



## GOVERNOR POLICY 53 Attendance Policy

- Policy first agreed: May 2012
- Review undertaken by the Senior Leadership Team
- Policy Review Period: Every 2 Years
- This revision: April 2022

### **Summary:**

The school has a legal duty to publish its absence figures to parents and to promote attendance. Equally, parents have a duty to make sure that their children attend.

All school staff members are committed to working with parents and pupils as the best way to ensure as high a level of attendance as possible and that every child's welfare and life opportunities are promoted.

### **Introduction:**

All Saints Primary School aims to provide a high-quality education so that all children are able to reach their full potential. In order to do this our children need to develop positive feelings about their learning and a responsible attitude to recognising the value of good attendance and punctuality.

Most parents and carers share our desire that their children are successful in their learning and the link between attainment and attendance has long been proven. Good attendance is essential in ensuring educational progress and poor attendance impacts not only the achievements of individuals but of the whole school. Attendance is examined as part of the Ofsted school inspection process when making a judgement on behaviour and safety. We believe good attendance is the responsibility of the whole school community - parents, pupils, staff and governors. We aim for excellence and for our children to gain the greatest benefit from their education it is vital that they attend regularly on time, every day the school is open unless the reason for the absence is unavoidable.

### **Why regular attendance is important:**

- Research shows that educational progress in Primary Schools significantly starts to drop when attendance falls below 96%. 95% attendance sounds very good, but still means that one day's learning is lost every month. 80% attendance means that one day of learning is lost per week.
- Children whose attendance drops below 95% reduce their chances of achieving the expected level in English and Maths (at the end of Year 6) by 15% and this steadily declines with lower attendance.
- Learning: Any absence affects the pattern of a child's schooling and regular absence will seriously affect their learning. Any pupil's absence disrupts teaching routines so may affect the learning of others in the same class.
- Parents have a legal responsibility to ensure their children attend school regularly. Permitting absence from school without good reason creates an offence in law and may result in prosecution.

## **Objectives:**

- To encourage full attendance and punctuality
- To monitor attendance and apply appropriate strategies to minimise absenteeism
- To acknowledge and celebrate a successful record of attendance
- To ensure a consistent approach throughout the school
- To make attendance and punctuality a priority for those associated with the school including pupils, parents, teachers and governors.
- To provide support, advice and guidance to parents and pupils
- To work effectively with other services and agencies to support these objectives

## **The Law relating to attendance:**

- Under the 1988 Education Act, parents and carers are responsible for ensuring their children attend school regularly and punctually. Failure to do so could result in legal action being taken against them by the Local Authority.
- The register is a legal document and schools must, under the Education (Pupil Registration) Regulations 2006 take a register at the start of the morning session and again during the afternoon session. Since September 2006, schools have been required to use statutory registration codes.
- Under the Education (pupil Registration) Regulations 2006 only the school (and not the parents/carers) can authorise an absence. Where the reason for a pupil's absence cannot be established at the time the register is taken, that absence shall be recorded as unauthorised using the appropriate national code.
- The Education (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2013 removed all references to family holidays and leave of absence shall not be granted unless an application had been made in advance and the Headteacher considers that leave of absence should be granted due to exceptional circumstances. Whilst the Headteacher will consider all requests on a case by case basis, parents must be aware that requests will normally be refused. The Sherborne Schools Partnership share common guidelines and policies on attendance.
- Where a family chooses to take a holiday during term time, the absence will be coded as unauthorised and a Penalty Notice may be issued to each parent for each child (where 5 or more days of unauthorised absences are recorded as a result).
- If leave of absence is taken without the request being agreed, the absence will be recorded as unauthorised. This may result in the Local Authority issuing a Penalty Notice, in accordance with **Dorset County Council Children's Services Penalty Notice Protocol** which is attached as an appendix to this policy. If this penalty is not paid the Local Authority will instigate legal proceedings against the parent/carer in the Magistrates Court.
- In compliance with the Education Act 436A (Chapter 2 Part 6), the school will, after making appropriate checks, report all Children Missing from Education to the Local Authority Education Welfare Service, who has a duty to investigate the whereabouts of such children and negotiate a prompt return to suitable education.
- The school would scrupulously monitor requests for absence from pupils with an ethnicity linked to countries where female genital mutilation (FGM) is practised. (Egypt, Iraq, Iran, Sudan, Gambia, Nigeria, Ethiopia, Pakistan, Eritrea, Somalia, Sierra Leone, Gambia, Senegal, Chad, Mala, Uganda, UAE, India, Tanzania, Malaysia)

