



St. Peter's Catholic Primary School

ATTENDANCE POLICY

Ratified: October 2020

Review: September 2021

COVID-19 – Covid related additions to this policy are shown in red.

The school is committed to safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children and young people and expects all staff, volunteers and visitors to share the same commitment. We follow Gloucestershire Safeguarding Children's Board Procedures. For more information go to www.gscb.org.uk

Throughout this policy we refer to **regular** and **good** attendance. It is our school's expectation that **regular and good attendance is 100% attendance**, unless there is a reason acceptable to the school for absence that can be authorised.

Since Covid-19, the government is clear that from the start of the autumn term 2020, pupil attendance will be mandatory and the usual rules on attendance will apply. Please refer to the following document.

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/school-attendance/addendum-recording-attendance-in-relation-to-coronavirus-covid-19-during-the-2020-to-2021-academic-year>

The use of code 'X' has been extended to include pupils not attending a session who meet the criteria for 'not attending in circumstances related to Covid-19'. Please see below.

St Peter's Catholic Primary School recognises that positive behaviour and good attendance are central to raising standards of pupil attainment and progress.

This policy is written with the above statement in mind and this policy underpins our school ethos to:

- Promote children's welfare and safeguarding;
- Ensure every pupil has access to the full time education to which they are entitled;
- Ensure that pupils succeed whilst at school; and
- Ensure that pupils have access to the widest possible range of opportunities when they leave school.

For our children to gain the greatest benefit from their education it is vital that they attend regularly and be at school, on time, every day the school is open unless the reason for the absence is unavoidable.

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

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

We want to ensure that there is a good attendance habit at our school. We want to make sure that children get into a good pattern, right from the first day that they start school. This is because good attendance leads to better learning, which can lead to better qualifications and ultimately better employment chances for our children.

Pupils are expected to attend school for the entire duration of the academic year, unless there is an exceptional reason for the absence. There are two main categories of absences:

Authorised Absence: is when the school has accepted the explanation offered as satisfactory justification for the absence, or given approval in advance for such an absence.

Unauthorised Absence: is when the school has not received a reason for absence or has not approved a child's absence from school after a parent's request.

Please be aware that when a parent telephones the school with information that their child is unable to attend due to illness, or other circumstances, this may not be automatically authorised. Your child's current and previous school attendance will be taken into consideration and as a result the absence may not be authorised.

Keeping your child off school with minor ailments such as a headache or slight cold is not acceptable. Repeated absences may require us to request that you obtain medical evidence from your doctor's surgery. This may be in the form of a date stamped compliment slip confirming your visit, or prescription or medicine bottle. Any of the above is to be shown to a member of the school office. (Please note: that the school is not asking any parent to incur a charge for such information and will not be liable for the cost.)

"There is a clear connection between regular attendance and achievement."

Responsibilities of the school:

- To set up good attendance patterns in all children
- To create a culture in which good attendance is accepted as the norm
- To improve attendance and punctuality across the whole school
- To reduce the percentage of unauthorised absence and increase the percentage of complete weeks
- To demonstrate that good attendance and punctuality is valued by the school
- To maintain and develop effective communication regarding attendance between home and school

Information to parents: The school will give 'attendance reports' to parents at each parents' evening to inform them about their child's attendance. Parents are free to request an update at any time.

Attendance targets: We will set attendance targets in line with recommendations from the Local Authority in order to improve attendance.

Monitoring attendance: The school will monitor attendance of all pupils, including their overall attendance, lateness, broken weeks and unauthorised absence. School will take action, where appropriate, by contacting parents or the Education Inclusion Service.

Celebrating good attendance: In order to help promote good attendance, attendance awards will be given out at the end of each term and at the end of the academic year. School attendance bears will be shared at weekly assemblies to those classes achieving the best attendance.

New Intake: For those parents whose children are beginning their school life at St Peter's Catholic Primary School, they receive an introductory talk which includes the subject of attendance. Good habits are promoted from the children's' first year of school in Reception Class and are continued to be encouraged right the way through to year 6.

