



Policy for <b>Attendance</b>		 
Date of policy:	February 2023	Committee: Premises and Health and Safety
Next review:	February 2024 Review Period (1 Year)	

## 1. Principles

Good attendance in school is pivotal in pupils achieving their potential. Therefore, all children should be at school, on time, every day the school is open, unless the reason for the absence is due to exceptional circumstances (see below).

Parents are asked to ensure that their child is punctual for school.

- All year groups should be in class by 8.55am. Children who arrive after 8.55am will need to enter school via the main school office and sign in using the Entry system. If a child arrives in school after the registers are closed, he/she will be marked as late (Code L). After 9.15am, this is recorded as unauthorised absence (Code U).

An attendance register is taken twice a day, and this shows whether the child is present, engaged in an approved educational activity off-site, or absent. If a child of compulsory school age is absent, every half-day absence from school has to be classified by the school, as either AUTHORISED or UNAUTHORISED.

**Only school can authorise the absence, not parents.** This is why information about the cause of each absence is always required, either in writing, by email or telephone message.

In exceptional circumstances, absences may be authorised by the Head Teacher. Absences are considered by the Head Teacher on a case by case basis at the request of the parent. Please see supporting appendices for further details.

Unauthorised absences are those which school are not able to code as 'authorised'. This includes:

- parents keeping children off school unnecessarily
- absences which have never been properly explained (see section 2)
- children who arrive at school too late to get a mark, after registers have closed

Please see supporting appendices for further details.

## 2. Registers

Registers are legal documents. We use the Arbor database to record attendance. It contains the full names and address of every child, in alphabetical order. School attendance codes for pupils are recorded as per current DfE Attendance Guidance. Addresses of pupils are not amended in real-time by parents through the Parent portal Arbor reporting function, direct to school. School Office team pick up any changes to pupil records requested by parents and amend accordingly. Medical information is recorded on your child's Care Plan, School Asthma Register, School Anaphylaxis Register and School Allergens Register, copies of which are confidentially stored in your child's class, electronically on Arbor pupil records and the school office.

## **2.1 REPORTING ABSENCES**

Parents should contact school **on the first and each day** of their child's absence from school, **before 9:00am**. The reason for absence should be explained so that school can decide whether to issue a code to authorise the absence. This can be in writing, ParentMail or on an email or an answer messages can be left if the phone on the absence line. A member of staff will return any calls if necessary.

## **2.2 UNEXPLAINED ABSENCES**

School administrative staff will contact parents during the morning of any day which a registered pupil of compulsory school age is absent without explanation. This may be initially by e-mail/SMS, followed up by consecutive phone calls to the contacts named on the child's Arbor profile. Through this contact school ensures the parent is aware their child is not in school, enabling the parent where necessary to establish their child is safe. Parents are responsible for ensuring contact information is up to date. The School Business Team are responsible for attendance matters in this school.

If we are unable to make contact with parents to explain their child's absence by lunchtime of day one, a school representative may deem it necessary to make a home visit to the child. If we are still unable to ascertain that the child is safe, the designated safeguarding lead may contact social services. The absence will remain unauthorised until it has been explained.

## **2.3 UNEXPLAINED ABSENCE FOLLOWING A KNOWN ABSENCE**

When a pre-planned absence is known about (whether authorised or not authorised) a return date will be specified. Should a child fail to return to school on the specified day, parents must report the absence as in section 1, and in the event of no communication from parents, school will investigate the absence in line with section 2.

## **2.4 PLANNED ABSENCES (MEDICAL)**

Planned absences in school time should be avoided. This includes routine dental and medical appointments. Parents should arrange all routine appointments to take place after school or during school holidays where possible. If the appointment relates to ongoing medical or dental issues, parents are asked to provide proof by means of a medical appointment letter, in advance of the absence. See supporting appendices for further details.

