



Policy on School Attendance

St Laurence School Academy Trust

Date of last review:	September 2022	Review period:	1 year
Date of next review:	September 2023	Owner:	Deputy Headteacher

Approval: Community and Ethos
Review: September 2023



St Laurence School Policy on School Attendance 2022

1. Introduction

We recognise that following the impact of national lockdowns and year group closures, students have returned or arrived at St Laurence school with a confusing prior experience of attendance due to the coronavirus pandemic.

The Governing Body recognises the causal link between student attendance and student achievement and acknowledges that full attendance underpins learning. It expects staff to place high priority on punctuality and attendance by students in partnership with their Parent / Carers in order to maximise student achievement and progress.

As a Church school, our ethos is one that values all students equally and seeks to provide the opportunity for every student to develop to their full potential during their time at school. All young people have a right to education and it is well documented that poor attendance can result in restricted access to the curriculum, disaffection from school, lowered academic success and loss of educational opportunity. We embrace our moral duty to ensure that attendance is a high priority and are unwavering in our drive to continue to improve the attendance of all students to give them the very best possible chance of success. All students are expected to attend school every day.

We recognise that following the impact of national lockdowns and year group closures, students have returned or arrived at St Laurence school with a confusing prior experience of attendance due to the coronavirus pandemic.

Our school aims to meet its obligations with regards to school attendance by:

- Promoting good attendance and reducing absence, including persistent absence
- Returning to pre-pandemic expectations and exceeding last current national average attendance rates 2018-19 for secondary schools of 94.8%
- Setting aspirational targets for our school average attendance rate (this academic year 96%)
- Ensuring every student has access to full-time education to which they are entitled
- Acting early to address patterns of absence

Students should be on school site for 8.30am. The register closes at 9.00am. The end of the school day is 3.00pm.

We will also support Parent / Carers and carers to perform their legal duty to ensure their children of compulsory school age attend regularly, and will promote and support punctuality in attending lessons.

This policy is closely aligned to policies on Child Protection, Behaviour Management, Children with Health Needs who Cannot Attend School and Supporting Students with Medical Conditions.

2. Legislation and Guidance

The Law firmly places the responsibility for attendance with the Parent / Carers or carers of the child. Section 7 of the Education Act 1996 states that Parent / Carers of children of compulsory school age are required to ensure that they

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receive sufficient full time education. Attendance includes punctuality and the responsibility for ensuring a child is in school on time also lies with the Parent / Carer or carer.

If a child who is registered at a school fails to attend regularly and there are no legitimate reasons, then Parent / Carers are guilty of an offence under section 444 of the Education Act 1996. If convicted, Parent / Carers will be liable to a fine of up to £2500 and / or a prison sentence of up to 3 months. Magistrates may also impose a Parent / Carer Order.

This policy meets the requirements of the [school attendance guidance](#) from the Department for Education (DfE), and refers to the DfE's statutory guidance on [school attendance Parent / Carer 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 \(Student Registration\) \(England\) Regulations 2006](#) (and [2010](#), [2011](#), [2013](#), [2016](#) amendments)
- [The Education \(Penalty Notices\) \(England\) \(Amendment\) Regulations 2013](#)

This policy also refers to the DfE's guidance on the [school census](#), which explains the persistent absence threshold.

3. Strategies

The Governing Body agrees Annual Attendance Targets as part of the annual review of the attendance policy and is committed to the following approaches for maximising standards of attendance:

- promoting a welcoming and caring ethos where good attendance and punctuality are recognised as 'the norm' and are valued by the school community
- where appropriate, making decisions that allow for a programme of personalised learning and individual learning pathways often in consultation with other agencies
- acknowledging high levels of attendance and improved attendance through a meaningful system of rewards
- emphasising Parent / Carer responsibility as shown by the Home-School Partnership document
- working in partnership with Parent / Carers and carers and communicating clearly about matters relating to attendance
- using an accurate system for collating and monitoring attendance with a rapid follow-up of any unexplained absence
- evaluating attendance data systematically and targeting appropriate intervention to students or student cohorts who need it most
- providing support for students and families who, for genuine reasons, may experience attendance problems
- offering a tailored approach to the reintegration of students after long periods of absence
- raising awareness about the importance of uninterrupted attendance with staff, Parent / Carers, carers and students
- employing a clear set of criteria for authorising planned absence
- working in partnership with our cluster primaries to maintain clear criteria for the granting of exceptional leave of absence
- ensuring an effective partnership with the Education Welfare Service and a range of outside agencies
- making a firm stand against low levels of attendance including the use of Fixed Penalty Fines and Fast Track Prosecution, when support provided by school is not successful or engaged with by the parent/s.

