

The Federation of St Martin's and Seabrook CEP Schools

ATTENDANCE POLICY

**Based on the DfE document "Working Together to
Improve School Attendance" Published February
2024 (applies from 19th August 2024)**

Reviewed September 2025

The Federation of St Martin's and Seabrook Church of England Primary School believes in ensuring all children can reach their potential by excellent ATTENDANCE

Statement of Intent

The Federation of St Martin's and Seabrook CEP School's is committed to the continuous raising of achievement of all our pupils. Regular attendance is critical if our pupils are to be successful and benefit from the opportunities presented to them.

Our Attendance Target is 100%. While our aspiration is 100% attendance for every pupil, we also recognise the importance of monitoring improvements from individual starting points and aiming for attendance above national benchmarks. This ensures our expectations are ambitious but realistic and supportive.

One of our basic principles is to celebrate success. Good attendance is fundamental to a successful and fulfilling school experience. We actively promote 100% attendance for all our pupils and we use a variety of weekly, termly and annual awards to promote good attendance and punctuality to celebrate attendance and to reinforce the importance of good attendance.

The Governors, Executive Headteacher and Staff, in partnership with parents, have a duty to promote full attendance at The Federation of St Martin's and Seabrook CEP Schools.

The importance of school attendance

Improving attendance is everyone's business. The barriers to accessing education are wide and complex, both within and beyond the school gates and are often specific to individual pupils and families. The foundation of securing good attendance is that school is a calm, orderly, safe, and supportive environment where all pupils want to be and are keen and ready to learn.

Some pupils find it harder than others to attend school and therefore at all stages of improving attendance, schools and partners should work with pupils and parents to remove any barriers to attendance by building strong and trusting relationships and working together to put the right support in place. Securing good attendance cannot therefore be seen in isolation and effective practices for improvement will involve close interaction with schools' efforts on curriculum, behaviour, bullying, special educational needs support, pastoral and mental health and wellbeing and effective use of resources, including pupil premium. It cannot solely be the preserve of a single member of staff, or organisation, it must be a concerted effort across all teaching and non-teaching staff in school, the trust or governing body, the local authority, and other local partners.

The law on school attendance and the right to a full-time education

The law entitles every child of compulsory school age to an efficient, full-time education suitable to their age, aptitude, and any special educational need they may have. It is the legal responsibility of every parent to make sure their child receives that education either by attendance at a school or by education otherwise than at a school. Where parents decide to have their child registered at school, they have an additional legal duty to ensure their child attends that school regularly. This means their child must attend every day that the school is open, except in a small number of allowable circumstances such as being too ill to attend or being given permission for an absence in advance from the school.

Parental Responsibility

Parents have a legal duty to ensure that their children attend school regularly and arrive on time. Regular attendance is essential to the all-round development of the child and they should be allowed to take full advantage of educational opportunities available to them in order to make good progress in their learning. Poor attendance and punctuality undermines their educational attainment and progress and, sometimes, puts pupils at risk by encouraging anti-social behaviour. If a pupil has attendance of 90% that is equivalent to them having **one day off every 2 weeks**. It is important for parents/carers to know that any absence, regardless of the reason, will affect their child's ability to make progress in their learning and reach their full potential. We will be monitoring children's attendance regularly. If a child's attendance falls below **95%** we have a duty of care to inform parents and further action may be taken.

It is the parent's responsibility to contact the school on the first day their child is absent. This is a safeguarding requirement so that all parties know that your child is safe and their whereabouts is known. Parents should regularly update the school and inform the school when their child is returning.

Pupils are expected to arrive and be ready to learn on time. School, start times:

□ Whole School 8:50am

All pupils that arrive late must report, with their parent, to the school office where the reason for lateness is recorded. This lateness will be monitored.

The Role of the School Staff

At The Federation of St Martin's and Seabrook CEP School there is a whole school responsibility and approach for improving school attendance, with specific staff taking individual responsibility.

Class teachers complete a register at the beginning of each morning and once during the afternoon session. Marking the attendance registers twice daily is a legal requirement. (The Education (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2006). Teachers mark pupils present, absent or late.