## **The Law relating to Safeguarding**

- Section 175 of the Education Act 2002 places a duty on local authorities and governing bodies to have regard to guidance issued by the Secretary of State with regard to safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children and students under the age of 18.
- Safeguarding: A child may be at risk of harm if they do not attend school regularly. Safeguarding the interests of each child is everyone's responsibility and within the context of this school, promoting the welfare and life opportunities for children encompasses attendance, behaviour management, Health and Safety, access to the curriculum and Anti-bullying. Failing to attend this school on a regular basis will be considered a safeguarding matter.

## **Children Missing Education (CME)**

The government has placed a duty on local authorities (Education and Inspections Act 2006) to make arrangements to establish (as far as it is possible to do so) the identities of children in their area who are of compulsory school age and not receiving a suitable education.

Children Missing Education (CME) refers to all children of compulsory school age who are neither on a school roll, nor being educated other than at school or who have been out of any educational provision for a substantial period of time. All children, regardless of their circumstances, are entitled to a full time education which is suitable to their age, ability, aptitude and any special educational needs they may have. A child going missing from education is a potential indicator of abuse or neglect. School and college staff should follow the school's or college's procedures for dealing with children that go missing from education, particularly on repeat occasions, to help identify the risk of abuse and neglect, including sexual exploitation, and to help prevent the risks of their going missing in future.

All staff are alert to signs to look out for and the individual triggers to be aware of when considering the risks of potential safeguarding concerns such as travelling to conflict zones, Female Genital Mutilation (FGM) and forced marriage.

The law requires all schools to have an admission register and, with the exception of schools where all pupils are boarders, an attendance register. All pupils must be placed on both registers. All schools must inform their local authority of any pupil who is going to be deleted from the admission register where they:

- have been taken out of school by their parents and are being educated outside the school system e.g. home education
- have ceased to attend school and no longer live within reasonable distance of the school at which they are registered;
- have been certified by the school medical officer as unlikely to be in a fit state of health to attend school before ceasing to be of compulsory school age, and neither he/she nor his/her parent has indicated the intention to continue to attend the school after ceasing to be of compulsory school age;
- are in custody for a period of more than four months due to a final court order and the proprietor does not reasonably believe they will be returning to the school at the end of that period; or, have been permanently excluded.

The local authority will be notified when a school is to delete a pupil from its register under the above circumstances. This will be done as soon as the grounds for deletion are met, and before deleting the pupil's name from the register. The local authority can then, as part of its duty identify children of compulsory school age who are missing education, follow up with any child who might be in danger of not receiving an education and who might be at risk of abuse or neglect.

All schools must inform the local authority of any pupil who fails to attend school regularly, or has been absent without the school's permission for a continuous period of 10 school days or more, at such intervals as are agreed between the school and the local authority (or in default of such agreement, at intervals determined by the Secretary of State).

## **Promoting Regular Attendance:**

Helping to create a pattern of regular attendance is everybody's responsibility - parents, pupils and all members of school staff. It is the policy of All Saints to celebrate achievement and attendance. Attendance is a critical factor in a productive and successful school career. Our school will actively promote and encourage 100% attendance for all our pupils. We will give high priority to conveying to parents and pupils the importance of regular and punctual attendance. We recognise that parents have a vital role to play and that there is a need to establish strong home-school links and communication systems that can be utilised whenever there is concern about attendance.

