

Attendance & Special Absence in Term Time policy

St Michael's CE Primary School



Approved by:	Sarah Mortimer	Date: April 2023
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Next review due by:	September 2023	

Attendance Policy

1. Aims

We are committed to meeting our obligation with regards to school attendance through our whole-school culture and ethos that values good attendance, including:

- Promoting good attendance
- Reducing absence, including persistent and severe absence
- Ensuring every pupil has access to the full-time education to which they are entitled
- Acting early to address patterns of absence
- Building strong relationships with families to ensure pupils have the support in place to attend school

We will also promote and support punctuality in attending lessons.

2. Legislation and guidance

This policy meets the requirements of the [working together to improve school attendance](#) from the Department for Education (DfE), and refers to the DfE's statutory guidance on [school attendance parental responsibility measures](#). These documents are drawn from the following legislation setting out the legal powers and duties that govern school attendance:

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

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

3. Roles and responsibilities

3.1 The governing board

The governing board is responsible for:

- Promoting the importance of school attendance across the school's policies and ethos
- Making sure school leaders fulfil expectations and statutory duties
- Regularly reviewing and challenging attendance data
- Monitoring attendance figures for the whole school
- Making sure staff receive adequate training on attendance
- Holding the headteacher to account for the implementation of this policy

3.2 The headteacher

The headteacher is responsible for:

- Implementation of this policy at the school
- Monitoring school-level absence data and reporting it to governors
- Supporting staff with monitoring the attendance of individual pupils

- Monitoring the impact of any implemented attendance strategies
- Issuing fixed-penalty notices, where necessary

3.3 The designated senior leader responsible for attendance

The designated senior leader is responsible for:

- Leading attendance across the school
- Offering a clear vision for attendance improvement
- Evaluating and monitoring expectations and processes
- Having an oversight of data analysis
- Devising specific strategies to address areas of poor attendance identified through data
- Arranging calls and meetings with parents to discuss attendance issues
- Delivering targeted intervention and support to pupils and families

The designated senior leader responsible for attendance is the Headteacher and can be contacted via the school office.

3.4 The attendance officer

The school attendance officer is responsible for:

- Monitoring and analysing attendance data (see section 7)
- Benchmarking attendance data to identify areas of focus for improvement
- Providing regular attendance reports to school staff and reporting concerns about attendance to the designated senior leader responsible for attendance and the headteacher
- Working with education welfare officers to tackle persistent absence
- Advising the headteacher (authorised by the headteacher) when to issue fixed-penalty notices

The attendance officer is Elaine Stevenson and can be contacted via the school office.

3.5 Class teachers

Class teachers are responsible for recording attendance on a daily basis, using the correct codes, and submitting this information to the school office.

3.6 School office staff

School office staff will:

- Take calls from parents about absence on a day-to-day basis and record it on the school system
- Update the attendance lead/Headteacher with attendance data.

3.7 Parents/carers

Parents/carers are expected to:

- Make sure their child attends every day on time
- Call the school to report their child's absence before 9am on the day of the absence and each subsequent day of absence, and advise when they are expected to return
- Provide the school with more than 1 emergency contact number for their child
- Ensure that, where possible, appointments for their child are made outside of the school day

3.8 Pupils

Pupils are expected to:

- Attend school every day on time

4. Recording attendance

4.1 Attendance register

We will keep an attendance register, and place all pupils onto this register.

We will take our attendance register at the start of the first session of each school day and once during the second session. It will mark whether every pupil is:

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

Any amendment to the attendance register will include:

- The original entry
- The amended entry
- The reason for the amendment
- The date on which the amendment was made
- The name and position of the person who made the amendment

See appendix 1 for the DfE attendance codes.

We will also record:

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

We will keep every entry on the attendance register for 3 years after the date on which the entry was made.

Pupils must arrive in school by 8:50am each school day.

The register for the first session will be taken at 8:35am and will be kept open until 8:50am, the register for the second session will be taken at 1pm.

