

St.Paul's (C) Primary School Attendance Policy (Updated 2023)

Aims

At St Paul's we recognise the importance of all pupils enjoying learning, experiencing success and reaching their full potential. Our Attendance policy reflects this and recognises that regular attendance has a positive effect on motivation and attainment of pupils. This policy aims to make clear the school's position on attendance and detail the procedures that all parents and pupils are expected to adhere to ensure that every pupil at St Paul's has access to the full-time education that they are entitled to.

Principles

St Paul's recognises that everyone in the school community is responsible for promoting excellent attendance. It is vital that children develop regular attendance habits from an early age and that all pupils attend school, on time and every day that school is open, unless an absence is unavoidable.

Where problems with regular attendance do occur, we will seek in the first instance to resolve the issue between school, parents and the pupil concerned. This will be done at the earliest opportunity possible, so as to avoid the impression that attendance does not matter and to help avoid the problem becoming worse.

We believe that full attendance for a pupil can be achieved, but where problems arise parents are expected to contact school at an early stage and to work with school in resolving any difficulties. If difficulties cannot be resolved, the school may refer the matter to the Local Support Team. In addition to this, help and advice may also be sought from other local authority services.

Alternatively, parents or the child themselves may wish to contact the Local Support Team directly to ask for help or further information. The service is independent of the school. Contact name and details of how to contact this service are available to parents from the school office or directly from the local authority.

Registration

- School Gates open at 8.35 (Parents must remain with children on the playground until the School Door opens)
- School Door opens at 8.40
- School Door closes at 8.45

Children must be in the school building by 8.45am

The end of the day is 3.15pm

The morning register is taken at 8.50am. The afternoon register is taken at 12.45pm for EYFS/KS1 and 1.10pm for KS2.

Pupils who have not arrived at school within this period will be recorded as an unauthorised absence unless there is an acceptable reason for the absence/lateness.

As a school, we are required by law to take an attendance register twice a day and this shows whether the pupil is present, engaged in an approved educational activity off-site, or absent. If a pupil is absent, every half-day absence from school must be classified by the school as either **AUTHORISED** or **UNAUTHORISED**. Only school can authorise the absence, not parents. Therefore, information about the cause of each absence is always required.

Authorised absences are mornings or afternoons away from school for a good reason e.g., illness, A religious observance or other unavoidable cause.

Unauthorised absences are those which the school does not consider reasonable and for which no "leave" has been given.

This includes:

- parents keeping pupils off from school unnecessarily
- truancy before or during the school day
- absences which have never been properly explained
- pupils who arrive to school after the close of the register
- school refusal
- holidays taken during term time that have not been authorised by the Headteacher

Reporting Absence

Absence notification - parents should contact the school via telephone or email the school on the first day of the absence (except when a prior written request for the absence has been agreed). The email address for reporting absences is office@st-pauls-stafford.staffs.sch.uk.

If a phone call or email has not been received in school before registration from a parent or carer then pupils will be marked absent.

A member of the school administrative staff will try to make contact to determine the reason for the absence.

If no contact is made with the first contact, the school office will use all contact numbers to ascertain why the child is not in school and ensure they are safe.

If the school office is unable to make contact with any of the members of family / friends on the contact list, a home visit or referral to the local authority safeguarding team may be carried out.

Illness

In most cases, absences for illness which are reported by following the school's absence reporting procedures will be authorised. That is unless the school has a genuine concern about the authenticity of the illness.

We will not ask for medical evidence unnecessarily. In some instances, the school may ask the parent to obtain a letter from a GP, or the school may seek parental permission to contact the pupil's GP directly.

If the school is not satisfied about the authenticity of the illness, the absence will be recorded as unauthorised.

Where a pupil has a high level and/or frequency of absence, the school may require medical evidence of some description in order to authorise any future medical absences. If this is the case, the school will make the parent/s aware of this expectation in advance.

Late Arrival

If a child arrives after the start of school, which is 8.45am they must report to the school office where their late attendance will be recorded.

If lateness is a cause for concern, the following procedures will be followed.