Responsibilities of parents/carers

We encourage parent/carers to promote an ethos with their children/family which places a high value on regular attendance and good punctuality. We would ask parent/carers therefore to encourage good habits by:

- Making sure your child gets enough sleep so they are able to wake up in plenty of time to get ready for school and eat a good breakfast;
- Make sure that your child attends school wearing the correct uniform and brings appropriate kit and provision for lunch;
- Help your child by showing an interest in school life;

- If your child appears reluctant to attend school, contact the child's class teacher immediately to discuss any concerns. There could be a number of reasons for this reluctance such as difficulties with school work, friendship problems or family difficulties. It is important to identify any reasons for a reluctance to attend school quickly and before it becomes a more serious issue.

KEEPING YOUR CHILD SAFE: We need to know your child is safe if they do not arrive at school. Parents should let us know by 9.00am at the very latest if their child won't be in school.

Parents have a key responsibility for promoting patterns of good attendance with their children, including ensuring children arrive at school on time and ready to learn every day. Parents also need to be aware of the importance of avoiding 'broken weeks' where some sessions are missed which leads to disjointed education and learning.

Parents are encouraged to make an appointment with the Attendance Officer if they are worried about their child's attendance.

Informing the school regarding absence: Parents are asked to call the school before 9.00 am on each day that their child is absent, so that the attendance records can be kept up to date and children kept safe. If a child has an illness like Chicken Pox which is going to keep them off school for a certain amount of time we ask that parents call on the first morning of absence and then update us regularly rather than calling every morning. Parents of children with unexplained absences will be contacted by the school requesting a reason for non-attendance at school. If the reason given is not deemed appropriate or contact cannot be made then any outstanding absences will be recorded as unauthorised.

If a parent rings and gives one of the three symptoms of Covid-19:

- a new continuous cough
- a loss of or change in smell and taste
- a high temperature

parents are advised that they should book their child for a test and that the whole household will need to self-isolate until the results of the test are received. Parents are asked to inform the school of the test result.

Ensuring children arrive at school on time: Parents have a responsibility to make sure their children arrive on time. We encourage families to arrive at school from 8:40am, and all children should be in class by 8.55 am. Any child who arrives after this time will be late in the register, and marked 'L'. Any child who arrives after the register has been closed, 9:10 am, will be unauthorised, and marked 'U'. For those children who turn up late for school on a regular basis a letter (Appendix 2) will be sent to the parent/carer of the child. If persistent lateness occurs, parents/carers will be contacted to discuss the matter further. Where there have been ten sessions of unauthorised lateness (marked 'U') within the immediately preceding ten week period, a letter will be sent to each parent warning that if there is further unauthorised absence within the next fifteen school days then a penalty notice will be requested for each parent (Appendix 3). The letter will be sent by first class post and formally addressed to each parent. The fifteen day period will start two days after being posted in order to allow for delivery time. If there is no further unauthorised absence within the allotted period no penalty notice will be requested, but if there is a further ten sessions within the twelve month period following the warning letter, a penalty notice may be requested.

Medical and Dental Appointments: We encourage parents to make medical or dental appointments out of school hours where possible because medical appointments taken in school

time affect pupil learning and attendance figures for individual pupils as well class groups and the school as a whole. Where it is not possible to have an appointment out of school time, the pupil should only be out of school for the minimum amount of time. The child will be marked with authorised absence code 'M'.

Code X: this code is not counted as an absence in the school census, and is used in **two circumstances:**

1. *Not required to be in school:* used to record when non-compulsory school age children are not expected to attend, for example when Reception children attend mornings only in September, the afternoon would be coded 'X'.
2. *Circumstances relating to coronavirus (Covid-19):* for example where the child is required to self-isolate as they or a member of their household have symptoms or confirmed Covid-19. Parents are reminded of the importance of the whole household self-isolating, and asked to inform the school of any test result.