## **2.5 PLANNED ABSENCES (OTHER)**

If an absence relates to a legal or educational matter, written details must be provided in advance in order for the absence to be recorded and a decision to be made whether the absence can be authorised.

## **2.6 MONITORING AND PROMOTING PUPIL AND CLASS ATTENDANCE**

**Promoting individual pupil attendance in school:** The school promotes excellent attendance which is celebrated by awarding Dojo points –**See Appendix 1 – St Modwen's Attendance Ladder**. This helps to maintain attendance as a high priority and give the children an incentive for excellent attendance. Attendance rates for classes are monitored weekly.

**Promoting class attendance in school:** Class attendance is monitored weekly and each classes weekly attendance rate is displayed in their classroom alongside the weekly average for the school and the DfE Target (currently 97%). Class rewards: Class Teacher consistently promote good attendance and reward using Class Dojo.

## **2.7 ATTENDANCE TARGETS**

The school has adopted the following attendance targets:

- 1) To maintain a whole school attendance level in-line with DfE National Averages (currently 97%)
- 2) To ensure that the level of unauthorised absence stays below DfE National Averages
- 3) To reduce the number of Persistent Absentee families to less DfE National Average rates (currently 90%)

## **2.8 SCHOOL MONITORING PROCESSES AND PROCEDURES**

**School Monitoring processes:** The headteacher and staff responsible for attendance at school analyse attendance data each half-term in order to follow up concerns with individual children and identify trends for individual classes and year groups.

Please reference Appendix 1 – St Modwen’s Attendance Ladder which indicates school’s processes and procedures for monitoring attendance. A member of SLT/Attendance Lead will meet with parents in cases where the percentage falls below 90% (or is at risk of falling below 90%) for two consecutive monitoring periods (1/2 termly monitoring periods) in order to have a discussion around the attendance the how the school can support the family to make improvements.

**Parents whose children are experiencing difficulties with attendance or punctuality should contact the school at an early stage and work together with staff in resolving any problems.**

**2.9 SCHOOL AND PARENTS ATTENDANCE DUTY – EDUCATION ACT 1996.** In the event that attendance concerns are ongoing following support and recommendations from the school, school will consider whether to make a referral to the Local Authority Education Welfare Services. Parenting contracts may also be agreed, and targets may be set. Following further monitoring, any unresolved issues could result in parents/carers receiving a Penalty Notice or ultimately a prosecution under the Education Act 1996 s.444. Schools have a duty in law to refer any absence concerns to the Local Authority Education Welfare Service.

### **PARENTS will:**

- Ensure that their children attend school regularly
- Notify school on the first day of absence before **9.00am** by phone/letter
- Complete a request form for absence in term time for exceptional circumstances
- Ensure when their child returns to school they bring in written confirmation of why they were absent
- Hand in medical evidence for 4 or more days absence due to illness
- Meet with the Attendance Lead, Head Teacher and Deputy Head Teacher to discuss their child’s attendance when necessary

### **CLASS TEACHERS will:**

- Complete class registers at the start of each session (morning and afternoon)
- Monitor daily patterns of attendance and report any concerns that arise to the SLT/Attendance Lead
- Provide work for children to do at home if an absence is due to a long illness, disability or other circumstances
- Make parents aware of concerns over good attendance
- Promote Attendance Dojo’s and ensure children record their Attendance Dojo at registration

### **SCHOOL BUSINESS TEAM will:**

- Input attendance data on

- Print off official reports for each calendar month for monitoring purposes
- Complete the absence record book
- Monitor alongside SLT, patterns of attendance and lateness
- Make first day absence calls and record reasons for absence
- Carry out Fast Track procedures with parents of children whose attendance is of a concern.

