

St Thomas of Canterbury Church of England Infant School

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Headteacher Mrs C B L'Estrange BA Ed (Hons) NPQH



Attendance and Punctuality Policy

Introduction

St Thomas of Canterbury Church of England Voluntary Aided Infant School is committed to providing every child with a sound Christian education in accordance with our mission statement and to encouraging each child to let their little light shine brightly. We believe that all children benefit from the education that we provide and, therefore, from regular school attendance. Irregular attendance and late arrival will inevitably undermine the children's learning and is not fair on the child concerned, the other children in the child's class or the school staff.

We recognise that positive behaviour and good attendance are essential in order to raise standards of attainment and to give every child/young person the best educational experience possible.

This policy is written with the above statements in mind and underpins our school ethos to:

- promote every child's welfare and safeguarding
- ensure every child has access to the full time education to which they are entitled
- ensure that children succeed whilst at school
- ensure that children have access to the widest possible range of opportunities at school, and when they leave school

For our children to gain the greatest benefit from their education it is vital that they attend regularly and be at school, on time, every day the school is open unless the reason for the absence is unavoidable. **It is a rule of this school that children must attend every day, unless there are exceptional circumstances and it is the Headteacher or the Chair of Governors, not the parent, who can authorise the absence.**

Any absence affects the pattern of a child's schooling and regular absence will seriously affect their learning. Any child's absence or late arrival disrupts teaching routines and so may affect the learning of others in the same class. Ensuring a child's regular attendance at school is a parental responsibility and permitting absence from school without a good reason creates an offence in law and may result in prosecution.

The law states that parents/carers have a legal obligation to ensure that children within their care attend school regularly. Schools and local authorities have a duty to ensure that poor school attendance is dealt with swiftly.

The school will do all that it can to encourage the children to attend by putting in place appropriate procedures. The governors and staff believe that the most important factor in promoting good attendance is the development of positive attitudes towards school. To this end, everybody involved in the life and work of the school strives to make the school a happy and rewarding experience for all children. The school expects all children to be able to talk with their classteacher or another adult within school about any problems that may affect their school attendance.

This policy has been developed in consultation with school governors and the Local Authority. It seeks to ensure that all parties involved in the practicalities of school attendance are aware and

informed of attendance matters in school and to outline the school's commitment to attendance matters. It details the responsibilities of individuals and groups involved and the procedures in place to promote and monitor attendance of all children.

This policy must be read together with appendices A to D.

Aims

This policy aims to:

- support children and their parents/carers in the establishment of the highest possible levels of attendance and punctuality
- ensure that all children have full and equal access to the best education that the school can offer in order to increase learning
- enable children to progress smoothly, confidently and with continuity through the school
- make parents/carers aware of their legal responsibilities
- promoting a positive and welcoming atmosphere in which children feel safe, secure and valued
- raising awareness of the importance of good attendance and punctuality
- ensuring that attendance is monitored effectively and reasons for absences are recorded promptly and consistently.

Promoting Regular Attendance

Helping to create a pattern of regular attendance is the responsibility of parents, children and all members of school staff.

To help us all to focus on this we will:

- give parents/carers details on attendance in our newsletters
- report to parents/carers annually on their child's attendance with the annual school report
- contact parents/carers should their child's attendance fall below the school's target for attendance
- celebrate excellent attendance by displaying and reporting individual and class achievements
- reward good or improving attendance

Understanding types of absence

Every half-day absence from school has to be classified by the school (not by the parent/carer), as either AUTHORISED or UNAUTHORISED. This is why information about the cause of any absence is always required.

Authorised absences are mornings or afternoons away from school for a good reason like illness (although you may be asked to provide medical evidence for your child before this can be authorised), medical or dental appointments which unavoidably fall in school time, emergencies or other unavoidable cause. These absences will be reviewed by the Headteacher.

Children leaving school during the school day

During school hours the school staff are legally in loco parentis and, therefore, must know where the children are.

- children should not leave the school premises without authorisation
- whenever possible, parents should try to arrange medical and other appointments outside of school time
- parents are requested to confirm in writing by using the Leave of Absence request form (Appendix C), the reason for any planned absence, the time of leaving and the expected return time
- where a child is being collected from the school, parents are to report to the school office before the child is allowed to leave the school premises.

