

# **Attendance Policy**

## **St Helen Auckland Community Primary School**



**Academic Year**

**2022/23**

## Attendance Policy

### St Helen Auckland Community Primary School

#### Document History Log:

<b>Author of document:</b>	Rachael Carroll	<b>Job role:</b>	Parent Support Advisor and Attendance Lead
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### Attendance key contact List

Name	Role	Contact details
Janet Elmes	Head Teacher	01388604168 j.elmes100@sthapprimary.co.uk
Rachael Carroll	Designated senior leader with responsibility for attendance	01388 604168 r.carroll200@sthapprimary.co.uk
Mandy Bostock	Office Manager	01388604168
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Helen Lyon	Attendance Improvement Team School Link	<a href="mailto:Helen.Lyon@durham.gov.uk">Helen.Lyon@durham.gov.uk</a>
Heather Airey	Attendance Governor	01388604168 <a href="mailto:h.todd102@sthapprimary.co.uk">h.todd102@sthapprimary.co.uk</a>

**Who in school can help if you are experiencing difficulty / require help and support:**

Name	Role / type of help	Contact details
Janet Elmes	Head Teacher	01388604168
Rachael Carroll	Parent Support Advisor	01388604168
Naomi Treend	SENCO	01388 604168
Yours child's class teacher.		01388604168

## **Introduction to our school attendance vision and ethos**

**St Helen Auckland Community Primary** School seeks to ensure that all of its pupils receive an education which maximises opportunities for each pupil to realise his/her true potential. The school will strive to provide a calm, orderly, safe, and supportive environment where all pupils want to be and are keen and ready to learn within a culture that promotes the benefits of high attendance.

Regular school attendance plays a vital role in children's wellbeing and their education, ensuring that their current learning needs are being met but also building their future ability to learn.

As attendance is the essential foundation to positive outcomes for all pupils', improving attendance is everyone's business, a concerted effort across all teaching and nonteaching staff in school, governing body, the local authority, and other local partners.

Some pupils find it harder than others to attend school and therefore at all stages of improving attendance, the school and partners will work with pupils and parents to remove any barriers to attendance by building strong and trusting relationships and working together to put the right support in place.

### **Why is regular attendance so important?**

Being in school every day that it is open, is important to your child's achievement, wellbeing, and their wider development. There is a renewed national focus on maximising pupils' time in the classroom, as evidence shows that the students with the highest attendance throughout their time in school gain the best GCSE and A Level results.

### **Here's what the data shows:**

Pupils with higher attainment at KS2 and KS4 had lower levels of absence over the key stage compared to those with lower attainment.

Pupils who did not achieve the expected standard in reading, writing and maths in 2019 had an overall absence rate of 4.7% over the key stage, compared with 3.5% among pupils who achieved the expected standard and 2.7% among those who achieved the higher standard.

Pupils who did not achieve grade 9 to 4 in English and maths GCSEs in 2019 had an overall absence rate of 8.8% over the key stage, compared with 5.2% among pupils who achieved a grade 4 and 3.7% among pupils who achieved grade 9 to 5 in both English and maths.

Generally, the higher the percentage of sessions missed across the key stage at KS2 and KS4, the lower the level of attainment at the end of the key stage.

Among pupils with no missed sessions over KS2, 83.9% achieved the expected standard compared to 40.2% of pupils who were persistently absent.

Among pupils with no missed sessions over KS4, 83.7% achieved grades 9 to 4 in English and maths compared to 35.6% of pupils who were persistently absent.

**This policy is supported by our policies on:**

- Safeguarding
- Keeping Children Safe in School
- Supporting Pupils with medical conditions
- Behaviour policy
- Equality, diversion and Cohesion Policy

This policy has been written in line with Dfe Working together to improve school attendance guidance published in May 2022.

**The school and all partners will work together to:**

**EXPECT**

Aspire to high standards of attendance from all pupils and parents and build a culture where all can, and want to, be in school and ready to learn by prioritising attendance improvement across the school.



**MONITOR**

Rigorously use attendance data to identify patterns of poor attendance (at individual and cohort level) as soon as possible so all parties can work together to resolve them before they become entrenched.



**LISTEN AND UNDERSTAND**

When a pattern is spotted, discuss with pupils and parents to listen to understand barriers to attendance and agree how all partners can work together to resolve them.



