



St Peter's Smithills Dean CE Primary School

Attendance Strategy 2026–2027



Let Your Light Shine

Our vision for attendance

At St Peter's, we believe that every day matters because every child matters. Regular attendance enables children to learn, develop friendships, experience the full richness of school life and flourish academically, socially, emotionally and spiritually.

Our attendance strategy is rooted in our Christian vision, "Let Your Light Shine," and our core values of Love, Hope, Trust, Thankfulness and Respect.

We want St Peter's to be a school where children want to come to school, feel that they belong and know that they are valued. At the same time, we have high expectations for attendance and recognise that parents and carers have an important responsibility in ensuring that their children attend school regularly.

Our approach is therefore:

High expectations, strong relationships, early support and consistent follow-up.

We will work with families, not against them, recognising that there may be genuine barriers to attendance. Where barriers exist, we will seek to understand them, provide appropriate support and work with parents, children and external agencies where necessary.

Our attendance principles

Our strategy is based on six principles:

1. Attendance is everyone's responsibility

Attendance is not simply the responsibility of the Headteacher or office administrator. Every member of staff contributes to a culture in which attendance is valued.

2. Every day matters

We will communicate clearly with children and families that missed days mean missed opportunities to learn, participate and belong.

3. We act early

We will not wait for a child to become persistently absent before taking action. Attendance patterns will be monitored from the beginning of the academic year.

This is particularly important because the presentation highlights that children who have an absence in the first week are significantly more likely to experience persistent absence later in the year.

4. We look beyond the headline attendance figure

Two children with the same attendance percentage may require very different support. We will therefore look at patterns, including:

- children below 90%
- children between 90–95% who may be at risk
- children whose attendance is declining
- persistent absence
- Friday absence
- patterns around particular days or weeks
- absence following holidays
- attendance by year group and pupil group
- attendance of disadvantaged pupils and pupils with SEND.

5. We remove barriers

Where attendance is poor, we will seek to understand **why** before deciding what action is needed. Barriers may include anxiety, SEND, medical needs, family circumstances, transport, routines, friendship difficulties, bullying or difficulties with transition.

6. Support first, but with clear expectations

Our first response will be supportive and solution-focused. However, where attendance does not improve, where support is not engaged with, or where there is no appropriate reason for continued absence, we will follow the school's attendance policy and the appropriate Local Authority/DfE processes. This reflects the DfE's current statutory approach to attendance.

Attendance and our Christian values

Our value	What this means for attendance
Love	We care about every child and family and seek to understand the barriers that may affect attendance.
Hope	We believe attendance can improve. A difficult start does not have to determine a child's future attendance.
Trust	We build honest, respectful relationships with families and children and work together to find solutions.
Thankfulness	We celebrate children who attend regularly and recognise the opportunities that being in school provides.
Respect	We respect the importance of education, the rights of other children to learn and the responsibility we all have to attend regularly.

Our vision of “**Let Your Light Shine**” reminds us that every child has gifts, talents and potential. Regular attendance gives children the opportunity to discover and develop these.

Our attendance priorities for 2026–27

Priority 1 – Secure excellent attendance from the start

We will place particular emphasis on the first weeks of the academic year.

Before September:

- identify children who were persistently or severely absent in 2025–26;
- identify children whose attendance was declining towards the end of the year;
- identify children who may need additional support with transition;
- communicate attendance expectations clearly to all families;
- contact families where there are known barriers before the start of term.

During the first week:

- closely monitor attendance daily;
- make prompt contact regarding unexplained absence;
- identify children who are absent for a day;
- provide early support where appropriate.

Priority 2 – Prevent persistent absence rather than simply respond to it

We will focus particularly on the Autumn Term, recognising that persistent absence tends to become established early.

Each half term we will identify:

Green – Good attendance

- attendance is strong and consistent.

Amber – Attendance to watch

- attendance is beginning to decline;
- attendance is between approximately 90–95%;
- there are emerging patterns of absence.

Red – Targeted support

- attendance is below 90%;
- persistent absence is established or imminent;
- severe absence or significant barriers are identified.

Our attendance approach

Universal – for every child

We will:

- promote the importance of attendance through assemblies and worship;
- regularly communicate attendance messages to families;
- celebrate good attendance and improvement;
- make attendance part of our conversations with children;
- ensure registers are accurate and completed promptly;
- follow up unexplained absence every day;
- monitor attendance by class, year group and pupil group;
- promote positive morning routines;
- ensure children feel welcomed and valued when they arrive;
- ensure school is a safe, calm and enjoyable place to be.

The DfE guidance is clear that good attendance is closely connected to school being a calm, orderly, safe and supportive environment where pupils want to attend. This is what we want St. Peter's to be.

Targeted support

For children whose attendance is causing concern, we will use a graduated approach.

Stage 1 – Early identification

Where attendance begins to fall or a concerning pattern emerges:

- attendance is reviewed;
- the child may be spoken to;
- parents/carers are contacted;
- barriers are explored;
- practical support is offered;
- attendance is monitored.

Stage 2 – Attendance support

Where attendance does not improve:

- a meeting with parents/carers may be arranged;
- an attendance support plan may be introduced;
- specific attendance targets will be agreed;
- barriers and actions will be recorded;
- a review date will be established.

Where appropriate, we will calculate how many days of attendance are needed to improve the child's attendance position.

