

St. Peter's C of E Primary & Nursery School



Attendance Policy

Reviewed: September 2024 (updated guidance: Working Together to Improve Attendance)

'Unlocking the gates to a lifelong love of learning and faithfulness'

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Attendance Policy

Vision statement At St Peter's C of E Primary School, the growth and development of children and adults is central to everything we do. As a church school, we aim to serve and take care of our community by providing an education which inspires every child to be the best they can be. This is within a framework which is rooted in distinctive Christian beliefs and values whilst embracing diversity, respecting other faiths and worshipping together. We encourage an understanding of the meaning and significance of faith and promote Christian values through the experiences we offer to all our school community.

Equality statement

St Peter's C of E Primary School is committed to valuing diversity by providing equality of opportunity and anti-discriminatory practice for all children and families. We also value our staff and are committed to good employment practice. St Peter's C of E Primary School seeks to ensure that no member of the school community, or any person through their contact with the school, will receive less favourable treatment on the grounds of a protected characteristic. These include: race, colour, nationality, ethnic or national origin, religion or belief, gender, marital status, responsibility for children or other dependents, disability, sexual orientation, gender reassignment, age, trade union or political activities, socio-economic background, living situation, or spent convictions.

In this we include all members of the extended school community – pupils, staff, Governors, Parents / Carers and others from our local community. Partners, contractors and other visitors to the school are also expected to adhere to this policy.

Beyond Expectation Education

We actively promote what we call 'Beyond Expectation' attitudes within our school and these are applicable to every member of our school community: children, staff, parents, governors and visitors.

Our 'Be ...' attitudes:

- Be kind
- Be trustworthy
- Be positive
- Be respectful
- Be courageous
- Be forgiving

- Be yourself!

The importance of coming to school

Coming to school every day is **very** important for your child.

Research has shown that children with poor attendance:

- Find it harder to make and keep friends
- Are less likely to gain good qualifications
- Earn lower wages
- Have a higher chance of being unemployed
- Have low self-esteem

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Children who miss school miss lessons. These lessons are **not** repeated, so *children will have gaps in their learning*. Additionally, often each day's lessons build upon those of the previous day – if a child misses a lesson they can miss the foundation to subsequent lessons. Children could begin to struggle and achieve less.

Attendance is related to achievement:

The better the attendance, the better the achievement

If your child is away from school for more than 9 days a year they will not have 'Good' attendance. They will have missed 45 lessons!

This means your child can only miss one day every half-term to get good attendance.

- If a child misses only one day each week, by the end of the school year they will have missed 39 days of school – that's the same as missing **8 weeks worth of lessons!**
- If they did this for two years they will have missed the equivalent of **nearly half a year of school!**
- Looking ahead, 90% of young people with absence rates below 85% fail to achieve five or more good grades of GCSE and around one third achieve no GCSEs at all.
- Further more, poor examination results limit young people's options and poor attendance suggests to colleges and employers that these students are unreliable.

It is important from an early age to get into the habit of attending school!

At St. Peter's C of E Primary & Nursery School, our target attendance figure is 98%

Additionally, while children are absent, friendship groups are formed within school and children can feel left out when they return.

Here are some key reasons why it's important for children to attend school:

- To learn
- To have fun
- To make new friends
- To experience new things in life
- To develop awareness of other cultures, religion, ethnicity and gender differences
- To achieve
- To gain qualifications
- To develop new skills
- To build confidence and self-esteem
- To have the best possible start in life

By keeping a child out of school, we are stopping them experiencing and gaining these important things.

Young people who regularly miss school without good reason are more likely to become isolated from their friends, to underachieve in examinations and/or become involved in anti-social behaviour.

We expect all children on roll to attend punctually every day when the school is in session, as long as they are fit and healthy enough to do so.

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What is good attendance?

Attendance	Attendance grade indicator
98%-100%	Excellent
96%- 98%	Good
95.1%–96%	Above average
94%–95%	Average
Below 94%	Low
Below 90%	Persistent absence

Attendance data will be sent out to parents at half termly intervals.

Attendance codes for punctuality:

- If a child is present in the classroom when the class register is taken, they will be given a present mark.
- If a child arrives 30 minutes after the register has closed, the child will be given a late mark.
- After 9:20 am, the child will be marked with a U (considered to be not present) if there is no other reason than lateness.

Class teachers are responsible for indicating whether a child is present, absent or late on the register. It is the role of the Office Manager to upload specific codes.