4.2 Unplanned absence

The pupil's parent/carer must notify the school of the reason for the absence on the first day of an unplanned absence by 9am or as soon as practically possible by calling the school office staff (see also section 7).

We will mark absence due to illness as authorised unless the school has a genuine concern about the authenticity of the illness.

If the authenticity of the illness is in doubt, the school may ask the pupil's parent/carer to provide medical evidence, such as a doctor's note, prescription, appointment card or other appropriate form of evidence. We will not ask for medical evidence unnecessarily.

If the school is not satisfied about the authenticity of the illness, the absence will be recorded as unauthorised and parents/carers will be notified of this in advance.

4.3 Planned absence

Attending a medical or dental appointment will be counted as authorised as long as the pupil's parent/carer notifies the school in advance of the appointment.

However, we encourage parents/carers to make medical and dental appointments out of school hours where possible. Where this is not possible, the pupil should be out of school for the minimum amount of time necessary.

The pupil's parent/carer must also apply for other types of term-time absence as far in advance as possible of the requested absence. Go to section 5 to find out which term-time absences the school can authorise.

4.4 Lateness and punctuality

A pupil who arrives late:

- After the register has closed will be marked as late, using the appropriate code

4.5 Following up unexplained absence

Where any pupil we expect to attend school does not attend, or stops attending, without reason, the school will:

- Call the pupil's parent/carer on the morning of the first day of unexplained absence to ascertain the reason. If the school cannot reach any of the pupil's emergency contacts, the school may contact external support agencies (police, child services, MASH)
- Identify whether the absence is approved or not
- Identify the correct attendance code to use and input it as soon as the reason for absence is ascertained – this will be no later than 5 working days after the session
- Call the parent/carer on each day that the absence continues without explanation to ensure proper safeguarding action is taken where necessary. If absence continues, the school will consider involving an education welfare officer

4.6 Reporting to parents/carers

The school will regularly inform parents about their child's attendance and absence levels if they fall below 90%.

5. Authorised and unauthorised absence

5.1 Approval for term-time absence

The headteacher will only grant a leave of absence to a pupil during term time if they consider there to be 'exceptional circumstances'. A leave of absence is granted at the headteacher's discretion, including the length of time the pupil is authorised to be absent for.

'Exceptional circumstances' are considered at the Headteachers discretion.

The school considers each application for term-time absence individually, taking into account the specific facts, circumstances and relevant context behind the request.

Any request should be submitted as soon as it is anticipated and, where possible, at 3 weeks before the absence, and in accordance with any leave of absence request form, accessible via the school office. The headteacher may require evidence to support any request for leave of absence.

Valid reasons for **authorised absence** include:

- Illness and medical/dental appointments (see sections 4.2 and 4.3 for more detail)
- Religious observance – where the day is exclusively set apart for religious observance by the religious body to which the pupil's parents belong. If necessary, the school will seek advice from the parents' religious body to confirm whether the day is set apart
- Traveller pupils travelling for occupational purposes – this covers Roma, English and Welsh gypsies, Irish and Scottish travellers, showmen (fairground people) and circus people, bargees (occupational boat dwellers) and

new travellers. Absence may be authorised only when a traveller family is known to be travelling for occupational purposes and has agreed this with the school, but it is not known whether the pupil is attending educational provision.

- Visiting secondary school setting open days.

5.2 Legal sanctions

The school or local authority can fine parents for the unauthorised absence of their child from school, where the child is of compulsory school age.

If issued with a fine, or penalty notice, each parent must pay £60 within 21 days or £120 within 28 days. The payment must be made directly to the local authority.

Penalty notices can be issued by a headteacher, local authority officer or the police.

The decision on whether or not to issue a penalty notice may take into account:

- The number of unauthorised absences occurring within a rolling academic year
- One-off instances of irregular attendance, such as holidays taken in term time without permission
- Where an excluded pupil is found in a public place during school hours without a justifiable reason

If the payment has not been made after 28 days, the local authority can decide whether to prosecute or withdraw the notice.

