

# St Helen's Church of England Primary School

## Attendance and Punctuality Procedure



This Procedure operates in accordance with the framework and advice contained within the Medway guidance on achieving and maintaining high attendance, which the school and its Governing Body intend to follow.

<b>AAP – Attendance Advisory Practitioners.</b> <b>Arbor – School Information Management System</b> <b>DfE – Department for Education</b>
---

**N.B The term ‘parent’ should also be taken to mean the person with care responsibilities.**

### Principles

- Regular and full time attendance is essential if children and young people are to benefit fully from their school life
- It is important that children learn the importance of being punctual as part of their preparation for adult life
- It is the parents responsibility to contact the school on the first day of an absence
- The school and parents should work together in order to achieve high standards of attendance and punctuality
- Every pupil is expected to achieve 96% attendance

### Purpose

The purpose of this Procedure is to:

- set out the ways by which attendance and punctuality are managed by the school
- clarify the role of the parents/carer

### The School will:

- give attendance and punctuality a high priority;
- provide and promote a welcoming and positive atmosphere so that children feel safe, and know that their presence is valued;
- raise awareness of the importance of full attendance and punctuality, using newsletters and other communications to parents;
- encourage parents to fully support the procedure as a vital contribution towards their child’s education;
- encourage the children to have a positive attitude towards attendance and punctuality so that they can retain this into adult life;
- ensure that attendance is effectively monitored, using a computer based registration system, and absences are followed up promptly;
- communicate effectively with other agencies (Traveller Education, Health, Social Services etc);
- meet the legal requirements with particular reference to authorised and unauthorised absence;
- ensure that all staff comply with the school procedure and deal consistently with absence and punctuality;
- ensure information is available for Governors and parents;
- ensure good liaison where a change of school occurs;
- develop incentives for good attendance and punctuality;
- share good practice with other schools;
- have procedures in place to help children settle in after a long absence.

## Strategies to Promote and Maintain High Standards of Attendance and Punctuality

- All new parents are introduced to the Procedure and information on attendance. It is accessible on the school website.
- The newsletter is used as a vehicle to promote this aspect of school life and serves as a reminder.
- Individual parents are approached where there is concern about their child's attendance or punctuality.
- Maintain and promote a set of class rules which refer to punctuality and readiness for work.
- Maintain up to date records within Arbor management information system.
- Liaise with the AAP during regular monitoring visits to identify attendance concerns.

### We expect the parent to:

- provide up to date contact numbers and changes of address;
- notify the school when their child is unable to attend, with a reason, on the first day of the absence;
- telephone the school after the first day of absence to advise the school if the absence is continuing;
- in cases of lengthy absence, keep the school well informed so that work can be sent home in certain cases and in order for the school to be prepared for the child's return;
- provide a note indicating attendance at the dentist, doctor or optician before the arranged appointment unless an emergency situation has arisen;
- ensure that their child arrives at school on time each day;
- let the school know if their child is going to be late, e.g. if a car breaks down; if an urgent appointment has been made;
- understand the importance of good attendance and punctuality and promote this with their child.

## Registers

The method of maintaining the class registers is through the Arbor Attendance Module. Class teachers complete an online registration twice daily.

Weekly absence reports are printed and reasons for absence recorded using the relevant codes.

**M** : medical or dental appointments authorised  
**I** : illness authorised  
**L** : late before registers closed authorised  
**U** : late after registers closed unauthorised  
**C** : other authorised circumstances (exceptional) authorised  
**G** : family holiday not agreed unauthorised  
**N** : no reason yet provided for absence unauthorised  
**V** : educational visit or trip authorised  
**R** : religious activities authorised  
**E** : exclusion authorised  
**O** : unauthorised absence not covered by above unauthorised

The School gates will open from 8:40 a.m. The learning begins at 8.40 a.m. and the register will be taken between 8:40 a.m. and 8:55 a.m. Children arriving after 8:55 a.m. should report to the school office. The registers close at 8:55 a.m. and children will receive a late mark until 9:10 am then any children arriving after this time without a reason for doing so will be regarded as being absent without authorisation for the morning session.

Afternoon registers are taken at 1pm. The registers close at 1:10pm and children will receive a late mark until 1:10pm and then any children arriving after this time without a reason for doing so will be regarded as being absent without authorisation for the afternoon session.

Lateness after this time is classed as unauthorised absence unless it is for a medical appointment or a reason is provided which can be authorised by the Head Teacher.

### Authorised and unauthorised absence

Absences can be authorised if they are for certain reasons e.g. sickness, absence following the death of a close member of the family, attendance at an interview or examination, participation in a regional or national sporting event or an approved holiday (see below).

The ultimate responsibility to authorise absence rests with the Head Teacher. If the Head Teacher is not satisfied with the reasons provided, the absence may be categorised as unauthorised.

An absence will be classified as unauthorised when:

- a child is kept off school because a parent is ill;
- a child is absent because a sibling is ill;
- the parent cannot get the child to school;
- the child is taken on a shopping trip;
- the child is absent due to a birthday treat/family treat;
- a child is absent due to family work patterns;
- the child refuses to come to school or wants to stay at home;
- a child is late after the register is closed (9:10am or 1:10pm).

Each child's unauthorised absences (including unauthorised holiday absences) will be noted and recorded on an annual report to parents.

It is a legal requirement for a school to report percentages of authorised and unauthorised absences to parents in the annual Governors Report and to the DfE.

