



ATTENDANCE POLICY

Our school is a happy place where everyone is valued, every child can thrive and reach their full potential and where we live out our Christian values celebrating the uniqueness of each individual.

At St Nicholas School, we are committed to ensuring equality of education and opportunity for all pupils, staff, parents and carers receiving services from the school, irrespective of race, gender, disability, faith or religion or socio-economic background. We aim to develop a culture of inclusion and diversity in which all those connected to the school feel proud of their identity and able to participate fully in school life.

Policy reviewed by:	FGB January 2025
Chair of Governing Body:	Lucy Parr
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Policy review due:	January 2027

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1. Introduction

St Nicholas School is committed to achieving excellent levels of attendance for individual children, the school and Hertfordshire as a whole. Underpinning this commitment is the belief that if children attend school regularly and punctually they will be best able to take full advantage of the educational opportunities available to them.

The law entitles every child of compulsory school age to an efficient, full-time education suitable to their age, aptitude, and any special educational need they may have. It is the legal responsibility of every parent to make sure their child receives that education either by attendance at a school or by education otherwise than at a school.

Where parents decide to have their child registered at school, they have an additional legal duty to ensure their child attends that school regularly, on time. This means their child must attend every day that the school is open, except in a small number of allowable circumstances such as being too ill to attend or being given permission for an absence in advance from the school.

The Department for Education (DfE) has produced statutory guidance for maintained schools, academies, independent schools, and local authorities. It is called "[Working together to improve school attendance](#)" and it includes a National Framework in relation to absence and the use of legal sanctions.

Our School Attendance Policy reflects the requirements and principles of that guidance. This policy is written with the above guidance in mind and underpins our school ethos to:

- promote children's welfare and safeguarding.
- ensure every pupil has access to the full-time education to which they are entitled.
- ensure that pupils succeed whilst at school.
- ensure that pupils have access to the widest possible range of opportunities at school, and when they leave school.

This Attendance Policy is intended to guide, assist and empower the school to meet its responsibilities and to provide an agreed framework within which consistent practices and procedures can be applied.

It has been developed in consultation with school governors, teachers, local Headteacher Associations, the Local Authority and parents and carers. It seeks to ensure that all parties involved in the practicalities of school attendance are aware and informed of *attendance matters* in school and to outline the school's commitment to *attendance being everyone's responsibility*.

It details the responsibilities of individuals and groups involved and the procedures in place to promote and monitor pupil attendance. In addition, all schools follow the DfE's statutory safeguarding guidance, Keeping Children Safe in Education, which emphasises the importance of understanding the potential vulnerabilities of children who are missing or absent from education. <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/keeping-children-safe-in-education--2>

Our policy aims to raise and maintain levels of attendance by:

- Promoting a positive and welcoming atmosphere in which pupils feel safe, secure, and valued.
- Raising and maintaining a whole school awareness of the importance of good attendance and punctuality.
- Ensuring that attendance is monitored effectively and reasons for absences are recorded promptly and consistently.

It is a rule of this school that pupils must attend every day, unless there are exceptional circumstances, and it is the headteacher/principal, not the parent, who can authorise the absence.

We believe this policy will be effective only if it is consistently monitored across the whole school.

2. Statement of Intent

We aim to ensure that all our children and young people take full advantage of the educational opportunities available to them and will strive to raise standards by promoting the regular attendance and punctuality of our pupils. We believe the foundation of securing good attendance is that our school is a calm, orderly, safe and supportive environment where our pupils will want to be and are keen and ready to learn.

3. Expectations

At St Nicholas school, we believe in developing good patterns of attendance and set high expectations for the attendance and punctuality for all our pupils from the outset. It is a central part of our school's vision, values, ethos and day to day life. We recognise the strong connections between attendance, attainment, safeguarding and wellbeing.

The name and contact details of the SLT Attendance Lead (the senior leader responsible for the strategic approach to attendance in our school) is: **Dr Cherniaeva**.

The governor with responsibility for monitoring attendance is **Dr Harvey**.

Helping to create a pattern of regular attendance is the responsibility of parents, pupils and all members of school staff. St Nicholas attendance expectations are:

- To demonstrate that improving attendance is everyone's business and embed a 'support first' approach.
- To develop and maintain a whole school culture that promotes the benefits of good attendance and is an integral part of the school's ethos.
- To work with pupils and parents to remove any barriers to attendance by building strong and trusting relationships.
- To keep whole school attendance above 96%.

To help us all to focus on this, we will:

- Submit a daily attendance return to the Department of Education, in line with the legal expectations placed on all schools.
- Build strong relationships and work jointly with families.
- Give parents/carers details on attendance in our newsletters.
- Promote the benefits of high attendance.
- Accurately complete admission and, with the exception of schools where all pupils are boarders, attendance registers and have effective day to day processes in place to follow-up absence as required by law.
- Celebrate excellent attendance by displaying and reporting individual and class achievements.

