



ST. DUNSTAN'S

Attendance and Punctuality

Policy and procedures

Responsible committee: Welfare &
Inclusion

Approved by Governing Body:
March 2026

Review Date: Annually (autumn term)

Mission Statement

Our mission is to be a happy, caring and compassionate Catholic community where each child's gifts are developed to the full and the foundations for lifelong learning are laid down. Everyone will be supported, nurtured and inspired to be the very best they can be and to persevere to overcome life's challenges.

With God's help, we will educate our children to live safely and responsibly, to care for His wonderful creation and to live their lives through the example of Jesus and the values of the Gospel.

Introduction

School lays the vital foundations for a child's future life. Research shows that irregular attendance can adversely affect academic and social development. Parents/carers and school staff must work in partnership to make each child's education a positive and successful experience and to ensure that all children have full and equal access to all that the school has to offer.

Parents/carers are legally required to ensure that their children are punctual and have good attendance at school. Governors expect that pupils attend school 100% of the time when the school is open. They are helped to do this by being encouraged to follow our established systems for informing school in case of absence, and to bring to the school's attention any concerns or difficulties that may be affecting their child's attendance or punctuality. As a school we will offer all the support we can to enable them to carry out their responsibilities effectively.

This policy adheres to the school's Equality Policy, incorporating Disability, Gender and Race Equality Schemes.

This policy is updated in line with the following regulations:

- Regulations by the [Education \(Pupil Registration\) \(England\) \(Amendment\) Regulations 2013](#) ("2013 Regulations")
- [Education \(Penalty Notices\) \(England\) \(Amendment\) Regulations 2013](#).
- ["Working together to improve school attendance: Statutory guidance for maintained schools, academies, independent schools and local authorities"](#)

August 2024

Approaches to ensure good attendance

At St Dunstan's Catholic Primary School, we aim to provide a positive, welcoming and supportive environment within the school and its classrooms. We emphasise to parents/carers and pupils the importance of regular attendance and punctuality and we aim to offer a consistent approach to attendance matters through the implementation of procedures to record and follow up pupils' absences and lateness, as well as praising and rewarding excellent and improved pupil attendance.

We have a Senior Teacher for Inclusion and Welfare who is our Inclusion Leader. Parents can make an appointment to meet with the Inclusion Leader if they would like help to improve their child's attendance.

Procedures for implementing the policy

When parents attend the induction meeting before their children begin their schooling, the importance of regular attendance and punctuality is stressed. New parents, whose children are admitted to school throughout the year, are also given an outline of procedures in the school brochure. All parents are given a copy of "Parent's Guide to Attendance & Punctuality."

Contact with the School

Parents must contact the school on the first day of a child's absence by 9am and every day thereafter giving the reason for the child's absence. The school may ask for this reason to be provided in writing, either by letter or by email. If a child is absent due to

medical reasons for 3 days, the school may require medical evidence to justify the absence.

If the school does not receive any contact from the parent, the school will contact the parents by telephone and then by email on the first day of absence, will then contact the parents and other contacts on the second day of absence and will send a letter to parents on the third day. A request will be made for the parents to attend school for a meeting with the Inclusion Leader.

If a child continues to be absent, the details will be passed on to the Headteacher who will contact the parent/carer and consider if a referral to the Inclusion Officer (Local Authority Inclusion Service) is required.

If absence is unexplained or unjustified, then it will remain unauthorised and lead to the necessary action being taken.

If a child is absent regularly or over an extended period; or there is a pattern to the absences; or if the school is unhappy with the reason given to explain absence, the Headteacher (or Inclusion Leader) will contact the parent/carer and invite him/her to discuss their child's attendance. This is a pre-referral meeting and failure to attend generates an automatic referral to the Local Authority Inclusion Service.

Authorisation of absence during term time

A pupil's absence during term time can seriously disrupt their continuity of learning. Not only do they miss the teaching provided on the days they are away, they are also less prepared for the lessons on their return. There is consequently a risk of underachievement, which must be avoided. Absence from school can also affect a child's relationships with their peers and create anxiety for the child.

Parents should not take any unauthorised leave of absence during term time. Parents do not have the right to take their child out of school for any period of time. All parents seeking leave of absence must complete an "Application for leave of absence/exceptional circumstances" form. It is for the Head Teacher to decide whether or not there are exceptional circumstances.

Penalty Notices

The Inclusion Service, acting on behalf of Surrey County Council, may issue a Penalty Notice as an alternative to the prosecution of a parent/carer for their child's unauthorised absence from school and requires the recipient to pay a fixed amount.

The amount payable on issue of a Penalty Notice is £60 if paid within 21 days of receipt of the notice, rising to £120 if paid after 21 days but within 28 days.

If the Penalty Notice is not paid within 28 days, the Local Authority must consider a prosecution for failing to ensure regular school attendance under Section 444 Education Act 1996.

Each parent is liable to receive a penalty notice for each child who is absent.

Circumstances when a Penalty Notices may be issued

- Pupils identified by police and Inclusion Officers engaged on Truancy Patrols and who have incurred unauthorised absences.