4. Roles and Responsibilities

4.1 **Governors of the Community and Ethos Committee** are responsible for monitoring attendance figures for the whole school on at least a termly basis. They also hold the Headteacher to account for the implementation of this policy.

4.2 **The Headteacher** is responsible for ensuring that the policy is effectively implemented across the school and communicated to Parent / Carers as well as for making decisions regarding Parent / Careral requests for holidays or pre planned exceptional leave of absence.

4.3 **The Deputy Headteacher Quality of Education - Attitudes** is responsible for:

- a) monitoring school-level attendance data, identifying trends and presenting termly summary reports to the senior leadership team and the governors
- b) initiating whole school policies as required
- c) developing coherent whole school systems for improving attendance including supportive interventions
- d) promoting good attendance through assemblies, briefings and communications with Parent / Carers and carers
- e) supporting other staff in monitoring the attendance of individual students
- f) developing safeguarding systems and effective working with partners and other agencies to protect and promote the welfare of students, maximising their attendance
- g) representing the school at Local Authority Attendance Meetings which are chaired by the Educational Welfare Officer

This includes close liaison with the Attendance Officer-and other members of the admin team who ensure that data is circulated regularly to the Deputy Headteacher and the House Teams.

4.4 **The Assistant Headteacher – Teaching and Learning** is responsible for:

- a) monitoring the attendance of LAC (looked after children) students in line with their PEPs
- b) ensuring that disadvantaged students are monitored carefully and appropriate intervention is provided where needed

4.5 **Heads of House, in conjunction with their Assistant Head of House and tutors**, are responsible for:

- a) monitoring the attendance of their House Group, including the monitoring of vulnerable students and disadvantaged groups
- b) being vigilant about possible safeguarding issues associated with poor attendance and referring these to the safeguarding team
- c) being vigilant about any SEND needs, or the potential of as yet undiagnosed SEND needs, which may be the underlying cause of poor attendance and referring these to the AEN team
- d) promoting and celebrating good attendance through the rewards system and House Briefings
- e) challenging unexplained or persistent absence through contact with Parent / Carers and carers
- f) meeting with Parent / Carers and carers where attendance and/or punctuality are a cause for concern
- g) closely monitoring students with previous attendance concerns and those whose attendance falls below 96%
- h) co-ordinating the sending of letters to Parent / Carers and carers of those students with attendance concerns
- i) targeting appropriate intervention to secure improvement
- j) putting in place early intervention for students who are at risk of persistent absence (PA)

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- k) using knowledge of historical patterns of attendance to identify students at risk of poor attendance and apply early intervention
- l) identifying and reporting children who are missing in education
- m) offering support through external agencies as required

4.6 The Assistant Headteacher (Director of 6F) in conjunction with the 6F Support Officer and tutors are responsible for:

- a) monitoring the attendance of Y12 and Y13 students, including the monitoring of vulnerable students and disadvantaged groups
- b) being vigilant about possible safeguarding issues associated with poor attendance and referring these to the safeguarding team
- c) being vigilant about any SEND needs, or the potential of as yet undiagnosed SEND needs, which may be the underlying cause of poor attendance and referring these to the AEN team
- d) promoting and celebrating good attendance through the rewards system and House Briefings
- e) challenging unexplained or persistent absence through contact with Parent / Carers and carers
- f) meeting with Parent / Carers and carers where attendance and/or punctuality are a cause for concern
- g) closely monitoring students with previous attendance concerns and those whose attendance falls below 96%
- h) co-ordinating the sending of letters to Parent / Carers and carers of those students with attendance concerns
- i) targeting appropriate intervention to secure improvement
- j) putting in place early intervention for students who are at risk of persistently absent (PA)
- k) using knowledge of historical patterns of attendance to identify students at risk of poor attendance and apply early intervention
- l) identifying and reporting children who are missing in education
- m) offering support through external agencies as required