**FACILITATE SUPPORT**

Remove barriers in school and help pupils and parents to access the support they need to overcome the barriers outside of school. This might include an early help or whole family plan where absence is a symptom of wider issues.



**FORMALISE SUPPORT**

Where absence persists and voluntary support is not working or not being engaged with, partners should work together to explain the consequences clearly and ensure support is also in place to enable families to respond. Depending on the circumstances this may include formalising support through a parenting contract or education supervision order.



**ENFORCE**

Where all other avenues have been exhausted and support is not working or not being engaged with, enforce attendance through statutory intervention or prosecution to protect the pupil's right to an education.

## 1. Expectations

We recognise that the relationship between attendance and achievement of our students is inextricably linked.

Regular school attendance is crucial to maximise pupil progress and enjoyment of learning, and for this reason the school is dedicated to ensuring its attendance policy is adhered to.

### **School will ensure that:**

- All students have an equal right, and access to, an education in accordance with the national curriculum, or agreed alternative.
- Attendance is a priority across the school.
- Aspire to high standards on attendance.
- Students will not be deprived of their education opportunities by, either their own absence or lateness, or that of students.
- Action is taken where necessary to secure an improvement in attendance.
- That there is a culture amongst all stake holders around the importance of regular attendance.
- All staff have high expectations of pupils and monitor it's affect on pupil progress.

### **What is expected of Parents?**

- To contact school on the first day of their child's absence and inform school why they are absent. Then keep school informed at regular intervals throughout the absence until they return to school.
- To ensure that their child arrives at school on time, with everything they need for the school day. A reason should given for lateness.
- Take holidays during the school holidays and only take leave of absences in extenuating circumstances.
- Promote the value of a good education and the importance of regular school attendance.
- Engage with their child's learning and take an interest in what they do.
- Do everything they can to prevent unnecessary absences from school.
- To work closely with the school and the Parent Support Adviser to resolve any problems that may impede a child's attendance.

## 2. Attendance data

St Helen Auckland Community Primary School rigorously analyses attendance on a yearly, half termly and weekly basis to allow us to quickly identify patterns of poor attendance this maybe for individuals or cohorts within in school. We also benchmark our data against local and national data to see how we compare. This allows us to quickly identify where there are patterns of poor attendance and to put appropriate support in place before issues become entrenched.

### **3. Listening to and understanding barriers to attendance**

When a pattern of poor attendance is identified school will speak with parents and pupils to identify what the barriers to attendance are. Initially this maybe on a more informal basis but if it is needed a plan of how we can move forward to improve attendance will be put in place with support if required.

### **3. Facilitate support**

School can support families improve their child attendance in a number ways these include:

- Listening to parents and pupil's reasons for low attendance or poor punctuality.
- Regular meetings with parents to improve attendance.
- TAF/ multi-agency meetings.
- Making reasonable adjustments.
- Leasing with Health professionals including referrals to school nurse.
- Referrals to other services for support including One Point.
- Home visits.

Rachael Carroll (Parent Support Advisor and Attendance Lead) and Naomi Treend (SENCO) can support parents accessing other services.

Where persistent or severe absenteeism is sustained and external support is not effective or not engaged with, the school will call upon the support of the Attendance Improvement Team.

### **5. Formalise support**

Where absence persists and voluntary support is not working or not being engaged with, partners will work together to explain the consequences clearly and ensure support is also in place to enable families to respond. Depending on the circumstances this may include formalising support through a parenting contract or education supervision order.

### **6. Enforce**

Where all other avenues have been exhausted and support is not working or not being engaged with, attendance may be enforced where necessary through statutory intervention or prosecution to protect the pupil's right to an education.



## **General / frequently asked questions**

### **When can children be absent from school?**

When you register your child at school, you have a legal duty to ensure your child attends that school regularly.

This means that your child must attend every day that the school is open, unless:

- Your child is too ill to attend that day.
- You have asked in advance and been given permission by the school for your child to be absent on that day due to exceptional circumstances.
- Your child cannot attend school on that day because it is a day you are taking part in religious observance
- Your local authority is responsible for arranging your child's transport to school and it is not available on that day or has not been provided yet; or
- You are a gypsy/traveller family with no fixed abode, and you are required to travel for work that day meaning your child cannot attend their usual school. In most circumstances, however, your child is required to attend another school temporarily during such absences.

