



St Peter's Catholic Primary School, Waterlooville Attendance Policy for Children

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Committee	Full Governing Body	Responsibility	Full Board of Governors
Associated Policies, Documents, Agencies: School Admissions, Safeguarding & Behaviour Policies, Request for Leave of Absence Form, Home-School agreement (1/9/17), HCC's 'Good practice guidance for attendance and safeguarding' (updated January 2016)			

Context

St Peter's Catholic Primary School recognises the clear links between attendance and attainment and attendance and safeguarding children. Absence can be damaging to a child's education as it removes opportunities to learn. Unauthorised absence can be further damaging as it validates the mistaken idea that attendance is not important and it can render children extremely vulnerable. If absence is frequent or continuous (except where a child is clearly unwell), the School will challenge parents/carers on the reasons for their child's absence and will encourage them to keep absences to a minimum.

A note or explanation from a pupil's home does not mean an absence becomes authorised. The decision whether or not to authorise an absence will always rest with the School.

The School is committed to providing education of the highest quality to all pupils and recognises that this can only be achieved alongside maximum school attendance. Attending school regularly and punctually enables pupils to take full advantage of their right to an education; **high attainment requires high attendance**. The whole school community of pupils, parents/carers, teaching and support staff and school governors has a responsibility to ensure good school attendance. Staff will work with pupils and their families to ensure pupils attend school regularly and punctually. To meet these objectives we will establish an effective and efficient system of communication with pupils, parent/carers and appropriate agencies to provide information, advice and support.

The purpose of this policy is to clarify roles, responsibilities and procedures with regard to attendance. The policy is based on current government (DfE) and Local Authority (LA) guidance and statutory regulations. Under current government legislation, **unauthorised absence is regarded as truancy** and all absence figures have to be reported to the LA and the DfE and are recorded on a child's annual report.

Why is Good Attendance Important?

Statistics show a direct link between under-achievement and absence below 95%. Regular attenders

- make better progress both socially and academically
- find school routines, school work and friendships easier to cope with
- find learning more satisfying
- are more successful in transferring between primary school, secondary school and higher education, employment and training.

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It is important that children arrive on time for school, as the start of the day establishes the learning activities for the day. Our school day begins at 8.50am and all children should be ready to learn at this time. Lateness after this time is recorded in the register and contributes to individual attendance reports. In expecting our children to be on time, we are setting them up for a lifetime of meeting the expectations of the world of work and wider society. The playgrounds are open from 8.30am to allow for all children to be in school by 8.50am.

Procedures

St Peter's will use the SIMS Attendance module to record pupil's attendance and absence. This allows for the recording of data in accordance with current legislation. The Pupil Register will be held in the School Office. Class teachers will register pupils twice a day;

-at the beginning of the morning session at 8.50am

-at the beginning of the afternoon session at 1.05pm.

Children should not leave school until the end of the school day at 3.15pm. Children leaving school before the end of a session will be recorded in the Children On/Off site book.

It is very unusual for children to be released early from school and any decision to do so is made by the Headteacher, or another senior leader, on a case by case basis. Parents/carers cannot assume that if one of their children is sent home early due to illness it will always be the right thing to take any siblings with them. Whilst working to accommodate family needs, the needs of each child as an individual and their right to their education, will be taken into account in the decision.

Any child who is not present at registration time will be marked as having unexplained absence, unless leave has been granted by the school in advance, or the reason for the absence is already known and accepted by the school as legitimate. Where a reason for absence is accepted by the school at a later stage, the register will be amended such that the original entry and the amendment/correction are distinguishable creating an audit trail. Absence authorisation is the responsibility of the Headteacher.

Where a reason for absence has not been given, the school will contact parents/carers by telephone or text to ascertain the reason for absence. If contact is not made via telephone or text, a letter will be sent to establish the reason for absence. If a response to the letter is not received within 7 calendar days from the date of posting, the absence will be recorded as unauthorised and this may result in a penalty notice being issued.