- Report to parents/carers regularly on their child's attendance and the impact on their progress.
- Contact parents/carers should their child's attendance fall below the school's target for attendance.

4. Understanding Types of Absence

Any absence affects the routine of a child's schooling and regular absence will seriously affect their learning journey and ability to progress. Any pupil's absence or late arrival disrupts teaching routines and so may affect the learning of others in the same class. Ensuring a child's regular attendance at school is a parental responsibility and allowing absence from school, without a good reason, creates an offence in law and may result in prosecution.

Every half-day absence from school has to be classified by the school (**not by the parent**), as **either** authorised **or** unauthorised. This is why information about the cause of any absence is always required. Each half-day is known as a 'session'. Any reasons for absence should be reported to the school office, but only illness will usually be authorised. **A letter or telephone message from a parent / carer does not authorise an absence.** The absence will be authorised only if the school is satisfied as to the validity of the explanation offered by the letter or message from the parents. If the school continues to have concerns and after further investigation doubt remains about the explanation offered – or when no explanation is forthcoming at all – the absence will be treated as unauthorised and the parent will be informed. It is the Headteacher's decision as to whether absence is authorised.

Authorised absences **are morning or afternoon sessions away from school for a genuine reason such as illness. You may be asked to provide medical evidence for your child's absence to be authorised.**

Authorised absence may include:

- Genuine illness
- Medical or dental appointment (where possible routine appointments should be arranged out of school time)
- Bereavement (Headteacher's discretion)
- Religious observance (Headteacher's discretion)
- Approved leave in term time where there are exceptional circumstances, as agreed by the Headteacher
- The pupil has a local authority licence to take part in a public performance and the school has granted leave of absence.

Unauthorised absences **are those which the school does not consider reasonable and for which no 'leave' has been granted. This type of absence can lead to the school** referring to the Local Authority for penalty notices and/or legal proceedings.

Unauthorised absence includes (however this list is not exhaustive):

- Being late after the registers have closed.
- parents/carers keeping children off school unnecessarily e.g. because they had a late night or for non-infectious illness or injury that would not affect their ability to learn.
- absences which have never been properly explained.
- children who arrive at school after the close of registration are marked using a 'U'. This indicates that they are in school for safeguarding purposes, however, is counted as an absence for the session.
- shopping trips.

- looking after other children or children accompanying siblings or parents to medical appointments.
- their own or family birthdays.
- holidays taken during term time, not deemed 'for exceptional purposes' by the headteacher, including any arranged by other family members or friends.
- day trips.
- taking the rest of the day off before or after a medical appointment
- exceptional term time leave longer than agreed by the Headteacher.
- other leave of absence in term time which has not been agreed.

Persistent Absenteeism (PA) and Severe Absenteeism (SA).

A pupil is defined by the Government as a '**persistent absentee**' when they miss **10%** or more schooling across the school year for any reason; this can be authorised or unauthorised absence. Absence at this level will cause considerable damage to any pupil's education and we need the full support and co-operation of parents to resolve this. All pupils who have attendance levels of **90%** or below are considered to be a persistent absentee.

A pupil who has missed **50%** or more schooling is defined by the Government as '**severely absent**'. Pupils within this cohort may find it more difficult to be in school or face bigger barriers to their regular attendance and, as such, are likely to need more intensive support.

5. Attendance procedures

5.1 Arrival and Registration

At St Nicholas School, we begin the day with a soft start. It is the time from **8:40** a.m. when the gates open until **9 a.m.** when the gate closes. This time allows flexibility for children to arrive at school before the register starts. The school day times are given in the table below.

St Nicholas School Day Times

Doors open	School start time	Morning register closes	Lunchtime	Afternoon register closes	End of school
8:40 a.m.	9:00 a.m.	9:05 a.m.	11:45 -12:45 (KS1) Garnet and Topaz 12:00–13:00 (KS2) Emerald, Sapphire, Diamond	5 minutes after end of lunchtime	3:15 p.m.

5.2 Absence Procedures

Parents should contact the school office about attendance on a day to day basis or the Attendance Lead: admin@stnicholasce.org.

We thoroughly monitor and review all pupils' absence, and the reasons of absence that are given.

If a child is absent from school, the parent must follow these procedures:

- Contact the school on the first day of absence **before 9.05** am, when our register closes;
- The school has an answer phone available to leave a message if nobody is available to take your call, or you may call into school personally and speak to the office staff.

Please be aware that, if you leave a voicemail, or send an email to report your child's absence, you may receive a call from the school so that we may discuss the absence before making a decision as to whether the absence is to be recorded as authorized.