- The Education (Pupil Registration)(England)(Amendment) Regulations 2013, state that Head teachers may not grant any leave of absence during term time unless there are exceptional circumstances. The Head teacher is required to determine the number of school days a child can be away from school if leave is granted.

Where a child is taken out of school for 10 sessions or more within a 3 month period (the sessions do not have to be consecutive) and the 'leave of absence' is without the authority of the head teacher, each parent is liable to receive a penalty notice for each child who is absent. In these circumstances, a warning will not be given where it can be shown that parents had previously been warned that such absences would not be authorised and that they will be liable to receive a Penalty Notice if the leave of absence is taken.

- The issue of a Penalty Notice will also be considered where a pupil has incurred 7 or more unauthorised sessions during the preceding 6 school weeks. The parents' failure to engage with supportive measures proposed by the school or Inclusion Service will be a factor when considering the issue of a Penalty Notice. Unauthorised absence will include late arrival after the close of registration without good reason.

Should unauthorised absence become a concern the Headteacher will be obliged to consider such absence as serious and will consider all options up to and including removing the child from the school register.

Lateness

The school day begins at **8.55am**.

There is an **arrival window** between **8.40am and 8.55am** to assist with congestion. Children may not be left before 8.40am as they are not supervised.

Registration takes place at **8.55am**.

Children arriving in school after **9.00am** and before **9.15am** will be marked late. ('L' Code)

9.15am is the official time that registers are closed. If a child arrives after this time an absence will be recorded. ('U' code)

Where persistent lateness gives cause for concern, further action will be taken. This may involve contacting the appropriate authority outside the school

The class teachers will monitor lateness on a weekly basis. If a child is regularly late class teachers will inform the Headteacher who will send a letter to the parent/carer. If the child continues to be late, an appointment will be made with the parent/carer in order to agree a way forward.

If there is a negative response or little or no improvement after discussions about attendance or lateness, a referral will be made to the Local Authority Inclusion Service.

This can include late arrival after the close of registration on 7 occasions in any six week period (not including school closures).

The liable parent/carer will receive a written warning of the possibility of a Penalty Notice being issued and a maximum of 15 school days to effect improvement. During this period the pupil is not expected to incur any further lateness.

Registration

It is of the utmost importance that registers are completed fully and correctly so that accurate attendance records can be kept and any problems addressed promptly. All staff have responsibility for this, but it is the Headteacher who will be the first one alerted to any attendance concerns.

Collection of children at the end of the school day

Children should be collected promptly at the end of the school day:

3.05pm for Reception

3.10pm Year 1

3.15pm for Years 2 and 3

3.20pm for Years 4, 5 and 6

On exceptional occasions when a parent may be unexpectedly delayed when collecting their child, if the child is in Lower School they wait in their classroom until **3.25pm** and will then be taken to wait at the school office.

Children in Key Stage 2 wait with their teacher until **3.30pm** and are then taken to wait at the school office.

No pupil may leave the school unless collected by their parent/carer or a person named on the child's "Going Home" form. Year 6 pupils may leave school unaccompanied if their parent/carer has given written permission and their parent feels they are sufficiently responsible to do so.

Procedures for those having Parental Responsibility but not living in the child's home

We are required to maintain a list of names and addresses of those having parental responsibility. The law instructs us to make reasonable attempts to gather such information in the case of parents not living in the child's home.

In order to do this, we may ask one parent to provide appropriate details of the other.

Key Personnel

The Governing Body is responsible for overseeing the implementation of the Attendance Policy and working closely with the Head teacher to evaluate the successes of the strategies implemented.

The Head teacher is responsible for reporting attendance to the Governing Body on a termly basis.

Class teachers are responsible for monitoring attendance and punctuality and are responsible for informing the Headteacher should there be an issue.

The Headteacher is responsible for regular reviews of all attendance issues and registers, as well as liaison with parents/carers, pupils and other agencies.

When a concern is identified, the class teacher will liaise with the parents/carers concerned in the first instance and will refer to the Headteacher if the situation does not improve. If this fails to create an improvement after a reasonable period, the Local Authority Inclusion Service will be asked to contribute to a formal meeting with the parent/carer to discuss the issues preventing attendance.

The final stage will involve the problem being dealt with legally by the Local Authority Inclusion Service, with the support of the Head teacher. This could result in a penalty notice being issued to the parent/carer concerned, or a prosecution of the parents in the Magistrates Court.

Each term the Local Authority Inclusion Service is responsible for carrying out regular checks on school registers in partnership with the Headteacher. The Local Authority Inclusion Service is contacted immediately if the Headteacher has identified a cause for concern in the interim period between monitoring visits.

The school office assistant (attendance) is responsible for entering data and obtaining feedback; informing teaching staff of notified absences/lates; making first day absence calls.

It is vital that all members of the school community work together to instil good attendance and punctuality in pupils as a means of preparing them to be socially responsible and to facilitate learning, allowing all pupils to have equality of opportunity and achieve their potential.

Monitoring and evaluation

This policy will be reviewed annually, along with the effectiveness of the systems that are in place.