If a child is marked absent and the school has reasons for concerns around the child's absence, a home visit, or a call to social services or the police may be necessary in order to ensure the school is carrying out its safeguarding duty to the child.

For sickness

- When a child is unwell, parent/carers are required to inform the School (usually by telephone) **on the first morning of absence by 9.30am**, providing a reason for the absence and an approximate return to school date.
- For absence of longer than 3 days the School also requires a letter on the child's return to school, stating the reason for absence and any medical advice that the School needs to be aware of.
- A child who has been sick, or who has had diarrhoea, must **wait at least 48 hours from the last episode before returning to school**. For example if your child is sent home ill on a Monday at 10am and the last episode of sickness is at midday on the Monday, your child must not return to school until midday on the Wednesday at the earliest.

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Time sent home ill	Time of last episode	48 hours later	Return to School
Monday 10am	Monday midday	Wednesday midday	Wednesday midday
Monday 2.30pm	Tuesday 3am at night	Thursday 3am	Friday 8.50am
Tuesday 11am	Tuesday 1pm	Thursday 1pm	Thursday 1pm
Wednesday 2pm	Thursday 11am	Saturday 11am	Monday 8.50am

Please ring the school office to ask advice if you are unsure, before sending your child back in.

- Any pupil who is absent due to illness will be recorded as an authorised absence due to sickness.

Any sickness, of any duration, that precedes or follows a request for term time absence, or a period of unauthorised absence, will need to be supported by documented medical evidence.

Lateness Before School

Pupils who are consistently late are disrupting not only their own education but also that of the other pupils.

Pupils are expected to arrive at school and ready for registration by 8.50am every day. Children arriving late must report to the School Office. Names of pupils who arrive after the register closes will be recorded on their SIMS pupil record by the School Office with the time of arrival along with a reason for the lateness.

- Any child who arrives late (after 8.50am) but before the close of registers at 9.10am, will be marked as present but will be recorded as late on their individual record (L code).
- Any child arriving after the close of registers at 9.10am will be marked as on site but not counted as present; this will mean they have an unauthorised absence (U code).
- If a pupil is late after 8.50am, more than three times during any 6 week period, a letter will be sent to parent/carers to make them aware of the situation. Lateness will then be closely monitored for those pupils.
- If after a further 6 week period there is no obvious improvement, parent/carers will be invited to meet with either the Headteacher, or Child and Family Support Worker, to discuss the pattern of lateness, investigate whether the school or another agency could provide support, and to draw up a parenting contract to commit to prompt attendance at school.
- Should lateness continue to demonstrate a persistent pattern after this, with little or no evident improvement, it will be recorded on SIMs as unauthorised absence and in accordance with Hampshire County Council guidelines a penalty notice may be applied.

Lateness After School

Please collect your child promptly at the end of the school day at 3.15pm. If your child is taking part in an after-school club please be aware of the different pick-up time and ensure that they are picked up promptly. If there is space available, the school will place a child into the after-school club and provide the parent/carers with the bill. Where late collection is persistent and/or significantly late, the school is obliged to take any uncollected pupil to a place of safety and share concerns, as necessary, with other agencies.

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For out of school dental and medical treatment:

Appointments should be made out of school hours. If it is necessary to have treatment during school hours the School must be informed in writing, in advance of the date and time of the appointment; stating when the child will be collected from and/or returned to school. A copy of the appointment letter must be supplied to the School Office. Any pupil who is absent due to a medical/dental appointment will be marked on the register as an authorised absence due to a medical/dental appointment (M code).

Please note that parent/carers cannot assume that if one of their children leaves school early it will always be acceptable to take siblings with them.

Request for Leave of Absence

Amendments to school attendance regulations were updated and enforced from September 2013. The Education (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations state that headteachers may not grant any leave of absence during term time unless there are exceptional circumstances. It is important to note that headteachers can determine the length of the authorised absence, as well as whether absence is authorised at all.