These are the only circumstances where schools can permit your child to be absent.

### **What do I need to do if my child needs to be absent from school for one of those reasons?**

You should contact their school as early as possible to explain why. If not, your child's school will contact you on the first morning of their absence to find out why.

All parents can request a 'leave of absence' for their child which gives them permission to be absent from school. Leaves of absence must be applied for before your child will be absent and will only be granted in exceptional circumstances.

Your child's headteacher has the final say over whether to approve the request and how long your child can be absent.

Their decision will be made after considering the specific facts and circumstances behind your request.

### **Can I take my child on holiday during term time?**

Parents should plan their holidays around school breaks and avoid requesting leaves of absence for holidays unless it is unavoidable.

As leave of absence is only granted in exceptional circumstances, it is unlikely that your child's headteacher will agree a leave of absence for a family holiday.

If permission is refused and you keep your child off school on the days requested, you are likely to be committing an offence and be issued a fixed penalty notice or be

prosecuted by your local authority. Fixed Penalty Notices are issued when there are 14 sessions of unauthorised leave of absence in a maximum 12 rolling weeks.

## **Attendance Procedures and Absence Processes**

### **Attendance and absence management**

#### **Promoting good attendance and punctuality**

The school recognises that many families work extremely hard to ensure that their child has good attendance at school. For this reason we want to recognise this and encourage it to continue. We will promote good attendance in the following ways:

- Sharing attendance for the week at our weekly celebrations assembly.
- Weekly Top Table at lunch time, 10 minutes extra playtime for the class with the highest attendance and a certificate home.
- Messages home to parents whose children have worked hard to improve their attendance.
- Sending home attendance certificates each half term using our traffic light system. Green for 96% and over, yellow for 93-95.9%, orange for 90-92.9% and red for under 90%. Including an explanation of how many days each percentage equates to.
- 96% attendance prize draw each half term for a Supermarket food voucher.
- Discussions at parents meeting with teachers around attendance.
- Attendance leaflet for parents summarising key points.
- Work with parents in the Early years so that good patterns of attendance are embedded Early.

#### **Communication**

The school requests that all parents please remember to report and explain the reasons for absence on the first day and to make sure your contact and emergency contact details are up to date.

It is vital, that school can contact parents if their child becomes unwell during the school day or in order to discuss the reasons for absence.

The school will analyse absence across the school. As a result of this, some families will receive letters to inform them if their child's absence is lower than it should be if no prior discussion has taken place (unless this is due to, for example medical needs). If we have concerns regarding your child's attendance then we may contact you by phone, letter, invite you to a meeting or make a visit to your home.

As a parent you may identify concerns about school attendance early on if you have seen a change in your child's attitude to school or in their willingness to attend. If this is the case, please share your concerns with us and we can work together to ensure that school attendance doesn't ever need to decline. The quicker that concerns are shared, the quicker they can be resolved.

The school will work with you to discuss ways that we can offer support in finding a way to improve attendance.

### **On the first day of absence**

If a child is absent for any reason, parents or carers are asked to phone the School Office or send a message via Parent Pay by 9am stating the reason for your child's absence. If a child is absent from school and there is no phone call from home then school will phone home to inform parents that the child is not in school and enquire about a reason why. If you choose to send a message by Parent Pay this may be followed up by a phone call to seek further information.

If school are unable to contact Parents on the phone then the school will complete a home visit and contact other emergency contacts that are held by the school. If the school still have concerns about a child or Parent/Carer's welfare they will take any action relevant action to assure the safety of the child and/or Parent/Carer.

If the school receives no reason for the absence then upon the child returning to school a letter will be sent home requesting a reason for the absence. If the school still receives no reason for any absence then an unauthorised absence will be recorded. Continued absenteeism and unauthorised absences could result in more formal action.

### **Periods of extended absence**

Parents are requested to keep school informed at regular interval throughout the absence. If a phone call is not received, the school will call or complete a home visit to verify the absence and take any relevant action in relation to assuring itself of the child's welfare.

### **Medical Appointments**

Doctors and dentist's appointments should be made outside of school time. If this is not possible, you should notify the school office and provide proof of your child's appointment to the school office. Your child should miss the minimum amount of school time necessary. If they are well enough to come back to school following the appointment they need to.