4.7 The Attendance Officer is responsible for:

- a) liaising with Heads of House, the Assistant Heads of House, tutors, Parent / Carers and the EWO on any attendance issues causing concern
- b) monitoring registration marks for morning and afternoon attendance
- c) checking daily messages on the absence line
- d) recording on SIMs the details of messages left by Parent / Carers and carers on the absence line
- e) sending truancy call to Parent / Carers of students with unexplained absence
- f) sending any concerns to the relevant pastoral team for follow up
- g) alerting relevant members of the pastoral team should any student leave the site without permission
- h) monitoring incomplete registers on a daily basis and provide the DHT with regular information to act on
- i) completing forms for Fixed Penalty Notices where applicable and maintaining a log
- j) issuing Fixed Penalty Notice requests in line with LA guidance

4.8 Teachers and Tutors are responsible for:

- a) ensuring that an accurate register is taken at the designated times
- b) recording attendance on a daily basis, using the correct codes
- c) ensuring that a register is taken for each lesson and following up on any suspicious absenteeism.
- d) challenging lateness and setting high standards of punctuality themselves
- e) emphasising the importance of attendance and its impact on attainment
- f) promoting the next lesson and the sequence of the lesson to motivate students to be in the classroom
- g) applying rewards and sanctions consistently
- h) reviewing the tutor group attendance weekly to share data, identify issues, intervene early and help set targets
- i) considering the individual needs and vulnerabilities of students

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4.9 Parent / Carers and carers are partners in the education process and their positive involvement is essential. They are responsible for:

- a) ensuring that their child attends school and arrives at school punctually, in accordance with their legal obligations
- b) working with the School to ensure that their child has full time attendance planning holidays outside of term time and during the school holidays
- c) completing, in advance, an official leave of absence request form if, in exceptional circumstances, a leave of absence is requested
- d) making every effort to ensure that medical and dental appointments are arranged outside of school hours (please note we will only authorise an AM or PM session without information to support the absence.
- e) contacting the School on the first day of absence and on subsequent days
- f) explaining all absences to the relevant members of the pastoral team
- g) Parent / Carers and carers will be asked to provide evidence of medical evidence for prolonged or intermittent absence following a school attendance meeting or in the case where a student's attendance is classed as persistently absent.

4.10 Students are expected to attend school unless they are ill or have an authorised absence. In addition, they should be punctual to school every day, arriving on site by 8.30am so that they can start lessons on time at 8.35am. They are also expected to catch up on their studies, including Homework missed through absence.

5 Authorisation of Absence

All absence is challenged and the School determines whether to authorise an absence in line with LA and National Guidelines. No holiday absence will be authorised in term time except in compassionate or very exceptional circumstance with consideration also being given to the student's attendance, attainment and public examinations. Absences may only be authorised at the discretion of the Headteacher and where prior permission has been sought. Retrospective requests will be denied as a matter of course.

6 Monitoring

- 6.1 Termly monitoring of whole school attendance and the attendance of groups of students takes place in senior leadership team meetings and in Community and Ethos Governors' Meetings.
- 6.2 Fortnightly monitoring is conducted in the Behaviour and Attendance Meeting attended by the Deputy Headteacher, the Head of House, Assistant Head of House and Attendance Officer (when necessary).
- 6.3 In addition, the Deputy Headteacher consults with the EWO on a regular basis for guidance, advice and discussion of more complex cases.
- 6.4 Weekly monitoring of the attendance log is undertaken by the Head of House and the Assistant Head of House and appropriate interventions are planned and actioned.
- 6.5 Daily monitoring is undertaken by the House Team and the attendance officer who liaise closely to ensure that all absences are explained, that the correct coding has been used and that contact is made with Parent / Carers and carers as required. As part of the daily monitoring, the House Team will prioritise contact for students with Student Premium status.
- 6.6 Compliance with regulations relating to maintenance of the Admission Register and other procedures (e.g. Children Missing from Education, Meeting the Medical Needs of Students; Exclusion Procedures) is monitored through the Heads of House regular, individual meetings and review with the EWO.

