



St Mary and St John C.E.V.A. Primary School Attendance & Punctuality Policy

Policy Owner	Headteacher
Governing Body Committee	SIAMS
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Versions

Version	Date	Page	Description of change	Origin of change
5	August 2015	5	Penalty Notices	Rutland LA
6	January 2017	3	School Procedures – Registration/punctuality and recording of attendance/absence	School - HT

Rationale

The law states that children must receive full time education from the ages of 5 to 16. The law also states that it is the parents' responsibility to ensure their child(ren) receive that education.

St Mary & St John Church of England Voluntary Aided Primary School promotes the view that regular, punctual attendance is important to ensure the best possible learning outcomes for all of our pupils and we take seriously our responsibility to monitor and promote this. We feel the whole school community has a responsibility for punctuality and attendance and we work closely with parents and carers to promote regular, punctual attendance.

Term time leave of absence

In exceptional circumstances (once in a life time event) the Headteacher may grant you leave of absence during the school term. This is not a parent's right and will not include time out for a family holiday. Parents/carers must apply to the Headteacher to request leave of absence. Each application will be judged on its own merit.

(Appendix 1)

- The Headteacher cannot authorise leave of absence if it overlaps with the beginning or end of term.
- Leave of absence request forms must be signed by all parents with legal responsibility for the child. If a parent does not reside with the child due to family separation, an application must be accompanied by a letter of consent from the absent parent. It is the responsibility of both parents to provide the information required by the school.
- Leave of absence requests will only be accepted from the child's legal guardians and not by extended family members

LEAVE OF ABSENCE - Changes to School Attendance Regulations from September 2014

From September 2014, The Education (Pupil Registration) (England) (Amendment) Regulations 2013 remove provision for Headteachers to grant term time leave of absence in 'special circumstances' and only allow leave to be granted in 'exceptional circumstances'.

The government has not defined the '*exceptional circumstances*' referred to in the 2013 regulations other than it is **a one-off, life time event - this does not include family holidays**. The Department for Education states that it is for the Headteacher to decide what he/she views as 'exceptional circumstances'. The current guidance on granting leave of absence in exceptional circumstances says that schools should consider each request individually.

At St Mary & St John Church of England Voluntary Aided Primary School we will consider factors such as:

- The nature of the request and why it could not be taken in the school holidays
- General welfare of the pupil, school attendance record and family circumstances
- Pupil's educational needs and ability to catch up on work missed
- Proximity of SATS and other examinations
- The frequency of such requests from the pupil's parents
- Amount of time requested
- Whether the parent gave advance notice

'Exceptional' circumstances will be regarded as one-off situations. Should a Service family wish to cite serving overseas as a reason for absence the Army Welfare Office (or equivalent) will be asked to verify the application.

If an event can reasonably be scheduled outside of term time then it is unlikely that the absence will be authorized.

The following will **not** be considered as 'exceptional':

- Relatives coming to visit
- Cheaper flights/holidays in England and abroad
- Family day trips and outings
- Visiting family/friends who have different half terms or holidays

Examples of Authorised Absence

- ◆ Sickness, where **the child is too ill to leave the house** (if absences are excessive, evidence of medical consultation will be required and a doctor's note may be requested)
- ◆ **Emergency** medical/ dental appointments
- ◆ Days of religious observance
- ◆ Exceptional family circumstances (e.g. bereavement)
- ◆ Approved educational activity: sporting or musical / competition / examination
- ◆ Fixed term exclusion

Examples of Unauthorised Absence

- ◆ Frequent absences attributed to minor ailments but not supported by medical evidence
- ◆ Sleeping-in
- ◆ To avoid being late for school
- ◆ One child is ill, so all are kept off school
- ◆ Shopping / Birthday Treats/Concerts
- ◆ Day trips
- ◆ Looking after siblings or sick parents
- ◆ Unexplained absence
- ◆ Holidays

Teachers are not expected to set work for absent pupils where the absence is due to an unauthorised holiday in term time or short term illness.