6. Strategies for promoting attendance

The school will use and review a variety of methods to promote attendance. These methods may change depending on effectiveness.

7. Attendance monitoring

7.1 Monitoring attendance

The School will:

- Monitor attendance and absence data half-termly, termly and yearly across the school and at an individual pupil level
- Identify whether or not there are particular groups of children whose absences may be a cause for concern

Pupil-level absence data will be collected each term and published at national and local authority level through the DfE's school absence national statistics releases. The underlying school-level absence data is published alongside the national statistics. The school will compare attendance data to the national average, and share this with the governing board.

7.2 Analysing attendance

The School will:

- Analyse attendance and absence data regularly to identify pupils or cohorts that need additional support with their attendance, and use this analysis to provide targeted support to these pupils and their families
- Look at historic and emerging patterns of attendance and absence, and then develop strategies to address these patterns

7.3 Using data to improve attendance

The School will:

- Provide regular attendance reports to class teachers, and other school leaders, to facilitate discussions with pupils and families

- Use data to monitor and evaluate the impact of any interventions put in place in order to modify them and inform future strategies

7.4 Reducing persistent and severe absence

Persistent absence is where a pupil misses 10% or more of school, and severe absence is where a pupil misses 50% or more of school.

The school will:

- Use attendance data to find patterns and trends of persistent and severe absence
- Parents will receive letters outlining attendance if fall below 90%
- School will consult with EWO (educational Welfare Officer) regarding those falling below 85% and discuss next steps.
- Hold regular meetings with the parents of pupils who the school (and/or local authority) considers to be vulnerable, or are persistently or severely absent, to discuss attendance and engagement at school
- Provide access to wider support services to remove the barriers to attendance

8. Monitoring arrangements

This policy will be reviewed as guidance from the local authority or DfE is updated, annually by the Headteacher. At every review, the policy will be approved by the full governing board.

9. Links with other policies

This policy links to the following policies:

- Child protection and safeguarding policy
- Behaviour policy

Appendix 1: attendance codes

The following codes are taken from the DfE's guidance on school attendance.

Code	Definition	Scenario
/	Present (am)	Pupil is present at morning registration
\	Present (pm)	Pupil is present at afternoon registration
L	Late arrival	Pupil arrives late before register has closed
B	Off-site educational activity	Pupil is at a supervised off-site educational activity approved by the school
D	Dual registered	Pupil is attending a session at another setting where they are also registered
J	Interview	Pupil has an interview with a prospective employer/educational establishment

P	Sporting activity	Pupil is participating in a supervised sporting activity approved by the school
V	Educational trip or visit	Pupil is on an educational visit/trip organised, or approved, by the school
W	Work experience	Pupil is on a work experience placement

Code	Definition	Scenario
Authorised absence		
C	Authorised leave of absence	Pupil has been granted a leave of absence due to exceptional circumstances
E	Excluded	Pupil has been excluded but no alternative provision has been made
H	Authorised holiday	Pupil has been allowed to go on holiday due to exceptional circumstances
I	Illness	School has been notified that a pupil will be absent due to illness
M	Medical/dental appointment	Pupil is at a medical or dental appointment
R	Religious observance	Pupil is taking part in a day of religious observance
S	Study leave	Year 11 pupil is on study leave during their public examinations
T	Gypsy, Roma and traveller absence	Pupil from a traveller community is travelling, as agreed with the school
Unauthorised absence		
G	Unauthorised holiday	Pupil is on a holiday that was not approved by the school

N	Reason not provided	Pupil is absent for an unknown reason (this code should be amended when the reason emerges, or replaced with code O if no reason for absence has been provided after a reasonable amount of time)
O	Unauthorised absence	School is not satisfied with reason for pupil's absence
U	Arrival after registration	Pupil arrived at school after the register closed