**ATTENDANCE LEAD and HEADTEACHER will:**

- Monitor official registers and take actions where concerns have been identified
- Inform Governors of attendance records
- Inform parents of individual pupils' attendance record, Children's annual school reports and ½ termly for those children whose absence falls below 97% - reference Appendix 1 – Attendance Ladder
- Inform/Meet with parents whose children's attendance causes concern
- Make referrals to the Staffordshire County Council Education Welfare Services
- Make referrals to the School Nurse team.
- Support the school in achieving its targets and addressing concerns.
- Support families in ensuring their child/ren attend school regularly.
- Prepare and facilitate school attendance review meetings for punctuality
- Contact you by phone, letter, or Attendance Management Plan meeting to discuss the school's concerns and how attendance and punctuality can be improved

**GOVERNING BODY will:**

- Monitor whole school attendance termly and take appropriate action should it affect standards.
- Nominate a named Governor for Attendance.

**Penalty Notice and Prosecution**

**Section 444A of the Education Act 1996** (as inserted by section 23 of the Anti-Behaviour Act 2003) **empowers designated Local Authority (LA) officers to issue Penalty Notices in cases of unauthorised absence from school. A penalty notice may be requested by the Headteacher.**

The Education Penalty Notices (England) Regulations 2007

The Education and Inspections Act 2006.

The issuing of Penalty Notices must conform to all requirements of the Human Rights Act 1998 and the Equality Act 2010.

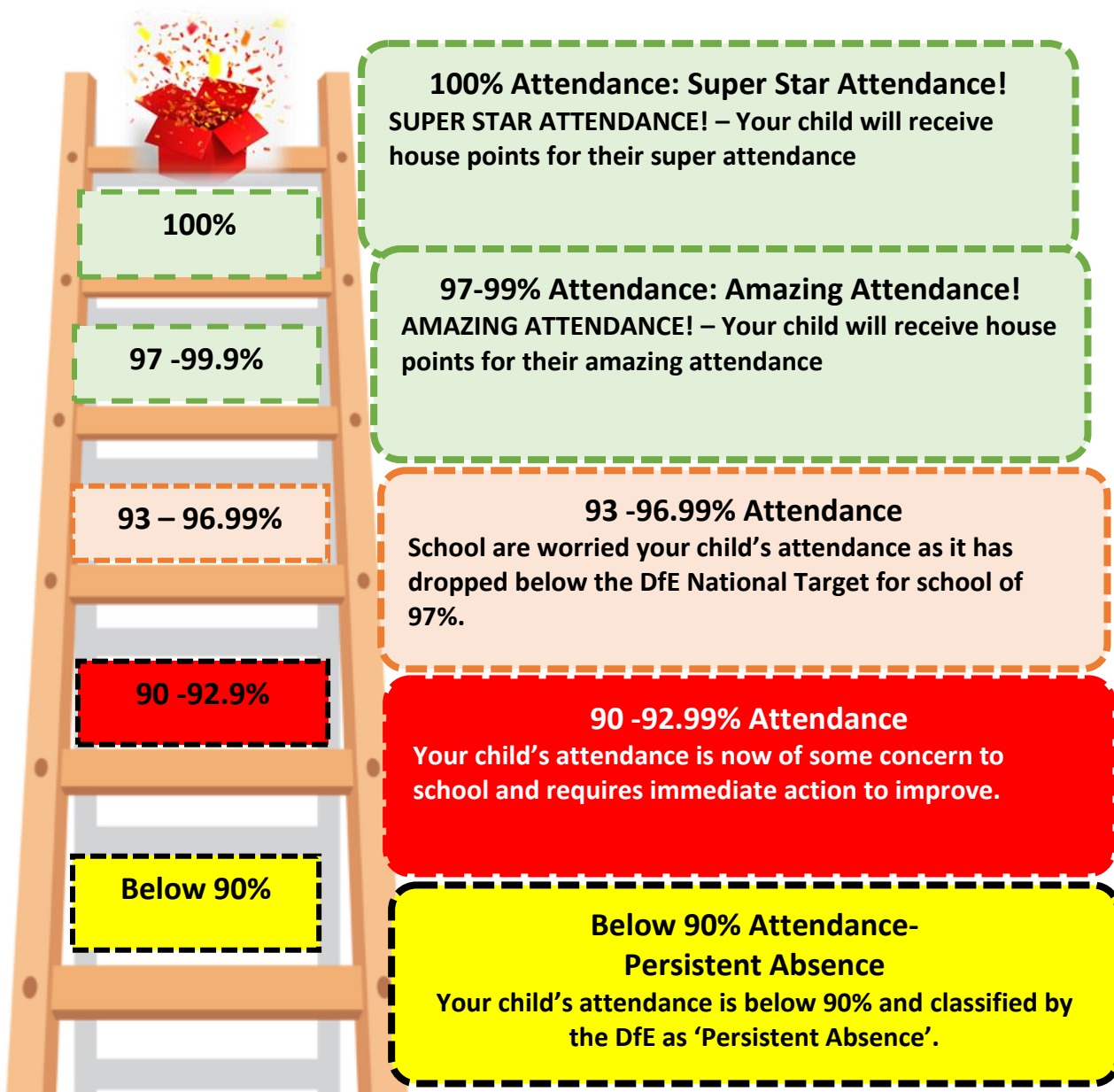
Section 444 of the Education Act 1996 makes it an offence if a parent fails to secure their child's regular attendance at school at which they are registered, if that absence is not authorised by the school. Penalty Notices supplement the existing sanctions currently available under s444 Education Act 1996 or s36 Children Act 1989 to enforce attendance at school where appropriate.