A weekly attendance Risk Register will be kept for those pupils whose attendance is declining.

We do all we can to encourage the children to attend and to put in place appropriate procedures. We believe that the most important factor in promoting good attendance is the development of positive attitudes towards school. Good attendance is promoted and celebrated throughout the school and an Attendance display board in the hall supports this. To this end, we strive to make our school a happy and rewarding experience for all children. We will make the best provision we can for those children who, for whatever reason, are prevented from coming to school. However, work will not be provided for pupils who are taken out of school for a holiday.

Our ultimate aim is to allow pupils to be safe, healthy and successful children, fulfilling their potential, not just achieving an impressive attendance statistic.

Under the *Education (Pupil Registration) (England) (Amendment) Regulations 2013*, 'the governing body are responsible for making sure the school keeps an attendance register that records which pupils are present at the start of both the morning and the end of the afternoon sessions of the school day. This register will also indicate whether an absence was authorised or unauthorised. Class teachers are responsible for keeping class registers up-to-date.

All attendance registers are completed using the Scholar Pack program.

ALL COVID-19 RELATED ABSENCES WILL BE MANAGED ACCORDING TO THE NOTTINGHAMSHIRE SCHOOLS' RELATED GUIDANCE AT THE TIME.

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Definitions

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 carer; for example, if a child has been unwell and the parent writes a note or telephones the school to explain the absence.
- Only the school can make an absence authorised. Parents do not have this authority. Consequently, not all absences supported by parents will be classified as authorised. For example, if a parent takes a child out of school to go shopping during school hours, this will not mean it is an authorised absence.
- The Department for Education guidance states that *“head teachers should only authorise leave of absence in exceptional circumstances.”*

ABSENCE FOR MEDICAL REASONS – taken from the ‘Improving Attendance Toolkit (Nov 2017 Notts CC)

For your information: this advice aims to help schools, local authorities and health professionals prevent avoidable and unnecessary absence which parents attribute to illness.

Introduction

1. Pupils are not expected to attend to school when they are not well enough to do so whether as a result of short term, long term or recurring illnesses. But they should not be kept away from school when they are well enough to go to lessons or when they have minor ailments which do not prevent them from taking part in their education. A useful rule of thumb is whether the ailment would keep parents and teachers away from work.

PUPILS WHO HAVE EXPERIENCED SICKNESS AND/OR DIARRHOEA MUST NOT RETURN TO SCHOOL UNTIL 48 HOURS AFTER THE LAST EPISODE.

This is the guidance of the NHS

Seeking Medical Evidence

1. Schools should have an established system in place to enable parents/carers to report their child's absence because of illness. It is reasonable for the school to ask the nature of the illness, ask the parent the expected length of absence and make arrangements for the parent to call the school again if the situation changes.

2. **Schools have the right to consider whether to accept the parent/ carers position with regard to medical absence as there are occasions when parents report parentally condoned absence to the school as medical absence. If the school has concerns that the illness may not either be genuine or warrant the amount of absence accruing, the school may ask the parent to substantiate the illness by asking to see additional evidence such as an appointment card or medical certificate.**

3. However, they should not request additional evidence every time pupils miss school due to illness. Restricting such requests to when the school has concerns that a pupil was not ill or that the illness was trivial and did not warrant time off reduces the administrative burden on schools. Schools and local authority staff should also be aware of the pressure they could place on doctors' appointment systems if they request parents/carers to produce a Doctor's Note every time pupils are ill, particularly if doctor did not treat the illness at the time. **In general it is not the responsibility of the school or local authority to chase or gather medical evidence from a GP or other medical professional on behalf of a parent whose child is missing school.**

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4. For incidences of **recurring absence where illness is given as a reason, but there are indications or concerns** that this may not be the case, the absence may be marked as unauthorised.

Parents and carers who frequently keep their children off school because of sore throats, headaches, tummy aches, being sick etc, will be referred to the Healthy Families Team.

It is not the responsibility of the school to prove that the children are ill if absence is below 96%.

Patterns of absence will also be monitored: days of the week; days preceding or following a school holiday etc.

Unauthorised absence

- An absence is classified as unauthorised when a child(ren) are absent from school without a legitimate reason. The absence is unauthorised if a child is away from school without good reason, even with the support of a parent.
- If evidence is found that absence is due to an unauthorised reason, despite parents' giving alternative reasons, then the school reserves the right to not authorise the absence.
- Holidays will not be authorised.

