

St Austin's R.C. Primary

ATTENDANCE POLICY (2023/24)

Title of Policy: Attendance Policy 2023/24
This Policy replaces: Attendance Policy 2021
Author: A Shepherd
Post Holder (will be responsible for keeping policy updated):
Headteacher, Governing Body, SENCO, Business Manager
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Date to be reviewed: Autumn term 2025

St Austin's R.C. Primary

Attendance Policy 2023/24

Introduction:

We aim for an environment which enables and encourages all members of the community to reach out for excellence. For our children to gain the greatest benefit from their education it is vital that they attend regularly. Your child should be at school, on time, every day the school is open unless the reason for the absence is unavoidable.

It is very important therefore that you make sure that your child attends regularly and this Policy sets out how together we will achieve this.

Why Regular Attendance is so important:

Learning: Any absence affects the pattern of a child's schooling and regular absence will seriously affect their learning. Any pupil's absence disrupts teaching routines so may affect the learning of others in the same class.

Ensuring your child's regular attendance at school is your legal responsibility and permitting absence from school without a good reason creates an offence in law and may result in prosecution.

Safeguarding: Your child may be at risk of harm if they do not attend school regularly. Safeguarding the interests of each child is everyone's responsibility and within the context of this school, promoting the welfare and life opportunities for your child encompasses:-

Attendance
Behaviour Management
Health and Safety
Access to the Curriculum
Anti-bullying

Failing to attend this school on a regular basis will be considered as a safeguarding matter.

Promoting Regular Attendance:

Helping to create a pattern of regular attendance is everybody's responsibility - parents, pupils and all members of school staff. Regular attendance in line with St Helens Council policy and procedure is 96%.

To help us all to focus on this we will:

- Give you details on attendance in our regular Home – School Bulletin
- Report to you of how your child is performing in school including their attendance report
- Celebrate good attendance by displaying individual and class achievements
- Reward good or improving attendance through class competitions, certificates and rewards
- Run promotional events when parents, pupils and staff can work together on raising attendance levels across the school

The Law relating to attendance

This policy is written in conjunction with the:

School Attendance Guidance for Schools – 25.11.13 and updates contained therein including all requirements contained therein including Addendum: recording attendance in relation to Covid-19 during academic year 2021/22.

Section 7 of the Education Act 1996 states that '*the parent of every child of compulsory school age shall cause him / her to receive efficient full time education suitable:-*
(a) to age, ability and aptitude and
(b) to any special educational needs he/ she may have
Either by regular attendance at school or otherwise'

The Law relating to safeguarding

Section 175 of the Education Act 2002 places a duty on local authorities and governing bodies to have regard to guidance issued by the Secretary of State with regard to safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children and students under the age of 18.

Understanding types of absence:

Every half-day absence from school has to be classified by the school (not by the parents), as either AUTHORISED or UNAUTHORISED. This is why information about the cause of any absence is always required, preferably in writing.

Authorised absences are mornings or afternoons away from school for a good reason like illness, medical/dental appointments which unavoidably fall in school time, emergencies 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/carers keeping children off school unnecessarily
- absences which have never been properly explained
- shopping or birthdays
- day trips and holidays in term time which have not been agreed.

Whilst any child may be off school because they are ill, sometimes they can be reluctant to attend school. Any problems with regular attendance are best sorted out between the school, the parents and the child. If your child is reluctant to attend, it is never better to cover up their absence or to give in to pressure to excuse them from attending. This gives the impression that attendance does not matter and usually make things worse.

Persistent Absenteeism (PA):

A pupil becomes a 'persistent absentee' when they miss 10% or more schooling across the school year for whatever reason. Absence at this level is doing considerable damage to any child's educational prospects and we need parents' fullest support and co-operation to tackle this.

We monitor all absence thoroughly. Any case that is seen to have reached the PA mark or is at risk of moving towards that mark is given priority and you will be informed of this immediately.

PA pupils are tracked and monitored carefully through our pastoral system and we also combine this with academic mentoring where absence affects attainment. All our PA pupils and their parents are subject to an Action Plan.

Penalty Notices

With effect from 13th November 2017 the school Governors have agreed to issue Penalty Notices in line with St Helens Policies and Procedures. With this in mind with effect from 1st January 2018 all unauthorised holidays maybe subject to Penalty Notice or legal proceedings.

The school have adopted the use of Penalty Notices in line with The Education (Penalty Notices) (England) (Amendment) Regulations 2013, regarding the issuing of Penalty Notices for unauthorised absence from school.

Absence Procedures:

If your child is absent you must:

- Contact us as before 9.30am on the first day of absence;
- Send a note in on the first day they return with an explanation of the absence – you must do this even if you have already telephoned us;
- If we do not receive an explanation for the reason for absence within 2 weeks we will your child will receive an unauthorised mark for the session.

If your child is absent we will:

- Telephone, text you or e-mail you on the first day of absence if we have not heard from you;
- Invite you in to discuss the situation with our Attendance Officer or Headteacher if absences persist;
- Refer you to the Educational Welfare Service if absence persists.

Telephone numbers:

There are times when we need to contact parents about lots of things, including absence, so we need to have your contact numbers at all times. Please also advise the school office if you change your address. There will be regular checks on telephone numbers throughout the year.

Lateness:

Poor punctuality is not acceptable. If your child misses the start of the day they can miss work and do not spend time with their class teacher getting vital information and news for the day. Late arriving pupils also disrupt lessons, can be embarrassing for the child and can also encourage absence.

How we manage lateness:

The school day starts at **9am for all pupils** (doors open 8.50am) and we expect your child to be in class at that time. If a pupil arrives after this time but before registers close they will receive a late mark.

At **9.30am** the registers will be closed. If your child arrives after 9.30am and does not have a medical appointment your child will be given an unauthorised mark for this session. In accordance with the Regulations, if your child arrives after that time they will receive a mark that shows them to be on site, but this will **not** count as a present mark and it will mean they have an unauthorised absence.

If your child has a persistent late record you will be asked to meet with the Headteacher or Attendance Officer to resolve the problem, but you can approach us at any time if you are having problems getting your child to school on time.

Holidays in Term Time:

With effect from 1st September 2013, the school is unable to authorise any requests for absence relating to holidays in term time unless there are exceptional circumstances. This has been brought about by an amendment to the Education (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2006, which has removed reference to holidays and the ten day period. With effect from 13th November 2017 the School Governors have agreed to issue Penalty Notices in line with St Helens Local Authority Policies and Procedures which will take effect from 1st January 2018.

School targets, projects and special initiatives:

The school has targets to improve attendance and your child has an important part to play in meeting these targets.

Targets for the school and for classes are displayed in the school and you should take time to study them.

The minimum level of attendance for this school is **96%** attendance and we will keep you updated regularly about progress to this level and how your child's attendance compares. Our target is to achieve better than this however because we know that good attendance is the key to successful schooling and we believe our pupils can be amongst the best in the area.

Through the school year we monitor absences and punctuality to show us where improvements need to be made. Information on any projects or initiatives that will focus on these areas will be provided in our Home - School bulletin and we ask for your full support.

Those people responsible for attendance matters in this school are:

Mrs P Wade – Headteacher
Mrs A Shepherd – Office Manager
Mr M Burke - Chair of Governors

Summary:

The school has a legal duty to publish its absence figures to parents and to promote attendance. Equally, parents have a duty to make sure that their children attend.

All school staff are committed to working with parents and pupils as the best way to ensure as high a level of attendance as possible and that every child's welfare and life opportunities are promoted.

