



## All Saints CE Primary School & Nursery

# Attendance Policy

Date written: October 2019

Date adopted by Governing Body: November 2019

Review Schedule: Annual

### 1. Aims and Ethos

Our attendance policy aims to support pupils and their parents/carers in the establishment of the highest possible levels of attendance and punctuality. This will ensure all pupils have full and equal access to the best education that we can offer, and enable pupils to progress smoothly and confidently, with continuity through the school.

School education lays the vital foundations of a child's life. There is a direct link between underachievement and poor attendance. Pupils who attend school regularly make better progress, both academically and socially. They find learning more satisfying and cope better with school work and school routines. We aim for an environment which enables and encourages all members of the community to reach out for excellence. Parents/carers and the school staff should work in partnership in making educational success and in ensuring that all children have full and equal access to all the school has to offer.

Regular attendance at school is therefore essential to ensure our pupils are able to succeed. All Saints CE Primary School expects and encourages all children to attend every day, as long as they are fit and healthy enough to do so. We believe that the most important factor in promoting good attendance is the development of positive attitudes towards school and learning.

All Saints CE Primary School aims to maintain an overall whole school attendance above 95%. Each pupil's attendance can be summarised as below:

<b>Above 95%</b>	Good attendance which will help all aspects of pupil's progress and life in school.
<b>90% - 94%</b>	Attendance requires improvement. Depending on the reason(s) resulting in these attendance figures, the School may contact parents/ carers in order to improve the situation.
<b>Below 90%</b>	Unacceptable attendance which is causing serious concern and has a serious negative impact on pupil's attainment and progress. The School will work with parents/ carers and the Attendance Improvement Officer to improve the pupil's attendance.

Non-attendance is an important issue that is treated seriously. However each case is different and the School acknowledges that no one standard response will be appropriate in every case. Consideration is given to all factors affecting attendance before deciding what intervention strategies to apply.

In every case, early intervention is essential to prevent the problem from worsening. It is essential that parents/ carers keep the School fully informed of any matters that may affect their child's attendance. Prior to the engagement of the Attendance Improvement Officer, the School may issue letters to parents clearly defining the concerns within school regarding a pupil's absence. It is hoped that a quick response and change in levels of absence will prevent the need for Attendance Improvement Officer involvement.

This Attendance policy is based on National Guidance and Recommendations which requires schools *"to work closely with Attendance Improvement Teams and Parents to achieve excellent levels of school attendance and punctuality for all pupils"*.

### 2. Rights and Responsibilities

Improving attendance at All Saints CE Primary School is the responsibility of everyone in the school community - pupils, parents, staff and governors.

## **2.1 Parents and Carers**

Parents are responsible by law for ensuring that their children of compulsory school age receive an efficient education suitable to their age, ability, aptitude and any special educational needs that they may have. Parents are legally obliged to ensure that their child attends school at all times unless they are too unwell to attend. Most parents fulfil this responsibility by registering their children at a school. Parents whose children are registered at a school are responsible for ensuring that their children attend and stay at school.

Parents should:-

- ensure that their children arrive at school on time, properly dressed and in a condition to learn.
- instil in their children an appreciation of the importance of attending school regularly
- impress upon their children the need to observe the school's code of conduct
- take an active interest in their children's school career, praising and encouraging good work and behaviour and attending parents' evenings and other relevant meetings.
- work in partnership with their children's school to resolve issues, which may lead to non-attendance.
- ensure that they are aware of the attendance policy of their children's school.
- notify their child's school if he/she is absent and provide an explanation for the absence. This should be done on the first day of absence by phone and then followed up in writing on the day the child returns.
- avoid arranging medical/dental appointments during school hours
- avoid booking holidays during term time.

The school is obliged by law to differentiate between authorised and unauthorised absence. Only if the school is satisfied as to the validity of the explanation offered by the letter/message will the absence be authorised.

## **2.2 Pupils**

All pupils are expected to attend school and all of their lessons regularly and punctually. We believe this is excellent preparation for working life, helping them develop good discipline and routines.

## **2.3 School**

Staff will endeavour to encourage good attendance and punctuality through personal example. Attendance is the responsibility of all staff (not just teaching and pastoral staff). The school will employ a range of strategies (see below) to encourage good attendance and punctuality and will promptly investigate all absenteeism, liaising closely with parents. Staff will respond to all absenteeism firmly and consistently. Parents will be promptly informed of any concerns, which may arise over a child's attendance. Parents whose first language is not English or have literacy problems will be offered appropriate support from school in matters of communication as far as we are able.

