



St Alban & St Stephen Catholic Primary School & Nursery

ATTENDANCE POLICY

Approved by:	Full Governing Body	Date: July 2023
Last reviewed on:	July 2023	
Next review due by:	July 2024	

1. Aim

The aim of St. Alban & St. Stephen Catholic Primary School's attendance policy is to enable the school to provide a consistent practice that encourages and facilitates the regular attendance of all pupils, ensuring that they receive the full-time education to which they are entitled. Regular attendance at school is key to steady pupil progress and enjoyment of learning, and for this reason the school is dedicated to ensuring its attendance policy is adhered to.

St Alban & St Stephen Catholic Primary School takes a whole-school approach to maintaining excellent attendance. It is the joint responsibility of parents, pupils and all staff members to ensure that children are attending school as they should be. We endeavour to act early to address patterns of absence. We build strong relationships with families, working together to make sure that any problems or circumstances which may lead or be leading to poor attendance are given the right attention and appropriate support. We aim to reduce absence, including persistent and severe absence.

This policy is supported by our policies on safeguarding, bullying, behaviour and inclusive learning.

2. Legal framework

The *Education Act 1996* states that:

The parent of every child of compulsory school age shall cause him to receive efficient full-time education suitable —

- (a) to his age, ability and aptitude, and
- (b) to any special educational needs he may have,

either by regular attendance at school or otherwise.

A person begins to be of compulsory school age —

- (a) when he attains the age of five, if he attains that age on a prescribed day, and
- (b) otherwise at the beginning of the prescribed day next following his attaining that age.

Prescribed days are 31 August, 31 December and 31 March

A person ceases to be of compulsory school age at the end of the day which is the school leaving date for any calendar year (the last Friday in June) —

- (a) if he attains the age of 16 after that day but before the beginning of the school year next following,
- (b) if he attains that age on that day, or
- (c) (unless paragraph (a) applies) if that day is the school leaving date next following his attaining that age.

St. Alban & St. Stephen Catholic Primary School is dedicated to complying with attendance laws set out by the legal framework and has set out this attendance policy accordingly. This policy meets the requirements of the [working together to improve school attendance](#) from the Department for Education (DfE), and refers to the DfE's statutory guidance on [school attendance parental responsibility measures](#). These documents are drawn from the following legislation setting out the legal powers and duties that govern school attendance:

- Part 6 of [The Education Act 1996](#)
- Part 3 of [The Education Act 2002](#)
- Part 7 of [The Education and Inspections Act 2006](#)
- [The Education \(Pupil Registration\) \(England\) Regulations 2006 \(and 2010, 2011, 2013, 2016 amendments\)](#)
- [The Education \(Penalty Notices\) \(England\) \(Amendment\) Regulations 2013](#)

This policy also refers to the DfE's guidance on the school census, which explains the persistent absence threshold.

3. Roles and responsibilities

Governing body

As part of our whole-school approach to maintaining high attendance, the governing body will:

- Promote the importance of school attendance across the school's policies and ethos
- Make sure school leaders fulfil expectations and statutory duties, holding the head teacher to account for the implementation of this policy
- Take time at governors' meetings to regularly review and challenge attendance data review and discuss attendance issues that have arisen in order to stay on top of expected attendance targets for the year
- Make sure staff receive adequate training on attendance policy
- Annually review the school's attendance policy and ensure that all provisions are in place to allow school staff, parents and children to implement the policy effectively
- Nominate or identify a member of the governing body who will take the lead role in monitoring attendance and coordinating provision and policies for attendance
- Ensure that all legislation regarding attendance is complied with and that up-to-date guidelines are communicated to parents, children and staff
- ensure that the school is implementing effective means of recording attendance and organising that data, including for children who are educated off-site

School leadership team

As part of our whole-school approach to maintaining high attendance, the head teacher working with the Senior Leadership Team will:

- Implement this policy at the school
- Monitor school-level absence data and reporting it to governors
- Support staff with monitoring the attendance of individual pupils
- Monitor the impact of any implemented attendance strategies
- Be active in their approach to promoting good attendance to pupils and their parents, which includes forming positive relationships with families.
- Ensure that the school's teaching and learning experiences encourage regular attendance and that pupils are taught the value of high attendance for their own progression and achievement.
- Coordinate with the governing body to monitor the implementation of the attendance policy and its effectiveness, with an annual full policy review.