- Contact the school on every further day of absence, again before 9.05 am;

5.3 Punctuality

St. Nicholas takes steps to actively encourage excellent levels of punctuality. Lateness is to be monitored and followed up.

School policies and the website clearly state the time at which each school session begins and finishes, including the time at which registers open and close.

Poor punctuality is not acceptable and can sometimes lead to irregular school attendance patterns. **Good timekeeping is a vital life skill** which will help children as they progress through their school life and out into the wider world.

Pupils who arrive late disrupt lessons and, if a child misses the start of the day, they can feel unsettled and embarrassed and risk missing vital work and important messages from their class teacher.

If a child arrives after registration has closed, he/she will be marked as **Late**. A pupil who arrives after the register has closed (**9:05 a.m.**) and whose parents fail to provide a satisfactory explanation will be marked as 'unauthorised absent' for that session. A child will receive a mark that shows them to be on site – 'U', but it will mean that they have an unauthorised absence. The afternoon register is taken straight after the lunch period has ended (**see the table 5.1 above.**).

School may arrange a meeting with parents to discuss concerns so that punctuality can be addressed.

From time to time a member of school staff will undertake a 'Late Gate' check, greeting late arrivals at the main entrance to the school.

If your child has a persistent lateness record, you may be asked to meet with the Attendance Lead, the Headteacher, but you can approach us at any time if you are having difficulties getting your child to school on time.

We expect parents and staff to encourage good punctuality by being good role models to our children and, as a school. Unauthorised lateness could result in the school seeking advice and guidance from the Local Authority.

5.4 Illness and medical appointments

If a child is arriving and leaving school outside the normal hours, a parent/carer should accompany him/her. The signing in/out book is kept at the school office. Every effort should be made to arrange medical appointments outside the school hours. If a child has a medical appointment during school hours, the school can ask parents /carers to provide a photocopy of the appointment letter or a photograph that can be sent to the admin email address. The child should be returned to school directly after the appointment.

If a child is unwell, the school office should be made aware of their absence by **9:05 a.m.** that morning. Reporting absence should be done by telephoning school or by emailing admin@stnicholasce.org . If a child's absence continues, it is very important that we are informed daily and kept up to date.

6. Requesting Term Time Leave.

Amendments to the 2006 Pupil Registration (England) Regulations which came into effect on 1st September 2013 remove all references to family holidays and extended leave for holidays in term time. The amendments make clear that Headteachers may not grant any leave of absence during term time unless there are exceptional circumstances. It is for the Headteacher to determine what constitutes exceptional circumstances and for them to determine the number of school days a child can be away from school if the leave is granted.

Holidays during term time are discouraged by the school and the local authority. Holidays during term time cannot be authorised by the Headteacher and may result in a Penalty Notice. Parents/carers needing to take their child out of school during term time must complete a form. Only exceptional absences will be authorised by the Headteacher.

6.1 Advance authorisation

In order to notify St. Nicholas CE School of an absence, parents need to provide written notification of the reasons for absence to the school secretary/office. The leave of absence form can be found on **Appendix 3** in the school Attendance Policy published on our school website. We ask that you complete this with at **least 3 weeks' notice** of the absence.

Leave of absence can be applied for in advance. It is the school's decision as to whether this is granted because of exceptional circumstances relating to the application (parents cannot expect, as of right, that the school will grant leave of absence).

It is a rule of this school that a leave of absence shall not be granted in term time unless there are reasons considered to be exceptional by the headteacher, irrespective of the child's overall attendance. Only the headteacher or his/her designate (not the local authority) may authorise such a request and all applications for a leave of absence must be made in writing, in advance, on the prescribed form provided by the school (see above). The school will usually consider that the parent who has made the application is therefore allowing the leave of absence, and that all parents who are on the holiday are allowing the leave. Where a parent removes a child after their application for leave was refused or where no application was made to the school, the absence will be recorded as unauthorised. It is likely that penalty notices will be requested, in line with the

National Framework and Hertfordshire Code of Conduct, in respect of each parent believed to have allowed the absence.

6.2 At St Nicholas School 'exceptional circumstances' will be interpreted as:

The fundamental principles for defining 'exceptional' are events that are "rare, significant, unavoidable and short". By 'unavoidable' we mean an event that could not reasonably be scheduled at another time, outside of school term time, regardless of who has planned or paid for the holiday or absence (including grandparents or other family or friends).

The headteacher/school may discuss the leave of absence request with other education settings and/or the Local Authority to determine any exceptional circumstances.

If leave of absence is authorised, the school will not provide work for children to do during their absence. Parent/Carers are however advised to read with their children and encourage them to write a diary while they are away.