It is the responsibility of the School's Attendance Officer to ensure:

- Attendance and lateness records are up to date
- If no reason for absence has been provided, parents are contacted on the first day of absence by SMS then phone call.
- Where there has been no communication, an SMS is sent in the first instance to parents requesting the reason for absence.
- The appropriate attendance code is entered into the register (see updated National Attendance Codes)
- Parents can log onto Reach More Parents for an up to date attendance figure for their child.
- Attendance is shared with the DfE daily via Wonde

The senior leader who has overall responsibility for attendance procedures is the Executive Headteacher, Mrs. E Carter who can be contacted via the school office on or at:

headteacher@seabrook.kent.sch.uk / headteacher@st-martins-folkestone.kent.sch.uk.

Any queries about attendance on a day to day basis should be dealt with through our attendance officer:

St Martin's – Mrs. L Colley/ Ms A Ewins 01303 238888 office@st-martins-folkestone.kent.sch.uk
Seabrook – Mrs. J Beech/Mrs A Colley 01303 238429 office@seabrook.kent.sch.uk

Role and Responsibility of Kent County Council

For all pupils

- Have a strategic approach to improving attendance for the whole area and make it a key focus of all frontline council services. Have a School Attendance Support Team (PIAS) that works with all schools in their area to remove area-wide barriers to attendance.
- Provide each school with a named point of contact in the School Attendance Support Team who can support with queries and advice.
- Offer opportunities for all schools in the area to share effective practice.

For pupils at risk of becoming persistently absent -

- Hold a termly conversation with every school to identify, discuss and signpost or provide access to services for pupils who are persistently or severely absent or at risk of becoming so.
- Where there are out of school barriers, provide each identified pupil and their family with access to services they need in the first instance. If the issue persists, facilitate a voluntary Early Help assessment where appropriate and take an active part in the multi-agency effort with the school and other partners.
- To provide the lead practitioner where all partners agree that a local authority service is best placed to lead. Where the lead practitioner is outside of the local authority, continue to work with the school and partners.

For Persistently absent pupils (under 90%)

- Continued support as for pupils at risk of becoming persistently absent and: work jointly with the school to provide formal support options including parenting contracts and education supervision orders.
- Where there are safeguarding concerns, ensure joint working between the school, children's social care services and other statutory safeguarding partners.
- Where support is not working, being engaged with or appropriate, enforce attendance through legal intervention (including prosecution as a last resort).

For severely absent pupils (under 50%)

- Continued support as for persistently absent pupils and: all services should make this group the top priority for support.

Support for cohorts of pupils with lower attendance than their peers

- Track local attendance data to prioritise support and unblock area wide attendance barriers where they impact numerous schools.

Support for pupils with medical conditions or SEND with poor attendance

- Work closely with relevant services and partners, for example special educational needs, educational psychologists, and mental health services, to ensure joined up support for families

Support for pupils with a social worker (VSK - Virtual School Kent)

- Regularly monitor the attendance of children with a social worker in their area. Put in place personal education plans for looked-after children. Secure regular attendance of looked-after children as their corporate parent and provide advice and guidance about the importance of attendance to those services supporting pupils previously looked after.

Role of School Governors

At The Federation of St Martin's and Seabrook CEP Schools governors take an active role in attendance improvement, support the school to prioritise attendance, and work together with leaders to set whole school cultures. The EHT updates the governors 3 times per year to ensure school leaders fulfil expectations and statutory duties. They regularly review attendance data and help school leaders focus support on the pupils who need it.

Timeline of the Staged Approach for Managing Poor Attendance

For any child's attendance that falls to 95% or below they will be identified to the SLT. A letter will be sent to parents and improvement is expected over a reasonable amount of time. If a child's attendance falls below 95%, further absences will not be authorised, unless supported by medical evidence.

- Where attendance falls to 95% or below – The School's Attendance Officer will send a letter to notify parents.
- 90 - 95% attendance - school intervention letters/meeting with parents.
- Where the level of absence has not improved and there are unauthorised absences, the school will make a referral to the KCC using the Digital Front Door. If it is not clear a referral to the Service is appropriate, the school will consult with the Local Authority School Liaison Officer for advice.
- For the cases that require intensive family support, the school may make an Early Help Notification.

Support for all

At The Federation of St Martin's and Seabrook CEP Schools we will support each individual case in a way we see fit to do. We will be supportive and as bespoke as possible in order to find methods and approaches that work for that individual. Access to wider support services will be provided to remove barriers to attendance. If absence is severe and persistent, support will be offered in conjunction with the local authority.

Children Missing Education

No child should be removed from the school roll without consultation between the Executive Headteacher and the Inclusion and Attendance Service when appropriate. Please see the circumstances below:-

Where a child is missing from education, Local Authority guidance will be followed, by completing a Child Missing Education referral for the following circumstances:-

- If the whereabouts of the child is unknown and the school has failed to locate him/her.
- The family has notified the school that they are leaving the area but no Common Transfer Form (pupil file) has been requested by another school.