Code	Definition	Scenario
X	Not required to be in school	Pupil of non-compulsory school age is not required to attend
Y	Unable to attend due to exceptional circumstances	School site is closed, there is disruption to travel as a result of a local/national emergency, or pupil is in custody
Z	Pupil not on admission register	Register set up but pupil has not yet joined the school
#	Planned school closure	Whole or partial school closure due to half-term/bank holiday/INSET day

Special Absence in Term Time Policy

Introduction:

The staff and Governors of St. Michael's CE Primary School are committed to providing the finest education possible. We believe that this can be achieved, with the support of parents by ensuring that holidays are not taken in school time. Absence during term-time for any reasons interrupts the continuity of teaching and learning – disrupting the educational progress of pupils.

Good attendance is essential if pupils are to take full advantage of all aspects of school life, acquire the skills they need and develop good habits.

There is a clear correlation between regular attendance and achievement; as attendance deteriorates, so will performance and achievement.

Our Aims

To encourage parents to support their children in achieving 100% attendance

The Law

The Education (Schools and Further Education) Regulations 1981 give schools the discretionary power to grant leave for the purpose of an annual holiday during term time. The Education (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2006 clarifies that the granting of a term time holiday (of up to 10 days) is subject to the “special circumstances” of the request. Requests for holidays in term time exceeding ten days should only be granted only in “exceptional circumstances”.

Only the school, within the context of the law, can approve absence, not parents.

It is only the school, within the context of the law (Section 199 of the Education Act 1993), which can approve absences in terms whether in “special” or “exceptional” circumstances, **NOT** the parents/carers.

Term Dates

The school holiday dates are published each year in advance and parents/carers should only book their family holidays during school holidays.

Authorised/Unauthorised Absence

The question of authorised and unauthorised absence is a fairly recent issue and to help parents distinguish between the two the following guidelines are included. If after reading these guidelines you are still in doubt please contact the Headteacher.

Authorised Absences

- a) **Illness, Medical and Dental Appointments** - If the school is satisfied that a pupil of compulsory school age is prevented from attending school by reason of illness then the absence will be treated as authorised. Leave for medical or dental appointments may be given (i.e. the absence may be authorised) where confirmation has been received from the parents (either in person, in writing or by a telephone call) or on production of an appointments card. A book is maintained by the School Office for the purpose of recording pupils leaving or returning to the site during the school day. Parents are encouraged to make appointments after school. Where this is not possible, pupils must return to school after the appointment if

it is in the morning or if the afternoon, they are to come to school in the morning. Failure to do so will result in an unauthorised absence.

- b) **Family Bereavements** - The death of a family member can be a particularly traumatic event in any young person's life. Schools have discretion to authorise absence to attend funerals or associated events and any request would be dealt with sympathetically.
- c) **Days of Religious Observance** - Absence of a pupil for participation in a day set aside exclusively for religious observation by the religious body to which the parents belong is classified as authorised absence. It is expected that the School will be given advance notice of religious observance days.
- d) **Excluded pupils**
- e) **Special and Exceptional Circumstances**
The Head teacher & Governors may consider that the following circumstances are “special” or “exceptional”:
 - a. to allow pupils to return to their country of origin for family, religious or cultural reasons
 - b. unavoidable circumstances e.g. the parent/carer has inflexible leave allocation and that this has been confirmed by the employer.
 - c. a family member is seriously ill
 - d. there has been a death or significant trauma in the family and a holiday would be beneficial for the child.

Unauthorised Absences

a) Holidays in Term Time

St Michael's CE Primary School will not grant permission for holidays or extended leave to be taken in term time except in special or exceptional circumstances”.

b) Absences not considered as “special” or “exceptional;” circumstances

The following are examples of absences that will not be authorised:

- Availability of “cheap” holidays
- Availability of desired accommodation
- The prospect of better weather
- Looking after the home, brothers and sisters
- Shopping during School hours
- There will be less traffic
- Birthdays or a Day Out with the family

Holidays Taken In Term Time

The Law:

Penalty Notices and Legal Action. Education Act 1996 Section 444 (1) 444 (1A) states that:

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

- (a) to his/her age, ability and aptitude and
 - (b) to any special needs he/she may have
- either by regular attendance at school or otherwise.