The examples of exceptional circumstances may include:

- the pupil is absent with leave (defined as 'leave granted by any person authorised to do so by the governing body or proprietor of the school');
- the pupil is ill or prevented from attending by any unavoidable cause;
- the absence occurs on a day exclusively set aside for religious observance by the religious body to which the pupil's parent belongs;
- leave of absence has been applied for in advance and has been granted because of **exceptional** circumstances relating to the application (parents should be reminded that they cannot expect, as of right, that the school will grant leave of absence);
- the pupil is the child of Traveller parents who are known to be travelling for occupational purposes and have agreed this with the school but it is not known whether the pupil is attending alternative provision;
- there is a close family bereavement
- leave of absence can be granted to allow a pupil to take part in a performance within the meaning of s37 of the Children and Young Persons Act 1963 (c) for which a child performance licence has been issued.

Before granting a licence the local authority must be satisfied that the child's education will not suffer. A school letter is requested as part of the licence application as confirmation of this. If a school believes a child's education will suffer as a result of taking part in a performance they should provide reasons to the local authority in writing. The information must be specific to the child (saying for example that it is against school policy is not sufficient). If the school does not provide such information the local authority will issue the licence. The absence should be recorded as code C.

Further guidance is available at - <http://www.thegrid.org.uk/info/welfare/attendance.shtml>

6.3 Religious observance

St Nicholas School aims to develop a culture of inclusion and diversity in which all those connected to the school feel proud of their identity. We treat people of all race, gender, disability,

faith, religion or socio-economic background equally and with respect. The school will authorise absence that is due to religious observance.

7. Understanding barriers to attendance

Whilst any child may occasionally have time off school because they are too unwell to attend, sometimes they can be reluctant to attend school. Any barriers preventing regular attendance are best resolved between the school, the parents, and the child. If a parent thinks their child is reluctant to attend school, then we will work with that family to understand the root problem and provide any necessary support.

We can consider a Families First Assessment, use outside agencies to help with this, such as the School Nurse, Mental Health and Emotional Wellbeing support services, a Family Support Worker, or the relevant Local Authority team/s. Where outside agencies are supporting the family, you may be invited to attend a Team Around the Family meeting (TAF) to consider what is working well and what needs to improve. An individual support plan will be agreed and subsequently reviewed.

Some pupils face greater barriers to attendance than their peers. These can include pupils who suffer from long-term medical conditions or who have special educational needs and disabilities, or other vulnerabilities. High expectations of attendance remain in place for these pupils; however, we will work with families and pupils to support improved attendance whilst being mindful of the additional barriers faced. We can discuss reasonable adjustments and additional support from external partners, where appropriate.

Under the DfE's statutory guidance, **schools are required to submit a sickness return** to the Local Authority for all pupils who have missed/are **likely to miss 15 or more school days** (consecutive or cumulative) due to medical reasons/illness.

See Annex A for DfE summary tables of responsibilities for school attendance.

At St Nicholas School you can contact the Attendance Lead via admin@stnicholasce.org for more detailed support on attendance.

8. Monitoring

The office staff and teachers at St Nicholas School are responsible for daily monitoring of their pupils' attendance. Parents can expect to be informed promptly if the school is concerned about a pupil's attendance. The office staff will undertake "**first day contact**" by either text or phone call for absences with no prior notice. They will inform a class teacher and/or Attendance Lead about the reasons of absence or lateness.

The Attendance Lead and office staff will liaise **regularly** to discuss attendance and punctuality and to ensure the parents are informed on their child's attendance. The Attendance Lead meets with SLT **termly** to discuss the attendance and review actions taken to improve the situation.

Parents will be advised of concerns so that they may be actively involved in monitoring their child's attendance.