- Parents/carers will be contacted to discuss any issues regarding attending school on time with the school and to offer support if required.
- If there is no improvement parents/carers will receive a letter informing of the concern.
- If difficulties regarding persistent lateness cannot be resolved, the school may refer the matter to the Local Support Team. In addition to this help and advice may also be sought from other local authority services.
- If no improvement is seen after the meeting has taken place, the school may follow Staffordshire County Council Code of Conduct for issuing penalty notices for persistent lateness.

Effects of Late Arrival at School

When a child arrives late to school, they miss important events like assembly, teacher instructions and introductions. Children often also feel embarrassed at having to enter the classroom late.

The table below indicates how frequent lateness can add up to a considerable amount of learning being lost. This can seriously disadvantage children and disrupt the learning of others.

Minutes late per Day	Equates to Days of Teaching Lost in one Year	Which means this number of lessons missed
5 mins	3 Days	15 Lessons
10 mins	6 Days	30 Lessons
15 mins	9 Days	45 Lessons

Requests for leave

Parents who want the school to consider granting leave of absence in school term time are required to submit this in writing to the Headteacher. This written request should be made by completing a 'Request for Leave during Term Time' form which is available from the school office. Any request must be made in advance of the actual period. Each request will be considered by the school individually and on its own merits. In considering a request, the school will take account of:

- The exceptional circumstances stated that have given rise to the request being made.
- The stage of the pupil's education and progress and the effects of the requested absence.
- The overall attendance pattern of the pupil.
- Frequency of similar requests.
- Whether the parent made the request in advance.
- Pupils due to take SAT's will not normally be granted leave of absence in that period.

A written response will be sent to the parent when the individual request has been considered by the Headteacher.

Religious Observance

Our school acknowledges the multi-faith nature of the school community and recognises that on some occasions, religious festivals may fall outside of school holidays or weekends. In accordance with the law, the school will authorise one day's absence for a day exclusively set apart for religious observance by the religious body to which the parent belongs.

Should any additional days be taken, these will be recorded in the register as unauthorised absence. If necessary, the school will seek advice from the parents' religious body, to confirm whether the day is set apart.

Medical appointments

Parents should try to make appointments outside of school hours wherever possible. Where appointments during school time are unavoidable, the pupil should only be out of school for the minimum amount of time necessary for the appointment.

It is not acceptable for a child to miss a whole day's schooling for an appointment, unless absolutely necessary, in which case the school will need an explanation as to why this is.

If a pupil must attend a medical appointment during the school day, they must be collected from the school office by the parent or another authorised adult.

Advance notice is required for medical or dental appointments, unless it's an emergency appointment, and must be supported by providing the school with sight of, or a copy of, the appointment card or letter - only then will the absence be authorised.

Monitoring Attendance procedures

The school aims to achieve at least 96% attendance each year. To help with this we monitor attendance frequently.

Where there appears to be a persistent problem with attendance the following procedures will be followed

- Parents/carers will be contacted to be made aware of the decline in attendance and be offered support if required.
- If there is no improvement parents/carers will receive a Persistence Letter informing them of the concern regarding attendance and the need for attendance to improve. Parents will be made aware that their child's attendance will be monitored
- If difficulties regarding persistent absence cannot be resolved, the school may refer the matter to the Local Support Team. In addition to this help and advice may also be sought from other local authority services.
- If no improvement is seen after the meeting has taken place, the school may follow Staffordshire County Council Code of Conduct for issuing penalty notices for persistent absence.

Penalty Notices

Parents/carers have a legal responsibility to ensure their children attend school regularly, on time, properly dressed and with the correct equipment ready to learn.

Penalty Notices may be considered appropriate if one of the following criteria is met:

- There is unauthorised persistent absence. "Persistent" means at least 20 sessions of unauthorised absence over a period of twelve school weeks, excluding holidays. These absences do not need to be consecutive.
- There is a period of absence (at least one day) not authorised by the head teacher or in excess of the period authorised by the head teacher (e.g. family holiday).
- Persistent late arrival at school, i.e. after the register has closed. "Persistent" means at least 10 sessions of unauthorised late arrival over a period of 12 school weeks, excluding holidays. These late episodes do not need to be consecutive.
- The presence of an excluded child in a public place at any time during school hours in that child's first five days of exclusion. An "excluded child" is one who has been excluded from school for a given period under the Education and Inspections Act 2006.
- A Penalty Notice will not be issued in respect of children in the care of the LA with whom other interventions will be used.

