

Attendance Policy

St. Paul's School



Chipperfield

“Love to Learn; Learn to Love”

February 2016

General Statement

The school recognises the need for good attendance for all pupils in order that we can provide the best learning opportunities for all. We understand that consistent attendance provides continuity in the building of essential skills, in learning as well as in teaching. We see the whole school community as having responsibility for providing and maintaining good attendance; pupils, all staff and parents and carers.

Statutory Framework

Under the Education Act, a pupil is required to attend regularly at the school where they are registered as a pupil. The school is obliged, by law, to maintain accurate records of attendance and to differentiate between authorised and unauthorised absences.

Parents are made aware that their children are expected to attend school regularly and punctually as well as being properly dressed and in a fit condition to learn. If a child is unable to attend or is expected to be late, parents must inform the school as soon as possible by phone. Absence is considered as being unauthorised until a satisfactory explanation is forthcoming from the parent or carer. Only the school, not the parent, can authorise an absence. On the child's return to school, the parent must provide a written explanation of the absence. Family holidays during term time are not permitted.

Staff will report any concerns regarding absences to the office staff, who will follow up any unexplained absences by telephone. If concern continues, the Headteacher will then be informed, who will then contact the parents for a satisfactory explanation. Parents are informed if a problem has been identified. Letters are then sent by the school to parents who do not provide evidence as to why their child has been absent. Letters are sent out at the end of each term to parents whose attendance is causing concern. The **Attendance Improvement Officer** monitors attendance and problems are discussed with the Headteacher. Where appropriate, links are made with other agencies and with partnership schools.

Every effort is made by the school to motivate good attendance by offering an environment in which pupils feel valued, supported and welcome. Certificates are awarded to pupils with excellent or significantly improved attendance.

Authorised absences are:

- Illness.
- A special religious festival day observed by the family.

- Family bereavement.
- Medical appointments for the child.
- Participation in an approved performance.
- Other educational reasons.
- Exceptional special occasions such as the graduation of an older sibling.

Unauthorised absences are:

- No explanation is forthcoming.
- The school is dissatisfied with the explanation.
- A shopping trip.
- Birthdays.
- Holidays taken during term time.

Where unauthorised absences persist, or absence sessions reaches 15 (1 session = half a day) or more in the current and/or previous term, parents/carers may be issued with a Penalty Notice. If a holiday is taken then this absence is classed as unauthorised and illegal leaving you at risk of a fixed term Penalty Notice without warning.

Penalty Notices

If a pupil has at least 15 sessions (half day = 1 session) unauthorised absence in the current and/or previous term, including leave of absence where permission has not been requested or requested and denied, the Head Teacher can apply for a Penalty Notice to be issued by the Local Authority. The amount payable is £60 if paid within 21 days or £120 if paid after 21 days but within 28 days of receipt of the notice. Separate notices are sent to each parent for each child. Parents can discharge potential liability for conviction by paying the penalty. Should the fine not be paid in full within 28 days, the Local Authority must consider prosecution.

Process for Poor Attendance

- 1) Parents are informed through a whole-school letter every September about our attendance policy and process.
- 2) Parents are informed in writing half-termly if a child's absence falls below 90%; this may be more frequent if there is a particular cause for concern. Any unauthorised absences will also be noted.
- 3) If attendance has been a cause for concern, parents will be informed by letter as to whether attendance has improved, not significantly improved or deteriorated. These letters may be sent out periodically (usually 4-8 weeks) as evidence of correspondence and monitoring attendance.
- 4) If attendance has been poor and doesn't improve, parents will received a warning by letter that no further authorised absences will be recorded without evidence (such as a medical certificate). This may be sent out if attendance is persistently below 85% or a child has approximately 8 recorded unauthorised absences.
- 5) A penalty warning notice letter may be sent if a student has approximately 10 unauthorised absences.

The Headteacher makes an annual report to Governors on attendance and the Secretary completes an electronic return to the DfE each term for monitoring.

The Headteacher may not grant any leave of absence during term time unless there are exceptional circumstances. A request needs to be made in writing to the Headteacher. *NB: Headteachers no longer have the discretion to allow up to 10 days in a school year for a family holiday or to agree leave for parents to visit their country of origin*

Registration and Policy for latecomers

The first whistle to signal that school is open will be blown at 8.50am, upon which children may start to make their way to classrooms. Children must be on the school premises by 8.55am when the second whistle is blown to show that the school day has officially begun and that pupils should be in classrooms. Registration is at 9.00am and registers close at 9.25 am. Children who arrive between the register being taken and 9.25am are marked as late. Children who arrive after the close of registers are marked as absent. These children are signed in the late arrivals book at the school office. Similarly children who have to leave early are signed out by a parent in the school office. Registers are completed in accordance with Hertfordshire County Council Policy and are checked at the end of each week by a member of staff who co ordinates registration and absences.

Concerns about children who arrive after 8.55 am on a regular basis should be brought to the Headteacher. The Headteacher may feel it necessary to speak to the parents about punctuality. Parents and children are frequently reminded about punctuality in school communications. Both attendance and punctuality are reported on in the child's annual report. A similar process to persistent absentees (see above) may be taken if students are consistently recorded as late.

This policy is reviewed at least every two years by the Governors' Pupil Committee.