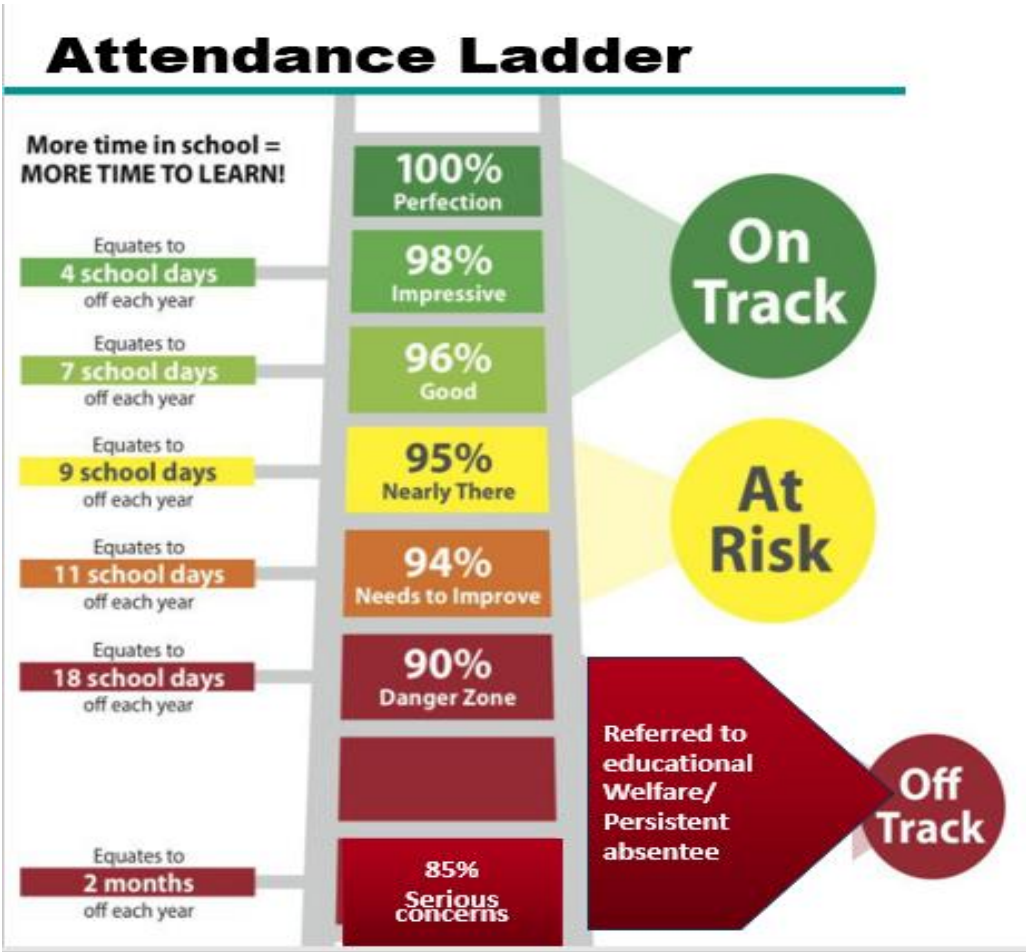
9. Absence data

We use data to monitor, identify and support individual pupils or groups of pupils when their attendance needs to improve, and schools are required to submit pupil attendance data to the Department for Education on a daily basis Education (Information about Individual Pupils) (England) (Amendment) Regulations 2024. Persistently and severely absent pupils are tracked and monitored carefully. We also combine this with academic tracking, as increased absence affects attainment.

We share information and work collaboratively with other schools in the area, local authorities, and other partners, when absence is at risk of becoming persistent or severe.

10. Reporting the percentage of attendance to parents

The percentage of attendance will be linked to the learning hours missed by the child (see Table below and the Attendance Ladder).



Category Percentage of attendance	Excellent 98 -100	Good 96 -97	Cause of concern 91 - 95	Serious concern 85 - 90
Learning hours lost	0 -10	20-37.5	47.5 -125	135- 190

At the end of each **half term**, formal letters will be sent to any parents of children whose attendance is **95%** or lower with information about percentage of attendance and missed hours of learning (see Table 9.3)

The Attendance Lead will liaise with colleagues and wider support services when reducing the barriers to attendance. We will always strive to overcome barriers and help to support families with attendance issues.

Attendance will always be part of a parent consultation meeting and will always be included in every child's end of year report.

Whole school attendance will be referenced on a half termly basis in the e-bulletin to parents.

Penalty Notices are not something we take lightly and will make every effort to work with the parents to improve their child's attendance before this notice is issued. The school will follow the recommendations given in the Hertfordshire Code of Conduct (2024) (<https://thegrid.org.uk/assets/hcc-sapt-penalty-notices-code-of-conduct-unauthorised-absence-guidance-for-schools-august-2024-v2.pdf>) when issuing the Penalty Notice.

The Notice to Improve may be used to offer parent/s a final opportunity to engage with support and improve the attendance levels of the child concerned. Where a parent fails to engage with the offer of support during **the Notice to Improve** validity period and/or further unauthorised absences are recorded for the pupil and/or the pupil fails to make significant improvements in their attendance patterns, a penalty notice may be issued in line with this code of conduct.

11. Strategies for promoting attendance and punctuality

A range of strategies are used to promote good attendance and punctuality, including but are not limited to the following:

- ✓ Promotion in the school e-bulletin
- ✓ Letter of acknowledgement for parents' support and cooperation on improving their child's attendance and punctuality
- ✓ A Notice to improve
- ✓ A Penalty Notice

11.1 Pupils who are persistently absent

Persistent absence occurs when a child's attendance is at or **falls below 90%**. Absenteeism at this level will considerably damage a pupil's educational prospects and the school will work alongside parents/carers to tackle this issue.

