



'Learn to love and love to learn; in God's love each one will shine'

St. Andrew's Church of England (VC) Primary School Attendance Policy

Rationale:

At St. Andrew's Primary School it is our vision for every child in our school to have

- * positive self-esteem through inner confidence and strength
 - * creativity of thought within a life-long passion for learning
 - * excellence, high personal achievement and the experience of success
 - * a set of values by which to live
 - * an enjoyment of childhood
- developed within a caring Christian environment.

We work to enable each child in our care to fulfil their potential, whether academic, social, physical, moral or spiritual. We are committed to providing high quality inclusive learning opportunities for all children. Our vision is to develop happy children, successful learners and confident individuals. To achieve this, we believe that children need to attend school regularly and punctually in order to take full advantage of the educational opportunities available to them.

We believe that if children are to reach their full potential, then excellent attendance is crucial. Any problems that impede full attendance will be identified and addressed as speedily as possible. We also realise that children who enter a class late or leave early i.e. after the class have settled, often feel very self-conscious and uncomfortable. These feelings impact on their capacity to learn.

Aims and Targets:

We aim to have a fair and clear policy which is in line with other schools in the authority. It is the policy of our school to celebrate achievement. Full attendance is a critical factor in ensuring positive educational outcomes for our pupils. Our school will actively promote and encourage 100 per cent attendance for all our children.

Our school will give a high priority to emphasising to parents and children 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, pupils, Parent Support Advisors and Attendance Improvement Services 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.

Roles and Responsibilities:

Parents

Parents are responsible in law for ensuring that their children of compulsory school age receive an efficient education suitable to their age, ability, aptitude and any special educational needs that they may have. Most parents fulfil this responsibility by registering their children at a school.

Parents whose children are registered at a school are responsible for ensuring that their children attend and stay at school.

Parents should:

- ensure that their children arrive at school on time, appropriately dressed and ready to learn
- instil in their children an appreciation of the importance of attending school regularly
- ensure that they are aware of the attendance policy of their children's school
- impress upon their children the need to observe the school's code of conduct
- take an active interest in their children's school career, praising and encouraging good work and behaviour and attending parents' evenings and other relevant meetings
- work in partnership with their children's school to resolve issues which may lead to non-attendance
- notify their child's school if he/she is absent. This should be done as soon as possible – preferably on the first day of absence. They should also provide an explanation for the absence. This explanation should be confirmed in writing - when the child returns to school
- avoid arranging medical/dental appointments during school hours
- avoid booking holidays during term time

Schools

Schools are responsible for supporting the attendance of their pupils and for dealing with problems that may lead to non-attendance.

Schools are required to call attendance registers at the start of the morning session and once during the afternoon session and to record whether pupils are present, absent or on an approved educational activity.

For pupils of compulsory school age, schools are required to differentiate in the registers between absence that is authorised and absence that is unauthorised.

Schools should:-

- ensure that legal requirements are met
- give a high priority to attendance and punctuality
- work actively to maximise attendance rates - both in relation to individual pupils and for the pupil body as a whole - as one of their key tasks
- have clear policies in place to address persistent absence
- support parents in ensuring the regular and punctual attendance of pupils and promptly respond to any issue which may lead to non-attendance
- be sensitive to the needs of individual parents and this should be reflected in the way in which attendance issues are addressed. Schools should recognise that some parents have difficulty understanding written communications. They should also recognise the reluctance of some parents to come into school
- clearly communicate and consistently apply this policy to all parents, pupils and staff
- inform the Local Authority about pupils who do not attend school regularly or who have been continuously absent for two weeks or more (unless the absence is covered by a medical certificate)
- include data on authorised and unauthorised absence in the school prospectus and in accordance with DfE requirements
- inform parents/carers of their child's attendance and lateness figures annually through the child's annual school report; at termly Parents' Consultations (Persistent Absentees - attendance below 90% and Potential Persistent Absentees- attendance below 95%); and celebrate good attendance through the school Newsletter
- work closely with their designated Attendance Improvement Officer (AIO) to address the attendance of any child with an attendance percentage of less than 90% by making a referral and calling for advice and guidance through the new triage system in place at the LA from September 2017
- establish procedures for reintegrating long-term absentees

- maintain initiatives that promote good attendance for all children at all times e.g. first day response; rewards for good attendance etc.
- maintain a focus on the achievement of children with poor attendance and address concerns arising as appropriate.