- Ensure that all staff are up to date with the school's attendance policy, legislation and government guidance, and that staff are fully trained to recognise and deal with attendance issues.
- Ensure that legislation and government guidance on attendance is complied with and that they (the leadership team) are up to date with any legislative changes and how to implement them.
- Nominate or appoint a senior manager to take the responsibility of overseeing and monitoring attendance provision and that this person has sufficient time and resources to give to this job. The designated senior leader responsible for attendance is Charlene Smith, SENDCo, who will work with Nicola Rees, Pastoral Mentor to follow up and support all Persistent Absentees to improve attendance.
- Report to the governing body termly and the lead governor for attendance half-termly on attendance records, data and provision, comparing this with national data.
- Ensure that systems to record and report attendance data are in place and working effectively.
- Identify whether or not there are particular groups of children whose absences may be a cause for concern
- Develop multi-agency relationships to help with poor attendance and support families who are having difficulties getting their child to attend.
- Document any specific interventions or steps taken to work with families to improve their child's attendance in case of future legal proceedings.
- Appoint a School Attendance Officer. The designated School Attendance officer is Julia Costas who can be contacted via 01727866668 or via admin@ssas.herts.sch.uk. The Attendance Office will:
 - Use the School's MIS system ARBOR to monitor and analyse attendance data
 - Ensure that attendance codes used are accurate
 - Benchmark attendance data to identify areas of focus for improvement
 - Provide regular attendance reports to school staff and reporting concerns about attendance to the designated senior leader responsible for attendance and the head teacher
 - Work with education welfare officers to tackle persistent absence

Teachers and support staff

As part of our whole-school approach to maintaining high attendance, the school's teachers and support staff will:

- be active in their approach to promoting good attendance to pupils and their parents, which includes forming positive relationships with families.
- ensure that the school's teaching and learning experiences encourage regular attendance and that pupils are taught the value of high attendance for their own personal progression and achievement.
- ensure that they are fully aware and up to date with the school's attendance policy, legislation and government guidance, and that they will speak to another member of staff or seek support if they are unsure how to deal with an attendance issue.

- ensure that they are following the correct systems for recording attendance and that attendance is taken daily.
- contribute to strategy meetings and interventions where they are needed.
- work with external agencies to support pupils and their families who are struggling with regular attendance.

Parents and carers

As part of our whole-school approach to maintaining high attendance, we request that parents:

- engage with their children's education – support their learning and take an interest in what they have been doing at school.
- promote the value of good education and the importance of regular school attendance at home.
- encourage and support their children's aspirations
- follow the set school procedure for reporting the absence of their child from school **(see section 4.1)**, and include an expected date for return.
- do everything they can to prevent unnecessary school absences, such as making medical and dental appointments outside school hours.
- use the school as a support when they or their child are having difficulties, and work to form a positive relationship with the school so that there is easy communication when a problem arises.
- keep the school informed of any circumstances which may affect their child's attendance.
- enforce a regular routine at home in terms of homework, bedtime, etc. so that the child is used to consistency and the school day becomes part of that routine. It is vital that the child receives the same message at home as they do at school about the importance of attendance.
- do not take their children out of school for holidays during term time.
- make a request for any planned absences to the head teacher by filling in the Request for Leave form **(see Section 4.2)**
- sign our Home School Agreement, agreeing to adhere to our attendance policy.

Pupils

As part of our whole-school approach to maintaining high attendance, we request that pupils:

- be aware of the school's attendance policy, and when and what they are required to attend. This will be communicated to them through assemblies, by their class teacher, by their parents and the school website.
- speak to their class teacher or another member of staff if they are experiencing difficulties at school or at home which may impact on their attendance.
- attend all lessons ready to learn, with the appropriate learning tools requested and on time for the school day.
- bring a note of explanation from their parents or carers to explain an absence that has happened or is foreseen.
- follow the correct school procedure if they arrive late **(see section 4.7)**. Parents and pupils are held responsible for this and it is made clear to all pupils what this procedure is by their class teachers. This will help the school to monitor attendance and keep accurate records for the child's individual attendance, and is also vital for health and safety in the event of a school evacuation

4. Categories of absence and procedure for reporting absences

We will keep an attendance register using our school MIS system, ARBOR, and place all pupils onto this register. We will take our attendance register at the start of the morning and the afternoon of each school day. It will mark whether every pupil is:

- Present
- Attending an approved off-site educational activity
- Absent
- Unable to attend due to exceptional circumstances

We will also record:

- For pupils of compulsory school age whether the absence is authorised or not
- The nature of the activity if a pupil is attending an approved educational activity
- The nature of circumstances where a pupil is unable to attend due to exceptional circumstances

Absences will be treated as unauthorised unless a satisfactory explanation for the pupil's absence is given to the school. Parents cannot authorise absences.

Staff should make it clear on the school register when taking attendance whether a child's absence is authorised or unauthorised. Where staff have concerns regarding absences they should follow the school's safeguarding procedures.