## **3. Registration**

Registers will be called promptly at 8.55am and at 1.00pm (infants)/ 1:15pm (juniors) and will be marked in red or black in accordance with the list of symbols as set out in the register front sheet.

Registers will close at 9.30am and at 1.05pm for infants and 1.20pm for juniors. If a pupil fails to arrive before the registers close, he/she will be marked as 'absent'. Pupils who arrive after the registers have closed should report to the School Office and sign the School Late Book. If a pupil is persistently late, the Headteacher will contact the parents (see Section 7 of this policy).

Parents are reminded that if a child arrives in school after the registers have closed and an acceptable explanation is not forthcoming, the pupil has to be recorded as 'unauthorised absent' for that session. All class teachers will take registers in each of their classes. The School Office staff will check the registers for any absentees so that appropriate steps can be taken to check on the absence. The Head teacher will inspect all registers each half term in order to ensure that correct procedures are being followed.

The school is required to notify the Attendance Improvement Officer of any pupil of compulsory school age who fails to attend school regularly, or who has been absent for a continuous period of more than 10 school days, without a legitimate reason.

## 4. Authorised/Unauthorised Absence

### 4.1 Definitions of Absence

Definition of authorised absence – an absence is classified as authorised when a child has been away from school for legitimate reason and the school has received prior notification from a parent or carer.

Definition of unauthorised absence – an absence is classified as unauthorised if a child is away from school without a legitimate reason, even with the support of a parent

It is vital that all staff adhere to the same criteria when deciding whether or not to authorise an absence.

All Saints CE Primary School will decide on how an absence is to be recorded according to 'School Attendance: Policy and Practice on Categorisation of Absence'. This states that: *"Only the school can authorise an absence. The fact that a parent has provided a note or other explanation in relation to a particular absence does not, itself, oblige the school to accept the explanation offered if the school does not accept the explanation offered as a valid reason for absence."*

Where a child continues to have low attendance (below 95%) and absences are being supported by parents providing medical reasons, then the school will expect medical evidence before authorisation will be granted. Parents will be informed of this as appropriate.

Parents/ carers must use the School's 'Application for Leave of Absence' form (Appendix 1) for all absences other than sickness and medical/dental appointments (see separate paragraph for Medical/Dental appointments).

Absence can be **authorised** if:

- the pupil was absent with leave (defined as 'leave granted by any person authorised to do so by the governing body)
- The pupil was ill or prevented from attending by any unavoidable cause
- The absence occurred on a day exclusively set aside for religious observance by the religious body to which the pupil's parent belongs
- the school at which the child is a registered pupil is not within walking distance of the child's home and no suitable arrangements have been made by the LA for the child's transport to and from school
- the pupil is the child of Traveller parents who temporarily leave the area giving reasonable indication of their intention to return.
- the pupil is attending an approved off-site activity or is receiving special off-site tuition
- the pupil is attending a Pupil Referral Unit
- the pupil is participating in an approved public performance
  - there is a family bereavement
- the pupil is attending a school visit/ interview or music/sporting examination
- the pupil is involved in an **exceptional** special occasion (at the Headteacher's discretion)

Absence should be **unauthorised** if:

- no explanation is forthcoming
- the school is dissatisfied with the explanation
- the pupil stays at home to mind the house or to look after siblings (the guidance suggests that absence in such cases should only be granted in exceptional circumstances)
- the pupil stays at home because of parental organisation issues e.g taking relative to hospital, mum ill, parent appointments
- the pupil is shopping during school hours
- the pupil is absent for **unexceptional** special occasions (e.g. a birthday)
- the pupil is away from school on a family holiday or a period of time longer than that negotiated with the school
- the pupil is on a family holiday without permission or if the parents have failed to apply for permission in advance of the holiday and instead seek retrospective approval on their return

#### **4.2 Medical / Dental Appointments**

Medical and dental appointments should be made outside of school hours. Where this is not possible, the pupil should be out of school for the minimum amount of time necessary for the appointment. The school should be informed in advance of any medical or dental appointments taken during school hours in writing. Otherwise the absence may be recorded as 'unauthorised absence'.