Issuing of penalty notices is not influenced by previous good attendance. The rate of each penalty notice will be £60 per parent if paid within 21 days, rising to £120 if paid between 21 and 28 days. If a penalty notice is not paid parents may be liable to prosecution at the Magistrates Court.

Where a referral for poor or irregular patterns of attendance has been made to the Local Support Team the school will support any possible legal action taken by the local authority.

Effects of non-attendance

The table below indicates how what might seem like just a few days absence can result in children missing a significant number of lessons.

Attendance during school year	Days lost in a year	Which is approximately	Approximate number of lessons missed
95%	9.5 Days	2 Weeks	50 Lessons
90%	19 Days	4 Weeks	100 Lessons

Safeguarding and Attendance

Our school will monitor trends and patterns of absence for all pupils as a part of our standard procedures. However, we are aware that sudden or gradual changes in a pupil's attendance may indicate additional or more

extreme safeguarding issues. In line with government guidance Keeping Children Safe in Education (2023 version, or as updated by the DfE) we will investigate and report any suspected safeguarding cases on to the relevant authorities. As part of our safeguarding duty and our standard procedures, we will inform the Local Authority and/or the Police of the details of any pupil who is absent from school when the school cannot establish their whereabouts and is concerned for the pupil's welfare.

Rewarding Good and Improved Attendance

Good attendance is promoted through the curriculum and Collective Worship. Attendance figures and the importance of good attendance and punctuality is shared with parents through our school newsletters and parents meetings.

At St Paul's we reward 100% attendance through weekly class attendance certificates, termly certificates and badges for individuals.

Reporting to Parents

During the autumn and spring parents' evenings, teachers will share each child's attendance record. There will also be a written report on attendance annually in the pupil's end of year school report.

Roles and Responsibilities

Class teachers and cover teachers have the responsibility of recording attendance accurately and in a timely manner.

Office staff record information left on the absence line into the school's data system ~~SMS~~ They then follow up any unexplained absences and follow up accordingly.

The Headteacher and DSLs ensure that the office staff know of vulnerable children and the office staff inform the Headteacher or DSLs in her absence of any concerning absences or unexplained absences of vulnerable groups. If there is no reason given or there is reason to think that a child may be at risk, then the DSL will contact children's social care or the police to do a welfare check.

The Governing Board/IEB

The governing board is responsible for monitoring attendance figures for the wholeschool on at least a termly basis. It also holds the headteacher to account for the implementation of this policy.

The safeguarding governor also has responsibility to monitor attendance. Attendance of vulnerable groups, the actions taken to improve attendance and the impact that this has had will be the main focus of monitoring visits.

The Headteacher

The headteacher is responsible for ensuring this policy is implemented consistently across the school, and for monitoring school-level absence data and reporting it to governors.

The headteacher also supports other staff in monitoring the attendance of individual pupils and requests fixed-penalty notices, where necessary.

The headteacher has responsibility for interrogating attendance by group, such as pupils entitled to Free School Meals, Pupil Premium pupils, pupils with SEND, Children in Care, attendance by Ethnicity and Language (English/EAL).

Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL)

The Early Help process will be instigated for families with issues that impact on attendance and support put in place to improve attendance. This may be in conjunction with other professionals such as the PFSA.

The DSL regularly checks attendance data for children on CIN (Child in Need) or CP (Child Protection) plans and takes appropriate action based on any concern. Regular liaison with parents should include the implementation of timely action plans and regular meetings to review progress against targets. The DSL may also refer to education safeguarding, Get Set, Team Around the School, the police or children's social care for additional support.

Class Teachers

Class teachers and cover teachers are responsible for recording attendance on a daily basis, using the correct codes, and submitting this information to the school office.

Office Staff

School office staff are expected to take calls from parents about absence and record it on the school system. They also have the responsibility of highlighting absence of vulnerable children to the DSL or Headteacher so that actions can be followed up in a timely manner.

Policy Monitoring Arrangements

This policy will be reviewed annually by the Headteacher or more frequently if there are changes to legislation and guidance. At every review, the policy will be shared with the governing body.

<p>This policy was presented to and approved by the IEB on 12th October 2023. To be reviewed October 2024</p>
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