Unauthorised absences are those which the school does not consider reasonable and for which no 'leave' has been given. This type of absence can lead to the Local Authority using sanctions and/or legal proceedings. Unauthorised absence includes:

- parents/carers keeping children off school unnecessarily e.g. because they had a late night or for non-infectious illness or injury that would not affect their ability to learn.
- absences which have never been properly explained
- children who arrive at school too late to get a mark on the attendance register
- shopping trips
- looking after other children or children accompanying siblings or parents to medical appointments
- their own or family birthdays
- holidays taken during term time without leave - 5 days unauthorised absence will lead to a penalty notice being triggered by the Local Authority
- day trips
- other leave of absence in term time which has not been agreed

School Attendance and the Law

There is no longer any entitlement in law for pupils to take time off during the term to go on holiday. In addition, the Supreme Court has ruled that the definition of regular school attendance is "in accordance with the rules prescribed by the school".

The Education (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2006 were amended in September 2013. All references to family holidays and extended leave have been removed. The amendments specify that headteachers may not grant any leave of absence during term time unless there are "exceptional circumstances" and they no longer have the discretion to authorise up to ten days of absence each academic year.

At St Thomas of Canterbury CEVA Infant School 'exceptional circumstances' will be interpreted as... being of unique and significant emotional, educational or spiritual value to the child which outweighs the loss of teaching time. The fundamental principles for defining 'exceptional' are events that are "rare, significant, unavoidable and short". By 'unavoidable' we mean an event that could not reasonably be scheduled at another time.

We will not agree leave during term time:

- at any time in September - this is very important as your child needs to settle into their new class as quickly as possible
- during assessment and test periods in the school's calendar affecting your child
- when a child's attendance record already includes any level of unauthorised absence or they have already been granted authorised leave within that academic year

Whilst any child may occasionally have time off school because they are ill, sometimes they can be reluctant to attend school. Problems with regular attendance are best sorted out between the school, the parents and the child. If a parent thinks their child is reluctant to attend school then we will work with that family to understand the root problem and provide any necessary support. We can use outside agencies to help with this such as the School Nurse, Local Authority Officers or Child and Family Support Worker.

Persistent Absenteeism (PA)

A pupil is defined by the Government as a '**persistent absentee**' when they miss 10% or more schooling across the school year for whatever reason. Absence at this level will cause considerable damage to any child's education and we need a parent/carer's fullest support and co-operation to tackle this.

We monitor all absence, and the reasons that are given, thoroughly. If a child is seen to have reached the PA mark or is at risk of moving towards that mark we will inform the parent/carer. PA pupils are tracked and monitored carefully. We also combine this with academic tracking where absence affects attainment. All our PA pupils and their parents are subject to a school based meeting and the plan may include: allocation of additional support through the School Nurse, Local Attendance Adviser, Home School Liaison Worker, Local Authority, Family Solutions or Social Care. We may also use circle time, individual incentive programmes, individual targets and participation in group activities to support us in raising attendance.

Absence Procedures

If a child is absent from school the parent/carer must follow the following procedures:

- Contact the school on the first day of absence before 9.30 am. The school has an answer phone available to leave a message if nobody is available to take your call, or call into school personally and speak to the office staff
- Contact the school on every further day of absence, again before 9.30am
- Ensure that your child returns to school as soon as possible

If your child is absent we will:

- Telephone or text you on the first day of absence if we have not heard from you
- Write to you if your child's attendance is below 95%
- Invite you into school to discuss the situation with our School Welfare Officer, Child and Family Support Worker or Headteacher if absences persist
- Refer the matter to the Local Authority to request a formal School Attendance Meeting if attendance deteriorates following the above actions

The Missing Education and Child Employment Service (MECES)

Parents are expected to contact school at an early stage and to work with the staff in resolving any problems together. This is nearly always successful. If difficulties cannot be sorted out in this way, the school may refer the child to the Local Authority. Local Authority Officers work with schools, families and other professionals to reduce persistent absence and improve overall attendance. If attendance does not improve, legal action may be taken in the form of a Penalty Notice (see Appendix A for the Essex Code of Conduct), prosecution in the Magistrates Court or the application of an Education Supervision Order, designed to strengthen parental responsibilities and ensure improved attendance.