Persistent absence

A child is classed as having 'persistent absence' if attendance drops below 90%.

Once children are classed as persistently absent, no absence will be authorised unless it's medical and is supported by appropriate paperwork (appointment letter, medical report) issued by the correct authority.

If a child is absent

When a child is absent unexpectedly, the class teacher will record the absence on Scholar Pack and will inform the school office. The School Office will attempt to contact a parent or carer before 10am in order to confirm the whereabouts of the child. This is part of our first day response policy. In certain circumstances, when we believe that the child is not safe, a member of the SLT will visit the house.

In the event that the parent / carer cannot be contacted by the school before 10 am, the parents and carers must contact the school on the first day of absence, via a telephone call or email to explain why the child is absent, otherwise the absence will not be authorised.

A note or evidence of a verbal agreement may be sent to the school prior to the day of absence; for example, if a child has a medical appointment. Evidence for such appointments should be provided by the parent/carer.

Requests for leave of absence

We believe that children need to be in school for all sessions so that they can make the most progress possible.

Parents do not automatically have the right to gain authorised permission to withdraw their children from school for an annual holiday. We naturally prefer parents to take their family holiday in the normal school holiday periods. To this end, annual holidays taken in term time will not be authorised.

If time taken for a holiday exceeds 5 days, a penalty notice will be issued.

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Can a parent take their child on holiday during term time? – guidance taken from the 'Improving Attendance Toolkit (Nov 2017 Notts CC)

Under the revised regulations, the Head Teacher no longer has the discretion to agree up to 10 days leave for a family holiday during term time.

Instead, Head Teachers can only agree a leave of absence during term time in exceptional circumstances. The NAHT have produced some guidance for Head Teachers on what might constitute an exceptional circumstances.

As a general principle, schools should consider each request individually taking into account the circumstances, such as:

- the nature of the event for which leave is sought;
- the frequency of the request;
- whether the parent gave advance notice;
- the pupil's attainment, attendance and
- possible impact on learning and examinations and
- the students ability to catch up on missed schooling.

Long-term absence

When children have an illness that means they will be away from school for over five days, and if requested by parents/carers, the school will do all it can to send material home so that the child can keep up with their school work.

If the absence is likely to continue for an extended period, or be a repetitive absence, the school will contact LA support services to see what arrangements can be made for the child to receive tutoring outside of school.

Repeated unauthorised absences

The school monitors its own attendance figures which will be reported through the termly Head teacher's Reports to Governors. Attendance figures are also monitored on a half termly basis.

The school will contact the parent or carer of any child who has an unauthorised absence. If a child has a repeated number of unauthorised absences, the parents or carers will be made aware of their child's percentage attendance on a more regular basis.

Should attendance drop **below 96%**, action will be taken to address this issue. A letter outlining an expression of concern will be sent to the parents / carers. If no improvement is seen within a six week period, parents/carers will be invited to a meeting with the Head teacher.

Meetings will be supportive, identifying barriers to attendance. Where attendance improves, a thank you letter will be issued.

Attendance figures that fall **below 92%** will prompt a request for parents / carers to attend a meeting with the Head teacher. A warning letter will be issued. Attendance will be expected to improve to at least 95% over a six week period.

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If a child's percentage attendance falls **below 90%**, parents will be required to attend a meeting with the head teacher. Attendance figures below 90% are classed as 'persistent' absence. Parents are advised that this figure needs to improve. They will also receive a warning letter. Parents are then given 6 weeks to improve their child's attendance to at least 90%.

If this does not happen, a further meeting will take place with the Head teacher and a panel of Governors. A Targeted Support programme is then put into place. This will include an Action Plan that has been created by both parents and school. If attendance does not increase to at least 90% in the next 6 week period, a Fixed Term Penalty Notice will be issued.

Pupils are not punished directly because of poor attendance because of their age.

Whilst the school will listen, understand, empathise with and support families whose children have low attendance, we will not tolerate it.

If the situation does not improve, the parent **could** be issued with an Education Penalty Notice.

The head teacher can issue or request the local authority to issue an Education Penalty Notice for any unauthorised leave of absence in excess of 5 days or 10 sessions (updated by LA October 2024) over a six week period regardless of whether the unauthorised absence relates to a family holiday or is more general in nature.