As a maintained school we are committed to working with the Local Authority on the matter of issuing penalty notices for **any period of unauthorised absence**. Currently penalty notice charges are set at £60 per child per parent (if paid within 21 days) payment between 22<sup>nd</sup> and 28<sup>th</sup> day is £120 per child per parent. Non-payment will trigger fast track prosecution process under the provisions of section 444(1) of the Education Act 1996.

Further information about attendance is available from: [www.staffordshire.gov.uk/education](http://www.staffordshire.gov.uk/education)

**This policy forms part of the school safeguarding policies – reference Appendix 2**

# Appendix 1 – Attendance Ladder



### House Points

50 house points – sticker from class teacher  
100 house points – Bronze Award from Miss Smith  
200 house points – Silver Award from Mrs Sherratt  
300 house points – Gold Award in Assembly  
500 house points – Platinum Award Special Celebration

You will receive an Attendance Letter informing you that your child’s attendance rate for the monitoring period is between 93-96.99% and school is worried.  
School will continue to monitor your child’s attendance to ensure it soon gets back on-track and in-line/above the DfE National Target (97%.)

Your will receive an Attendance Letter If your child’s attendance rate is between 90-92.99% - You may also be asked to attend an Attendance Meeting with the Attendance Lead, so we can establish and address any underlying reasons for your child’s poor attendance rate.

You will receive an Attendance Letter if your child’s attendance falls below 90% in any school attendance-monitoring period. You will be expected to attend an Attendance Meeting with the Attendance Lead in order to establish an Attendance Support Plan to improve your child’s attendance.  
**Please note should your child’s attendance rate not improve significantly their attendance will be referred to Staffordshire County Council Education Welfare Services for further action.**

In school we are all committed to working in partnership with parents/carers to improve our children’s attendance. If you are concerned about your child’s attendance please contact the school Attendance Officer to discuss further.

## Appendix A

As you are aware, we regularly review our operational procedures for monitoring attendance and punctuality. We are regularly visited by our Education Welfare Officer (EWO) for Attendance. We have produced a leaflet (see attached) which aims to make procedures clearer to you all and explain how we are meeting our legal requirements for which we are externally accountable.