If attendance falls: school will support parents, particularly if attendance drops below **95%**, in order to help it improve (as this is equal to missing half a day a week). A letter (appendix 5) will be sent to parents whose children's attendance is below this figure at the start of the Spring term and again at the start of the Summer term, and attendance rates will be monitored. Parents may be expected to attend meetings held at the school to discuss ways of helping attendance improve. When attendance drops to 90%, the school may refer this to the Education Inclusion Service; this could then result in a court appearance and a fine. The Local Authority's policy will be followed through with supporting evidence from the school's Attendance Officer.

Persistent Absence

In September 2015 the government reduced the persistent absence threshold to 10%. If a child has missed 38 sessions or 19 days they will be classified as persistently absent. Parents/carers of children at risk of being persistently absent will be contacted.

Request for absence: The law does not permit Headteachers to authorise absence during the school term unless there are exceptional circumstances relating to the request. The Education (Pupil Registration) (England) (Amendment) Regulations 2013 explanatory note states:

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.

All parents must complete a 'Request for absence during school term – exceptional circumstances only' form (APPENDIX 1). The absence will only be authorised if there are exceptional circumstances relating to the application.

Each parent will receive the response form completed by the Headteacher. If the absence is authorised this will be marked as 'H' for holiday or 'C' for other absence. Unauthorised family holiday will be marked as 'G'. Parents are reminded that Leave of absence taken without authorisation may be referred to the Education Inclusion Service if there have been ten sessions of unauthorised holiday absence within the immediately preceding ten week period. This may result in prosecution proceedings, or a Fixed Penalty Notice. If a Fixed Penalty Notice is issued, a separate Notice would be issued to each parent for each child. As of 1st September 2013, the rate per parent per child is £60 if paid within 21 days and rising to £120 if paid between 22 and 28 days.

If the penalty notice is not paid each parent may be liable to prosecution at the Magistrates Court.

If no request for leave of absence is made, and the Headteacher deems that the absence is unauthorised family holiday (marked 'G') then a letter will be sent to each parent (appendix 4).

We hope that this clarifies the school's position and that this information will help you plan holidays and celebrations at weekends or over the holiday periods.

Pupils' Responsibility: Additionally, we encourage the pupils to take responsibility for themselves and others and to play a positive role in the life of the school, making the most of educational opportunities available. We therefore expect children to:

- Respect themselves and others;
- Do all they can to attend school regularly and punctually (e.g. getting up on time/when they are asked to);
- Be kind and caring to each other in order to create a sense of belonging;
- Talk to an adult if they have any worries or concerns over school that make them feel like they don't want to come;
- Wear the correct school uniform and arrive at school ready to learn.

Vulnerable Pupils: Any attendance concerns for vulnerable pupils will be discussed immediately with a designated safeguarding lead to ensure any actions are taken at the earliest possible opportunity.

Local Authority: For pupils/families who show no improvement in attendance despite support offered, legal proceedings can take place. Although as a school we hope never to reach this stage, where the use of enforcement processes is found to be necessary, the school will support this. For information on enforcement and penalty notices please visit:

<http://www.gloucestershire.gov.uk/article/107600/Attendance-and-absence-from-school>

Children Missing from Education: Any pupils who are classed as missing from education will be reported to the local authority.

For the purpose of this document a Child Missing from Education is defined as: *"Any children of compulsory school age (5-16) who are registered on school roll but have not taken up an allocated space as expected, have 10 or more days of continuous absence from school without explanation or who have left school suddenly and the destination is unknown."*

Additional information on this subject can be found at:

<http://www.gloucestershire.gov.uk/schoolsnet/children-missing-education>

Definition of Parent:

- All natural parents, whether they are married or not;

- Any person who has parental responsibility for a child or young person;
- Any person who has day to day care of a child or young person i.e. lives with and looks after the child.