Local Authority

The ISL Attendance Team fulfils the statutory duty of the County Council in enforcing regular school attendance. In doing so it enables schools and parents to meet their respective responsibilities.

Each maintained school in Hertfordshire will be allocated an Attendance Improvement Officer (AIO) who will work in close partnership with the school offering the following services:

- Consultation visits by the AIO allocated according to need identified using the school annual DfE Absence data. The purpose of the consultation visit will be to:-
 - identify pupils who are experiencing attendance difficulties. This will include the regular examination of attendance registers, although this responsibility rests with the school.
 - advise on focused, time-limited action which needs to be taken by the school and/or the AIO.
 - feed back and exchange information in relation to work which has been undertaken by the AIO and/or the school
 - identify areas of concern and of good practice in relation to attendance matters
 - advise the school on strategies for improving attendance
 - assist schools in identifying Persistently Absentee (PA) pupils and those at risk of becoming PA and ensuring that effective plans of action are in place through advice and guidance.
 - If the AIO Team Manager is concerned that the Headteacher is not engaging with the process of addressing issues raised the Attendance Team Manager will write to the Headteacher formally noting the concern. A copy of this letter will be sent to the relevant ISL Area Manager and the County Lead for Behaviour and Attendance
- Casework: AIOs may undertake early intervention (pre-referral) work prior to a case being accepted. This may include: telephoning or writing to the parents about their child's absences or lateness; attending a meeting with parents arranged by the school to emphasise the need for good attendance and the possibility that, if there is no improvement, the AIO will become formally involved. However, this will happen only if allocated school hours permit this. Reallocation of funds for 2017/18 had resulted in a significant fall in funding for the Attendance Team which has resulted in a strict time allocation for each school. Early intervention is the schools responsibility and the AIO will only become involved with a case in extremely sever cases,

Once a referral has been accepted, the AIO will undertake direct work with pupils and their parents including: arranging meetings between the school, parents and pupils; making home visits to assess the situation and determine what action needs to be taken; offering specific support to parents and individual pupils, either at school or elsewhere; facilitating meetings; enabling the pupil and parents to access appropriate support from other services and agencies through the use of Integrated Practice/Common Assessment process; arranging for the pupil to receive specialist support such as counselling or group work.

Attendance Improvement Officers will usually work with children whose absences have not been authorised.

6. The Use of Legal Action

If a parent fails to register a child of compulsory school age at a school (and he/she does not intend to educate the child otherwise than at school). The LA will serve a School Attendance Order under Sections 437 - 439 of the Education Act 1996.

If a pupil, who is registered at a school, fails to attend that school regularly without a legitimate reason and attempts by the Attendance Improvement Officer and the school fail to secure that pupil's return to regular attendance, the County Council will take legal action. A complaint may

be laid against the parents in the Magistrates' Court under Section 444 of the Education Act 1996, or an Education Supervision Order relating to the pupil under Section 36 of the Children Act 1989 will be applied for. Any exceptional mitigating circumstances relating to the pupil's absence will be taken into account, when considering legal action. 'Exceptional mitigating circumstances' will be determined by the Central Attendance and Employment Support Team Manager on behalf of the County Lead for Behaviour and Attendance. If 'exceptional mitigating circumstances' are not deemed to exist then cases which remain open for more than 12 weeks will be referred for legal action. Legal action will, however, be taken earlier when appropriate.

If, after legal action has been taken, the child still fails to attend school regularly the AIO will keep the case open and will, if appropriate, take further legal action at a subsequent date.

In cases where parents wilfully withhold a pupil from school, or persistently refuse to co-operate with efforts aimed at affecting a return to satisfactory school attendance, the ISL Attendance Team will promptly begin legal proceedings on the grounds that no other course of action is available.

The Central Attendance & Employment Support Team Manager on behalf of the County Lead for Behaviour and Attendance will give approval before legal proceedings are commenced.

The Attendance Team will consider applying for an Education Supervision Order when a parent finds it difficult to exercise an effective influence over a child who has developed a pattern of poor attendance.

Before an application is made for an Education Supervision Order:

- other possible means of dealing with the pupil's poor attendance will be explored
- the attitudes of the parent and pupil towards the poor attendance, and their wishes as to how it should be dealt with, will be noted
- the AIO will be of the view that the Order will have a significant effect on the pupil's attendance at school

Fixed Penalty Notices

Subsection (1) of section 23 of the Anti-Social Behaviour Act 2003 added two new sections (444A and 444B) to section 444 of the Education Act 1996 which introduced penalty notices as an alternative to prosecution and to enable parents to discharge potential liability for conviction for that offence by paying a penalty.