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6.7 Student level absence data is collected each term and published at national and local authority level through the DfE's school absence national statistics releases. The underlying school-level absence data is published alongside the national statistics. We compare our attendance data to the national average, and share this with governors.

6.8 The Governors Community and Ethos Committee monitors progress against annual attendance targets.

6.9 The Governing Body ensures that annual absence figures are published and used as benchmark data for school improvement.

7. **St Laurence School's day to day processes on managing attendance.**

Parent / Carers should contact the school absence line on 01225 309500 to report their child's absence from school on the first day of absence and every subsequent absence. With this Parent / Carers should also provide an explanation for their child's absence. If a Parent / Carer fails to do this, a truancy call / text message will be sent every time there is an absence that has not been explained by the Parent / Carer. The absence will be recorded as unauthorised.

Parent / Carers should contact their child's tutor in the first instance if they have any emerging concerns regarding attendance. Please see the school website for staff contact details.

For more detailed support on attendance, Parent / Carers should contact your child's House team. Contact details are available on the school website.

Should a child's % attendance rate fall to below 90%, they are classed as persistently absent from school (DFE Working together to improve school attendance – May 2022). If a child's absence is nearing this threshold we will send a template letter informing Parent / Carers of our concerns regarding their child's attendance. If there is no improvement, we will invite the Parent / Carers to attend a school attendance meeting, where we can explore reasons for the absence and try to support improving the attendance rate. At this meeting targets will be set, including a target that requires medical evidence to support further absence from school (this could include a medical appointment card, a prescription or a doctor's note).

Following the SAM meeting we will continue to monitor attendance and as part of our monitoring complete a review, that will be set at the SAM meeting. If there is an improvement, then we will continue to support the improved attendance. If there is a further decline and we have received no medical evidence to enable us to authorise the absence from school, we will make a referral to the Education Welfare Service. The threshold for this referral is ten unauthorised sessions in a six-week period. The Education Welfare Officer will then arrange a local authority attendance meeting.

There may be times when attendance of a child declines so rapidly and so significantly, that unless school is engaged with, and provided with the opportunity to work collaboratively with Parent / Carers to improve the attendance of our student, then we will send a formal warning letter that will advise of the intention of Wiltshire to issue a penalty notice. This is something we wish to avoid at all costs, however we are not able to ignore the absence of a student who remains on our school roll and does not attend our school. We will exhaust all options available to ensure St Laurence students are able to receive the education that they are legally entitled to, including requesting a penalty notice.

8. How does St Laurence promote and incentivise school attendance?

- We rehearse and reinforce attendance and punctuality expectations continually
- We emphasise the importance of attendance and its impact on attainment
- We promote the next lesson and the sequence of the lesson to motivate students to be in the classroom
- We promote rewards and celebrate progress but continue to outline sanctions
- We apply rewards and sanctions consistently
- We follow up on absence and lateness with students to identify barriers and reasons for absence
- We contact parents and carers regarding absence and punctuality
- We review tutor group attendance weekly to share data, identify issues, intervene early and help set targets
- We periodically review practice and consistency both across and between Houses
- We proactively promote attendance practice as part of staff induction
- We consider the individual needs and vulnerabilities of students

At St Laurence we do not reward students for 100% attendance for the following reasons:

- 1) The use of 100% attendance awards might be considered to be discriminatory.
- 2) Children with medical conditions must be understood and supported.

Instead we will use personalised targets and recognise improvement in attendance.