Lateness

At The Federation of St Martin's and Seabrook CEP Schools the register is taken at the start of each school day (8:50am). Children who arrive after their registration time and before 9.00am are marked as 'late' (Code 'L') and 9.00am onwards as 'unauthorised' (Code 'U'). Pupils arriving after this time must enter school by the main entrance and report to Reception where their name and the reason for lateness will be recorded.

Pupils arriving after the register has closed will be marked as late after registration (Code 'U') and this will count as an unauthorised absence.

Frequent lateness after the register has closed (U) will be discussed with parents and could provide grounds for prosecution or a Penalty Notice.

All attendance marks are recorded through Horizons, an MIS system used throughout the school

Penalty Notice Proceedings for Lateness

- 10 incidents of late arrival after the registers have closed (Lateness code U) during any possible 100 school sessions leads to a Penalty Notice Warning Letter.
- The Penalty Notice Warning Letter sets out 15 school days during which no unauthorised absence (Lateness Code U) is to be recorded
- If unauthorised absence (Lateness Code U) is recorded during the 15 day period, a Penalty Notice(s) will be issued (one per parent per child)
- Where a Penalty Notice is not paid within 28 days of issue the Local Authority will instigate court proceedings

Authorising Absence

Only the Executive Headteacher can authorise absence using a consistent approach. The Executive Headteacher is not obliged to accept a parent's explanation. A letter or telephone message from a parent does not in itself authorise an absence. If absences are not authorised, parents will be notified.

If no explanation is received, absences will not be authorised.

Absence (for example leave for holidays) during term time can only be approved in "exceptional circumstances". The following reasons are examples of absence that will **not be authorised**:

- Persistent nonspecific illness e.g. poorly/unwell
- Absence of siblings if one child is ill
- Oversleeping
- Inadequate clothing/uniform
- Confusion over school dates
- Medical/dental appointments of more than half a day without very good reasons
- Child's/family birthday
- Shopping trip
- Family Holidays (with some rare exceptions)

Persistent unauthorised absence (10% or more of the school year) or severe persistent unauthorised absence (50% or more of the school year) may result in an AS1 referral to the Local Authority School Liaison Officer for consideration of prosecution. The school will follow procedures prior to referral and parents will be notified in writing.

When a referral is made, the child's Registration Certificate, copies of all letters sent to parents and minutes of any meetings **need to** be attached to the completed AS1 referral form with any other relevant information.

Local Authority Action may include:- •

Attendance Improvement Meeting

- Home visits
- Liaison with other agencies
- Fast Track to Prosecution

Pupils with long-term medical conditions or special educational needs

The school will work together with parents of pupils with long term medical conditions or special educational needs. Schools must be mindful of the barriers these pupils face and put in additional support where necessary to help them access full time education. This will be done in partnership with parents.

Penalty Notice Proceedings for Poor Attendance *(Please refer to: Kent County Council Code of Conduct for issuing penalty notices for school absence 2024)*

- A Penalty Notice can only be issued in cases of absence for 10 or more half day sessions (5 school days) without authorisation during any 100 possible school sessions or period of 50 days of schooling (10 week period) – these do not need to be consecutive.
- A penalty notice will be issued per parent, per child e.g. 3 siblings absent for term time leave, would result in each parent receiving 3 separate fines.
- A Penalty Notice can also be issued where an excluded child is found in a public place during school hours.
- After the appropriate request for a Penalty Notice is received, the KCC Inclusion and Attendance Service will issue a warning letter setting out 15 school days during which no unauthorised absence is to be recorded.
- If unauthorised absence is recorded during the 15 day period a Penalty Notice will be issued (one per parent per child).

Notice to improve *(Please refer to: Kent County Council Code of Conduct for issuing penalty notices for school absence 2024)*

A notice to improve is a final opportunity for a parent to engage in support and improve attendance before a penalty notice is issued. If the national threshold has been met and support is appropriate but offers of support have not been engaged with by the parent or have not worked, a notice to improve should usually be sent to give parents a final chance to engage. Kent schools will issue a notice to improve for parentally-condoned absence and unauthorised absence. It will not be necessary to issue a notice to improve for term time holidays or leave of absence.