School Procedures

- ◆ The doors are opened and children welcomed at 8.45am. Registration is between 8.50am and 9.00am. A pupil arriving in class between 9.00am and 9.15am will receive a late mark. A pupil arriving after 9.15am will have been marked as absent and an absence code will be recorded in the register according to the reason given. If no valid reason is given, the pupil will receive a 'u' code (unauthorised absence).
- ◆ The afternoon register is taken at 1.10pm. Pupils are expected to be settled in class for registration at 1.10pm
- ◆ Parents should telephone the school before 9.00am on the first morning of a child's absence
- ◆ If no explanation for absence is received, the school will phone the parents
- ◆ Pupils who arrive late (after 9.00am or 1.10pm) must report to the school office to be signed in
- ◆ Pupils who are leaving school before the end of the day must report to the school office to be signed out
- ◆ The Headteacher and Governing Body monitors attendance and lateness. Where there is a pattern beginning to emerge, the parents are contacted by letter. A standard letter for punctuality will be sent (Appendix B). Letters for absence reasons will be written by the Headteacher, to meet the circumstances. (Example Appendix C)
- ◆ If there is no improvement, the Headteacher will phone the parents and arrange a meeting to discuss the situation or contact the parents by letter

- ◆ If unresolved, the Headteacher will contact the Local Authority Officer

How to make a request

Requests for permission for an exceptional leave of absence for a pupil during term time must be made in advance, either by filling in our school 'Exceptional Leave of Absence' form or in writing to the Headteacher by the parent with whom the pupil normally resides. In separated families, the application must be accompanied by a letter of consent from the absent parent.

The Headteacher will only approve the request in *exceptional circumstances*. It is important to note that Headteachers can determine the length of the authorised absence as well as whether absence is authorised at all.

Unauthorised leave of absence will be reported to the Local Authority and may lead to prosecution under The Education Act 1996.

Further guidance can be found at <http://www.gov.uk>

Is your child missing out on learning? Each child's attendance can be summarised as:

99%+	Excellent -attendance this level will ensure your child is enjoying and achieving along with their peers.
97-98%	Average -this level of attendance will now be impacting your child's learning. You should now be working with the school to improve this attendance.
96%	Poor -The cumulative effect of this level of absence will now impact on your child's overall levels at SATs and up to GCSE
Below 96%	Unacceptable –Your child is now falling into "Persistent Absence". This is of serious concern. It is affecting attainment and progress and may lead to your prosecution for failing to ensure your child's regular attendance at school. The school will start not to authorize all absence and you may have to provide medical evidence for absence due to illness.

Definitions

Every half-day absence has to be classified by the school (not by the parents) as either **Authorised** or **Unauthorised**. This is why information about the cause of each absence is always required, preferably in writing or by telephone. Reasons such as "unwell or ill" cannot be authorized; you will need to inform the school of the symptoms.

Authorised absence

An absence is classified as authorised when a child has been away from school for a legitimate reason and the school has received notification from a parent or guardian. For example, if a child has been sick during the night and the parent telephones the school to explain the absence. Only the Headteacher can authorise an absence.

Unauthorised absence

An absence is classified as unauthorised when a child is away from school without the permission of the Headteacher. Unauthorised absences are those which:

- the school does not consider reasonable (including when parents untruthfully cite illness when taking holiday)
- for which no explanation for the absence has been given
- the absence has never been properly explained
- planned term time absence that has not been agreed by the Headteacher prior to the absence

Penalty notices:

These will be issued by the Local Authority for absence from school in the following circumstances:

- Truancy
- Parentally-controlled absence
- Term time absence which has not been previously agreed by the Headteacher or when permission has not been previously sought

- Persistent lateness
- Absence that has not been authorised by the Headteacher

Parents will be challenged after their child has absence of 10 days if unauthorised and after 15 days if authorised. These do not have to be consecutive days and can span academic years.

Where a Penalty Notice is issued, **each** parent is required to pay a fine to the Local Authority.

