



**Policy name: Attendance Policy**

**Last reviewed: 16/05/2018**

**Next review date: 10/07/2019**

## **ATTENDANCE POLICY**

### **Whole School Policy for Attendance - Aims**

1. To improve the overall percentage of pupils at school.
2. To make attendance and punctuality a priority for all those associated with the school, including parents and carers, pupils, teachers and governors.
3. To develop a framework which defines agreed roles and responsibilities and promoted consistency in carrying out designated tasks.
4. To provide support, advice and guidance to parents and pupils.
5. To develop a systematic approach to gathering and analysing attendance related data.
6. To further develop positive and consistent communication between home and school.
7. To promote effective partnerships with other services and agencies.
8. To recognise the needs of the individual pupil when planning reintegration following significant periods of absence.

### **Principles**

At St. Andrew's we believe regular and punctual school attendance is absolutely central in ensuring that all children have full access to the curriculum. Valuable learning time is lost when children are absent or late.

Children should be at school, on time, every day that the school is open, unless the reason for the absence is unavoidable. Permitting absence from school without a good reason is an offence by the parent or carer.

Children are sometimes reluctant to attend school. Any problems with regular attendance are best sorted out between the school, the parents or carers and the child. If a child is reluctant to attend, it is never better to cover up their absence or to give in to pressure to excuse them from attending. The school offers a variety of support to families in overcoming the challenges they face in this area. These include our Pupil Care Co-ordinator, a bridging system between home and school, access to the School Counsellor and access to the services of the Home-School Liaison Officer.

Every half-day absence has to be classified by the school as either AUTHORISED or UNAUTHORISED. This is why information about the cause of each absence is always required.



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### **School Session Times**

There are two sessions each day with a lunch break in between.

Infants (Years R, 1 & 2): Morning 9:00am to 12:00 noon with a 15 minute break.  
Afternoon 1:00pm to 3:15pm with a 10 minute break.

Juniors (Years 3 to 6): Morning 8:55am to 12:30 with a 15 minute break.  
Afternoon 1:30pm to 3:20pm.

### **Recording Late Arrivals**

The school gate opens at 8:45pm. If your child arrives after the start time for their year group they will be recorded as late. The number of minutes late is recorded and, where necessary, the reason for lateness.

Frequent late arrivals will be followed up with a letter home. If there is no improvement in timekeeping then a Fixed Penalty Notice may be issued by the Local Authority.

### **The Effects of Arriving Late at School**

- Arriving 5 minutes late every day adds up to over 3 whole school days lost each year.
- Arriving 15 minutes late every day is the same as being absent from school for 2 weeks a year.
- Starting the school day rushed and arriving late makes it hard for children to settle in the classroom.
- Children who arrive late will miss vital information given at the start of the day by their class teachers.
- Arriving late in the classroom or into an assembly hall can make children feel anxious or embarrassed.
- Children who arrive late also disrupt the other children in the classroom who are ready to start learning.

### **Authorised Absence from School**

‘Authorised absence’ means that the school has either given approval in advance for a pupil of compulsory school age to be absent, or has accepted an explanation offered afterwards as justification for absence.

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Authorised absences are mornings or afternoons away from school for a reason such as genuine illness of the pupil or unavoidable cause. It is now the school's policy that we will not grant leave of absence, unless in exceptional circumstances. Any application must be made in advance and the head teacher must be satisfied that there are exceptional circumstances which warrant the leave. Where a leave of absence is granted, the head teacher will determine the number of days a pupil can be away from school. Exceptional circumstances are not precisely defined by their nature but compassionate consideration will be given to issues of specific family need. Examples of this might be bereavement, serious illness of a close family member, a wedding or other significant occasion within the immediate family, religious festivals and service personnel with specific leave restrictions. A leave of absence is granted entirely at the head teacher's discretion.

Other authorised absences include:

- **Present at an Approved Off-Site Educational Activity** (i.e. external examinations or specialised training that is approved by the school in advance)
- **Dual Registered** - at another educational establishment
- **At an interview with/on a visit to another prospective educational establishment** - the school must be informed in advance and be assured this is an approved absence
- **Participating in a supervised sporting activity**
- **Educational visit or trip** - this applies to an organised trip or visit, including residential trips organised by the school, or attendance at a supervised trip of a strictly educational nature arranged by an organisation approved by the school.
- **Leave of absence authorised by the school** - Only exceptional circumstances warrant an authorised leave of absence. We will consider each request individually taking into account the circumstances, such as: the nature of the event for which leave is sought; the frequency of the request; whether the parent or carer gave advance notice; and the pupil's attainment, attendance and ability to catch up on missed schooling.
- **Excluded but no alternative provision made** - If no alternative provision is made for a pupil to continue their education whilst they are excluded but still on the admission register, they will be marked absent in the attendance register using Code E. Alternative provision must be arranged for each excluded pupil from the sixth day

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of any fixed period or permanent exclusion. Where alternative provision is made they will be marked using the appropriate attendance code.

