



# Attendance Policy

Registered pupils of compulsory school age are required by law to be in school.

**Created Summer 2015**

**Reviewed Summer 2021**

**Next review Summer 2024**

# St Peter's

**BUDLEIGH SALTERTON CHURCH OF ENGLAND PRIMARY SCHOOL**

## Aims of this policy

In striving to enable each child to reach their full potential, all schools stress the importance to both children and parents of the need for maximum attendance and punctuality.

There is a clear link between poor attendance at school and lower academic achievement. Of pupils who miss more than 50 per cent of school only three per cent manage to achieve five or more GCSEs at grades A\* to C including Maths and English. 73 per cent of pupils who have over 95 per cent attendance achieve five or more GCSEs at grades A\* to C. Evidence shows that children who miss significant amounts of their education in primary school are more likely to truant later on.

It is the parents who allow their child to have Monday off because the family is tired after a weekend away, who keep their child back from school because they are waiting for a delivery, or for whom a doctor's appointment in the afternoon becomes a reason for taking the whole day off who need to be challenged early, and supported to get their children back to school. It is the children in these families who are most likely to truant in Years 10 and 11.

One of the most effective ways that schools can improve achievement is by improving attendance. Even the very best teachers struggle to raise the standards of children who are not in school regularly. Schools that relentlessly pursue good attendance also get better overall attainment and behaviour.

## Rights and Responsibilities

### School:

- We expect pupils to attend school regularly and to arrive in a fit condition to learn.
- We will encourage good attendance and will investigate all absenteeism.
- School staff will set a good example in matters of attendance and punctuality and will promptly investigate all absenteeism and lateness.
- We will work closely with parents should attendance/punctuality give cause for concern. One strategy will take the form of a termly assessment check, with parents who children with attendance below 90% receiving a letter explaining what will happen if their child's attendance does not improve.

### Pupils:

- Pupils will ensure that they attend regularly and on time.
- Pupils will have individual records of attendance / punctuality acknowledged by the school.

### Parents:

- Parents are responsible for ensuring their children attend school regularly, punctually and are properly dressed and in a fit condition to learn.
- Parents are responsible for informing the school as early as possible of the reason for any absence (by letter, phone call or personal visit).
- Parents are required to complete a Request for Authorised Absence before a holiday. *Authorisation of holidays within term time are the exception and not the rule.*
- Parents can expect the school to keep them fully informed of their child's attendance, and ask them to take measures to improve it should it fall to a worrying level.

## Authorising absence

Absences can only be authorised by the Headteacher, or Deputy Headteacher.

All absences must be explained by a parental note or message. The school will then decide whether or not it will authorise the absence. All absence-related messages received by any member of staff will be conveyed to the school office. If no information from home is forthcoming, the school office will contact the child's parents. The school office will pay particular attention to the possibility of unauthorised absence and take speedy action if this is suspected.

Only exceptional circumstances warrant leave of absence. 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; and the pupil's attainment, attendance and ability to catch up on missed schooling.

### **Absence from school will be authorised if it is for the following reasons:**

- Sickness
- Unavoidable medical / dental appointments
- Days of religious observance
- Exceptional circumstances, such as bereavement
- Seeing a parent who is on leave from the armed forces
- External examinations
- When Traveller children go on the road with their parents

### **Absence from school will not be authorised for:**

- For any type of shopping
- Looking after brothers, sisters or unwell parents (an exception to this might be where a child is looking after a disabled parent)
- Minding the house
- Birthdays
- Resting after a late night
- Relatives visiting or visiting relatives
- Holidays

### **Parental requests for holidays or authorised absence in term time**

Currently head teachers may in special circumstances grant leave of absence of up to ten days for the purpose of family holidays during term time. The application must be made in advance and the head teacher must be satisfied that there are special circumstances which warrant the leave. A leave of absence is granted entirely at the head teacher's discretion and is not a parental right. **Holidays in term time will be the exception rather than the rule.**

If a school does not authorise a leave of absence and the parents still take the child on holiday, or the child is kept away for longer than was agreed, the absence is unauthorised. The regulations do not allow schools to give retrospective approval. If the parents did not apply for the leave of absence in advance the absence must be recorded as unauthorised.

***To put attendance in perspective, having 90% attendance average for your child's entire school career (until they are 16) actually means they miss a whole year of school.***

A parent must complete an **Absence Request Form** from the school office when asking for absence to be authorised. Such absences from school are discouraged, but the Head teacher is allowed to give permission for a child to be out of school up to a maximum of 10 days per school year (September to September).

**School will always put the education of the child first when deciding whether or not to authorise an absence.** In doing so, school will also take into account the child's age, stage of education, internal assessment weeks and educational progress when making a decision. It is not the school's decision to fine parents for unauthorised absences, but is at the discretion of Devon's Educational Social Welfare Service.

The Governing Body has agreed that the school **will not authorise any requests** for holidays unless there are exceptional circumstances. For example cheaper holidays, or a chance to holiday with extended family does not constitute exceptional circumstances.

### **Fines for unauthorised absence**

It is now Devon County Council policy to issue Penalty Notices or fines for unauthorised absence. Details of the implementation of fines can be found in Devon County Council's Penalty Notice Code of Conduct, of which the following is an extract: "*Following the implementation of the Anti Social Behaviour Act 2003 it is possible that certain cases of unauthorised absence can be dealt with by way of a Penalty Notice. Penalty Notices will require each parent of a child of compulsory school age, whose attendance has been unsatisfactory, to pay a fine, currently £50.00 if paid within 28 days or £100.00 if paid within 42 days.*"

These Penalty Notices can be issued for unauthorised holidays within term time and unauthorised absence from school when the circumstances appear to have been avoidable, (e.g. child too tired after a late night, a birthday treat, family friends/relatives visiting).