The definition of parent in education law is broader than the definition in other legislation. The 'parent' does not need to be named on the birth certificate and could be, for example, the birth parent's current partner if they are involved in the day to day care of the child.

Appendices:

Appendix 1 : Request for absence during school term

Appendix 2 : Flow Chart & Letters 1,2 & 3

Appendix 3 : Warning letter for unauthorised lateness ('U' code)

Appendix 4 : Letter to parents when no request for leave of absence made

Appendix 5 : Letter to parents when attendance falls below 95%

Appendix One

Request for a leave of absence during term time

Parents should be aware that the law does not grant parents an automatic right to take their child out of school during term time. The Department for Education allows a Head Teacher the discretion to consider authorising a leave of absence in term time only in “exceptional circumstances”.

You may consider that a holiday will be educational but your child will still miss out on the teaching and learning that their peers will receive whilst your child is away. Children returning from a leave of absence during term time are also unprepared for the lessons which build on the teaching they have missed and arrangements need to be made for individual children to catch up on missed work. Disruption to the continuity of teaching and learning is something we all have a responsibility to avoid.

If requesting a leave of absence you will need to complete the form on the reverse of this notice, setting out the reasons. If the holiday is not considered to be an exceptional circumstance it will not be agreed. If you nevertheless take your child out of school for the leave of absence this **will be recorded as unauthorised leave**.

In the case of an unauthorised leave of absence the head teacher may request that the Local Authority issue a Fixed Penalty Notice without further warning to the parent. Please note that such a penalty is issued to each parent for each child taken out of school. A Penalty Notice is a fine of £60 if paid within the first 21 days which increases to £120 if paid between 21 and 28 days. Thereafter, if the penalty remains unpaid this may lead to prosecution through the Magistrates’ Court.

All leave of absence requests should be completed on the attached form by the parent with whom the child ordinarily resides. This should be returned to the school at least seven days before the start of the holiday. All requests must be made prior to the leave being taken. Leave cannot be authorised retrospectively.

I hope you will support our efforts to maintain good levels of attendance and attainment.

Yours sincerely

Mrs Carol Baron
Head Teacher

Request for a leave of absence during term time

Pupil Name Class

Pupil's address

Date of first day of absence Date of return to school

Number of school days that your child will be absent from school

If a pupil fails to return within ten school days following the anticipated date of return and no reason is provided, there may be grounds (under some circumstances) to delete your child's name from the Admissions Register and register them as a Child Missing Education.

Please detail the exceptional circumstance for which you are requesting leave of absence

.....
.....
.....

I understand that if the absence request is not authorised and the holiday is taken the Head Teacher may request that the Local Authority issue a Fixed Penalty Notice. I understand that a Penalty is issued to each parent for each child taken out of school and that this is a fine of £60 if paid within the first 21 days which increases to £120 if paid between 21 and 28 days. I understand that if I do not pay this it may result in legal action.

Name(s) of Parent/Carer(s) making application:

Dr/Mr/Mrs/Miss/Ms

Forename.....Surname.....

Address:

Signed Dated

Dr/Mr/Mrs/Miss/Ms

Forename.....Surname.....

Address:

Signed Dated

(Please ensure you are giving at least seven days' notice of the proposed absence, retrospective applications cannot be authorised)

For school to complete: AUTHORISED UNAUTHORISED (please circle)

Request for a leave of absence during term time – school response

This response must be sent to each parent

Dear.....,

Child's Name..... Class/Tutor Group.....

Your request for absence on the following dates: ___/___/___ to ___/___/___
(totalling.....days, has been considered and is

AUTHORISED UNAUTHORISED

- a) Their attendance is currently:.....
- b) The request **does / does not** meet the criteria for 'exceptional circumstances'

Please note: An **unauthorised** absence may be notified to the Local Authority and a Penalty Notice may be issued without further warning

Signed
Mrs Baron, Head Teacher

Date ___/___/___

Appendix two
St Peter's Catholic Primary Schools Lateness Escalation
Process

Arriving late for school can be upsetting for children and is disruptive for the rest of the class. One of the most important things you can do to support your child is to ensure that they attend school regularly and on time. The more work they miss the harder it will be to catch up, and the longer they are away the harder it may be for them to fit back into school life and friendship groups.