The school may refer a child to MECES where attendance remains a concern following school intervention. MECES will work with schools and families to address attendance issues. However, if attendance fails to improve the MECES legal intervention process will be used.

Punctuality - Lateness

Poor punctuality is not acceptable. If a child misses the start of the day they can miss work and do not spend time with their class teacher getting vital information and news for the day. Late arriving children also disrupt lessons, can be embarrassing for the child and can also encourage absence. Good time-keeping is a vital life skill which will help our children as they progress through their school life and out into the wider world.

Registration arrangements and how we manage lateness:

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

The Attendance Register is marked with a red / if the child is present and a pencil O if the child is absent. This will be inked in when the reason for absence has been ascertained. A list of codes which show the reason for absence are listed in each register and will be entered inside the O. See Appendix B for Attendance Codes. The number of children present morning and afternoon will be entered at the bottom of the page in the column for the day. The Attendance Register is a legal document.

The school day starts at **8.45am for children in Reception and 8.55am for children in Key Stage 1**. Morning registration takes place as soon as practicably possible after the classroom doors are opened and children are in the classroom. For Reception this is at 8.45am and registers are in the office by 8.55am and for Key Stage 1 this is at 8.55am and registers are in the office by 9.05am. Any child arriving after the registers have been brought to the office will be marked as late - code L (Late arrival before the register has closed) if they arrive before the registers close at 9.15am and as late - code U (Arrived in school after registration closed) if they arrive after 9.15am. At **9.15am** the registers will be closed. In accordance with the Regulations, if your child arrives after that time they

will receive a mark that shows them to be on site, but this will **not** count as a present mark and it will mean they have an unauthorised absence. This may mean that you could face the possibility of a Penalty Notice if the problem persists. If your child has a persistent late record you will be contacted by the school and / or MECES where appropriate, but you can approach us at any time if you are having problems getting your child to school on time. We expect parents and staff to encourage good punctuality by being good role models to our children and celebrate good class and individual punctuality.

Children who arrive late are required to come to the school office, accompanied by a parent or carer, so that the reason for their lateness can be ascertained and the register can be appropriately marked. The parent/carers will be required to provide a reason for their lateness which is then recorded in our 'Late Book'. The school may send home 'late notes' in order to keep parents and carers informed. The Headteacher is regularly in the school office to carry out a 'Late Door' check, greeting late arrivals at the main entrance to the school.

Afternoon registration takes place at 1.15pm.

If leave of absence is authorised, the school will not provide work for children to do during their absence. Parents are however advised to read with their children and encourage them to write a diary while they are away.

Rewards for good attendance and punctuality

The school is committed to working with parents to encourage good attendance in school.

Weekly: Class Attendance Cup is awarded to the class with the highest attendance for that week. This is stated in the weekly newsletter. The cup is highly coveted and every class is eager to win it.

Weekly: House Punctuality Bear is awarded to the house with the highest punctuality for that week. This is stated in the weekly newsletter. This is again keenly sought after.

Termly: All the children who have 100 per cent attendance for the term will receive a sticker for attendance, awarded during the last week of the term.

Annually: Any child who has 100 per cent attendance for a whole year will receive a special certificate at the end of the academic year. All parents receive an attendance and punctuality summary of the academic, illustrating their child's detailed attendance and punctuality.

Annually: The school publishes its absence figures to parents (legal duty).

Attendance targets

The school sets an annual attendance target at the start of each academic year.

Changing school – deletion from roll

It is important that if parents / carers decide to send their child to a different school that they inform St Thomas of Canterbury Church of England Infant School as soon as possible. A child will not be removed from the school roll until the following information has been received in writing and investigated:

- the date the child will be leaving the school and starting the next
- the address of the new school
- the new home address if appropriate
- the new school has requested the common transfer file (CTF)

The child's school records will then be sent to the new school as soon as practicable. In the event that the school has not been informed of the above information, the family will be referred to MECES. This information is essential to ensure that we know and safeguard the whereabouts of all of our children.