### **Strategies for promoting attendance / punctuality**

- There is a termly attendance check. Parents whose children have attendance under 95% will receive a letter (see appendix) aimed at highlighting attendance and support. Following an initial letter, if parents of pupils whose attendance is below an acceptable percentage does not improve, they will be invited in to school by the Head teacher to discuss strategies to improve their child's attendance.
- The school will award certificates through its usual policy to pupils whose attendance / punctuality is much improved or high.
- Structured meetings will be held at appropriate times with the school's Education Welfare Officer in order to identify and support those pupils whose attendance / punctuality is a source of concern [persistent absence].
- Pupils whose attendance falls below 80% will be referred to the Education Welfare Officer (EWO).

## Equal Opportunities

We aim to offer an education and working environment appropriate to each individual pupil's needs regardless of their race, colour, ethnic or national origins, gender, sexuality, disability or religious beliefs.

## Frequently Asked Questions

The following information gives more details to help you to understand these changes and the specific new details of our policy, and any impact they may have on your future holiday plans.

The new application form is herein and the questions and answers below cover some of the main issues that were raised during consultation, and may be useful for you.

The Education Welfare Service and the Government make it clear that habits of absence and attitudes to attendance are formed much earlier on in a student's education – particularly at Primary School.

### **What if I go on holiday, and then later in the year my child has illness and their attendance becomes low?**

We have a series of procedures that we follow to try and work with families to try and help them to ensure good attendance. However if these do not work and a student fails to attend adequately there are a range of actions which can be taken. If absences are legitimate and a parent is doing all that can be reasonably expected to ensure good attendance – then there is no cause for concern. Each case is dealt with based on its own individual circumstances and the process is communicated throughout. It does reinforce our view that holidays in term time have a negative impact.

### **Does this mean we can't go – even if we have already booked and paid for our holiday?**

No, the holiday may still be taken, but there are potential consequences which should be understood by all families considering taking a term time holiday before they make their decision.

If we have already said no to authorisation, the details of any holiday exceeding 5 school days will be sent to the Education Welfare Service's legal team to follow their fixed penalty notice system. In the first instance they would send a warning letter indicating that any future unauthorised holidays taken within the following 12 months would lead to a Fixed Penalty Fine of £100 per adult per student. This would also be issued if any additional unauthorised absence takes place in the 15 days after the warning letter was issued.

These fines are halved if they are paid within 28 days, but will lead to immediate prosecution if not paid within 42 days. If a family is already involved in a 'Fast Track Prosecution Process' this unauthorised holiday would further compound the warnings and potential for court action in their specific case.

If no application is received but a significant absence is noted, families would be asked for a reason for the absence. If illness is offered as a reason we reserve the right to request satisfactory medical evidence to prove the illness. In all cases of absence, the school has the right to refuse authorisation if it is not satisfied that reasons given are genuine.

How would this be recorded on my child's absence record and what problems might this cause?

An unauthorised holiday is recorded as a 'O' on the attendance certificate. Any unauthorised absence or low attendance figure looks unimpressive.

## TERM TIME SCHOOL LEAVE INFORMATION FOR PARENTS

It is the responsibility of parents/carers to ensure that all their children of compulsory school age are receiving an efficient full-time education by regular attendance at a school or otherwise.

Babcock LDP monitor school attendance and support schools in their efforts to raise school attendance.

All schools have a legal obligation to inform Devon County Council of any child not attending regularly. Should you have any concerns about your child's attendance or need support please contact the [Education Welfare Service](#).

[Further information about school attendance and absence can be found at GOV.UK.](#)

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### **Absence from school: pay a school absence penalty notice**

If your child has unauthorised absences from school, this could result in a school absence penalty notice being issued. You can find out more about school absence penalty notices as well as the other legal measures that can be taken at [Absence from school – penalty notices](#).

If you have received a school absence penalty notice you can pay it in the following ways:

- Online at [Pay a school absence penalty notice](#).
- Phone on 0300 4560534 – calls charged at local rate. Further details available at [www.call-charges.co.uk/0300-call-charges#one](http://www.call-charges.co.uk/0300-call-charges#one).
- Postal order – must be the correct amount and be received by the specified payment date.
- Cash in person by pre-arranged appointment by calling 01392 383189.

Main reception

County Hall

Topsham Road

Exeter

EX2 4QD

Late or part payments cannot be accepted and no reminders will be sent.

## Appendix - attendance check letter to parents

### Attendance Monitoring for period: 1<sup>st</sup> September to 5<sup>th</sup> November 2020

Dear parent/carer,

This is an automated letter that we are sending out to every parent at St Peter's School whose child's attendance is below 95%. This is part of our aim to maximise your child's educational opportunities and to ensure they are able to reach their full potential at school.

**To put attendance in perspective, having a 90% attendance average for your child's entire school career (until they are 16) actually means they miss a whole year of school. Even a 95% attendance equates to missing two thirds of a school year.**

The current school average for attendance is 97%, which is above the national average.

**Attendance for xxxxxxxxx is currently 73%.**

*If you would like a copy of your child's attendance report, please ask the school office.*

Your child might have been absent from school for a very clear reason, like a recent long illness. If this is the case, and you are confident that their attendance will rise this year to above 95%, you do not need to worry. You don't need to do anything else at this point, but please do let us know if you need any support.

Yours truly,

Steve Hitchcock

**Headteacher**