- **Illness (not medical or dental appointments).** Parents and carers must notify school on the first day the child is unable to attend due to illness and every day after that. We will authorise absences due to illness, unless there is a genuine cause for concern about the legitimacy of an illness. If the authenticity of illness is in doubt, we may request parents or carers to provide medical evidence to support illness. The school can record the absence as unauthorised if we are not satisfied of the authenticity of the illness but will advise parents of their intention. We will not request medical evidence unnecessarily. Medical evidence can take the form of prescriptions, appointment cards, etc. rather than doctors' notes.
- **Holiday authorised by the school** – The head teacher will not grant leave of absence unless in exceptional circumstances. The application must be made in advance and the head teacher must be satisfied that there are exceptional circumstances which warrant the leave. Where a leave of absence is granted, the head teacher will determine the number of days a pupil can be away from school. A leave of absence is granted entirely at the head teacher's discretion.
- **Medical or dental appointments** - Missing registration for a medical or dental appointment is counted as an authorised absence. However, we encourage parents and carers to make appointments out of school hours. Where this is not possible, the pupil should only be out of school for the minimum amount of time necessary for the appointment.
- **Religious observance** – We will treat absence as authorised when it is due to religious observance. The day must be exclusively set apart for religious observance by the religious body to which the parents or carers belong. Where necessary, we will seek advice from the parents' or carers' religious body about whether it has set the day apart for religious observance.
- **Gypsy, Roma and Traveller absence**

### **Unauthorised Absences**

'Unauthorised absences' are those which the school does not consider reasonable and for which no "leave" has been given. This includes:

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- **Holiday not authorised by the school or in excess of the period determined by the head teacher** – If the head teacher does not authorise a leave of absence for the purpose of a holiday but the parents or carers still take the child out of school, or the child is kept away for longer than was agreed, the absence is unauthorised. The regulations do not allow schools to give retrospective approval. If the parents or carers did not apply for leave of absence in advance, the absence must be recorded as unauthorised.
- **Reason for absence not yet provided** – We will follow up all unexplained and unexpected absences in a timely manner. Every effort should be made to establish the reason for a pupil's absence. When the reason for the pupil's absence has been established the register will be amended. If no reason for absence is provided after a reasonable amount of time it will be replaced with code O (absent from school without authorisation).
- **Absent from school without authorisation** - If the school is not satisfied with the reason given for absence it will be recorded as unauthorised.
- **Parents keeping children off school unnecessarily**
- **Truancy before or during the school day**
- **Absences which have never been properly explained**

### **Penalty Notices for Unauthorised Leave during Term Time**

When permission for a leave of absence is not granted, the parent will be informed that the absence is unauthorised and that if it is taken the absence will be referred to the Behaviour and Attendance Team for a potential Fixed Penalty Notice. The matter will be handled by this team from this point onwards.

From September 2016, St Andrew's will actively consider referring unauthorised absences to the Local Authority's Behaviour and Attendance Team. Each absence will be considered individually based on the circumstances, length of absence and the child's current attendance.

### **Monitoring Attendance**

Registers are taken daily and close at 9.15am. Any unexplained absences are followed up by the school with a direct phone call or text home.

Absence codes are applied in compliance with the Department of Education's School Attendance Guidance published in October 2014.

Parents and carers are expected to contact school at an early stage and to work with the staff in resolving any problems together. If difficulties cannot be sorted out in this way, St



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Andrew's may invite the parents or carers to an Attendance Support Meeting in order to try and resolve the situation by agreement. If other ways of improving the child's attendance have failed, then we may then refer the case to the Local Authority and Attendance Officers who can use court proceedings to prosecute parents or carers or to seek an Education Supervision Order on the child. The maximum penalty on conviction is a fine of £2500 and/or 3 months imprisonment.

A monthly report is studied by the Attendance Officer (currently the School Secretary) and the Headteacher. All pupils with attendance less than 90% are studied individually and where no acceptable reason for absence is identified, any of the following actions are applied:

- A letter is sent to the parents highlighting initial concerns
- If there is no improvement or change, a stronger follow up letter is sent to parents
- The matter is referred to the Home School Support Officer for planned intervention as appropriate
- The matter is referred to the Access to Education team at the Local Authority for the consideration of further action.

The Attendance of Vulnerable Groups is also tracked at this point.

Attendance data is reported at every meeting of the whole Governing Body. It is also analysed as part of the school's Annual Cycle of Self Evaluation. Currently, attendance data is part of the Pupil Care section and is analysed in each Autumn term.

Whole classes are rewarded on a weekly basis for 100% attendance. Children with 100% attendance the school year receive an attendance reward at the end of the Summer Term.

### **Statement on Children in Vulnerable Circumstances**

Children who are subject to a Child Protection Plan (CPP) and those who are identified as Children in Need (CiN) are some of our most vulnerable children. For these children, but specifically for those as described above, absence from school can be the first indicator that all is not well. As a result:

- These children are prioritised when undertaking absence contact with parents
- Our system for addressing non-attendance will start when the attendance of these children falls below 95% in any half term period and the social worker will be informed
- If children are absent and no contact is received from the parent as to the reasons why or if the school are concerned about the reasons given, the school will inform the social worker.