attendance percentage.

Re-entry strategies for long term absentees:

When long-term non-attenders return to school the staff attempt to make them feel welcome back at school without drawing attention to the prolonged absence. The pupils are placed back in their class and given their individual programmes of work to continue.

If there are specific reasons where this is not felt to be appropriate, separate arrangements would be made. This would be considered on an individual needs basis.

Summary:

All school staff are committed to working with parents and pupils as the best way to guarantee as high a level of attendance as possible and that through good attendance ensures every child's welfare and life opportunities are promoted.

Where support is provided but has not been able to make a significant positive difference, or support has been refused, the school is likely to engage external agencies and partners to tackle low attendance.

Policy Review:

This policy will be reviewed by the Headteacher, Senior Leadership Team, Attendance Team, class teachers and the local governing committee on a three-year cycle. However, the school and academy trust retains the right to review this policy earlier if deemed necessary.