9. Strategies for reducing students who are at risk of being or are persistently absent or are severely absent.

St Laurence School will:

- welcome students back following an absence and provide good catch up support to build confidence and bridge gaps. This may include:
 - lesson resources
 - buddy support
 - one to one input from staff or support services
- meet with students to discuss absence, patterns, barriers and problems
- establish action plans to remove barriers, provide additional support and set targets. This could include:
 - lunchtime arrangements
 - support with uniform, transport, wake up routines or emotional wellbeing
- lead daily or weekly check-ins to review progress and the impact of support
- make regular contact with families to discuss progress
- consider what support for re-engagement might be needed, including for vulnerable groups
- prepare supporting resources to ensure students can access learning when they return
- develop targeted intervention to address gaps and build students' confidence (including considering small group additional support)
- contribute to action plans which attendance staff draw together where appropriate
- provide tailored praise and encouragement when students attend and arrive on time

Appendix 1: Attendance Codes

The following codes are taken from the DfE's guidance on school attendance (detailed in section 2 of this policy). They apply to children of compulsory school age (defined in the document as "up to 16 years old up to the last Friday in June"). We make use of these codes for all students at St Laurence.

Code	Definition	Scenario
/	Present (am)	Student is present at morning registration
\	Present (pm)	Student is present at afternoon registration
L	Late arrival	Student arrives late before register has closed
B	Off-site educational activity	Student is at a supervised off-site educational activity approved by the school
D	Dual registered	Student is attending a session at another setting where they are also registered
J	Interview	Student has an interview with a prospective employer/educational establishment
P	Sporting activity	Student is participating in a supervised sporting activity approved by the school
V	Educational trip or visit	Student is on an educational visit/trip organised, or approved, by the school
W	Work experience	Student is on a work experience placement

Code	Definition	Scenario
X	Not required to be in school	Student of non-compulsory school age is not required to attend
Y	Unable to attend due to exceptional circumstances	School site is closed, there is disruption to travel as a result of a local/national emergency, or student is in custody
Z	Student not on admission register	Register set up but student has not yet joined the school
#	Planned school closure	Whole or partial school closure due to half-term/bank holiday/INSET day

Code	Definition	Scenario
Authorised absence		
C	Authorised leave of absence	Student has been granted a leave of absence due to exceptional circumstances
E	Excluded	Student has been excluded but no alternative provision has been made
H	Authorised holiday	Student has been allowed to go on holiday due to exceptional circumstances
I	Illness	School has been notified that a student will be absent due to illness
M	Medical/dental appointment	Student is at a medical or dental appointment
R	Religious observance	Student is taking part in a day of religious observance
S	Study leave	Year 11 student is on study leave during their public examinations
T	Gypsy, Roma and Traveller absence	Student from a Traveller community is travelling, as agreed with the school
Unauthorised absence		
G	Unauthorised holiday	Student is on a holiday that was not approved by the school
N	Reason not provided	Student is absent for an unknown reason (this code should be amended when the reason emerges, or replaced with code O if no reason for absence has been provided after a reasonable amount of time)
O	Unauthorised absence	School is not satisfied with reason for student's absence
U	Arrival after registration	Student arrived at school after the register closed

Appendix 2: Requesting leave of absence.

[Our Ref: \(st-laurence.com\)](http://st-laurence.com)

Absence from School

This form should be handed in to the main reception for the attention of attendance staff at least 7 days prior to the absence.

Taking your son/daughter out of school during term time may harm his/her academic progress.

Following a change in Department for Education regulations from September 2013 schools may only authorise absence in exceptional circumstances. These include:

- **family emergency**
- **funeral of a close family member (please state relationship to you)**
- **wedding of a close family member (please state relationship to you)**

Holidays will **not** count as a reason to authorise absence in term time, with the exception of children of armed forces personnel on leave from active service (when confirmation from a commanding officer will be required).

Circumstances which are notified to the school or Local Authority **after** a decision has been made by the Headteacher will not be considered. Therefore please be certain to provide details of the exceptional circumstances relating to your application below and attach any supporting evidence.

Please read the attached Local Authority leaflet which explains Penalty Notices issued for unauthorised holidays during term time.

Date of application:					
Student's Name:		Year		Tutor GP	
Student's School:					
Full name of Parent(s) making application in Block Capitals		Title	Forename	Surname	
Full address of applicant					
		Post Code:			

PLEASE COMPLETE SEPARATE FORMS FOR EACH STUDENT AT THIS SCHOOL.