At the end of an unsatisfactory monitoring period, schools may request a penalty notice to be issued if this is considered the best course of action to improve attendance.

Penalty Notice Proceedings for Holidays *(Please refer to: Kent County Council Code of Conduct for issuing penalty notices for school absence 2024)*

Holidays **will not** be authorised. **For unauthorised family holidays (code “G”)**

- A Penalty Notice will be issued in cases of absence for 10 or more half day sessions (5 school days) without authorisation during any 100 possible school sessions or period of 50 days of schooling – these do not need to be consecutive.

Exceptional circumstances:

The fundamental principles for defining ‘exceptional’ are rare, significant, unavoidable and short. And by ‘unavoidable’ it implies that an event could not reasonably be scheduled at another time. It is important to note that Executive Headteachers can agree the absence of a child in exceptional circumstances and this discretion can be used also to determine the length of the authorised absence.

The Executive Headteacher may authorise absence in “exceptional circumstances” but this must be requested 6 weeks in advance and agreement to each request is at the discretion of the Executive Headteacher, acting on behalf of the Governing Body (Education (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2006). Each case will be judged on its merits and the Executive Headteacher’s decision is final. Once the decision not to authorise leave is taken, it cannot be authorised retrospectively.

If the absence is not authorised and the holiday is taken anyway, the case may be referred to Kent County Council who may issue a Penalty Notice to each parent for each child taken out of school.

Failure to pay the penalty in full by the end of the 28 day period will result in prosecution by the Local Authority.

Penalty Notices (*Please refer to: Kent County Council Code of Conduct for issuing penalty notices for school absence 2024*)

Where Penalty Notices are imposed, the regulations state that the penalty will be £160 to be paid within 28 days, reduced to £80 if paid within 21 days. Penalty Notices are issued to each parent of each child. Failure to pay the penalty in full by the end of the 28 day period will result in prosecution by the Local Authority.

Section 444 of the Education Act 1996 says that parents are **guilty** of an offence of failing to secure regular attendance at school unless they can prove that the child was absent:

- with leave (the school has given permission)
- due to sickness or any unavoidable cause (the sickness or unavoidable cause must relate to the child, not the parent)
- religious observance
- failure by the Local Authority to provide transport

In law, these are the only acceptable reasons for a child being absent from school.

First Offence

The first time a Penalty Notice is issued for Term Time Leave or irregular attendance the amount will be; £160 per parent, per child paid within 28 days. Reduced to £80 per parent, per child if paid within 21 days.

Second Offence (within 3 years)

The second time a Penalty Notice is issued for Term Time Leave or irregular attendance within a 3 year period the amount will be; £160 per parent, per child paid within 28 days.

Third Offence and any further offences (within 3 years)

Fines per parent will be capped to two fines within any three-year period. Once this limit has been reached, other action like a parenting order or prosecution will be considered. The third time an offence is committed for Term Time Leave and irregular attendance a Penalty Notice will not be issued, and the case will be presented straight to the Magistrates' Court. Magistrate's fines can be up to £2500 per parent, per child. Cases found guilty in the Magistrates' Court can show on the parent's future DBS certificate due to 'failure to safeguard a child's education.'

Using Data to Improve Attendance

The attendance officer has fortnightly attendance meetings with Senior Leaders to discuss individual pupils and their attendance. Attendance statistics are discussed and relevant attendance reports are shared with key staff to aid discussions with families. Best practice ideas are discussed and data is used to understand the impact of interventions.

Termly patterns of attendance are recorded and shared with senior leaders including:

- Whole school and individual pupil basis
- Groups e.g. FSM, SEN, PP, CiC, GRT, EAL
- How we compare with national data.
- Daily statistics are shared with the DfE via Wonde

Reduced Timetables (Working together to improve school attendance DfE guidance May 2023) All pupils of compulsory school age are entitled to a full-time education. In very exceptional circumstances, where it is in a pupil's best interests, there may be a need for a temporary part-time timetable to meet their individual needs. Exceptional circumstances include:

- There's a specific need for a pupil- e.g. medical condition
- It's in the pupils best interests
- It's on a temporary basis
- A family bereavement
- A pupil joining the school has significant needs and it is being used for transition

A part-time timetable must only be in place for the shortest time necessary and not be treated as a long-term solution. Any pastoral support programme or other agreement should have a time limit by which point the pupil is expected to attend full time, either at school or alternative provision. There should also be formal arrangements in place for regularly reviewing it with the pupil and their parents. In agreeing to a part time timetable, a school has agreed to a pupil being absent from school for part of the week or day and therefore must treat absence as authorised. All applications for reduced timetables are made to KCC.