Monitoring and review

It is the responsibility of the Governors to monitor overall attendance, and they receive a termly update report from the Headteacher at the School Development Committee Meeting. The Governing Body also has responsibility for this policy, and for seeing that it is carried out. There is a named Governor responsible for Attendance and Punctuality. Equally, parents have a duty to make sure that their children attend school, on time every day.

Class teachers are responsible for monitoring attendance in their class, and for following up absences in the appropriate way. If there is concern about a child's absence, they will contact the school office immediately. If there is a longer-term general worry about the attendance of a particular child, this will be reported to the Headteacher, who will contact the parent / carer.

This policy will be reviewed by the Governing Body (delegated to the School Development Committee) annually, or earlier if considered necessary.

Date approved:

Review date:

Appendix A – Essex Code of Conduct:

ESSEX CODE OF CONDUCT

PENALTY NOTICES FOR PARENTS OF TRUANTS AND PARENTS OF PUPILS EXCLUDED FROM SCHOOL

ANTI SOCIAL BEHAVIOUR ACT 2003 SECTION 23

The purpose of this local code of conduct is to ensure that the powers are applied consistently and fairly across the local authority area and that suitable arrangements are in place for the administration of the scheme.

The Government requires Local Authorities to issue a code of conduct.

The Essex code has been agreed following consultation with:

- Essex Local Authority – Missing Education & Child Employment Service
- Representatives from Governing Bodies and Headteachers of Essex Schools
- Essex Police Service

In accordance with the Education (Penalty Notices) Regulation 2007, Anti Social Behaviour Act 2003) section 23 subsection (1) and Sections 103 to 105 of the Education and Inspections Act 2006; Education (Pupil Registration) (England) (Amendment) Regulations 2013. Anyone issuing a penalty notice to a parent* of a child of statutory school age on roll at an Essex school, must do so within the terms of this code.

Legislation

The Anti Social Behaviour Act 2003 inserts into the Education Act 1996 Section 444A and Section 444B enabling authorised personnel to issue penalty notices as an alternative to prosecution under Section 444 and enable parents to discharge potential liability for conviction for that offence by paying a penalty.

Section 444(1) of the Education Act 1996 provides that if a child of compulsory school age ‘fails to attend regularly’ at the school where he is a registered pupil, his parent is guilty of an offence. On the 6th April 2017, in the case of *Isle of Wight Council v Platt* the Supreme Court judgement ruled that the word ‘regularly’ means ‘in accordance with the rules prescribed by the school’

Section 103 of the Education and Inspections Act 2006 places a duty on parents to ensure that their child is not present during school hours in a public place during the first 5 days of exclusions. Section 105 of the Act enables a penalty notice to be issued under Section 103.

Authorisation to issue penalty notices

Primary responsibility for issuing penalty notices rests with the Local Authority (LA). It has been agreed that the Missing Education & Child Employment Service, on behalf of Essex LA, will usually issue penalty notices. The Service will administer the scheme from any funds obtained as a result of issuing penalty notices.

Headteachers (and deputy headteachers and assistant headteachers authorised by the head teacher) and police, and persons accredited by the police are all able to issue the notices under the Act, although there is no requirement for them to do so. In Essex it has been agreed that the Police will not issue penalty notices to parents of truants, but persons accredited by them may do so. Schools will not generally issue penalty notices but where a Headteacher (or their designated deputy) or accredited person decides that a penalty notice is to be served, they must email ME&CE.legal@essex.gov.uk to ascertain if there is any current legal action. A response will be sent within 24 hours. This will avoid a penalty notice being issued when the Local Authority is instigating legal intervention proceedings for irregular school attendance.

Circumstances in which a penalty notice may be issued:

Penalty Notices apply to pupils of statutory school age which finishes in year 11.

Essex partners have agreed to use penalty notices for the following circumstances:

Penalty notices for irregular school attendance /leave of absence**

- Penalty notices may be issued where there has been at least 10 sessions of unauthorised absence during the previous ten school weeks. This includes unauthorised late arrivals, coded U, which count as unauthorised absence for the whole session.
- In addition to the above criteria, due to the importance of pupils settling into school at the commencement of the school year, penalty notices may also be issued if there have been at least 6 consecutive sessions of unauthorised leave of absence during the first two weeks of September due to a term-time holiday.