School is expected to:

- Continue support as for pupils at risk of becoming persistently absent
- Ensure additional targeted support is in place to remove any barriers. Where necessary this includes working with partners.
- If there is lack of engagement, hold more formal conversations with parents, being clear about the potential need for legal intervention in future.
- Where support is not working or being engaged with, work with the Local Authority on legal intervention.

- If there are safeguarding concerns, intensify support through statutory children's social care or other external agencies.
- Work with other local schools, such as schools previously attended or schools of siblings.

The **overview of the strategies** is outlined in the **Table 11.3** below.

11.2 Pupils who are severely absent

Severe absence occurs when a child's attendance is at or falls **below 50%**.

The school will:

- Continue support as for pupils who are persistently absent or are at risk of being persistently absent .
- Agree a joint approach with the Local Authority for all pupils who are severely absent.
- Penalty Notice can be issued

Pupils who are severely absent may be at risk of Child Criminal Exploitation (CCE)/ Child Sexual Exploitation (CSE)/grooming etc. and teachers must ensure this cohort is made the top priority for action and support.

St Nicholas School is especially conscious of any potential safeguarding issues ensuring joint working between the school, children's social care services and other statutory safeguarding partners.

The school recognises that severely absent pupils often have additional needs and therefore the school will ensure all appropriate services are informed and are aware of the pupil's absence so suitable support can be considered, and education provided/accessed.

The overview of the strategies are outlined in the **Table 11.4** below.

11.3 Pupils at risk of persistent absence

Pupils with increasing days out of school are the focus for staff discussions with leaders (including special educational needs coordinators, designated safeguarding leads and pupil premium leads) for monitoring and evaluation purposes.

Initiation, overseeing and the administration of absence procedures can include:

- letters home
- attendance meetings with class teachers, the Attendance Lead, Headteacher and the Governor responsible for attendance and/or safeguarding
- engagement with local authorities and other external agencies and partners
- work with families and the community to identify which methods of communication work best, recognising potential barriers in hard-to-reach families and find methods that work and are understood
- consideration as to whether further interventions are required in line with the statutory guidance on parental responsibility measures
- provide regular reports to leaders on the at-risk cohort
- provide regular reports/caseloads to local authority attendance team or independent attendance organisations to raise awareness of emerging at-risk pupils

11.4 Strategies for dealing with poor attendance and punctuality

If a child has poor punctuality and attendance even if it is authorised (e.g. caused by illnesses), school will take steps to improve this. The overview of the strategies that can be used by the school are given in the table below.

Table 11.4 Overview of the strategies for dealing with poor attendance and punctuality

Attendance	Timescale	Action	Staff
95%- 91?% and/or 4 lateness occurrences or up to 40 minutes learning time lost (e.g. when a child being late more than one time a week for 5-10 min for 2 weeks during one half term; or once a week 10min lateness for 3 weeks in a half term).	2 weeks	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ The reasons of absences will be analysed and attendance will be monitored. ➤ The class teacher will contact parents to discuss attendance. This will be an informal opportunity to clarify the absences with the parents and will either be a face-to-face conversation or via a phone call. ➤ If there is no improvement within 2 weeks or absences are unauthorised a <i>letter of concern</i> detailing the child's absence percentage and the impact the absence is having on the child's education will be sent. ➤ The parents may be asked to attend a meeting with the Class Teacher and/or Attendance Lead in school if we feel this is necessary. ➤ The Attendance Lead may speak with the child in school about their punctuality and/or attendance if it is appropriate. 	Attendance Lead Class teacher Attendance Lead Class teacher, Attendance Lead Attendance Lead
Cause of concern band 90%-86% 47.5 -125 hours lost more than 4 lateness occurrences or up to 1 hour learning time lost in total per half term.	Immediately	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ The reasons of absences/lateness will be analysed and attendance will be monitored. ➤ Letter of concern and/or a Notice to Improve detailing the child's punctuality and/or absence percentage and the impact low attendance is having on the child's education will be sent. The letter might also contain some advice on, for example, when sending child to school if they are slightly unwell. ➤ The school may request a medical evidence letter or other documents that need to be sent to the office. ➤ Possible Penalty Notice Letter (e.g. unauthorised absence); ➤ The parents may be asked to attend a meeting with the class teacher and/or Attendance Lead in school to discuss an action plan to improve attendance and/or punctuality. ➤ Attendance will be monitored every 2 weeks. ➤ The Local Authority will be notified of any pupil who fails to attend school regularly and whose attendance falls below 90% via a 10 Day Absence Form. 	Attendance Lead Attendance Lead Attendance Lead/ Office Staff Attendance Lead Class teacher Attendance Lead
Serious concern band 85% - 80%	Immediately	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ The reasons of absences/lateness will be analysed and attendance will be monitored. ➤ A warning letter detailing the child's 	Attendance Lead