If there are problems which affect a pupil's attendance we will investigate, identify and strive in partnership with parents and pupils to resolve those problems as quickly and efficiently as possible. We will adopt a clearly focused approach aimed at returning the pupil to full attendance at all times. Whilst any child may be absent from school because they are ill, sometimes they can be reluctant to attend school. Any problems with regular attendance are best sorted out between the school, the parents and the child. If a

child is reluctant to attend, the absence should not be excused as this gives the impression that attendance does not matter and usually makes things worse.

We monitor the attendance of individuals closely.

- Parents/Carers of pupils with attendance below 92% that is not due to an on-going medical condition will be contacted by letter.
- If attendance fails to improve or drops to 90% parents/carers will be invited into school for a meeting.
- If attendance reaches 85% the Local Authority will be notified.

#### **All Saints CE VC Primary School will:**

- Report whole school and class attendance on a weekly bulletin;
- Report authorised and unauthorised attendance to parents at least termly
- Write to parents/carers whose child(ren)'s attendance rate has dropped below 92% offering support towards improvement. If there is no improvement or reasonable explanation/medical reasons for non-attendance, an appointment will be made with the parents/carers in order to plan for improvement. Support from the Early Intervention team may be sought at this stage and definitely if attendance drops to 85%.
- Celebrate good attendance by rewarding good attendance each term and annually – 100% and 98+%
- Celebrate weekly the class with the highest attendance.

#### **Understanding types of absence:**

There will always be unavoidable reasons for children to be off school. It is important that parents understand that the school would not want to be viewed as anything other than supportive with families going through difficult or exceptional times. Schools would not be penalised for the absence of children with genuine reasons for non-attendance.

Every half-day absence from school has to be classified by the school as either **authorised** or **unauthorised**. This is why information about the cause of any absence is always required, preferably in writing. Authorised absences are mornings or afternoons away from school for a good reason such as illness, medical/dental appointments which unavoidably fall in school time, emergencies or other unavoidable causes. Authorised absence cannot be granted retrospectively. Unauthorised absences are those which the school does not consider reasonable and for which no leave of absence has been granted. These include:

- Parents/carers keeping children off school unnecessarily
- truancy before or during the school day
- absences which have never been properly explained
- children who arrive at school too late to get a mark
- shopping, looking after other children or birthdays
- day trips and holidays in term time

#### **Holidays in term time:**

Taking a child on holiday in term time often interrupts the learning of the whole class as teachers have to spend time helping children catch up. We ask our parents to respect our policy and not take holidays in term time. Parents/carers needing exceptional circumstances to be considered for absences up to 10 days within one academic year should complete a leave of absence form in advance.

#### **Persistent Absentees (PA)**

A pupil is defined as a 'persistent absentee' by the DfE when they miss 15% or more schooling across the school year **for whatever reason**. Absence at this level is doing considerable damage to any child's educational prospects and the school will seek parents'/carers' fullest support and co-operation to tackle this. All absence is monitored thoroughly and PA pupils are tracked carefully through our pastoral system. We will also combine this with academic mentoring where absence affects attainment. All PA cases are also automatically made known to the Attendance Officer who will offer support to the family through the Early Intervention Service.

## **First Day Response**

All Saints operates a First Day Response system - if a child is absent and a notification is not received, parents/carers will be contacted to establish the reason why. If a child's absence continues over a period of a few days and the school has not been notified by the parents or carers, contact will be made again to establish when the child is likely to return to school. Rarely, sudden, serious circumstances do occur, when it is impossible for a family to bring a child to school. It is essential that school is informed by the parent/carer of the circumstances so that the appropriate code can be written in the register. Parents should inform the school of any relevant factors that could affect a child's attendance.