Absence will be authorised in the following circumstances:

- Where the school is satisfied that the child is too ill to attend.
- Where the pupil has a medical appointment (parents/carers are encouraged to make these out of school hours wherever possible and return their child to school immediately afterwards, or send them to school beforehand).
- Where there is an unavoidable cause for the absence which is beyond the family's control, for example, extreme weather conditions.
- Where leave has been granted by the school in advance, for example if a pupil is to participate in an approved performance for which a licence has been granted by the Local Authority.
- A pupil is involved in an exceptional special occasion. In authorising such an absence, the individual circumstances of the particular case and the pupil's overall pattern of attendance will be considered.
- The absence occurs on a day exclusively set aside for religious observance by the religious body to which the pupil's parent/carer belongs.
- Where the pupil is of no fixed abode, parent and carers are engaged in a trade which requires them to travel, the pupil/student has attended school as often as the nature of the trade permits and, having reached the age of six, they attended 200 sessions in the preceding 12 months.
- In other exceptional circumstances (e.g. family bereavement) for a very limited period.

If parents/carers wish to remove their children from school for the purpose of any other absence they must complete a Request for Leave of Absence Form which is available from the School Office. This form includes a warning that **if leave is unauthorised but is still taken, the school will work in accordance with Hampshire County Council to take legal action** as outlined below. If the request is for more than one school day, parents/carers may be required to meet with the Headteacher or Child and Family Support Worker, to discuss current attendance and progress.

Term-time holiday:

Headteachers **may not** grant any leave of absence during term time unless there are exceptional circumstances. The Headteacher will determine the number of school days a child can be away from school if the leave is granted. Requests for leave will be considered on a case by case basis and if allowed, recorded as authorised. St Peter's will always work in conjunction with other schools,

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including secondary schools, and will ask for and share information around attendance and punctuality as necessary.

Where absences are not authorised but still taken and a pupil has accrued 10 sessions (5 days) unauthorised absence over a 100 session (50 day) period, a penalty notice may be applied. From September 2015 all schools are required to work with Hampshire County Council to take legal action¹ if:

- A child has unauthorised absence for 10 or more sessions (equivalent to 5 days).
- A child is continually late to school and this lateness is unauthorised for 10 or more sessions.
- A child has any unauthorised absence during any formal examinations, assessment or testing.

Meetings with Parents/Carers

Senior staff may call a meeting with parents/carers when attendance or lateness has become a cause for concern. The child's progress and attainment will be the focus of the meeting, with all parties working together to find a way forward to enable the child to get the full education to which they have a right and for which their parent/carers are responsible for ensuring they receive.

Reporting Attendance to Parent/Carers

Attendance will be reported to parents/carers verbally at parent consultation evenings in the Autumn and Spring terms. The Child and Family Support Worker will follow up on any non-attenders. Whole year attendance will be reported to parents/carers in writing, on their child's full written report in the Summer term.

Where attendance drops below 90% the Child and Family Support Worker will be in contact with parents/carers and a meeting may be scheduled to enable school and parent/carers to work together to improve attendance. Parenting contracts are sometimes helpful at this stage to support all parties to work together in the interests of the child to improve attendance.

Penalty Notices and other Legal Measures

In education law, parents/carers are committing an offence if they fail to ensure the regular attendance of their child of compulsory school age at the school at which the child is registered unless the absence has been authorised by the school. Hampshire schools and Hampshire County Council will use the full range of legal measures to secure good attendance, including Penalty Notices and referring to the Attendance Legal Panel.

Where a child has unauthorised absence the school must enforce Hampshire County Council's *Code of Conduct: issuing Penalty Notices for unauthorised absence from schools*, or follow its guidance on other legal measures for non-attendance. The Code of conduct is a statutory document that ensures the powers for legal sanctions are applied consistently and fairly across all schools and their families within the authority.

Where attendance problems and persistent lateness persist and are not addressed by parents/carers, the school may issue a fixed penalty notice. Education-related penalty notices were introduced by the Anti-social Behaviour Act 2003 which amended Section 444 of the Education Act 1996 to allow parent/carers to be issued with a penalty where they fail to ensure their child of compulsory school age (5-16) maintains school registered regular attendance.