135- 190 hours lost regular lateness (6 occurrences per half term and/or 1.5 hours learning time lost		<p>punctuality and/or absence percentage and the impact low attendance is having on the child's education will be sent.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ A Notice to Improve can be issued. ➤ Penalty Notice Letter can be issued if the school finds it reasonable (e.g. unauthorised absence). ➤ The parents will be asked to attend a meeting with the class teacher and/or Attendance Lead in school to discuss an action plan to improve attendance and/or punctuality; additional targeted support can be offered to remove any barriers. ➤ The class teacher and/or Attendance Lead will monitor the plan is followed and attendance is improving every 2 weeks. ➤ The Local Authority will be notified of any pupil who fails to attend school regularly and whose attendance falls below 80% via a 10 Day Absence Form. 	<p>Attendance Lead</p> <p>Class teacher Attendance Lead</p>
Not improving	Ongoing	<p>1. Frequent communication:</p> <p>1.1 meeting with the Attendance Lead and the class teacher to develop an action plan to support a child and improve attendance. We will document this meeting and any targets which are set and will monitor the support plan is followed.</p> <p>1.2 meeting with the Attendance Lead and the Headteacher (if there is no improvement with a support plan introduced or attendance falls in the serious concern band) to discuss further support and referrals to external agencies. The meeting will be documented.</p> <p>1.3 meeting with the Attendance Lead and the Governor responsible for attendance to ensure the school provides all necessary support and parents understand their legal responsibilities of sending their child to school, compliance with the school Attendance and Home Agreement Policies and are aware of negative effect on their child and consequences that may follow.</p> <p>2. Reporting the attendance to the Attendance Officer. Our Attendance Officer may call the parents or organise a meeting with them to discuss their child's attendance.</p> <p>3. A referral to external agencies.</p> <p>4. A Penalty Notice.</p> <p>5. Court assessment meeting.</p>	<p>Attendance Lead and Class Teacher</p> <p>Attendance Lead and Headteacher</p> <p>Attendance Lead, Headteacher and Governor</p> <p>Attendance Office</p> <p>Attendance Lead</p>
Severe absence (50%)	ongoing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Continue support as for pupils whose 	

and below)		attendance falls in serious concern band and/or not improving. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Agree a joint approach with the Local Authority for all pupils who are severely absent. 	
<p>Pupils with attendance below 95% may be reported to the Attendance Officer, leading to a referral if required.</p> <p>The school is legally obliged to ensure that the Local Authority is notified of any pupil who fails to attend school regularly and whose attendance falls below 90% or 80% via a 10 Day Absence Form.</p>			

11.5 A Notice to Improve

Local arrangements for the use of **Notices to Improve** across Hertfordshire are as follows:

- a. Schools across Hertfordshire may issue a **Notice to Improve** to any parent whose child's absence levels have triggered the national threshold for a penalty notice – i.e., 10 sessions of unauthorised absence in a rolling period of 10 school weeks.
- b. The Notice to Improve may be used to offer parent/s a final opportunity to engage with support and improve the attendance levels of the child concerned. Where a parent fails to engage with the offer of support during the Notice to Improve validity period and/or further unauthorised absences are recorded for the pupil and/or the pupil fails to make significant improvements in their attendance patterns, a penalty notice may be issued in line with this code of conduct.
- c. All Notices to Improve issued by Hertfordshire schools will have a validity period of 6 school weeks (a maximum of 30 school days) and will clearly list the attempts which have been made and support which has already been offered to resolve the absence concerns. Parents should be provided with clear contact details for the staff member/s within the school that they should contact to access the support that remains available during the Notice to Improve validity period.
- d. Attendance records will be reviewed daily throughout the improvement period and, where further unauthorised absence is recorded, consideration will be given as to whether a penalty notice is to be issued. Schools are not required to wait until 30 school days have passed before considering a penalty notice – decisions will need to be taken on a case by-case basis, based on the level of parental/pupil engagement and/or level of attendance improvement noted.
- e. Sufficient improvement during the Notice to Improve validity period may include evidence of no further unauthorised absences within the improvement period or a sufficient amount of improvement tailored to the specific family circumstances.

11.6 Strategies for dealing with poor punctuality

Punctuality is monitored as a part of attendance and with the same regularity. If there is poor punctuality parents will receive a notification via email informing them about lateness occurrences of their child, learning hours lost and advice. The detailed strategies for dealing with poor punctuality are given in the table above (see 11.4)

To prevent pupils from being consistently late class teachers and the Attendance Lead will liaise regularly and monitor the punctuality. Pupils who sometimes can be late will receive a phone call home from the Attendance Lead. During this call the Attendance Lead may arrange a meeting or phone call for a week's time to discuss progress and any support that the school can provide.