The change to the threshold for more general absence to bring it in line with holiday related absence means that the need to send out warning letters and introduce a monitoring period is not required. Accordingly, the Nottinghamshire Code of Conduct will be amended to reflect these changes and it will take effect from Monday 6th November 2017. Therefore, any new requests for Education Penalty Notices where the six week period of evidence commences on or after the 6th November 2017 will be subject to the revised threshold.

This is the policy of Nottinghamshire County Council.

Issuing of Penalty Notices– guidance taken from the 'Improving Attendance Toolkit (Nov 2017 Notts CC)

Explanation of the Nottinghamshire Code of Conduct Sections

444A and 444B of the Education Act 1996 (introduced by section 23 of the Antisocial Behaviour Act 2003) introduced penalty notices as an alternative to prosecution under section 444. Parents may discharge potential liability for conviction for an offence under section 444(1) by paying a penalty.

Nottinghamshire Local Authority Area has a Code of Conduct to enable Penalty Notices to be issued by authorised persons for truancy or where a pupil is found to be in a public place during the first five days of exclusion.

The purpose of the local Code of Conduct is to ensure that the power to issue penalty notices is applied consistently and fairly across the local authority area and that suitable arrangements are in place for the administration of the scheme.

A penalty notice is a suitable intervention in circumstances where the parent is judged capable of securing their child's regular attendance or whereabouts but is not willing to take responsibility for doing so.

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The law states that authorised LA staff, Head Teachers and school staff authorised by them (deputy/assistant heads), the Police, Community Support Officers and accredited persons may issue Penalty Notices, although there is no requirement for them to do so.

Head teachers can request that the Local Authority through its Family Service to issue Penalty Notices on their behalf. In Nottinghamshire head teachers (or school staff authorised by them) can issue penalty notices. Should a school issue penalty notices it is necessary to inform the local authority in order for the payment to be monitored. The Local Authority will only prosecute cases where the Penalty Notice has not been paid if the Code of Conduct has been followed by the school issuing a penalty.

The penalty is set at £120 and should be paid within 28 days of the date on which the notice starts. If the penalty is paid within 21 days of the date on which the notice starts the sum is reduced to £60. In line with the national requirements, the notice is always payable to the Local Authority.

Where the local authority is requested to issue a penalty notice, it will be necessary for the LA to receive details of the pupil's absence and the evidence to be presented to the magistrates' court should the penalty be unpaid. The standard of evidence required is the same as that required for court cases brought under section 444(1) of the Education Act 1996. Where a penalty is unpaid, the Local Authority will take legal action under Section 444(1) of the Education Act 1996 for the original offence. In this case it is necessary for the person who requested the issue of a penalty notice to provide evidence for the court case by way of a Section 9 Statement (a witness statement admissible in court under the Criminal Justice Act and the Magistrates' Courts Act and Rules).

There is no flexibility in the deadline for payment of fines.

Notices can only be withdrawn by the local authority to whom the fine is to be paid and in all instances, will only be withdrawn where:

- it ought not to have been issued; or
- it ought not to have been issued to the person named as the recipient; or
- it appears to the authority that the notice contains material errors,
- it interferes with existing intervention strategies or legal proceedings

Attendance Awards

100% attendance for one week

Children who attend school every day for one week will have a slip with their name on, added to the class 'Attendance' box in the hall. Each week, a slip from each class will be drawn out during Friday's Celebration Assembly. These children may choose a prize such as a badge or pencil with '100% Attendance' written on it. All slips will then be added to the Bee Box in the hall. At the end of each term, Christmas, Easter & July, one slip will be drawn from the large Bee Box and that child will receive a £20 Vue Cinema voucher.

100% attendance for one term

Children who attend school for every session for:

- one term will receive a bronze 100% badge
- two terms: silver 100% badge or

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- three terms: gold 100% badge

Terms do not have to be consecutive. 100% attendance in the Autumn and Summer terms would be rewarded with a silver badge.

Monitoring and review

It is the responsibility of the governors to monitor overall attendance and they will receive a termly report from the Head teacher. The governing body also has the responsibility for this policy and for seeing that it is carried out. The governors will therefore examine closely the information provided them and seek to ensure that our attendance figures are as high as they should be.

The school will keep accurate attendance records on file for a minimum period of three years.

Class teachers will be responsible for monitoring attendance in their class and for following up absences in the appropriate way. If there is concern about a child's absence, they will contact the school office immediately. If there is a longer-term general worry about the attendance of a particular child, this will be reported to the head teacher, who will contact the parents or carers.

This policy will be reviewed by the governing body every two years, or earlier if considered necessary.