Parents and carers will be warned of the likelihood of a Penalty Notice being issued for unauthorised absence via the leave of absence request form, this Attendance Policy, or communication from the Headteacher/Senior Staff at St Peter's. The Penalty Notice is a fine that is issued to each parent/carer

¹ Each parent/carer can be issued a separate penalty notice for each child.

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who was responsible for the child during the period of unauthorised absence for which the fine has been issued. For each case of unauthorised absence the school or Hampshire County Council will decide whether a Penalty Notice is issued to one or more parents/carers for each child.

NB: Each parent/carer can be issued a separate penalty notice for each child; this could mean four Penalty Notices for a family with two siblings both with unauthorised absence for holiday-one Penalty Notice for **each** child to **each** parent/carer.

Each Penalty Notice carries a fine of £60 if paid within 21 days of the Notice being posted. If the fine is not paid within 21 days the penalty is automatically increased to £120 if paid within 28 days. If the fine remains unpaid, Hampshire County Council will consider prosecution for the non-attendance. Payment methods are detailed on the Notices themselves. Penalties are to be paid to Hampshire County Council and revenue resulting from payment of penalties is used by the County Council to help cover the costs of issuing Penalty Notices and /or the cost of prosecuting recipients who do not pay.

Please note: If you pay the penalty Notice and your child has further unauthorised absences additional legal action will be taken. For example, in the event that a Penalty Notice has previously been served to you due to unauthorised holiday, should your child have any future unauthorised leave this will result in further legal action for you, such as prosecution or an Education Supervision Order.

Monitoring

Pupils' attendance records, including lateness, will be monitored weekly by the Child and Family Support Worker and Office Staff and shared with Class Teachers and members of the Senior Leadership Team. Regular reports will be produced which highlight authorised and unauthorised absence, and lateness. Any concerns will be shared with parent/carers to be used in collaboration to resolve problems as quickly as possible.

Rewards

- The key reward for good attendance is a good educational outcome for the child.
- Children who have achieved 100% attendance over a half-term period are rewarded with special stickers in assembly. This gives all children the opportunity to attain 100% attendance at some point in the year.
- The School recognises that maintaining above 99% attendance for the whole year is a significant achievement and those children will receive an attendance certificate and a small reward at the end of the Summer term.
- Each week, the two classes (1 x KS1 and 1 x KS2) that have the highest combined attendance in the preceding week have a trophy awarded in their weekly celebration assembly.

Publicity

- Parents/carers are reminded of our whole school attendance target in the monthly newsletter.
- The percentages of each year group's attendance are published in the monthly newsletter.
- The number of pupils who have achieved 100% attendance and have received a 100% sticker are announced in the monthly newsletter and are celebrated in assembly and in classes.
- The Child and Family Support Worker writes an article about some aspect of attendance for each newsletter.
- The Child and Family Support Worker keeps families updated with any relevant articles/information regarding attendance and punctuality on the 'Child and Family Support' blog on the school website.
- The importance of good attendance and punctuality will be embedded in the classroom and promoted throughout the school through display, parent meetings and assemblies.

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Information for Parents/Carers

For further information on Penalty Notices and Attendance Guidance, please see the links below, or ring in to speak to the school office;

<http://www3.hants.gov.uk/education/hias/learning-behaviour-attendance/attendance-guidance-for-parents/possible-penalties.htm>

http://www3.hants.gov.uk/code_of_conduct_-_issuing_penalty_notices_for_unauthorised_absence_from_schools.pdf

For Hampshire County Council's leaflet for parents regarding attendance, please see the link below. It includes a useful table to show different illnesses and what action to take;

<http://documents.hants.gov.uk/childrens-services/HIAS/Everydaycounts.pdf>

<http://www.what0-18.nhs.uk/parentscarers/child-unwell-ok-go-nurseryschool>

If you do not have access to a computer at home, please contact the school office, or Child and Family Support Worker who will be pleased to answer any questions.