



St Augustine's Catholic
Primary School, Wilman Road,
Tunbridge Wells, TN4 9AL



ATTENDANCE POLICY

DATE REVIEWED: JANUARY 2016

The Governors of St Augustine's Catholic Primary School are committed to safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children and young people and engage with staff in policy and practice developments and proactively encourages feedback.

Recommended by the Curriculum and Community Committee March 2016

Statement of Intent

St Augustine's Catholic Primary School is committed to the continuous raising of achievement of all our pupils. Regular attendance is critical if our pupils are to be successful and benefit from the opportunities presented to them.

One of our basic principles is to celebrate success. Good attendance is fundamental to a successful and fulfilling school experience. We actively promote 100% attendance for all our pupils and we use a variety of weekly, termly and annual awards to promote good attendance and punctuality.

The Governors, Head Teacher and Staff in partnership with parents have a duty to promote full attendance at St Augustine's. The Headteacher meets with the Governing body three times a year to report on attendance.

Our School Policy on authorised and unauthorised absences falls in line with guidance set out in the Kent County Education Penalty Notices Code of Conduct.

Parental Responsibility

Parents have a legal duty to ensure that their child(ren) attend school regularly and arrive on time. Regular attendance is essential to the all-round development of the child and they should be allowed to take full advantage of educational opportunities available to them. Poor attendance undermines their education and sometimes, puts pupils at risk, encouraging anti-social behaviour.

It is the parents' responsibility to contact the school, before 9.30am, on every day their child is absent. This is a safeguarding issue requirement so that all parties know that your child is safe. Upon a child's return to school, parents should send in a note, explaining the reason for the absence.

Pupils are expected to arrive by 8.55am. All pupils that arrive late must be signed-in in the late book and the reason for lateness recorded.

The Role of the School Staff

At St Augustine's there is a whole school responsibility and approach for improving school attendance, with specific staff taking individual responsibility.

The Headteacher has overall responsibility for monitoring attendance issues.

Class teachers complete a register at the beginning of each morning and once during the afternoon session. Marking the attendance registers twice daily is a legal requirement. (The Education (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2006) Teachers mark pupils present, absent or late. The class teacher notifies the school office of children whose attendance is causing concern.

It is the responsibility of the school office to ensure:

- Attendance and lateness records are up to date;
- If no reason for absence has been provided, parents are contacted on the first day of absence by phone call;
- Where there has been no communication, letters may be sent to parents requesting reasons for absence;
- The appropriate attendance code is entered into the register (National Attendance Codes);
- Parents informed termly of child's attendance figure if it falls below 95%.

Timeline of School Action for Poor Attendance (Appendix 1)

- 95 - 100% attendance - class teacher to investigate and notify the school office of concerns. Class teacher to contact parent if appropriate;
- 90 - 95% attendance - school intervention letters/meeting with parents – consider Penalty Notice or Early Help Notification;
- Below 90% - Where the absences have not been authorised consult with the Local Authority School Liaison Officer and a referral to PRU, Inclusion and Attendance Service may be considered.

Children Missing Education

No child should be removed from the school roll without consultation between the Head Teacher and the PRU, Inclusion and Attendance Service when appropriate. Please see circumstances below: -

Where a child is missing from education, Local Authority guidance will be followed, by completing a Child Missing Education referral for the following circumstances: -

- If the whereabouts of the child is unknown and the school have failed to locate him/her;
- The family has notified the school that they are leaving the area but no Common Transfer Form (pupil file) has been requested by another school.

Medical Appointments

If your child has a medical appointment the absence will be authorised but it is important that you make these appointments outside of school hours wherever possible. Parents must send a note, in advance to the class teacher, informing them of the appointment. Children are expected to be in school either side of the appointment as appropriate.

Lateness

At St Augustine's the register is taken at 8.55am and 1.00pm (Infants) / 1.15pm (Juniors). Pupils arriving after these times must enter school by the main entrance and record the reason for lateness in the late book. The pupil will be marked as late before registration has closed (Code 'L').

Pupils arriving after the register has closed will be marked as late after registration (Code 'U') and this will count as an unauthorised absence.

Frequent lateness after the register has closed (U) will be discussed with parents and could provide grounds for prosecution or a Penalty Notice.

Penalty Notice Proceedings for Lateness – Penalty Notices are issued in accordance with Kent County Council's Education Penalty Notices Code of Conduct effective from January 2016.