#### **4.3 Family Holidays during Term Time**

Parents are not permitted to take children out for family holidays during term time. From 1 September 2013 School Attendance Regulations prohibit any school from authorising leave of absence for holidays except in exceptional circumstances. If the Headteacher grants a leave request, it will be for them to determine the length of time that the child can be away from school. This leave is unlikely, however, to be granted for the purposes of a family holiday. Parents can be fined for taking their child on holiday during term time without consent from the school.

#### **4.4 Exceptional Circumstances**

It is not possible to define exceptional circumstances, but examples of what might be considered as such are:

1. Service personnel returning from/scheduled to embark upon a tour of duty abroad.
2. Where a holiday is recommended as part of a parent or child's rehabilitation from a medical or emotional issue. Evidence must be provided, from qualified professionals, such as a doctor.

The interpretation of 'exceptional circumstances' will have different parameters from one case to another, and whilst it is important to look at the whole situation in making decisions about any individual request, the normality will be that requests will be refused.

#### **4.5 Request for Leave of Absence**

The request for leave of absence must be done in writing at least 2 weeks prior the leave is to take place, using the school's 'Application for Leave of Absence' form (see appendix 1). The Headteacher will decide whether the leave of absence can be authorised and will contact the parent to inform them of the outcome (by return of the form). Even where there are exceptional circumstances, no holiday requests will be granted during any period of external examinations (the month of May for Year 2 and Year 6 pupils, the month of June for Year 1 pupils). If a pupil's overall attendance is low, leave is unlikely to be granted, and any permission will also take into account if any previous leave has been granted in that academic year.

#### **Strategies for Promoting Attendance**

- All Saints CE Primary School will offer an environment in which pupils feel valued and welcomed. The school's ethos must demonstrate that pupils feel that their presence in school is important, that they will be missed when they are absent/late and that follow up action will be taken
- A varied and flexible curriculum will be offered to all pupils. Every effort will be made to ensure that learning tasks are matched to pupils' needs
- Attendance data will be regularly collected and analysed in order to help identify patterns, set targets, correlate attendance with achievement and support and inform policy/practice
- Pupils whose attendance is a cause of concern will be set targets for improvement
- Parents will be regularly reminded (via newsletters, the school brochure, parents' evenings, etc) of the importance of good attendance
- The Headteacher will report to the school's governing body on attendance figures in their termly Headteacher's report to Governors.
- The Headteacher will, when appropriate, liaise with other agencies - Educational Psychology Service, Social Care, Attendance Improvement Officer, Family Support worker or Child and Family Guidance, etc - when this may serve to support and assist pupils who are experiencing attendance difficulties
- The Headteacher will have regular meetings/phone calls with the school's Attendance Improvement Officer in order to identify and support those pupils who are experiencing attendance difficulties.

#### **6. Fixed Penalty Notices**

- Fixed Penalty Notices will apply to any parent who fails to ensure the regular attendance of their child of compulsory school age (5-16) who is registered at a state school or fails to ensure that their excluded child is not found in a public place during schools hours without a justifiable reason.

- The Penalty notice will be issued via the Local Authority (LA) on the advice and discretion of the Headteacher.
- The Fixed Penalty Fine will be £60 if paid within 21 days or £120 if paid within 28 days. If the penalty is not paid the LA may prosecute. The penalty is issued to both parents/carers, as appropriate, individually.
- The Attendance Improvement Team sees Fixed Penalty Notices as an effective part of improving school attendance and discouraging unauthorised attendance.
- Fixed Penalty Notices are supported by both the LA and the Department for Education.

## **7. Procedures for Following up Absence**

- On the first day of absence, the school secretary will contact key parents if an explanation is not forthcoming for identified cases;
- If a pupil is absent for more than three consecutive days (without an explanation being forthcoming,) the school will call or write to the parents;
- If a pupil is persistently (or intermittently) absent, the Headteacher will write to the parents. (Appendix 3);
- If a pupil returns to school after a period of absence and fails to bring a note or if the explanation offered by a note is unsatisfactory, the School will send the standard letter to the parents (Appendix 2);
- If a pupil is persistently absent (or late) and the school's efforts to affect an improvement have been unsuccessful, the situation will be referred to the Attendance Improvement Officer, during their consultation meeting/phone call;
- Notes from parents will be kept in the school office until the end of the academic year when they will be placed in the registers and filed.