### Frequently Asked Questions

#### **Q. Is there any point in even filling a form in to request a holiday?**

**A.** On some occasions, a leave of absence will be granted under **highly** exceptional circumstances. However, as you are aware, from 1<sup>st</sup> September 2013, the Department of Education made important changes to the law for families wanting to request leave of absence in term time. Holidays, extended trips to visit families abroad, day trips, visits to theme parks, birthdays, visits to the dentist and shopping are not legitimate reasons for requesting exceptional leave of absence. The Local Authority and school governors support this; therefore students will only be given permission to take leave in term time if there are **highly** exceptional circumstances. There is no automatic right to any leave in term time.

#### **Q. When are the tests the children take? If I avoid taking the children before the tests, can I take them on holiday afterwards?**

**A.** Reception (EYFS) are assessed on their Early Learning Goals at the end of the Reception year, Year 1 sit a national Phonics test towards the end of the summer term, Year 2 and Year 6 have statutory testing (SAT's) and all other year groups play a vital part in preparing the pupils for these tests. Holidays are not legitimate reasons for requesting exceptional circumstances and will be recorded as unauthorised.

#### **Q. I am unable to take holidays during school holiday time due to the nature of my job. Can I have an authorised holiday?**

**A.** Our Education Welfare Officer has stipulated that it may be acceptable evidence to ask your employer for confirmation of this. There is no current guidance for those who are self-employed, but if you do complete a 'request for leave of absence' form, with all of the details on, it may be classed as sufficient evidence for exceptional circumstances depending upon the other factors involved at the time of request, such as your child's previous attendance. All of this information helps us to share with the government representatives and the Local Authority (LA) as to what messages could go back to the government if parents feel that their policies are potentially discriminatory.

#### **Q. I need to visit my country of origin for my child to attend a medical appointment. Can I have an authorisation under medical grounds?**

**A.** No. You need to register your child with a doctor or a dentist locally.

#### **Q. I need to request a leave of absence for religious purposes. Will this be authorised?**

**A.** Religious *compulsory* observances (those that have to be taken during the school day, i.e. Eid) are one of the factors which are considered to be exceptional circumstances.

**Q. Members of my family overseas are ill or dying; my religious celebration is taking place in a long distance location; once in a lifetime opportunities which are for extended periods of time. Can I have an authorised absence?**

**A.** In some unique circumstances, for prolonged stays outside of the UK, absence would only be authorised if the child was educated in a school at your country of destination. We would register the children as either ‘educated off site’ or ‘dual registration’. We would require substantial evidence from the other school, including the register and photographic evidence that your child has attended another educational establishment abroad. We would also require that your child keeps an educational activity log of their time in the country. Absences for more than four weeks (20 school days) will result in your child being taken off roll at St Modwen’s and their place given to another child.

**Q. I have split up with my child’s mother/father and that parent is planning on taking them on holiday. Can I prevent this? Will I get fined?**

**A.** To all known, held addresses of non-resident parents, St Modwen’s has sent a copy of its attendance leaflet to parents and we ask that you do your best to ensure that ex partners are kept informed of our procedures too. In the case of families where there is a clear court order for custody, the parent responsible for the child’s custody during the period of absence in question will be held accountable for their attendance as the non-custodial parent in the situation cannot break a court order by refusing the other parent access to their child. In a case where there is an informal arrangement amongst a family, where nothing is stipulated by a solicitor as to where the child spends a percentage of their week, both parents are accountable for the attendance of the children and one parent would have every right to object to the other parent taking their child out of school. This would be a family law matter in terms of custody. St Modwen’s would report the parent who takes the child on holiday and that parent could face a fine.

**Q. What is persistent unauthorised absence/lateness?**

**A.** “Persistent” absences mean at least 20 sessions of unauthorised absence over a period of twelve school weeks, excluding holidays. These absences do not need to be consecutive. Persistent late arrival at school, i.e. after the register has closed. “Persistent” means at least 10 sessions of unauthorised late arrival over a period of 12 school weeks, excluding holidays. These late episodes do not need to be consecutive in order for a penalty notice to be issued.