### **Absence authorisation**

The High Court has confirmed that the school's Head Teacher authorises absences. In some circumstances, the school may request that parent's provide medical evidence to support absences.

We are committed to supporting your child effectively, to ensure that they get the very best education possible and therefore have the best life chances. All challenges made concerning persistent absences, will be handled sensitively and in confidence.

### **Punctuality:**

The school gates open at 8.50am. Registration time is at **9am** at which point the pupil entry gates will be locked and all pupils must enter by the main entrance. It is so important for all children to be on time, as missing the first few minutes of any lesson

can be disruptive and unsettling, both for children and for the rest of the class. If a child arrives in school up to 30 minutes after this time then a late mark will be recorded in the register (L). Registers will be closed at this point and any children arriving more than 30 minutes late will be recorded as (U) which is a late after registers close mark and this is classed as an unauthorised absence (a number of these marks can also contribute to more formal action being considered).

### **If your child is late for school:**

All children arriving late at school will be asked the reason for their lateness and this will be recorded on the school's attendance data base (SIMs), along with the number of minutes they arrived late to school.

### **If a child is late (after registers close) for school on a number of occasions.**

If a child is arriving late for school on a regular basis then school will contact Parents/Carer to try and establish the reason for the lateness and to see if any support is needed

**If lateness becomes persistent** with no identifiable reason then a more formalised package of support will be offered. This could include:

- Giving a family an alarm clock.
- Organising an attendance planning meeting to put a support plan/parent contract in place.
- Organising a multi-agency meeting.
- Referrals to partner agencies who can offer support.
- Looking at what other reasonable adjustments school can make.

If persistent lateness does not improve or efforts to improve punctuality are not engaged with or do not improve then school will call upon the support of the Attendance Improvement Team.

### **If the school continues to have concerns about a child's punctuality**

Where all other avenues have been exhausted and support is not working or not being engaged with, persistent lateness may be enforced where necessary through statutory intervention or prosecution to protect the pupil's right to an education.

### **Help & Support**

If you need help with attendance, it is important that you contact school about the issues as soon as possible. The quicker we know what the problem is, the quicker that we can work together to solve it and put a plan together which will meet your child's needs and ensure your child can benefit from all that school has to offer.

Where needed we can also involve other services to make sure that your child and your family gets the right support, at the right time from the right people.

### **Leave of Absence in Term Time**

Head teachers are only able to grant leave of absence during term time **in exceptional circumstances**. The school will consider each request of absence individually; taking into account the circumstances, such as; the nature of the event

for which leave is sought, the pupil's prior attendance and any important events taking place in school at that time. School may ask for evidence to back up the absence before authorising the leave of absence.

An application for leave of absence must be made well in advance via a form which is available from the school office. Where a leave of absence is granted, the head teacher will determine the number of days a pupil can be away from school.

A leave of absence is granted entirely at the head teacher's discretion. If an application for leave of absence is not made prior to the time of the required absence, then the absence will be recorded as unauthorised regardless of circumstances.

**Please note that absence will not be authorised under any circumstances during any period of public examinations or internal assessments.**

### **Pupils with specific needs**

Some pupils face greater barriers to attendance than their peers. These include pupils who suffer from long term medical conditions or who have special educational needs and disabilities. Their right to an education is the same as any other pupil in school and therefore the attendance ambition should be the same.

For these pupils staff will work sensitively with parents and other stakeholders to ensure that these pupils have a specific approach to suit their individual needs. This may include:

- Making reasonable adjustments where a pupil has a disability or medical need.
- Putting in place an individual health care plan.
- Ensuring the provision outlined Education, Health and Care plans is accessed.
- Considering if additional support is needed from external partners such as the local authority or health services and then putting referrals into services in a timely manner.
- Working with the Attendance Improvement Team to develop specific approaches for pupils with medical needs.

### **Children Missing from Education**

If you move from the area and your whereabouts are unknown, the school can legally remove your child from the roll after 20 school days of unauthorised absence. It is **vital that you keep school informed of any change of details** and regularly update them if details change. Your child may be at risk of losing their school place if your whereabouts are not known.

It is also important that emergency contact information is kept up to date and that if you are leaving the area, you provide details of where and how you can be contacted. If you do not do this and the school is unable to trace your child, this would be treated as a **safeguarding matter**.

## **Roles and Responsibilities**

Please see key contact list and details at the start of this document.