By law, all children of compulsory school age are entitled to a full-time education. As a parent, you are legally responsible for making sure this happens. As a school we want all children to be in school and partaking fully in school life and will offer help in any way we can to yourselves and your child to ensure they enjoy school and want to come to school every day.

Child late into school (arriving after 8.55am) on more than 5 occasions:



Letter 1 sent to parent

Child late on more than 11 occasions:



Phone call to parent, letter 2 sent with Attendance Improvement Plan

Child late on more than 17 occasions:



Letter 3 sent. Parent/Carer will be requested to attend an Attendance Improvement Meeting with Attendance Officer, Pastoral Lead and Headteacher.

Regular contact will continue until lateness concerns have been resolved.

Appendix two

DATE

Dear Parents/Carers,

RE: Your child's punctuality at school (5 days late, including X unauthorised lates after 9.10am)

(First Name Surname Date of Birth)

Attendance is an important life skill and at St Peter's Catholic Primary School we want all children to attend school regularly and on time. We would encourage you to arrive at school from 8:40am and your child/ren need to be in their classroom by 8.55am.

Please see the flow chart attached detailing our school's approach to managing pupil attendance, and your child/ren's registration certificates. I have also enclosed Gloucestershire County Council's attendance advice for parents/carers.

Yours sincerely,

Mrs Ballard

Attendance Officer

Appendix two

DATE

Dear Parents/Carers,

RE: Your child's punctuality at school (11 lates, including X unauthorised lates after 9.10am)

Thank you for speaking with me on the phone earlier today. We discussed the lates your child has had this academic year and the reasons for them. This is the plan that we agreed to improve punctuality for your child:

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

(Include this line if the child is the reason for lateness) Mrs Desando (Pastoral Lead) and I have met with your child and together we have drawn up an Attendance Improvement Plan, as shared with you.

I would like to take this opportunity to remind you that the school's Attendance Policy is available on the school website, and the lateness escalation process is included for your information.

Thank you for working with us on this important aspect of school life, and we hope these actions will help to improve attendance.

Yours sincerely,

Mrs Ballard
Attendance Officer

Appendix two

DATE

Dear Parents/Carers,

RE: Your child's punctuality at school (17 lates, including X unauthorised lates after 9:10am)

(First Name Surname Date of Birth)

Further to our letters dated ___ & ___, we are writing to you because we continue to have concerns about your child's punctuality at school. Your child has now been late 17 times, and this includes X unauthorised lates after 9.10am.

Remember:

- 5 minutes late every day adds up to 3 days lost a year
- 10 minutes adds up to 6 days lost a year
- 15 minutes adds up to 10 days lost a year
- 20 minutes adds up to 13 days lost a year
- 30 minutes adds up to 19 days lost a year

We would like to discuss this matter with you and an appointment has been made for tomorrow, DATE at TIME at school. We would like your child to attend this meeting too. At the meeting we will review the Attendance Improvement Plan again. Please bring your copy with you.

Yours sincerely,

Mrs Ballard
Attendance Officer

Mrs Baron
Headteacher

Appendix three

Warning letter in respect of penalty notices for persistent lateness (U code).

(This will be sent to each parent that the school subsequently names in any request for a penalty notice).

Date

Name

Address

Dear (Name)

**Re: The Education (Penalty Notices) (England) Regulations 2007
Warning of penalty notice for persistent lateness after the register has closed**

Under the Education Act 1996, parents have a duty to make sure their children regularly attend school. If parents fail to do this, they can be prosecuted.

Working within an agreed Code of Conduct the Local Authority can issue a penalty notice to parents if a child has missed a number of sessions without permission from the school.