## **Illness and Medical Appointments - Advice to Parents**

These measures will lower the impact of absence for health reasons:

-Make doctor/dentist/optician appointments at the end of the school day

-Ensure that the time taken out of the school day for appointments is kept to the minimum. Children do not necessarily need to be off school for the entire morning, afternoon or day.

If your child is ill, it's likely to be due to one of a few minor health conditions. Whether you send your child to school will depend on how severe you think the illness is. You may ask yourself the following questions:

*Is your child well enough to do the activities of the school day?*

*Does your child have a condition that could be passed on to other children or school staff?*

*Would you take a day off work if you had this condition?*

### **If your child is absent we will:**

- Telephone or text you on the first day of absence if we have not heard from you;
- Invite you in to discuss the situation with the Headteacher if absence persists;
- Refer the matter to the Early Intervention Team if attendance moves below 90% without evident justifiable cause.

Parents/Carers may wish to contact the Early Intervention Team themselves to ask for help or information. They are independent of the school and will give impartial advice. This telephone number is available from the school office.

### **Lateness:**

Poor punctuality is not acceptable. If a child misses the start of the day they can miss learning and vital information. Late arriving pupils can feel uncomfortable and also disrupt lessons.

The school day starts at 8:55am and we expect your child to be in school at that time. By law, schools must take morning and afternoon registers and record the attendance or absence of every pupil.

Registers are marked by 9.10am and your child will receive a late mark if they are not in by that time.

At **9.30am** the registers will be closed. In accordance with the Regulations, if your child arrives after that time they will receive a mark that shows them to be on site, but this will **not** count as a present mark and it will mean they have an unauthorised absence. Afternoon registration is taken at 1:15pm.

If a child has a persistent late record his or her parents will be asked to meet with the Headteacher to resolve the problem.

Persistent lateness by a pupil will be dealt with through the attendance officer. Pupils' attendance and punctuality is recorded on their report and will be passed on to future schools as necessary.

### **Targets:**

The Government has set a minimum attendance target of 95% of lessons so that children's learning is not disrupted. If two weeks holiday in term time is taken then less than this percentage is achieved. All Saints School's targets are:

- for attendance rates to reach 97%
- for all absences to be legitimate and authorised
- to increase the numbers of pupils who achieve 100% attendance in the school year
- to reduce the numbers of families taking holidays during term time
- for all children to arrive on time for school, unless there is a legitimate reason for not doing so.

**The School Attendance Service**

All Saints liaises with the Dorset's School Attendance Service, which regularly carries out register checks.

# Appendix 1

## Dorset County Council Children's Services

### Penalty Notice Protocol

#### 1. Legal Basis:

Sections 444A and 444B of the Education Act 1996 empower designated Local Authority (LA) officers, Head Teachers (& Deputy and Assistant Head teachers authorised by them) and the Police to issue Penalty Notices in cases of unauthorised absence from school. The Education (Penalty Notices) (England) Regulations 2007 require the Local Authority, in consultation with all of the above, to develop a code of conduct which must be followed when issuing Penalty Notices. The issuing of Penalty Notices must conform with all requirements of the Human Rights Act 1988 and all Equal Opportunities legislation.

These provisions apply to all persons who fall within the definition of a 'parent' as set out in section 576 of the Education Act 1996. By virtue of this section 'parent' includes: all natural parents, whether they are married or not; any person or body who has parental responsibility for a child (as defined by the Children Act 1989); any person who, although not a natural parent, has care of a child. Having care of a child means that a person with whom a child lives and who looks after a child, irrespective of what their relationship is with that child, is considered to be a parent in education law.

#### 2. Rationale for Issuing Penalty Notices:

Regular and punctual attendance at school is both a legal requirement and essential for pupils to maximise their educational opportunities.

Children's Services will continue to investigate cases of non-attendance from school and, following appropriate casework, instigate legal action if applicable.