The Headteacher, Leadership and Governors of St. Andrew's School have taken the considered decision to reserve the right to use of Fixed Penalty Notices should the need arise. This decision will be reviewed annually on authority delegated by the Governing Body to the Governors' Chairs' Sub-Committee.

Attendance Registers

Attendance registers are legal documents that may be required as evidence in court cases.

Registers must be taken at the beginning of each morning and once during the afternoon session. They should ensure that pupils can be accounted for in an emergency and that a pupil removed from the school at lunchtime will not go unnoticed.

Registers must record whether each pupil is present; attending an approved educational activity; absent; or unable to attend due to exceptional circumstances. In the case of a pupil of compulsory school age who is absent the register must also indicate whether the absence has been authorised by the school.

Registers should open and close at regular, set times (see on). Registers should not be kept open for more than 10 minutes.

When calling the register the appropriate mark and/or symbol should be placed against each pupil's name - gaps should not be left so that entries can be made later. In marking registers, schools should use the national set of symbols as advised by the Department for Education (see Appendix 2)

When the reason for a pupil's absence cannot be established at the beginning of a session, the absence should be recorded as unauthorised and any subsequent correction to the register made as soon as practicable after the reason for the absence has been established.

All schools are required to notify the Local Authority of any pupil of compulsory school age who fails to attend school regularly, or who has been absent for a continuous period of more than 10 school days, without a legitimate reason.

Registers of all classes are kept and monitored by the office staff daily. A Log is kept of all children who arrive late.

Deletion from Roll

A pupil's name may not be deleted from the attendance register unless it has also been deleted from the admissions register. When a pupil's name is removed from the admissions register the school must notify their local Attendance Team.

A pupil of compulsory school age should have his/her name deleted from the admissions register when:

- the pupil is registered at the school in accordance with the requirements of a School Attendance Order and another school is substituted by the LA for that named in the Order or the Order is revoked
- the pupil has been registered at another school. (Schools can register Traveller children even if they are on the roll of another school. The school the child normally attends is the base school; the other registration is temporary)
- the school has received written notification from the parent that they are educating the pupil themselves. (Elective Home Education)
- the pupil has ceased to attend the school and no longer lives within a reasonable distance of the school
- a pupil granted leave of absence fails to attend the school within the 10 school days immediately following the last day of absence which was granted and the school is not satisfied that this is due to sickness or any unavoidable cause and both the school and the local authority have failed, after reasonable enquiry to locate him/her
- the pupil is 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
- the pupil has been continuously absent from school for a period of not less than 20 school days, the absence is unauthorised, *and* there are no reasonable grounds to believe that the pupil is unable to attend by reason of sickness or any unavoidable cause *and* both the school and the AIO have failed, after reasonable enquiry, to locate him/her
- the pupil has died
- the pupil has been permanently excluded and the exclusion has been upheld
- the pupil has been admitted to the school to receive nursery education and has not on completing such education transferred to a reception class at the school
- the pupil attends a special school and the LA gives consent for his/her name to be removed

If a school is told that a pupil is leaving to attend another school, staff at the school of departure should establish the pupil's new address, the name and address of the new school and the date the pupil will start there. Confirmation should then be sought from the receiving school. When this information has been obtained, the school should complete form EWN1 and return it to the local Attendance Team office. Whenever a pupil leaves a school a Common Transfer File (CTF) must be completed.

If a school is concerned about any aspect of a transfer or if a pupil has "disappeared" the matter should be drawn without delay to the attention of the Children Missing Education Officer by telephoning 01992 556867 or by written referral to CME Officer, Central Attendance & Employment Support Team, Room 134, CHO 135, County Hall, Pegs Lane, Hertford SG13 8DF.

Registers- Retention:

Registers should be kept in a secure place for a period of not less than 3 years.

Computerised registration print-outs should be made not less than once a month. A print-out of the register relating to a particular school year should be bound in a single volume and retained for a period of not less than 3 years.

Registers should be made available for inspection by Attendance Improvement Officers when requested.

