

'To walk hand in hand with God, loving Him, loving each other and loving ourselves, doing our best with the gifts He gave us to make the world a richer place.'



St Peter's Catholic Primary School

St Peter's Catholic Primary School, Waterloooville Attendance Policy for children

Control Box

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Author	Diane Price	Review Date	January 2018
Committee	Full Governing Body	Responsibility	Full Board of Governors
Associated Policies, Documents, Agencies:			

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) St Peter's Catholic Primary School will challenge parents and carers on the need and 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 and carers, teaching and support staff and school governors has a responsibility to ensure good school attendance. The purpose of this policy is to clarify roles and responsibilities with regard to attendance. The policy is based on current government (DfE) and Local Authority (LA) guidance and statutory regulations.

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, parents and appropriate agencies to provide information, advice and support.

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.

It is also 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.

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Procedures

St Peter's Catholic Primary School 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. An Official Register will be run monthly and these will be kept for a period of three years.

Class teachers will register pupils twice a day – at the beginning of the morning session at 8.50am and at the beginning of the afternoon session at 1.05pm. The Pupil Register will be held in the School Office.

Children should not leave school until the end of the school day. 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 Head Teacher or another senior leader on a case by case basis. Parents can not 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 should be taken into account in the decision a senior leader makes in these circumstances.

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 Head Teacher. 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 will trigger further action and 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 parents or 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. If the child has been sick or has had a temperature it is important they stay at home for 48 hours. 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.**

For Lateness:

To avoid disruption caused by lateness, pupils are expected to arrive at school, and be in the correct room for registration by 8.50am every day. 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. Children arriving late must report to the School Office. Their arrival in school will be recorded in the Children On/Off site book and recorded, along with the reason for lateness, onto the

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pupil's attendance record. Any child who arrives late, but before the close of registers at 9.05am will be marked as present but will be recorded as late on their individual record.

Any child arriving after the close of registers at 9.05am will be marked as on site but not counted as present – this will mean they have an unauthorised absence.

If a pupil is late after 8.50am, more than three times during any 6 week period, a letter will be sent to parents and 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, parents will be invited to meet with either the Headteacher or another senior member of staff 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.

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. Please note that parents can not assume that if one of their children leaves school early it will always be reasonable or acceptable to take siblings with them.

Amendments to the 2006 regulations remove references to family holiday and extended leave as well as the statutory threshold of ten school days. The amendments make clear that Head Teachers may not grant any leave of absence during term time unless there are exceptional circumstances and that Head Teachers should determine the number of school days a child can be away from school if the leave is granted.

Absence will be authorised in the following circumstances:

- Where leave has been granted by the school in advance, for example – 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.
- Where the school is satisfied that the child is too ill to attend.
- Where the pupils has a medical appointment (although parents will be encouraged to make these out of school hours wherever possible, and to 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, e.g. extreme weather conditions.
- The absence occurs on a day exclusively set aside for religious observance by the religious body to which the pupil's parents belong.
- Where the pupil is of no fixed abode, parent and carers are engaged in a trade which required 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.

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If parents or 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 and carers will be required to meet with the Head Teacher to discuss current attendance and progress.

Term-time holiday:

Head Teachers **may not** grant any leave of absence during term time unless there are exceptional circumstances. The Head Teacher 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, 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:

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

Meetings with parents

Senior staff may call a meeting with parents 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 parents are responsible for ensuring they receive. An individual record of attendance will be sent to all parents at the end of each term to ensure that parents are aware of their child's attendance in school.

Where attendance drops below 90% a letter will be sent to parents and a meeting scheduled to enable school and parents 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.

Referral to the Attendance Legal Panel

Where unauthorised absence persists, the case can be referred to the Attendance Legal Panel. A representative from this team may also be involved in parental meetings.

Fixed penalty notices

Where attendance problems persist and are not addressed by parents or 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 parents to be issued with a penalty where they fail to ensure their child of compulsory school age (5-16) maintains school registered regular attendance. Guidance document from the Department for Education (DfE) on securing regular school attendance allows for persistent lateness to be treated as unauthorised absence. The guidance lists penalty notices as an option for dealing with unauthorised absence. The

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

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Education (Penalty Notices) (England) (Amendment) Regulations 2012 increased the current amounts of penalty notices payable by parents from 1 September 2012. The amounts stated on the penalty notices are £60 for those who pay within 28 days; and from £120 for those who pay within 42 days.

Monitoring

Pupils' attendance records, including lateness, will be monitored weekly by the Child and Family Support Worker in school 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 parents to be used in collaboration to resolve problems as quickly as possible.

Rewards

The key reward of good attendance is a good educational outcome for the child. The School We also recognise that achieving attendance of 100% over a half term is a significant achievement and each half term a governor publically awards stickers to all the children in the school who have achieved this in a special assembly. Children who achieve above 99% attendance for the whole year get a further certificate and a small reward at the end of the summer term. Each week, the two classes in the school (one in KS1 and one in KS2) who have the highest combined attendance in the preceding week have a trophy awarded in their weekly celebration assembly.

Publicity

The percentages of the whole school who have received a 100% sticker are announced in the monthly newsletter. The classes who have won the trophy are also announced in the newsletter. The child and family support worker writes an article about some aspect of attendance for each newsletter.