(Name) has been marked absent from school for () sessions in the previous () weeks without prior authorisation or an acceptable reason being given to the head teacher. Please note there are normally two sessions in each school day.

This absence has therefore been recorded as unauthorised in the school register.

I need to inform you that the level of (Name's) unauthorised absence places you at risk of a penalty notice and/or court action by the Local Authority.

Providing there are no further unauthorised absences within the next fifteen school days, which will start two days after the date of this letter (to allow for postage) a penalty notice will not be issued on this occasion.

I must also draw your attention to the fact that should (Name) have more unauthorised absences related to lateness within the next twelve months following this warning letter, you may receive a penalty notice without further warning.

Yours sincerely

Mrs Carol Baron
Headteacher

Appendix four

Leave of Absence – when no request for leave was made by the parents but the head teacher has coded the absence as unauthorised family holiday (G Code).

This will be sent to each of the parents the school intends to request a penalty notice for

Parent's address (formally served)

date

Dear (parent's name)

Re: Leave of absence without request

Child(ren)'s Name(s): Date(s) of Birth:

I am aware that your child(ren) was/were absent from school from (date) to (date). I have tried to contact you with regard to these absences but have been unsuccessful and now understand that you were on a family holiday. I believe this to be the case because.....

As you will be aware, as of 1st September 2013 Head Teachers are no longer able to grant any leave of absence in term time unless there are exceptional/unavoidable circumstances. It is also stated in our school policy that all requests for leave of absence should be made in writing, in advance of the proposed absence.

As we are unaware of any exceptional circumstances that might apply, the absence has **not been authorised**. However, if you feel that the absence was due to an exceptional circumstance or illness, please provide supporting evidence to this effect no later than (Date – **allow two weeks**) and I may be able to reconsider my decision.

I must warn you that failure to ensure your child's regular attendance at school is an offence under Section 444 of The Education Act 1996. The Supreme Court Judgement from 2017 (Isle of Wight Council v Platt [2017] UKSC 28) has determined that 'regular' means 'in accordance with the rules prescribed by the school'.

If the reasons given for your child(ren)'s absence from school are not considered to be exceptional (and therefore the absence is unauthorised) then I may request, without further warning, that the Local Authority take legal proceedings against you for your failure to comply with the law. This may result in:

☐ A Penalty Notice requiring the payment of a penalty of up to £120 per parent per child. Failure to pay the penalty due may result in prosecution before Magistrates Court.

Please refer to the school's attendance policy (available on our website and in hard copy upon request) and Gloucestershire County Council's website for further information.

If you wish to discuss this further please do not hesitate to contact me.

Yours sincerely,

Mrs Carol Baron
Headteacher

Appendix five

DATE

Dear Parents/Carers,

RE: Your child/ren's attendance at school

(First Name Surname Date of Birth)

Attendance is an important life skill and at St Peter's Catholic Primary School we want all children to attend school regularly and on time. Between September and January your child/ren's attendance has fallen below 95% and I have enclosed their registration certificates for your information. I have also enclosed Gloucestershire County Council's attendance advice for parents/carers.

Obviously absences from school occur for a range of different reasons, some of which are unavoidable, including ongoing medical problems. However absence from school is a serious issue for us as it directly impacts upon children's progress and can create additional problems such as difficulty maintaining friendships. Although we would not advocate parents sending their children to school when they are in poor health we would encourage parents to avoid allowing their children to miss days unnecessarily for minor complaints. The fundamental message is that children should be in school every single day if possible.

As a school we want to work closely with parents and pupils to reduce absenteeism (whether through authorised or unauthorised absence) and improve attendance levels across the school, and we would hope that your child's attendance for the rest of the academic year can be improved. We are more than happy to assist you with this matter so if you, or your child, require any support then please contact the office.

If you wish to discuss any aspect of this letter please do not hesitate to contact me in the school office.

Yours sincerely,

Mrs Ballard
Attendance Officer