Punctuality:

- Doors open at 8.45 to 8.55am. School starts at 8:55 am
- Register closes at 8.55am. Lateness is classed as any child coming into school between 8.55 am and 9:05 am
- All children arriving after 8.55 am must report to the School Office to be signed in by their parent / carer and this record retained for purposes of emergency evacuation etc.(a "U" mark is recorded in these cases)
- Any child arriving after the ten minute period recognised as lateness (i.e. after 9:05 am) will be marked as absent for the session. If a satisfactory reason is provided this will be recorded as authorised. If no such reason is given it is marked as unauthorised.
- Lateness is monitored termly. Where children have persistent lateness problems the Head will invite the parents into school to a formal meeting. The AIO is no longer accepting referrals based solely on "U" marks but will be available to offer help and advice through the Triage System.

Absence Procedures

Authorising Absence

Only the school can authorise an absence – the provision of a parental, or other, explanation in relation to a particular absence does not oblige the school to accept it. If the school does not accept the explanation offered as a valid reason for absence, or doubt remains about the explanation offered, or no explanation is forthcoming at all - the absence should be treated as unauthorised.

Schools should communicate to parents their policies with regard to the notification and categorisation of absence. Schools are encouraged to keep all absence notes for at least a term and when a pupil's absence is a cause for concern to retain the notes until there is no longer a concern

Process:

- Parents and carers are asked to contact the School Office by phone or in person on the first day their child is absent from school. A follow up confirmation of the absence must be received from the parent / carer in writing once the child returns.
- The school operates First Day Response. If the school is not notified of an absence on the first day, the school will telephone the parent or carer to request an explanation. This will be repeated on each day that there is no explanation of the child's absence.
- If this persists beyond a week details will be passed to the Head who will either write to the parent/ carer or consider a referral to the Attendance Improvement Officer or the school nurse.
- Any absence considered not to be a justified reason will remain unauthorised and a series of unauthorised absences will trigger a meeting with the Head. (see appendix 1 for exemplar letters)

Attendance (lateness or absence) is scrutinised half-termly by the **Attendance Improvement Officer (AIO)** and repeated occurrences of lateness or absence and /or any pattern in these identified and addressed by formal letter from the school in the first instance and from the AIO if the situation recurs. This process may ultimately lead to legal action being taken by the County against the Parents/Carers. (See above)

Reasons for absence:-

Authorised absences:

This is an absence agreed by the Headteacher with an explanation from parents. The Headteacher will not grant any leave of absence during term time unless there are exceptional circumstances.

These include: Sickness, hospital appointments, dentist, religious holidays, absence of allocated LA transport, close family bereavement and funerals.

It may also be granted under circumstances deemed by the Headteacher to be wholly exceptional; for traveller children travelling for occupational reasons and agreed with the school and for a child taking part in performance within the meaning of s37 of the Children and Young Person's Act 1963(c) for which a child performance licence has been issued. (HCC will not issue this without written permission of the Headteacher).

Authorisation for extended periods of sickness absence (of over a week's duration) will require medical evidence. Medical appointments should be arranged if possible outside the school day. Where this is not possible it is expected that children only miss part of the day.

Unauthorised absences:

This is an absence not agreed –when no explanation is forthcoming.

An unauthorised absence will be necessarily placed on a child's attendance record, which will follow them throughout their school career.

These include:

Any absence not covered by the above.

Term time absence from school:

The school supports the view that every lesson counts and actively discourages parents from taking holidays in term time.

- Headteachers no longer have the discretion to authorise any absence in term time without exceptional circumstances. (Amendments to the 2006 Pupil Registration (England) Regulations (September 2103). Therefore – NO leave of absence for holidays will be granted during term time.
- In exceptional circumstances the Headteacher will determine the number of school days that a child can be away from school if the leave is granted.
- All requests for absence must be made in writing to the head prior to the absence being taken. Application forms are available from the School Office and should be submitted at least two weeks before the first day of intended absence unless not possible. Any absence which is not requested in advance will be automatically recorded as unauthorised.
- Requests for absences of five or more academic days must be preceded by an appointment with the Headteacher (or Deputy Headteacher in her absence).
- Any absence request for a child with less than 90% attendance for whatever reason will be refused.

Parents are strongly urged to avoid booking a family holiday during term time. Parents do not have the right to take their child out of school for such a holiday.

Other arrangements:

Approved Off-Site Educational Activity: Pupils who are engaged in off-site educational activities should be recorded as attending (or absent from) an approved educational activity using the appropriate code.

