

ST PETER'S COMMUNITY PRIMARY SCHOOL



ATTENDANCE INFORMATION

Parents have a legal responsibility to ensure their child attends school. For most parents this means registering their child at school in the year in which their child is five. Parents can be prosecuted if they fail to ensure their child's attendance at school or provide an alternative education. Prompt and regular attendance is vital for children's success in school and absence from school has a lasting effect on children's performance.

Brighton and Hove's "Every School Day Matters, Every School Day Counts" guide states:

"When your child attends school punctually and on a regular basis, they take an important step towards reaching their full potential, and are given the greatest opportunities to learn new things and develop their skills. Regular [attenders] usually leave school with more qualifications and access to greater employment opportunities.... show your child that attending school is a priority and is a key to their future success."

In line with DFES and Brighton and Hove Guidance, St Peter's Community Primary School will not authorise pupil absence for holidays in term time, unless there are exceptional or unusual and compelling circumstances.

All holiday requests should be made in writing to the Headteacher at least 10 days in advance. Holidays taken in term time will automatically be recorded as unauthorised unless there are exceptional or unusual and compelling circumstances.

Upon the request of a school, the local authority has the power to issue parents or carers with a fine for unauthorised absence, under section 23 of the Anti-Social Behaviour Act 2003.

If a parent or carer fails to secure their child's regular attendance at school, they are committing a criminal offence. A Fixed Penalty Notice, which includes a fine, may be issued in cases of 'Unauthorised Absence' including:

- Unauthorised leave during term time, including holidays or excessive delayed return from holiday.
- Persistent late arrivals at school (after the register has closed).

The following information is a guidance as to what constitutes “exceptional circumstances” and the decision to authorise absence is at the head teacher’s discretion based on their assessment of the situation. Circumstances vary from school to school and so there can be no absolute rules on this subject.

Term times are for education. This is the priority. Children and families have 175 days off school to spend time together, including weekends and school holidays. Heads will rightly prioritise attendance. The default school policy should be that absences will not be granted during term time and will only be authorised in exceptional circumstances.

If an event can reasonably be scheduled outside of term time then it would not be normal to authorise absence.

Absence during term time for holidays/vacations is therefore not considered an exceptional circumstance.

Absences to visit family members are also not normally granted during term time if they could be scheduled for holiday periods or outside school hours. Children may however need time to visit seriously ill relatives.

Absence for a bereavement of a close family member is usually considered an exceptional circumstance but for the funeral service only, not extended leave.

Absences for important religious observances are often taken into account but only for the ceremony and travelling time, not extended leave. This is intended for one off situations rather than regular or recurring events.

Schools may wish to take the needs of the families of service personnel into account if they are returning from long operational tours that prevent contact during scheduled holiday time.

Schools have a duty to make reasonable adjustments for students with special educational needs or disabilities.

Families may need time together to recover from trauma or crisis.

It is acceptable to take a student’s previous record of attendance into account when making decisions.

It is important to note that head teachers can determine the length of the authorised absence as well as whether absence is authorised at all.

Any examples provided are illustrative rather than exhaustive. The fundamental principles for defining 'exceptional' are rare, significant, unavoidable and short. And by 'unavoidable' we mean an event that could not reasonably be scheduled at another time. When parents write to request a leave of absence during term time, they should consult with this guidance prior to the application as to whether the circumstances are exceptional.

Brighton and Hove's "Persistent Absence" Guide:

What are the effects of Persistent Absence?

There's a clear link between poor attendance at school and low levels of achievement. Poor attendance can disrupt a pupils own learning and that of other pupils. It has a damaging effect on a child's education and most of the work missed while a child is off school is never made up.

Pupils who attend school regularly are likely to leave school with more qualifications and increased access to employment opportunities than children with persistent absence.

Children with persistent absence are at increased risk of involvement in crime, child exploitation and anti-social behaviour.

What do DfES figures show:

- Only 10% of persistent absentees achieve 5 A*-C GCSEs compared with 38% of occasional truants and 58% of regular attenders.
- 21% of persistent absentees had no qualifications, as opposed to only 3% of regular attenders.
- Truants are more likely to offend and, of the group of young people offending, 2/3 had truanted.

What are the consequences of Persistent Absence?

If a parent or carer fails to secure their child's regular attendance at school, they could be found guilty of a criminal offence under section 444 of the Education Act 1996.

Every school day matters

Persistent Absence

A guide for parents and carers

As part of the criminal investigation, parents or carers may be interviewed under caution. In accordance with the Police & Criminal Evidence Act 1984, this may be recorded and could be used as evidence in court.

The parents or carers may be subject to legal proceedings in the Magistrates Court.

What are the outcomes of legal proceedings?

If you are found guilty, magistrates can impose a fine of up to £2,500 and/or three months imprisonment.

Parents or carers may also be ordered to pay substantial legal costs.

If convicted, parents and carers could get a criminal record.

The court also has the power to direct the child to be brought before a Family Proceedings Court.

Statutory Defences include:

1. School grants leave of absence
2. Sickness/unavoidable cause
3. Day exclusively set apart for religious observance.

We would like to emphasise the Local Authority only uses legal proceedings as a last resort.

Further information

If you have any questions regarding Fixed Penalty Notices, please contact the Attendance Team by emailing attendanceteam@brighton-hove.gov.uk or by calling 01273 291378.

Why is there a law about poor school attendance?

The law is there to protect children who have poor school attendance.

Unauthorised absence from school can be a cause for concern in relation to child welfare, safety and protection.

Under the Education Act 1996, parents and carers have a legal duty to secure their child's regular and punctual attendance at school.

As well as being a legal requirement, it also ensures your child has access to the best start in life and that they are able to benefit fully from the education they're entitled to receive.

Good attendance is vital in enabling pupils to maximise the opportunities available to them.

What is 'Persistent Absence'?

A pupil is defined as a 'Persistent Absentee' if they miss approximately 10% or more of all possible school sessions, regardless of whether the absence is authorised or unauthorised.

What does good school attendance look like?

We take absence seriously. We identify students whose attendance falls below 95% and provide supportive intervention to improve this.

- Please don't let your child miss out on the education they deserve.
- Every school day counts.
- It is vital that parents or carers work with schools when a child is near the 10% persistent absence threshold to prevent emerging patterns of absence.

If your child does not attend school they will not achieve

We want all students to achieve high levels of attendance and give themselves the very best life chances and choices.

There are 175 non-school days per year for holidays, shopping and appointments.

There should be little need, except in "exceptional" circumstances for your child to miss a day's education.

90% Attendance may look impressive but it means they miss 19 days of education in a year and risk dropping one grade in their GCSEs.

5 C grades become 5 D grades

175 non school days a year		175 days to spend on family time, visits, holidays, shopping, household jobs and other appointments				
365 days in each year	190 School days in each year	10 days absence	19 days absence	29 days absence Half a term missed	38 days absence	47 days absence
	180 days of education	171 days of education	161 days of education	152 days of education	143 days of education	
	100%	95%	90%	85%	80%	75%
	GOOD	WORRYING	SERIOUS CONCERN			
	Best chance of success	Less chance of success	Not fair on your child			
	Gets your child off to a flying start	Makes it harder to progress	Court action			