Number of penalty notices which can be issued for truancy/unauthorised absence:

Discretion will be used to enable up to two penalty notices to be issued to each parent for each child within a twelve month period. If the law continues to be broken around school attendance the Missing Education and Child Employment Service legal intervention process will be used.

Pupil identified during a school attendance and exclusion sweep:

School attendance and exclusion sweeps take place in Essex and children stopped are often with parents condoning the absence.

If the Headteacher does not authorise the absence of a pupil stopped by a Local Authority Investigation Officer and Police Officer on a sweep and there has been at least 10 unauthorised absences for that pupil during the preceding 10 schools weeks, school will issue a warning letter to the parent within 14 days.

If there are any further absences that are not authorised by the headteacher, during the next 6 schools weeks the school will complete a request, signed by the Headteacher (or their designated deputy), for issue of a penalty notice and send to the Missing Education and Child Employment Service. The Missing Education and Child Employment Service may then issue a penalty notice.

Number of Penalty Notices which can be issued for pupils identified during a school attendance and exclusion sweep:

Essex will issue no more than two penalty notices to a parent in a twelve month period for pupils identified on a school attendance and exclusion sweep. If the law continues to be broken around school attendance the Missing Education and Child Employment Service legal intervention process will be used.

Excluded children

When a child is excluded from school, the parent will be responsible for ensuring that their child is not found in a public place during normal school hours on the first five days of each and every fixed period or permanent exclusion. (Section 103 Education and Inspections Act)

The excluding school must have issued notice to the parent informing them of their duty and warning that a penalty notice could be issued.

Where there is more than one person liable for the offence, a separate notice may be issued to each person.

Where a pupil is present in a public place in the first five days of a fixed period exclusion the Essex Local Authority would issue a penalty notice if the school is in their area. Where the child has been permanently excluded, it would be the authority where the child resides.

Number of penalty notices which can be issued for exclusion:

Essex will issue a maximum of 5 penalty notices per parent for each child during a 12 month period.

Number of penalty notices which can be issued for unauthorised leave of absence

Essex will issue no more than two penalty notices to a parent in a twelve month period for unauthorised leave of absence. If the law continues to be broken around school attendance the Missing Education and Child Employment Service legal intervention process will be used.

Payment of Penalty Notice

The penalty for each parent is £60 for each child if paid within 21 days of receipt of the notice, rising to £120 if paid after 21 days but within 28 days of receipt of the notice (service by post is deemed to have been effected, unless the contrary is proved, on the second working day after posting the notice by first class post).

All penalties are paid to the LA and revenue generated is retained to administer the system and contribute towards S444 prosecutions.

If the penalty is not paid in full by the end of the 28 day period Essex Missing Education and Child Employment Service will either prosecute for the offence to which the notice applies or withdraw the notice. The prosecution is not for non-payment of the notice but is a prosecution for irregular school attendance – Education Act 1996 Section 444 (1).

There is no statutory right of appeal against the issuing of a penalty notice.

Withdrawal of Penalty Notice

A penalty notice can be withdrawn in the following circumstances:

- Where it ought not to have been issued i.e. where it has been issued outside the terms of the local code of conduct or where the evidence does not support the issuing of a penalty notice.
- The notice contains material errors.
- Where it has been issued to the wrong person or the parent can prove it was delivered to the wrong address

Co-ordination between the LOCAL AUTHORITY and its local partners

The Missing Education and Child Employment Service and its local partners will review this Code of Conduct regularly.

** All those defined as a parent under Section 576 Education Act 1996 are parents for the purpose of these provisions. This means that all natural parents, whether they are married or not; any person who, although not a natural parent, has parental responsibility (as defined in the Children Act 1989) for a child or young person; and any person who, although not a natural parent, has care of a child or young person. Having care of a child or young person means that a person with whom the child lives and who looks after the child, irrespective of what their relationship is with the child, is considered to be a parent in education law. Parent means each and every parent coming within the definition (whether acting jointly or separately) and should not be taken to mean that provisions only apply to parent in the singular.*

As with prosecutions under Section 444 Education Act 1996 a penalty notice may be issued to each parent liable for the offence.