Stage 3 – Formal intervention

Where attendance remains a significant concern despite appropriate support, or where parents/carers do not engage with support, we will consider further action in line with the school's attendance policy, DfE guidance and Bolton Local Authority procedures.

Supporting families

We recognise that attendance difficulties are rarely solved by simply telling a family that their child's attendance is too low.

Our approach will therefore include:

- listening to parents and children;
- identifying the underlying barrier;
- signposting to appropriate support;
- working with the SENDCo where SEND may be a factor;
- considering mental health and wellbeing;
- working with the Local Authority and other agencies where appropriate;
- agreeing practical actions with families;
- reviewing whether the support is actually making a difference.

This reflects the DfE expectation that schools work collaboratively with pupils and parents to understand and remove barriers to attendance.

Communication with parents

We will have a planned programme of attendance communication rather than only contacting families when attendance is poor.

This will include:

August/September

“Welcome back – every day matters”

- term dates;
- attendance expectations;
- punctuality;
- illness guidance;
- the importance of establishing good routines.

Autumn Term

“Winter illness – helping your child attend”

- informing parents if we have an outbreak of coughs and colds
- encouraging uptake of the flu vaccine for children and staff
- In 26/27 we have a two-week half term; part of the decision making behind that is to break any infection cycle mid-term and provide a good rest time in the longest term.

Spring Term

“Every school day matters”

- Communication before the start of the Spring term with clear expectations and the message of every school day counts.
- Reminders about not taking holidays in term time – the New Year is often when people book summer holidays.

Summer Term

“Finish the year strongly”

- Importance of a good end of year attendance – with the potential to miss lots of exciting events in summer.
- Importance of transition

We will communicate attendance in terms that parents can easily understand, rather than relying solely on percentages.

For example:

“Your child has missed 12 days of school this year. That is 12 days of learning, friendship and opportunities they have missed.”

Celebrating attendance

We want attendance to be associated with belonging, success and encouragement, rather than anxiety or punishment.

We will celebrate:

- good attendance;
- improved attendance;
- children who have overcome barriers;
- classes with strong attendance;
- individual attendance achievements;
- positive attendance habits.

Recognition will focus particularly on improvement and effort, ensuring that children whose attendance has previously been poor have the opportunity to experience success.

This supports the DfE's current emphasis on rewards and recognition as part of a positive attendance culture.

Reception and transition

We will pay particular attention to attendance during transition into Reception.

Before children start school, we will seek to understand:

- previous nursery/pre-school attendance;
- children who may have experienced attendance difficulties;
- potential barriers to attending school;
- children who may need additional support settling into school.

Similar principles will be applied to other important transitions, particularly:

- new starters;
- children joining St Peter's during the year;
- children moving between year groups;
- Year 6 transition to secondary school.

Friday and other attendance patterns

We will analyse attendance by day of the week and identify children who have regular patterns of absence.

Particular attention will be given to:

- regular Friday absence;
- absence immediately before or after holidays;
- repeated Monday/Friday absence;
- regular appointments;
- patterns associated with particular activities or circumstances.

Attendance, learning and outcomes

We will make the link between attendance and learning explicit.

Children who attend regularly have greater opportunities to:

- build knowledge and skills;
- practise what they have learned;
- receive teacher feedback;
- develop friendships;
- participate in enrichment;
- develop confidence and independence.

We will particularly monitor the attendance of children whose attainment or progress is a concern.

Leadership and monitoring

Attendance will be monitored by school leaders throughout the year.

Weekly

- overall attendance;
- unexplained absence;
- children with emerging concerns;
- persistent/severe absence;
- patterns and trends.

Half termly

- attendance by year group;
- attendance by pupil group;
- SEND;
- disadvantaged pupils;
- persistent absence;
- severe absence;
- children at risk of persistent absence;
- comparison with previous years;
- comparison with national/local data.

Termly

Attendance will be reported to governors, including:

- overall attendance;
- persistent absence;
- severe absence;
- key groups;
- trends;
- impact of interventions;
- attendance priorities for the next term.

This reflects DfE expectations that leaders should analyse attendance information closely at whole-school and group level to identify patterns and trends, identify causes and intervene early.

Six-month attendance action plan

Period	St Peter's focus
August/September	Back-to-school campaign; identify vulnerable children; contact previous PA/SA families; secure excellent first-week attendance
October	Review attendance; identify children below 90%; identify those at risk; attendance support plans
November/December	Winter illness messaging; everyday counts; monitor patterns; Christmas attendance campaign
January/February	Re-set attendance expectations; review support plans; identify emerging PA/SA
March/April	Targeted support; review impact; address term-time holiday patterns
May/June	Maintain attendance; focus on transition; Year 6 attendance; identify children requiring additional support
July	Celebrate improvement; evaluate strategy; analyse data; identify priorities for September

How we will measure success

By the end of 2026–27, we aim to see:

- overall attendance at or above the national primary average, with an improving trajectory;
- a reduction in persistent absence;
- fewer children moving from the 90–95% band into persistent absence;
- improved attendance for children who were persistently absent in 2025–26;
- strong attendance during the first week of the academic year;
- reduced patterns of Friday/Monday absence;
- earlier identification of attendance concerns;
- increased parental engagement with attendance support;
- evidence that targeted interventions remove barriers and improve attendance;
- attendance becoming an embedded part of St Peter's whole-school culture.