Kent Catholic Schools' Partnership
'Academies in Christ'
Part of the Archdiocese of Southwark

ST. AUGUSTINE'S
CATHOLIC PRIMARY SCHOOL
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Friday 11th September 2026

Dear Parents and Carers,

Introducing our new Attendance Policy: Thrive Under Five

At St Augustine's, we believe every child deserves the very best opportunity to succeed. One of the most important factors in achieving this is excellent school attendance.

This year, we are launching our new attendance initiative, **"Thrive Under Five"**, which reflects our commitment to ensuring every child attends school regularly so they can flourish academically, socially and emotionally.

What does "Thrive Under Five" mean?

Our aim is simple:

Children should miss no more than five days of school during the academic year wherever possible.

Research consistently shows that children who attend school regularly:

- achieve better academically;
- develop stronger friendships and social skills;
- build confidence and resilience;
- experience greater wellbeing; and
- are better prepared for the next stage of their education and future life.

Every lesson matters. Learning is carefully planned so that each day builds on the one before. Even occasional absences can mean children miss important teaching, making it harder to catch up.

Our new attendance expectations

As part of our updated Attendance Policy, we will continue to work closely with families to ensure every child has the best possible attendance.

We will be introducing a clear colour-coded attendance system to help families understand attendance levels:

- Excellent – Above 99% *(2 days' absence or fewer / 4 sessions or fewer)*
- Good – 97%–99% *(Less than 5 days' absence / fewer than 10 sessions)*
- Below Expectation – 95%–96.9% *(9 days' absence / 18 sessions)*
- Poor – 90%–94.9% *(13–18 days' absence / 26–36 sessions)*
- Persistent Absence (Major Concern) – Below 90% *(More than 19 days' absence / more than 38 sessions)*

Rather than waiting until attendance becomes a significant concern, we will contact families early if attendance begins to fall so that we can work together to identify any barriers and offer appropriate support before attendance becomes a bigger issue**.** We will write to parents when the 5 days of absence threshold has been met, and attendance will be discussed at all parent teacher meetings. Once this threshold has been met the school may request a higher threshold of medical evidence in order to authorise absence.

Working together

We know that illness and unforeseen circumstances sometimes happen, and our approach will always be one of partnership.

Our priority is to work with families to:

- identify any challenges affecting attendance;
- provide support wherever possible;
- help children return to school quickly; and
- ensure every child feels happy, safe and successful in school.

At the same time, it is important to remember that only the school can authorise absences. Leave will only be granted in exceptional circumstances and in accordance with our new policy. A copy of the policy is available on our school website: Attendance_Policy_2026.pdf

When should my child stay at home?

The NHS advises that many common childhood illnesses do **not** require children to miss school. If your child is well enough to take part in normal school activities, they should attend.

Condition	Should my child attend school?	Guidance
Mild cold or cough	✅ **Yes**	Children with a mild cold or cough should attend school. Encourage good hand hygiene and provide tissues if needed.
Sore throat	✅ **Yes**	Most sore throats do not require time off school. Ensure your child drinks plenty of fluids.
Anxiety or worries about school	✅ **Yes**	It is common for children to feel anxious at times. Attending school usually helps, and we encourage families to speak to us so we can provide support.
Conjunctivitis	✅ **Yes**	Children can usually attend school. Encourage regular hand washing and avoid rubbing the eyes.
Head lice	✅ **Yes**	Children do not need to stay at home. Hair should be treated with an appropriate treatment.
COVID-19 (mild cold-like symptoms)	✅ **Yes**	Children can usually continue attending school if they feel well enough.

Please notify the school as soon as possible if your child is absent due to illness using the school's usual reporting procedure.

Where absence has become frequent and attendance is not good or better; we may ask for medical evidence before authorising further illness absence.

Medical appointments and leave during term time

Routine GP, dental and optician appointments should be made outside the school day wherever possible.

Leave of absence during term time will only be authorised in **exceptional circumstances**. Family holidays will **not** be authorised in line with national regulations, and unauthorised holidays will result in a Penalty Notice being issued by the Local Authority.

Requests for exceptional leave should be made in writing to **the Headteacher at least two weeks in advance wherever possible.**

Requests for leave under exceptional circumstances.

Requests for absence due to exceptional circumstances will be considered on an individual basis by the Headteacher. Only the school has the authority to authorise absence, and providing a reason does not automatically guarantee approval. Exceptional circumstances are defined as rare, significant and unavoidable events that are wholly outside the control of the family and cannot be arranged at another time, such as the bereavement or critical illness of an immediate family member.

Requests for family holidays, celebrations, reunions, visiting relatives abroad, work commitments or travel costs will not normally be authorised and Headteachers cannot take travel cost variations into account. Where a request does not meet the criteria for exceptional circumstances, or sufficient evidence is not provided, the absence will be recorded as unauthorised.

Working together to support attendance

We know that families sometimes experience challenges that affect attendance, and our approach is always one of partnership and support. If attendance begins to decline, we will:

- keep parents informed of the number of days missed;
- contact families early to discuss any concerns;
- invite parents to attendance support meetings where appropriate;
- agree practical actions to improve attendance;
- provide support to help children return to school successfully; and
- review progress together before any formal intervention becomes necessary.

Attendance will also be discussed during Parent Consultation Evenings.

Every day really does count

Missing just five days of school across the year means your child is still attending around **97%** of the time—a level that gives them the best chance to succeed.

By working together and aiming to **"Thrive Under Five"**, we can ensure every child benefits from the rich learning experiences, friendships and opportunities that school provides every day.

Thank you for your continued support and partnership. Together, we can give every child the very best chance to thrive.

If you have any questions about our new Attendance Policy or would like to discuss your child's attendance, please do not hesitate to contact the school office.

Yours sincerely,



Mrs Sarah Thompson
Headteacher
St Augustine's Catholic Primary School