In law, an offence occurs if a parent/carer fails to secure a child's attendance at the school at which they are a registered pupil and that absence is not authorised by the school. Penalty Notices supplement the existing sanctions currently available under section 444 Education Act 1996 or section 36 Children Act 1989 to enforce attendance at school where appropriate.

Children's Services delivers this LA responsibility.

#### 3. Circumstances where a Penalty Notice may be used:

Penalty Notices can only be issued in cases where a pupil of compulsory school age has been absent and the absence has not been authorised by the school or where the pupil has persistently arrived late after the register has closed.

The level of absence that is necessary before a Penalty Notice can be issued is 10 or more half days of unauthorised absence within a 12 school week period.

The key consideration in deciding whether to issue a Penalty Notice will be whether it can be effective in helping to get the pupil who is missing education back into school.

A Penalty Notice is a suitable intervention in circumstances of parentally condoned truancy, where the parent is considered capable of securing their child's regular attendance but is not willing to take responsibility for doing so.

To ensure consistent and fair delivery of Penalty Notices, the following criteria for their use shall apply:

- No one parent will receive more than three separate Penalty Notices resulting from the unauthorised absence of an individual child in any twelve month period.
- However, where families contain more than one poorly attending pupil, multiple issues may occur.

#### 4. Procedure for issuing Penalty Notices:

Children's Services will issue Penalty Notices for all Dorset Schools.

Penalty Notices will only be issued by first class post and never as an on the spot action; this is to satisfy that all evidential requirements are in place and to meet health and safety requirements.

Children's Services will receive requests from schools, Dorset Police and neighbouring LAs.

Requests from Schools will be sent to their area's Integrated Duty Team following discussion with a Locality Social Worker or a Practice Manager.

A Penalty Notice may be issued providing it does not conflict with other intervention strategies in place or other enforcement sanctions already being processed.

Children's Services will respond to all requests within 10 school days of receipt and where all criteria are met, will:

#### In cases of unauthorised absence

- Issue a formal warning to the parent/carer of the possibility of a Penalty Notice being used.
- In the same letter set a period of 15 school days within which the pupil must have no unauthorised absence.
- Issue a Penalty Notice through the post at the end of the 15 day period if the required level of improvement has not been achieved.

### **Exceptional Circumstances**

In accordance with The Education (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2006 as amended a Penalty Notice can be issued in exceptional circumstances, for example where a parent takes a child on holiday during term time without the school authorising the absence. In such circumstances, although a minimum of 10 half day sessions of unauthorised absence will still apply before a Penalty Notice may be issued, the authorised person may issue a Penalty Notice without first issuing a formal warning to the parent as would otherwise be required. However s/he should still be satisfied that the parent was informed beforehand that, in some exceptional circumstances e.g. term time holiday, unauthorised absence could lead to a Penalty Notice being issued without further warning.

### **Who can receive a Penalty Notice?**

Any Penalty Notice issued must be addressed to one parent but a Penalty Notice may be issued to each parent liable for the offence or offences.

An authorised person has discretion when deciding whether to issue one or more parents of a child with a Penalty Notice. This is to enable account to be taken of the specific circumstances in individual cases.

### **5. Roles and Responsibilities of the Local Authority**

Local Authorities (LAs) may, in the absence of any other agreement, only issue Penalty Notices in respect of pupils registered at a school in that LA area or, in the case of an unregistered pupil, who resides in their area or for whom that LA has arranged alternative provision. LAs may only issue Penalty Notices in respect of pupils registered at a school in another LA area or, in the case of an unregistered pupil, for which another LA has arranged alternative provision if they have an agreement to that effect with the other LA.

### **6. Procedure for withdrawing Penalty Notices:**

Once issued, a Penalty Notice will only be withdrawn in the following circumstances:

- Proof has been established that the Penalty Notice was issued to the wrong person.
- The use of the Penalty Notice did not conform to the terms of this Protocol.
- The Penalty Notice contains a material error.
- The Local Authority (LA) must withdraw the Penalty Notice if it is not paid in full and the LA has not, and does not intend to, instigate legal proceedings.