**Q. What is the fixed penalty, if I was to take my child out of school during term time?**

**A.** Should the school decide not to grant leave of absence and parents still take their child out of school, the absence will be recorded as **unauthorised**, which may be subject to a Penalty Notice fine of £60 **per parent/per child**, by the Local Authority. This fine will increase to £120 if not paid within 21 days. Failure to pay the £120 fine within the period 22 to 28 days may lead to Court proceedings by the Local Authority. This money is retained by the Local Authority.

**Child Protection**

***Abandonment of Children (late collection of children at the end of the school day):***

We understand that some families have unforeseen circumstances, staff are more than happy to support families who are in an emergency situation. Children not collected by 3:40pm will be seated outside the Deputy Headteacher Office, supervised by school staff until collection. There will be a charge of £10.00 per hour or part of hour for each child. School will not charge parents for the first late collection but all subsequent late collections will be chargeable at the



discretion of the school and the fee will be added to your child's Parentmail account. School encourages parents to review their childcare arrangements for emergency collection and consider:

- End of Day procedures – if they need updating to ensure one of the contacts could collect their child in an emergency situation
- Registering their child with the schools After School Club provider so they can attend there in case of an emergency and subject to a space being available .

Failure to collect your children on time from school at 3:30pm on a persistent basis could be indicative of a wider problem and as a school we must be vigilant to behaviours which may cause rise to a child protection concern. If you have problems getting your children to school on time or picking them up on time, please speak with a senior member of staff about the possibility of having a Family Support Worker assigned to you. **Our Designated Safeguarding Lead is: Mrs A Sherratt - Headteacher**

***Falsification of illnesses:*** The Designated Safeguarding members of staff for child protection are duty bound to ensure that all children who are reported as ill, are indeed ill. In some cases, if there are significant grounds to suspect that illness has been falsified, a simple print out from the receptionist at the Doctor's which shows a log of your child's appointments and attendance, including time of their booking, should suffice.

***Unannounced withdrawal:*** Unannounced withdrawal of your child/children is suspicious behaviour, whatever the reason given and will be logged as such.

### **Medical Appointments**

If your child is undergoing known, long term treatment for serious illnesses and/or there is a log of hospital attendance for an operation and associated treatment or your child is on a school medical plan e.g. for an epi pen, you will continue to be dealt with in accordance to your own individual needs as a family. For all other medical absences, we expect where possible, to be presented with an appointment card/letter prior to the day of the appointment. If you have a known appointment, which is to take place weeks ahead, please let us know as this information is inputted on to the register system, allowing teachers to be aware of the appointment. If you have called the surgery on the same day, the chances are that your child is too ill to attend school anyway and evidence upon return will suffice. For hospital visits such as blood test appointments or other scheduled work, there will usually be NHS/Private hospital appointment letters accompanying these appointments, which you are able to use as evidence for the authorised absences. Medical appointments for children who are withdrawn from their education without appearing to be sick or which are not later backed up with medical evidence will be treated as unauthorised. Families whose children are persistently absent due to illness will be referred to our school nurse for further support.

### **Unauthorised Absences**

Our Attendance Officer regularly checks the number of sessions recorded as unauthorised absence for each child. Lateness after the register has closed also counts as unauthorised absence. High levels of unauthorised absence could trigger a request for a meeting. Further action will be taken by the LA for families who fail to improve.



### **Patterns of Absence**

We are asked to report unusual patterns of absence such as a child who is always off/late every Monday - there may be an issue with Mondays in school in terms of the subjects for that child, which we would endeavour to explore or it may be symptomatic of long weekend holiday breaks being taken, particularly if the child is having Friday absences too.

**Please do not send your forms in your child's book bag.**

Many thanks for your continued support and understanding in these matters.

Mrs A Sherratt  
Head Teacher