Revised July 2017 for implementation from 1st October 2017

Revised November 2017

**** truancy/unauthorised absence is absence from school without permission or good reason and the absence is unauthorised by the school.**

Appendix B – Attendance Codes:

<u>Attendance Codes, Descriptions and Meanings</u>		
<u>Code</u>	<u>Description</u>	<u>Meaning</u>
/	Present (AM)	Present
\	Present (PM)	Present
B	Educated off site (NOT Dual registration)	Approved Education Activity
C	Other Authorised Circumstances (not covered by another appropriate code/description)	Authorised absence
D	Dual registration (i.e. pupil attending other establishment)	Approved Education Activity
E	Excluded (no alternative provision made)	Authorised absence
G	Family holiday (NOT agreed <u>or</u> days in excess of agreement)	Unauthorised absence
H	Family holiday (agreed)	Authorised absence
I	Illness (NOT medical or dental etc. appointments)	Authorised absence
J	Interview	Approved Education Activity
L	Late (before registers closed)	Present
M	Medical/Dental appointments	Authorised absence
N	No reason yet provided for absence	Unauthorised absence
O	Unauthorised absence (not covered by any other code/description)	Unauthorised absence
P	Approved sporting activity - supervised by someone authorised by the school	Approved Education Activity
R	Religious observance	Authorised absence
S	Study leave	Authorised absence
T	Traveller absence	Authorised absence
U	Late (after registration closed)	Unauthorised absence
V	Educational visit or trip	Approved Education Activity
W	Work experience	Approved Education Activity
X	Non-compulsory school age absence (sessions not expected to attend)	Not counted in possible attendances
Y	Enforced closure	Not counted in possible attendances
Z	Pupil not on roll	Not counted in possible attendances
#	School closed to pupils	Not counted in possible attendances

For further information / clarification please see DfE School Attendance advice November 2013.

Appendix C – Absence Request Form:

St Thomas of Canterbury Church of England Infant School

Sawyers Hall Lane, Brentwood, Essex. CM15 9BX

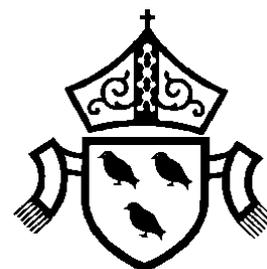
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Headteacher Mrs C B L'Estrange BA Ed (Hons) NPQH



APPLICATION FOR LEAVE OF ABSENCE DURING TERM TIME

Leave of absence may only be granted by the Governors or a person authorised on their behalf. Regulation 7 of the Education (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2006 (as amended in 2013) prohibits the Governors of a maintained school from granting leave of absence to a pupil for a term time holiday, except where an advance application has been made by the parent with whom the pupil normally resides, and the Governors consider that there are exceptional circumstances relating to the application. Such circumstances will be very rare.

Taking your child out of school during term time will be detrimental to your child's educational progress. A child who takes 10 days absence will only attain 94.7% attendance in the year, which is below the school's attendance target. 10 days absence also means the child will miss 50 hours of education.

There is no entitlement to parents to take their child out of school during term time. However, you may apply to the school for leave of absence for medical etc appointments which cannot be arranged outside school time or if you believe there are exceptional circumstances.

If the absence is not authorised, the case will be referred to the Education Welfare Service who may issue a Penalty Notice for £120 (or £60 if paid within 21 days) to each parent for each child taken out of school.

Name of Child		Class	
Date of first day of absence	Date of return	Number of days requested	
Reason for application (If necessary please outline exceptional circumstances in an attached letter).			
Signed		Dated	

School office use only:

Application is authorised		Application is not authorised	
Signed		Dated	
Attendance percentage preceding 12 weeks:			
Number of sessions absence this academic year:	Authorised	Unauthorised	Total

Appendix D

DfE “The link between absence and attainment at KS2 - 2013/14 academic year”

The analysis of the link between overall absence ...and attainment when taking prior attainment and pupil characteristics into account showed that, for each KS2 and KS4 measure, overall absence had a statistically significant negative link to attainment - i.e. every extra day missed was associated with a lower attainment outcome.