Failure to do so may result in legal action taken against the parent under the above legislation.

Leave of Absence

The Education (Pupil Registration) (England) (Amendment) Regulations 2013 explanatory note states:

Regulation 7 of the 2006 Regulations is amended to prohibit the proprietor of a maintained school granting leave of absence to a pupil; except where an application has been made in advance and the proprietor considers that there are **exceptional** circumstances relating to the application.

Leave of absence taken without authorisation may be referred to the Education Welfare Service. This may result in prosecution in the Magistrates Court, or a Fixed Penalty Notice. If a Fixed Penalty Notice is issued, a separate Notice will be issued to each parent for each child.

The penalty is per parent per child and will be £60 if paid within 21 days, rising to £120 if paid between 22 & 28 days.

If the penalty notice is not paid each parent may be liable to prosecution at the Magistrates Court, and if proved, each notice may receive a criminal conviction and/or a fine to the maximum of £1,000 plus costs.

Application for term-time leave of absence must be made in writing in advance by the parent with whom the child normally resides. Leave of absence will only be granted where the Headteacher considers it is due to 'exceptional circumstances'. Parent will be informed in writing of the Headteacher's decision.

There are approximately 195 school days (390 sessions) a year which your child is expected to attend. There are also approximately 71 days (142 sessions) of school holidays. This is over 13 school weeks. Please ensure that your holidays are taken during this period.

Additional Information

- St Michael's CE Primary School will ensure that all parents/ carers receive a copy of this Special Absence in Term Time Policy which forms part of the school attendance policy.
- Parents/carers will be required to complete a "Special Absence request form", available from the School Office,
- Parents/carers will normally be notified of the outcome of their application for Special Absence requests within 10 school days of the application.
- Where an absence is not deemed to be "Special" or "Exceptional", by the school, the request will be declined. If the absence still goes ahead it will be regarded as an unauthorised absence.
- Where a pupil is taken out of school for the purpose of a holiday in term time without the prior permission of the school, the parent/carer of the pupil may be contacted by the Education Welfare Officer.

Appendix 1 – copy of Special Absence Request Form

Special Absence Request Form

A request must be received by the school at least 3 weeks in advance of the first day of absence and/or PRIOR to making any arrangements ie. booking flights

Please note that it is only the school, within the context of the law, which can approve absences in terms whether in “special” or “exceptional” circumstances, NOT the parents/carers. *(Please see the Special Absence Policy for more information – a copy is on the school website and available in the school office)*

Name of pupil		Date of birth	
		Class	
Address			
SPECIAL ABSENCE REQUESTED			
Start date of absence		Return date to school	
Reason for special absence request			
I understand that keeping my child off school if my request is not granted, will result in the absence being recorded as Unauthorised.			
Name of Parent/Carer			
Signature		Date	

For School Use:

Class Teacher – would leave be detrimental to the education of this pupil Yes / No

Signed by the Class Teacher: Date:

Headteacher – reason for request being authorised:

Headteacher – reason for request being unauthorised:

Signed by Headteacher: Date:

Appendix 2 letters approval/rejection of absence request

Dear

Re: Special Absence Request for:

Dates:

Your request to take your child out of school during term time has been considered as **authorised**.

On this occasion I was able to approve the request as the reason given does meet the criteria of exceptional circumstances.

Yours sincerely

Mr Thompson
HEADTEACHER

Dear

Re: Special Absence Request –

Dates:

Your request to take your child out of school during term time has been considered as **unauthorised**.

On this occasion I was unable to approve the request as the reason given does not meet the criteria of exceptional circumstances.

Yours sincerely

Mr Thompson
HEADTEACHER