This fine equates to £60 per parent per child if paid within 21 days; £120 per parent per child if paid within 22-28 days. Failure to pay will lead to prosecution through the Magistrates Court.

The DfE has indicated that the fine is due to increase during the next academic year to £125 per parent per child if paid within 21 days and £250 if not paid before but within 22-28 days.

Where an absence has been unauthorised, a letter will be sent to the parents (See Appendix D) A copy of this is sent to the Local Authority along with a copy of the attendance register, a copy of the request for absence, and contact details of both parents. The Inclusion officer will then contact the family directly.

When the LA has issued a Penalty Notice in respect of unauthorised absence, this is both Term Time Leave of Absence and other absence (Illness), should there be a repeat offence the Penalty details will be forwarded to the Leicestershire Police for inclusion on the NPC. This is recorded as an offence against a child and will show up on DBS checks requested by Parents for support in their work role. This may prevent them from working with children.

Flexi Schooling

There is no legal obligation for us to agree to a parents request for flexi schooling. This includes children who are electively home educated where parents also want their children to be enrolled at our school. Any requests for a school place will follow our school's Admissions Policy.

Rewards: Ways for parents to encourage attendance:

- Ensure that your child has the correct uniform and equipment .
- Ensure that school uniform, including PE kit, swimming kit, pens pencils are ready the night before. Encourage your child to help you to do this.
- Find out regularly your child's absence and keep you own record.
- Talk regularly with your child about school and how they feel about it. Children are more likely to attend if they feel supported and parents speak positively about the school and their class teacher. If you have any concerns speak to the school about them rather than share them with your child.
- Phone the school as soon as possible to tell them of any absence and when you expect your child to return.
- Only allow days at home for genuine illness.
- Avoid any absence from school for reasons other than your child's illness.
- Have good routines at home to ensure homework is completed and know the school day routines.
- Praise and reward good attendance: even small successes eg going in to school promptly.

Other tips to help secure good attendance:

- If there is a problem with your child's attendance, talk calmly to your child and listen to the explanation. There is always an explanation. It may seem trivial to you but it's serious enough to make your child anxious.
- Talk to the school to resolve issues. They may be able to help and support you and your child. You are not alone.
- Be particularly watchful and supportive in the run up to tests and aware of homework deadlines.
- Check homework activities and 'hand ins' regularly for gaps as well as completed activities
- Help them catch up with missed work – a missed day doesn't mean missed work.
- Remember to praise your child.

The School does acknowledge that most children will have some unavoidable absence because of illness. It is important that children are not sent to school when they are unwell. It is especially important in the event of a stomach upset that the child has at least 48 hours clear at home after the last episode of vomiting or diarrhoea.



Application for Authorised Absence, other than through illness

This form is to be completed by the Parent*/Person with legal responsibility for the child and ordinarily forwarded to the Headteacher **at least 10 school days** before the period of absence.

Parents no longer have the right to remove children from school for reasons other than illness. In accordance with legislation, absences can only be authorised in exceptional circumstances. Please refer to our Attendance and Punctuality Policy for further details.

Name of Child/Children :	Class/es :
Dates (inclusive):	Length of absence: Collection time for an appointment during the school day:
Exceptional circumstances requiring absence during term time are:	
Parent / Guardian Name: Signed: *Accompanying parental consent letter attached <input type="checkbox"/> Date:	School Child's Current Attendance _____% Authorised <input type="checkbox"/> Unauthorised <input type="checkbox"/> Reason: Signed: Mrs F Wilce, Headteacher Date:
<p>Notes: Please refer to the school's Attendance and Punctuality Policy for further information.</p> <p>* Where parents are separated: Leave of absence cannot be granted unless both parents with parental responsibility agree to the request being made. Leave of absence request forms signed by one parent must be accompanied by a letter of consent from the other parent.</p> <p>For medical/dental appointments that cannot be arranged outside of the school day, the appointment card/letter/text must be shown to the Headteacher in advance of the appointment.</p> <p>Holidays in term time cannot be authorised.</p>	
<p>WARNING : Any leave of absence taken without the consent of the Headteacher is likely to lead to the Local Authority being informed and you may be prosecuted.</p> <p>The Education (Pupil Registration) (England) (Amendment) Regulations 2013 explanatory note states: <i>Regulation 7 of the 2006 Regulations is amended to prohibit the proprietor of a maintained school granting leave of absence to a pupil; except where an application has been made in advance and the proprietor considers that there are exceptional circumstances relating to the application.</i></p>	
<p>PLEASE DO NOT WRITE IN THIS BOX – OFFICE USE ONLY</p> <p>Received Date Stamp:</p>	