- 10 incidents of late arrival after the registers have closed during any possible 100 school sessions for a Penalty Notice Warning Letter.
- The Penalty Notice Warning Letter sets out 15 school days during which no unauthorised absence is to be recorded
- If unauthorised absence is recorded during the 15-day period, Penalty Notice(s) will be issued (one per parent per child)
- Where a Penalty Notice is not paid within 28 days of issue the Local Authority will instigate court proceedings

Authorising Absence

Only the Head Teacher can authorise absence using a consistent approach. The Head Teacher is not obliged to accept a parent's explanation. A letter or telephone message from a parent does not in itself authorise an absence. If absences are not authorised, parents will be notified.

If no explanation is received, absences will not be authorised.

Absence (leave) during term time can only be approved in "exceptional circumstances". The following reasons are examples of absence that will not be authorised:

- Persistent nonspecific illness e.g. poorly/unwell;
- Absence of siblings if one child is ill;
- Oversleeping;
- Inadequate clothing/uniform;
- Confusion over school dates;
- Medical/dental appointments of more than half a day without very good reasons;
- Child's/family birthday;
- Shopping trip;
- Family Holidays.

Persistent unauthorised absence may result in an AS1 referral to the Local Authority School Liaison Officer for consideration of prosecution. The school will follow procedures prior to referral and parents will be notified in writing.

When a referral is made, the child's Registration Certificate, copies of all letters sent to parents and minutes of any meetings **MUST** be attached to the completed AS1 referral form with any other relevant information.

Local Authority Action may include: -

- Attendance Improvement Meeting;
- Home visits;
- Liaison with other agencies;
- Fast Track to Prosecution.

Penalty Notices Proceedings for Poor Attendance - Penalty Notices are issued in accordance with Kent County Council's Education Penalty Notices Code of Conduct effective from January 2016

- A Penalty Notice can only be issued in cases of persistent unauthorised absence or where an excluded child is found in a public place during school hours;
- Absence for 10 or more half day sessions (5 school days) without authorisation during any 100 possible school sessions – these do not need to be consecutive;
- The PRU, Inclusion and Attendance Service issue a warning letter setting out 15 school days during which no unauthorised absence is to be recorded;
- If unauthorised absence is recorded during the 15-day period a Penalty Notice will be issued (one per parent per child).

Exceptional circumstances could include:

- Service personnel returning from a tour of duty abroad where it is evidenced the individual will not be in receipt of any leave in the near future that coincides with school holidays;
- Where an absence from school is recommended by a health professional as part of a parent or child's rehabilitation from a medical or emotional issue;
- The death or terminal illness of a person close to the family;
- To attend a wedding or funeral of a person close to the family. Only travel time and day of ceremony would be authorised;
- Any examples provided are illustrative rather than exhaustive. It is acceptable to take a student's previous record of attendance into account when the school is making decisions. The fundamental principles for defining 'exceptional' are rare, significant, unavoidable and short. And by 'unavoidable' it implies that an event could not reasonably be scheduled at another time. It is important to note that Head Teachers can agree the absence of a child in exceptional circumstances and this discretion can be used also to determine the length of the authorised absence.

Where Penalty Notices are imposed, the regulations state that the penalty will be £120 to be paid within 28 days, reduced to £60 if paid within 21 days. Penalty Notices are issued to each parent of each child. Failure to pay the penalty in full by the end of the 28-day period will result in prosecution by the Local Authority.

Leave of Absence/Holiday

From September 2013 the Department for Education have amended the Pupil Registration Regulations, removing the Head Teacher's ability to authorise leave of absence for the purpose of a family holiday.

Section 444 of the Education Act 1996 says that parents are **guilty** of an offence of failing to secure regular attendance at school unless they can prove that the child was absent:

- With leave (the school has given permission);
- Due to sickness or any unavoidable cause (the sickness or unavoidable cause must relate to the child, not the parent);
- Religious observance;
- Failure by the Local Authority to provide transport.

In law, these are the only acceptable reasons for a child being absent from school.

The Head Teacher may authorise absence in "exceptional circumstances" but this must be requested in advance and agreement to each request is at the discretion of the Head Teacher, acting on behalf of the Governing Body (Education (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2006). Each case will be judged on its merits and the Head Teacher's decision is final. Once the decision not to authorise leave is taken, it cannot be authorised retrospectively.

If the absence is not authorised and the holiday is taken anyway, the case may be referred to the PRU, Inclusion and Attendance Service who may issue a Penalty Notice to each parent for each child taken out of school. **The PRU, Inclusion and Attendance Service take into consideration a child's level of attendance over the past 12 months (from the last day of the absence) when considering whether to issue a fine.**

Failure to pay the penalty in full by the end of the 28-day period will result in prosecution by the Local Authority.

Appendix 1

Kent School Referral Pathway – Pupil Attendance