Names of sibling(s) at another school requesting the same absence		Name of school	
Date of first day of Absence		Date of last day of Absence	
Date of return to school		Total number of days requested	
Reason for absence to be taken during term time:			
Parent/Guardian signature		Date	

For School Use			
No. sessions H code		No. sessions G code	
% last year's attendance		Total no. unauthorised absence in previous 6 months	
% current attendance to date		Total unauthorised absence this year	

- We have noted the dates when your son/daughter will be absent from school. We are **able to authorise** the absence in this case.
- We are **unable to authorise** your request for student absence because it does not meet the criteria for "exceptional circumstance".

Yours sincerely

Headteacher _____ Dated: _____

Date form returned to parent:	Noted by class teacher/tutor:
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Christ Church CE VC Primary School



Churchfields The Village School



Fitzmaurice Primary School



St Laurence School



Westwood with Iford School



Winsley Primary School

PUPIL LEAVE OF ABSENCE IN TERM TIME

Important notice to all parents and carers

The Local Authority has amended its Local Code of Conduct in respect of Penalty Notices issued for truancy to include unauthorised pupil leave of absence in term time. If a pupil accumulates 10 or more sessions of unauthorised leave of absence within the previous 6 month period of a current academic year, the school must notify the Local Authority and a Penalty Notice will be issued to each parent for each child where that applies.

A penalty of £60 will apply if paid within 21 days or £120 up to 28 days. If after 28 days the penalty has not been paid, legal proceedings will be taken through the magistrates court for the unauthorised absence.



Parent / Carer Fact Sheet - Term-time leave of absence

When is my child allowed to miss school?

You can only allow your child to miss school if:

- They are too ill to attend
- You have advance permission from the school

What if my child can't attend because of coronavirus?

We don't expect your child to come in if they can't travel to or attend school in line with:

- Guidance from Public Health England (PHE), the UK Health Security Agency (UKHSA) and/or the Department of Health and Social Care (DHSC) relating to the incidence of coronavirus or its transmission
- Any legislation or statutory directions relating to the incidence or transmission of coronavirus

These are the only situations in which your child can miss school because of coronavirus.

Anxiety around coronavirus is not included – please let us know by contacting your child's Tutor if you or your child are feeling anxious about the situation, and we will be sure to provide additional support to help you both feel safe and comfortable about them attending school.

How can I make an absence request?

You must submit a request to the school before you arrange for your child to have time away.

If you wish to take your child out of school during term time, you should speak to your child's teacher and submit a formal request to the headteacher via the school office or website Our Ref: (st-laurence.com)

The headteacher will then consider whether to give permission for the absence.

You should refer to the school's attendance policy when considering whether to submit an absence request available online @ www.st-laurence.com

Is the school likely to grant absence requests? If so, when?

The headteacher will consider each absence request individually and decide:

- Whether to grant the absence
- How many days your child can be away from school for (if the absence is granted)

Absence requests will only be granted in exceptional circumstances. It's up to the school to decide which circumstances are 'exceptional' in line with DfE guidance.

Examples of circumstances that are not exceptional include:

- Cheap holidays or holidays that have already been paid for
- Absence that coincides with important school events such as the start of term or exams

As a general guideline, exceptional absence circumstances usually only apply to immediate family. Requests for leave related to extended family and friends are likely to be refused.

What if I take my child on unauthorised absence?

If you take your child out of school without advance permission (except where they're unwell or missing school due to legitimate reasons relating to coronavirus – see above for details), you can be fined or even prosecuted.

This could involve:

- A fine of £60 within 21 days (or, if unpaid, £120 within 28 days)
- A Parent / Caring order, education supervision order or school attendance order

Why is it important for my child to attend?

Missing, for example, 2 weeks of school for a holiday might not seem like very much, but it can have a big effect on your child's education.

For example, if your child misses 2 weeks of school every year, this adds up to more than 2 terms over the child's whole time in school.

Make sure your child attends school as much as possible. This means:

- Your child will have the same education and opportunities as everyone else in the class
- You won't need to worry about catching up on work, or that your child might fall behind because of missing an important lesson
- Your child won't miss out on activities at the start and end of term, which are often fun and a chance to develop friendships

My question hasn't been answered here

Please get in touch with us by contacting your child's House team with any further questions and we'll be happy to discuss them with you.