Appendix B



Date.....

Dear

I notice from the year register that has now been late to school on 10 occasions.

Punctuality is extremely important in school as lateness not only disrupts the learning of your child but also the rest of the class. Settling work starts as soon as children enter the classroom. Although a few minutes may not seem long, 5 minutes lateness per day amounts to 25 minutes per week adding up to over 3 whole weeks in the year. It is also important to instil in your child good habits and discipline for their independence in the future.

If you would like a copy of the school's attendance and punctuality policy, it is available on the school website or I would be pleased to let you have a copy.

I hope you are able to resolve the situation to ensure arrives on time from now on.

Yours sincerely,

Headteacher

For and on behalf of the Governing Body of St Mary & St John C.E.V.A. Primary School



Appendix C

Date.....

Dear

I am writing to alert you that’s attendance has dropped below the trigger point of 96% according to our data.

.....’s record shows sessions (half days) and unauthorised sessions (due to lateness after register closed/holiday/unexplained/other) of schooling has been missed this academic year. Therefore, the local authority, the Governors and I will be monitoring’s attendance closely. Regular and punctual attendance is both a legal requirement and essential for your child to maximise their educational opportunities.

99%+	Excellent -attendance this level will ensure your child is enjoying and achieving along with their peers.
97-98%	Average -this level of attendance will now be impacting your child’s learning. You should now be working with the school to improve this attendance.
96%	Poor -The cumulative effect of this level of absence will now impact on your child’s overall levels at end of Key Stage SATs and up to GCSE level.
Below 96%	Unacceptable –Your child is now falling into “Persistent Absence”. This is of serious concern. It is affecting attainment and progress and may lead to your prosecution for failing to ensure your child’s regular attendance at school. The school will start not to authorize all absence and you may have to provide medical evidence for absence due to illness.

A copy of the school’s attendance and punctuality policy is available on the school website. Alternatively, I would be pleased to let you have a paper copy on request.

I appreciate the absence(s) may have been unavoidable due to severe or ongoing illness or other medical needs requiring substantial recovery time. If this is the case, please ensure the school has been informed if you have not already done so. If this is not the case and there is anything that is impacting on’s regular attendance and you would like to discuss this so that we might support you and, please make an appointment to see me.

Yours sincerely,

Headteacher
For and on behalf of the Governing Body of St Mary & St John C.E.V.A. Primary School



Appendix D

Date.....

Dear,

I am aware that during this term, you removed your child/ren from school for a family holiday from to which was not authorised.

I must now make you aware that I will be advising the School Inclusion Officer for the local authority of this absence in order that it is recorded formally on the attendance records.

In line with Government policy, I will be discussing the possibility of sanctions for unauthorised absences with the school's Governing Body, who will consider issuing penalty notices should this type of absence be repeated in the future.

When the LA has issued a Penalty Notice in respect of unauthorised absence, this is both Term Time Leave of Absence and other absence, should there be a repeat offence the Penalty details will be forwarded to the Leicestershire Police for inclusion on the NPC. This is recorded as an offence against a child and will show up on DBS checks requested by Parents for support in their work role. This may prevent them from working with children.

Yours sincerely,

Headteacher
For and on behalf of the Governing Body of St Mary & St John C.E.V.A. Primary School