## **8. Punctuality**

All Saints CE Primary School expects all pupils to be punctual and arrive to school in time. When pupils arrive late, they miss out on essential instructions given at the beginning of the lesson/ school day. This reduces their chances on academic success. Poor punctuality can also cause social disruption – pupils may feel uncomfortable and embarrassed arriving to the classroom when everyone else is already settled. In fact, when one pupil arrives late it disrupts the teacher and the rest of the class, compromising everyone's learning.

In the mornings the School gates are promptly locked at 8:55am, when the registers are taken. Any pupil arriving after 8:55am will be recorded 'late' in the register and must report to the School Office, where an entry to the School's Late Book must be filled in by a parent/ carer. If the pupil arrives after registers are closed (9:30am or 1:05pm for infants/ 1:20pm for juniors), the whole session will be marked as unauthorised absence, if an acceptable explanation is not forthcoming.

If a pupil is late due to exceptional circumstances, no action will be taken. If a pupil is frequently late with the same or similar explanation, the School will either write to parents/ carers or ask to meet with parents/ carers to identify any issues that are causing the pupil to arrive late at school.

Persistent lateness will be referred to the Attendance Improvement Officer, if the pupil's punctuality has not improved as a result of conversations or correspondence between the School and parents/ carers.

## **9. Review and monitoring**

This policy will be reviewed annually by the Headteacher, with any changes approved by the Governing Body. The Headteacher will monitor the policy's effectiveness through the termly review of registers and overall school attendance data.

## Appendix 1



# All Saints CE Primary School & Nursery Leave of Absence Request Form

As a parent/carer, you should complete this form if you wish to take your child out of school during term time. This form is to be used for all absences other than sickness or medical/dental appointments. After completing the form, please return it to the Headteacher no less than **2 weeks** before the start of the absence period. Failure to do this may mean the absence is recorded as unauthorised.

Current legislation makes it clear that the headteacher may not grant any leave of absence during term time unless there are exceptional circumstances. At All Saints CE Primary School we are fully bound by this legislation and will be unable to authorise absences unless we believe that the occasion is exceptional i.e.:

- A one off (never to be repeated); and
- Cannot be avoided on a school day because of unique circumstances beyond your control.

The Headteacher will consider each case individually on receipt of this form. Please complete all sections fully to enable the full reasons for this exceptional absence to be understood:

Parent/Carer to complete this section:				
Full Name of Child			Class	
Dates requested:	<b>From</b> (First day absent from school)	<b>To</b> (The last school day that will be missed)	<b>Duration</b> (school days):	
Reason for absence:				
Please explain why this leave cannot take place outside of normal school time:		<i>Please attach a letter if you need further space to explain.</i>		
Signed:				Parent/Guardian
Relationship to Child:			Date:	
Headteacher to complete this section:				
Current Attendance:			We expect all pupils' attendance to be above 95%. Absence is unlikely to be approved if current attendance is below that figure.	
How much absence has already been granted this academic year?				
<input type="checkbox"/> Your request is <b>approved</b> and the absence as set out above is authorised. <input type="checkbox"/> Your request is <b>not approved</b> . If the pupil is absent as proposed above, it will be recorded as <b>unauthorised</b> for the following reason:				
Reason:				
Signed:			Date:	

## Appendix 2



# All Saints CE Primary School & Nursery

*Nurturing, Resilience and Achievement for all!*

Headteacher: Mr Philip Asher, BMus(Hons), PGCE, ARCO, NPQSL

Date: \_\_\_\_ / \_\_\_\_ / \_\_\_\_

Dear

### RE: Unexplained absence form

Below is a record of your child being absent from school and we have not yet received an explanation letter of note. Please complete the slip below and return as soon as possible.

When a child is absent from school we ask their parents to telephone by 9.30am and follow this up in writing upon their return (please see our Attendance Policy, Section 2.1). An email to the school office is sufficient, or a written note handed to the class teacher or the office.

It is important to note that if your child's attendance rate is below 95% for the last two terms, we will not be able to authorise absence without a written confirmation, either on this form or by way of a note/email. This is in keeping with Local Authority guidance. Persistent absence (less than 90% attendance) requires more formal explanation and you will already have received a letter informing you if this applies to your child.

If you have any questions, please do ask. Thank you for your support.