The key features of approved educational activity are that they must be:

- educational *and*
- approved by the school *and*
- supervised by the school or someone authorised by the school

A pupil should be recorded as approved educational activity if he/she is attending:

- a field trip or educational visit (Code V)
- an approved sporting activity approved/supervised with school authorisation (Code P)
- the pupil is attending an interview with another educational establishment (Code J)
- an off-site educational activity (Code B) which must be supervised in-line with the school's responsibilities for Safeguarding and Pupil Welfare

- the pupil is dual registered at another educational establishment (Code D) Note: This code is used to indicate that the pupil was not expected to attend the session in question because they were scheduled to attend the other school at which they are registered. This code is not counted as a possible attendance in the school census. This code should be used where pupils are attending an ESC, hospital or special school on a temporary basis or for Gypsy, Roma and Traveller children are known to be registered at another school for the session in question. Each school should only record the attendance/absence for those sessions where the pupil is expected to attend. Schools must ensure that they follow up all absence in a timely manner.

Flexi-schooling: Headteachers can agree to flexi-schooling arrangements where the parents take on the responsibility for their child's education for part of the school week. Such requests from parents are considered very carefully before and a written agreement with the parent is agreed. Where agreement has been reached, pupils should be marked authorised absent from school during periods when they are receiving home education. (C)

Part-time time-tables: All pupils of compulsory school age are entitled to a full-time education. In exceptional circumstances there may be a need for a part time timetable to meet an individual pupil's needs. A part time timetable must be time limited and must not be treated as a long term solution. The school should mark the sessions where the pupil is not expected to attend as authorised absence. (C)

Reintegration Strategies:

For any pupil returning to school after an unavoidable medical absence of longer than two weeks, the school will make provision to allow the pupil to ease back into the school system if necessary. The school will implement a supportive Pastoral Support Programme (PSP) which will include those members of the school staff working with the child and will follow County guidelines. The school will liaise with medical professionals and with ESTMA (Educational Support Through Medical Absence) in doing so as appropriate.

Raising the profile of attendance:

The school will employ a range of strategies to raise the profile of and encourage good attendance:

Weekly:

In Child of the Week assembly, the class with the best attendance will receive an award to be selected in liaison with their class teacher. Often this will be additional playtime. Their achievement is noted on the Attendance Board in the Hall and reported to parents via the Head's weekly Newsletter.

Termly

- Each child with 100% attendance will be presented with a certificate
- One term with 100% will receive a bronze certificate.
- Two terms with 100% will receive a silver certificate.
- Three terms with 100% will receive a gold certificate.

These will be presented at an Attendance Assembly to which parents of those being presented with gold certificates will be invited. 100% attendance is also recognised by the LA who issue certificates to those pupils achieving this level of attendance. These are also presented during the Assembly

Policy 'overseen and approved' by: Governors' School Improvement, Monitoring, Curriculum and Ethos Committee

Written: Autumn 2013

Reviewed and rewritten: Nov 2017

(in line with CSF0136 ' Local Authority Policy on School Attendance)

To be reviewed: Nov 2019

Appendix 2

ATTENDANCE CODES, DESCRIPTIONS AND MEANINGS

CODE	DESCRIPTION	MEANING
/	Present (AM)	Present
\	Present (PM)	Present
B	Present at off site educational activity	Approved Education Activity
C	Leave of absence authorised by the school	Authorised absence
D	Dual registered at another educational establishment	Not expected to attend this session
E	Excluded (no alternative provision made)	Authorised absence
G	Holiday (NOT agreed <u>or</u> days in excess of agreement)	Unauthorised absence
H	Holiday authorised by the school	Authorised absence
I	Illness (NOT medical or dental etc. appointments)	Authorised absence
J	Interview	Approved Education Activity
L	Late (before registers closed)	Present
M	Medical/Dental appointments	Authorised absence
N	No reason yet provided for absence	Unauthorised absence
O	Other unauthorised absence	Unauthorised absence
P	Supervised sporting/musical activity	Approved Education Activity
R	Day set aside exclusively for religious observance	Authorised absence
S	Study leave	Authorised absence
T	Gypsy, Roma and Traveller absence for occupational reasons	Authorised absence
U	Late and arrived after the registers closed	Unauthorised absence
V	Educational visit or trip	Approved Education Activity
W	Work experience	Approved Education Activity
X	Not required to be in school (non-compulsory school age pupils)	Not counted in possible attendances
Y	Unable to attend due to exceptional circumstances	Not counted in possible attendances
Z	Pupil not on admission register	Not counted in possible attendances
#	School closed to all pupils (Planned)	Not counted in possible attendances

Detailed advice on the use of these registration codes can be found at www.education.gov.uk/aboutdfe/advice/f00221879/advice-on-school-attendance