### **7. Payment of Penalty Notices:**

Arrangements for payment will be detailed in the Penalty Notice.

Payment of a Penalty Notice discharges the parent/carer liability for the period in question and they cannot subsequently be prosecuted under other enforcement powers for the period covered in the Penalty Notice.

Payment of a Penalty Notice within 21 days is £60 and payment after this time but within 28 days is £120.

### **8. Non-payment of Penalty Notices:**

Non-payment of a Penalty Notice will trigger the prosecution process.

Prosecution is for the offence to which the notice relates rather than for non-payment of the notice. In the case of unauthorised absence, if there is a prosecution, it will follow the usual procedure of a prosecution for irregular attendance (including considering an Education Supervision Order as an alternative, or in addition, to prosecution) under the provisions of section 444(1) or 444(1a) The Education Act 1996.

### **9. Penalty Notices and Excluded Pupils**

Section 103 of the Education and Inspections Act 2006 places a duty on parents in relation to an excluded pupil. A parent has to ensure that their child is not present in a public place during school hours without reasonable justification during the first 5 days of each and every fixed period or permanent exclusion.

Section 105 allows for a Penalty Notice to be given to a parent guilty of an offence under Section 103. The Penalty Notice allows a parent to pay a penalty as a way of discharging any liability for the offence of failing to ensure that their child is not present in a public place on the days specified in a notice given to them. The parent must have been notified by the school at the time of the



exclusion of their duty and the days to which it relates.

#### **10. Procedure for Issuing of Penalty Notices in Cases of Exclusion**

When a child is excluded from school – either for a fixed period or permanently – and the child is found in a public place during normal school hours on a specified day of exclusion

- Issue a Penalty Notice

In order for the parent to incur either form of legal responsibility the school must give them notice informing them of the duty to ensure their child is not found in a public place, the days when this duty will apply and, as appropriate, of the arrangements for alternative provision.

If the child has been provided with alternative provision and is not attending this provision then the parent will be liable under the unauthorised absence regulations.

#### **11. Non Payment of Penalty Notices – Exclusions**

In the case of a prosecution of a parent who has failed to ensure their child is not found in a public place during a specified day of exclusion, the procedures, such as preparing and serving a summons, will be similar to those for unauthorised absence.

## Appendix 2

### Letter sent to parents when attendance is below 92%

Dear XXXX,

At All Saints, we monitor school attendance closely with the Dorset Council Attendance Support Officer. It is our policy to inform parents/carers when a child's attendance drops below 92% (5 school days this term), as at this level there can be a significant impact on children's achievement. A recent register check was carried and XXX's attendance was noted as of concern.

I appreciate that this academic year has seen a lot upheaval with unavoidable absences due to chicken pox in particular, however, despite all of this, I am obliged to keep you updated about XXX's attendance which is currently XX% (X days) for this academic year (the attendance figures do not include periods of COVID-19 related absence). As a guideline, attendance in non Covid-19 times averages (nationally) at around 96%. Low attendance will now be having an impact on his/her attainment and progress.

#### Why regular attendance is important:

- In primary schools less than 65% of children with an average of 15 days absence a year achieve good results in English and Maths. This rises to almost 90% where the average absence is less than 8 days.
- Attending school every day = 100% attendance
- 95% attendance = 2 weeks learning missed per year
- 90% attendance = 4 weeks learning missed per year
- 80% attendance = more than half a term's learning missed per year.
- 70% attendance = more than a quarter of the school year missed.
- An average attendance of 90% or less across a child's school career adds up to missing a whole year of schooling.

**Persistent absence (PA) is defined as an attendance rate of 90% or below.**

Please rest assured that our staff will endeavour to address any gaps in learning created by periods of absence. I understand fully that we have only had 70 school days this academic year and that future good attendance will minimise the impact of XXX's absence this term. If you require any support around good attendance then please do contact us.

Yours,