Yours sincerely,

Mr Philip Asher  
Headteacher

Child's Name:		Class:	
Your child was absent for the period:	From:	Number of days:	
	To:		
We have not received a written confirmation of the reason for this absence. Please provide a written reason below and return this letter to the school office. Thank you.			
Signed: <i>Parent/carer</i>		Date:	

Unexplained Absence Letter: October 2019

Next Review: November 2020

## **Appendix 3a: Letter 1 (less than 95% attendance rate)**



# **All Saints CE Primary School & Nursery**

*Nurturing, Resilience and Achievement for all!*

Headteacher: Mr Philip Asher, BMus(Hons), PGCE, ARCO, NPQSL

Date: \_\_\_\_/\_\_\_\_/\_\_\_\_

Dear Parents,

**RE: Attendance and Absence for \_\_\_\_\_**

As you may be aware, we are required to closely monitor all the children's attendance. We are eager, as I'm sure you are, that children do not miss any opportunity to learn.

We are requested by the Local Authority to send this letter to all parents of children whose attendance drops **below 95% over a term**, since this represents a potential cause for concern with regards to attendance. As a worked example over a year, a 90% rate is equivalent to a half day absent each week, or four full school weeks in total.

Lateness can also often account for unauthorised absence, and so it is important children arrive punctually. At All Saints the register is taken at 8.55am. Children arriving after this time are entered on the register as 'Late' but present. The registers close at 9.30am, and children arriving after this time are entered on the register as 'Late' but this will count as an unauthorised absence due to being late. Lessons start at 9.00am, and any late arrival disrupts not only your own child's learning, but that of others in the class.

There are often legitimate reasons for absence – illness is one. However, it is important to note that it still counts as absence and parents are legally responsible for their child's attendance at school. Persistent absence or lateness may result in further action being taken, especially where absence is unexplained or unauthorised; this could include a Penalty Charge or legal action.

Therefore, I would urge all parents who receive this letter to ensure that if your child is away from school it is an unavoidable absence, that you contact the school on the first day of absence, and that you ensure a written note is provided upon their return.

Please find a print out of your child's attendance record attached for your information. There may also be a letter for you to use to explain any absences that we have not already received written confirmation for. As ever, if you wish to discuss your child's attendance further, please get in touch.

Yours sincerely,

Philip Asher, *Headteacher*

*Attendance Letter 1*

## **Appendix 3b: Letter 2 (less than 90% attendance rate)**



# **All Saints CE Primary School & Nursery**

*Nurturing, Resilience and Achievement for all!*

Headteacher: Mr Philip Asher, BMus(Hons), PGCE, ARCO, NPQSL

Date: \_\_\_\_/\_\_\_\_/\_\_\_\_

Dear Parents,

### **RE: Attendance and Absence for \_\_\_\_\_**

As you may be aware, we are required to closely monitor all the children's attendance. We are eager, as I'm sure you are, that children do not miss any opportunity to learn. We are requested by the Local Authority to send this letter to all parents of children whose attendance drops **below 90% over a term**, since this represents a significant cause for concern with regards to attendance. A 90% rate over a full year is equivalent to a half day absent each week, or four full school weeks in total out of an academic year.

There are often legitimate reasons for absence – illness is the most common. However, it is important to note that it still counts as absence and parents are legally responsible for their child's attendance at school. I need to advise you that for children with attendance below 90%, I am unable to authorise any further absence without suitable evidence being provided by parents:

- A dated and signed letter or email from the parent to explain absence – this will only be appropriate for a single day's absence. Longer periods of absence, or an overall attendance rate below 85%, will require more formal evidence (see below).
- A medical appointment card/letter – this should be in the child's name and have been signed & dated/stamped by the GP or Receptionist. Ask for this at the appointment – experience has shown your GP surgery may charge if you have to ask later!
- A prescription in the name of the child written out on the day of absence and covering the full period (though this does not always mean a child should be absent from school).
- A letter from the GP, hospital or other medical professional (on letterhead notepaper).

This will ensure that absences are explained fully. It also means queries from the Local Authority can be answered by the school. Please ensure routine appointments (eye tests, dental check-ups) are made outside of school time.

It is our school policy to proactively work with parents to ensure good attendance and we aim to support families as far as we can. However, we may need to involve the Local Authority, and in cases where there is no improvement, the school or the Local Authority may take legal action. This can include Fixed Penalty Notices or Court Action. Please find attached an information sheet provided by the Local Authority.

Please also find a print out of your child's attendance record attached for your information. As ever, if you wish to discuss your child's attendance further, I will be pleased to meet with you.

Yours sincerely,

Philip Asher, *Headteacher*

*Attendance Letter 2*