Home Visits

Through our safeguarding procedures, from the first day of absence, if we are in any way unsure about a child's absence we will carry out a home visit.

If a child has been absent for 3 days or more we reserve the right to carry out a home visit even if the parents have continued to be in communication with us.

Home visits will always be conducted by 2 members of staff.

Procedures

What you should do if your child is ill?

If your child is unable to attend school for any reason, for safeguarding purposes, it is imperative that you phone the main office and leave a message **before 8.40 am each and every day** detailing the nature of the absence and why they are unable to attend or leave a message via the Reach More Parents App. The Executive Headteacher will then make the decision whether or not to authorise the absence. Please call the school office and follow the directions to report the absence. If we have not heard why your child is absent we may also action a home visit. If you do not tell the school why your child is absent, it will be recorded as an 'unauthorised' absence

What about medical or dental appointments for your child?

We would respectfully ask that all medical appointments are scheduled before or after school, or preferably in the school holidays. However, we fully accept that there will be times that this is not possible and as a result we will need to see evidence of the appointment in order to authorise the absence.

Please let the school know about any medical or dental appointments you have made for your child. Please bring any letters or appointments cards relating to the absence into the school office or alternatively please email a copy to the school office at

St Martin's – office@st-martins-folkestone.kent.sch.uk

Seabrook – office@seabrook.kent.sch.uk

Full day absence for a medical appointment is usually unnecessary. If your appointment is during the day your child should attend school during the morning and be collected in time to go to the appointment. Your child must return to school after their appointment if fit to do so.

How do I find out about my child's school attendance?

- Parents can log onto Reach More Parents for an up to date attendance figure for their child.
- You can ask the school about your child's attendance at any time.

What does the School Liaison Officer do?

At The Federation of St Martin's and Seabrook CEP Schools, the Family Liaison Officer (FLO) works closely with our school's Attendance Officer and monitors our pupils on a weekly basis.

- They check how many children have attended school and how many children have been absent or late.
- They may contact parents/carers if a child is often late or absent. They can visit students and parents/carers in their homes.

What should I do if I learn that my child is truanting?

If your child does not come to school and you do not know about this, or if your child leaves school in the day without permission, then he/she is truanting. An absence like this will be recorded as 'unauthorised'. If you think your child may be truanting you should contact the school. The school can work with you and your child to find out why he/she is missing school.

Attendance Codes

/ Present (am)

\ Present (pm)

L Late arrival before the register is closed

K Attending education provision arranged by the local authority

V Attending an educational visit or trip

P Participating in a sporting activity

W Attending work experience

B Attending any other approved educational activity

D Dual registered at another school

Absence Codes (authorised and unauthorised)

Authorised absence

C Leave of absence for exceptional circumstance

C1 Leave of absence for the purpose of participating in a regulated performance or undertaking regulated employment abroad

C2 Leave of absence for a compulsory school age pupil subject to a part-time timetable

E Suspended or permanently excluded and no alternative provision made

I Illness (not medical or dental appointment)

J1 Leave of absence for the purpose of attending an interview for employment or for admission to another educational institution

M Leave of absence for the purpose of attending a medical or dental appointment

R Religious observance

S Leave of absence for the purpose of studying for a public examination

T Parent travelling for occupational purposes

X Non-compulsory school age pupil not required to attend school

Unauthorised absence

G Holiday not granted by the school

N Reason for absence not yet established

O Absent in other or unknown circumstances

U Arrived in school after registration closed

Absent - unable to attend school because of unavoidable cause

Q Unable to attend the school because of a lack of access arrangements

Y1 Unable to attend due to transport normally provided not being available

Y2 Unable to attend due to widespread disruption to travel

Y3 Unable to attend due to part of the school premises being closed

Y4 Unable to attend due to the whole school site being unexpectedly closed

Y5 Unable to attend as pupil is in criminal justice detention

Y6 Unable to attend in accordance with public health guidance or law

Y7 Unable to attend because of any other unavoidable cause

Administrative codes

Z Prospective pupil not on admission register

Planned whole school closure



Review

Governors to review this policy annually

NB: Definition of parent within the DfE document "Working together to Improve School Attendance"

- All natural parents, whether they are married or not;
- All those who have parental responsibility for a child or young person;
- Those who have day to day responsibility for the child (i.e. lives with and looks after the child).