Parents have a responsibility to telephone the school if their child is ill. If a child needs to be absent for a medical appointment a note must be received by the class teacher before the appointment. When a child returns from a period of absence due to a sickness, a note must be provided. The class teacher dates and signs all notes so that the school office may complete the weekly absence report.

The school will telephone the child's home to enquire about an absence if the parent has not contacted the school on the first day of absence.

If a child has been absent without an explanation, parents will be sent a letter. If no satisfactory response is received, a follow up reminder will be sent. Should this still result in a nil response, the absence will be marked unauthorised and the school will inform the AAP about the child's lack of attendance.

Where there is cause for concern, i.e. when attendance is below 90% in any term, the reasons for this will be investigated and where appropriate, discussed with the AAP during one of their regular visits. A referral may be made for appropriate action to be taken.

## Requests for Leave of absence

**It should be noted that leave during term time is granted in extenuating circumstances. There is no parental right. The Head Teacher and Governors of St Helen's will only consider requests for absence if the child / children concerned have 96% attendance in the last academic year, and current academic year. Requests for children who have less than 96% attendance will not be considered and therefore any subsequent absence will be unauthorised.**

Absence can only be granted only under exceptional circumstances. The Education (Pupil Registration) (England) (Amendment) Regulations 2013 changed the rules about term-time holidays. The amendments removed references to family holidays and extended leave as well as the statutory threshold of 10 school days.

The amendments specify that Head Teachers may not grant any leave of absence during term time unless they consider there to be "exceptional circumstances" for doing so. If leave is granted, Head Teachers should determine the number of days a child can be away from school.

The government has not defined the 'exceptional circumstances' referred to in the 2013 regulations. It is for the Head Teacher to decide what they view as exceptional circumstances. Guidance suggests: Schools should 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 gave advanced notice; and the pupil's attainment, attendance and ability to catch up on missed schooling. The DfE explains that although Head Teachers have the discretion to grant leave, such leave is unlikely to be granted ... for the purposes of a family holiday. As a Governing Body we define exceptional circumstances as: ... being of unique and significant emotional, educational or spiritual value to the child which outweighs the loss of teaching time.

Parents are asked to support St Helen's with its aims and not to take their children away from school during term time. Parents/carers who wish to request leave of absence must complete the **REQUEST FOR LEAVE OF ABSENCE DURING TERM TIME** form and return to the school at least 14 days before the date you wish to remove your child from school.

Upon receipt, the Head Teacher will make a decision. The reasons must be made clear to the Head Teacher. Parents are asked to reflect on the possible impact that this time out of school will have on their child's learning when requesting such authorisation. \*Please also bear in mind that significant periods of absence can impact on a child's social relationships and affect friendship patterns.

**Parents have no right to demand that absences are authorised. (Regulation 8 of the Education Regulations 1995 applies).**

Parents of children in Years 2 and 6 are particularly requested to avoid taking leave in the first half of the Summer Term when the end of KS1 and 2 statutory tests take place. **Absences will not be authorised during preparation for and administration of SATs.**

If a pupil goes on holiday without permission from the Head Teacher, the absence will be recorded as unauthorised and the AAP will be informed.

## **Sanctions**

Where absences are unauthorised....

- Referral can be made to the AAP, where legal sanctions maybe applied, in the usual manner.
- Where 10 unauthorised sessions (5 days) occur, the school can apply to the LA for the issuing of a **Penalty Notice**.\* This application would be made after consultation with the AAP.

The offence of non – school attendance is absolute, and the legal requirement regarding evidence is simply that the child did not attend.

**£120 fine for each adult / carer and each child in the household if paid within 28 days.**

**£ 60 each for each adult / carer and each child in the household if paid within 21 days.**

**Failure to pay will result in a summons to the magistrate court.**

## Punctuality

The School gates will open from 8:40 a.m. The learning begins at 8.40 a.m. and the register will be taken between 8:40 a.m. and 8:55 a.m. Children arriving after 8:55 a.m. should report to the school office. The registers close at 8:55 a.m. and children will receive a late mark until 9:10 am then any children arriving after this time without a reason for doing so will be regarded as being absent without authorisation for the morning session.

Afternoon registers are taken at 1pm. The registers close at 1:10pm and children will receive a late mark until 1:10pm and then any children arriving after this time without a reason for doing so will be regarded as being absent without authorisation for the afternoon session.

If parents know their child is going to be late for any reason, they should let the school know.

Parents of children who persistently arrive late will be approached and reminded of these times and their obligation to comply with them. It will be explained that the lateness not only interrupts their child's education, but also that of others in the class.

Repeated, unexplained lateness or persistent lateness without an acceptable reason will be referred to the APP and/or Social Services where relevant.

If a regular pattern of lateness is observed, a note will be sent home asking the parent to explain the lateness or to ensure that punctuality is maintained. In rare circumstances where the school is made aware of a situation, an arrangement allowing a degree of flexibility can be agreed with the Head Teacher.

## Medical Appointments

Parents must sign their child(ren) out and back in again when attending appointments during the school day. A log is kept for the purpose. Parents should come to the office, where the office staff will contact the classroom and ask that the child comes down to reception to meet their parent/carer. The School will require evidence of an appointment.

If a child has an appointment in a morning or afternoon session and does not attend school for the other session, this will be recorded as an unauthorised absence unless it has been agreed with the Head Teacher.

## Monitoring

The Head Teacher will keep the Governors informed about attendance matters.

All staff will be expected to comply with the procedure and any issues will be discussed at staff meetings.

The School has regular meetings with the APP to discuss concerns and review absence data.

Updated September 2023

Review Date September 2025