4.1 Unplanned Absence

When a child is to be absent from school without prior permission, parents should inform the school by telephone on 01727 866668 on the first day of absence and let the school know what date they expect the child to return. The parents should call the school on each subsequent day of absence.

For a prolonged absence, this should be followed up with a letter from the parent/carer of the child. Alternative arrangements will be made individually with non-English speaking parents or carers.

Most cases of unplanned absence are due to illness and are short term. Parents will need to make a phone call to alert the school on the first day and each subsequent day of absence.

For prolonged absence due to illness, parents may be asked to provide the school with medical evidence such as a letter from the child's doctor, an appointment card, a prescription paper or medication bearing a pharmacist's label.

4.2 Planned Absence

There may be some instances where the school will authorise a planned absence, but this is at the discretion of the head teacher.

If parents wish to make a request in advance for their child to miss school, they must fill in a Request for Leave form. This can be obtained as a paper copy from the School Office, on the School website <https://www.ssas.herts.sch.uk/school-information/attendance/> or as a digital copy which can be sent via email. All forms can be requested in person or via

admin@ssas.herts.sch.uk. Requests for absence should be completed as far in advance as possible of the requested absence.

Every request for absence will be considered individually, considering the specific facts and background context. If a leave of absence is granted, the school will decide how long the pupil can be away from school. If a request for absence is not granted, this will be marked as an 'unauthorised absence'.

Absence will usually be granted for:

- Medical, dental and hospital appointments Parents should make every effort to ensure these appointments are made outside school hours. Where it cannot be avoided, children should attend school for as much of that day as possible.
- Funerals/weddings of immediate relatives involving a short period of absence
- Musical instrument exams
- Visits/ interviews/exams at another school
- Religious observance
- Traveller pupils travelling for occupational purposes – this covers Roma, English and Welsh gypsies, Irish and Scottish travellers, showmen (fairground people) and circus people, bargees (occupational boat dwellers) and new travellers. Absence may be authorised only when a traveller family is known to be travelling for occupational purposes and has agreed this with the school in advance

Absence will not usually be granted for:

- Holidays
- Family days out
- Illness of other family members or pets
- Birthdays
- Funerals/ weddings of distant relatives/ friends involving more than one day of absence

4.3 Fixed Term Suspension

Suspension is treated as an authorised absence. The class teacher will arrange for work to be sent home from the first full day of suspension.

4.4 Late arrival

Registration takes place before 8:55am. Pupils who arrive after this time will be marked as late.

Pupils who arrive after the registration period has ended should go straight to the school office to sign in and give a reason for their lateness. It is vital that pupils sign in at the office to ensure that appropriate health and safety regulations are followed and that all pupils are accounted for.

A register is also taken at 1pm and any unexplained absences reported back to the school office.

If a child has been late three times a letter will be sent to the parents requesting that the situation be addressed. Where a child continues to be late, the parents will be invited to meet with a member of the Senior Leadership Team to discuss how punctuality could be improved.

5. School action: following up absences

Class registers are saved and closed at the end of the registration period.

Where there are unexplained or unauthorised absences, the school will contact the parents or carers by telephone on the first day of absence to request a verbal or written explanation. If the school cannot reach the parents, the child's emergency contacts will be telephoned.

The school will call the parent/carer on each day that the absence continues without explanation to ensure proper safeguarding action is taken where necessary.

The designated Office staff members who will telephone the parents in the case of an unexplained absence are:

Kat Purvey (EYFS/KS1) and Sandra Grisley (KS2)

If absence continues, the school will consider involving an education welfare officer. School may occasionally carry out a welfare visit to the child's home or may contact Children's Services if there are concerns around the child's absence.

If a pattern of unauthorised absences emerges, the Attendance Lead will contact the parent or carer to discuss possible reasons and school support systems that could help.

At the end of each term, letters will be sent to parents of pupils with attendance below 95%, inviting parents to meet with the Head teacher to discuss ways of supporting and improving attendance. Persistent absentees (90% and below) who do not attend meetings when requested will be referred to the Educational Welfare Officer for follow-up.

The percentage of sessions attended so far that academic year will be identified on the child's annual report. Attendance below 95% will receive a specific comment and target on the child's report.

Where pupils have been away for either short or long term, the school will support that child when they re-enter school to help them catch up on any work that they have missed.

Where a child has been absent from school for a period of more than 20 school days, and where the absence was unauthorised and both the school and LA have been unable to contact the parents, the school may remove the child from the school roll. The school will notify the local authority when such action is taken.

The school will take disciplinary action against any pupils who are discovered to be truanting and parents or carers will be contacted to discuss possible reasons and school support systems that could help. The school may take further action against the parents, including referral to the local authority to begin criminal proceedings against the parents.