If appropriate, the Attendance Lead will also speak with the child in school about their punctuality. If a child has some unauthorised or unexplained absences, the school will always seek to make contact parents to discuss. This will be an informal opportunity to clarify the absences with the parents and will either be a face-to-face conversation or via a phone call.

11.7 Repeated unauthorised absence and lateness

If a child has **repeated unauthorised or unexplained absences** the school will:

- Make an immediate contact with the parent to discuss the absences via a phone call.
- This will be followed by a letter detailing the child's absence percentage. If the child's attendance is 95% or lower the letter will also detail the impact the absence is having on the child's education and advise on how to improve (Notice to Improve Letter).
- We may ask the parents to attend a meeting with the Attendance Lead in school if we feel this is necessary. We will document this meeting and any targets which are set (see table in 11.4 for more school strategies used to address poor attendance). The attendance will be monitored and if required the parents will be asked to attend the meeting with the Headteacher and/or a Governor responsible for attendance and/or safeguarding.
- The Attendance Lead may choose to discuss the case further with the Attendance Officer.
- Our Herts County Council Attendance Officer may call the parents or organise a meeting with them to discuss their child's attendance.
- Unauthorised absences of **10 sessions** may result in a **Notice to Improve** Letter and a **Penalty Notice** being issued.

11.8 Local Authority Attendance Support Team

Local Authority Attendance Support Specialists work strategically by offering support to schools, to reduce persistent absence and improve overall attendance.

Parents/Carers are expected to work with the school and local authority to address any attendance concerns. Parent/Carers should proactively engage with the support offered, aiming to resolve any problems together. This is nearly always successful. If difficulties cannot be resolved in this way, the school may consider more formal support and/or refer the child to the Local Authority.

If attendance does not improve, legal action may be taken which may be in the form of a Penalty Notice (see **Annex B for the Hertfordshire Code of Conduct** <https://thegrid.org.uk/assets/hcc-sapt-penalty-notices-code-of-conduct-unauthorised-absence-guidance-for-schools-august-2024-v2.pdf>) or other legal options available to the Local Authority such as prosecution in the Magistrates Court.

11.9 School Attendance and the Law

New legislation was passed, The School Attendance (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2024 which introduced a National Framework in England. By law all children of compulsory school age must receive an appropriate full-time education (Education Act 1996). Parent/Carers have a legal duty to ensure their child attends school regularly at the school at which they are registered.

Parent/Carers may be recognised differently under education law, than under family law. Section 576 of the Education Act 1996 states that a 'parent', in relation to a child or young person, includes any person who is not a parent (from which can be inferred 'biological parent') but who has parental responsibility, or who has care of the child.

A person typically has care of a child or young person if they are the person with whom the child lives, either full or part time and who looks after the child, irrespective of what their biological or legal relationship is with the child.

12. National Framework for Penalty Notices

There is now a single consistent national threshold for when a penalty notice must be considered by all schools in England, of **10 sessions** (usually equivalent to **5 school days**) of unauthorised absence within a rolling 10 school week period. The 10 sessions of absence do not have to be consecutive and can be made up of a combination of any type of unauthorised absence (G, O and/or U coded within the school's registers). The 10-school week period can span different terms, school years or education settings.

Sanctions may include issuing each parent (for each child) with a Penalty Notice for £160, reduced to £80 if paid within 21 days (for the first offence). A second Penalty Notice issued within a three-year period will result in a fine of £160 per parent, per child. If a third offence is committed the matter may be referred to the local authority for consideration of prosecution via the Magistrates Court. If prosecution is instigated for irregular school attendance, each parent/carer may receive a fine of up to £2500 and/or up to 3 months in prison. If a parent/carer is found guilty in court, they will receive a criminal conviction.

See Annex B for the Hertfordshire Code of Conduct (<https://thegrid.org.uk/assets/hcc-sapt-penalty-notices-code-of-conduct-unauthorised-absence-guidance-for-schools-august-2024-v2.pdf>).

There is no entitlement in law for pupils to take time off during the term to go on holiday or other absence for the purpose of leisure or recreation, or to take part in protest activity in school hours. In addition, the Supreme Court has ruled that the definition of regular school attendance is "in accordance with the rules prescribed by the school."

The School Attendance (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2024 set out the statutory requirements for schools. **All references to family holidays and extended leave have been removed.** The amendments specify that headteachers may not grant any leave of absence during term time unless there are "**exceptional circumstances**" and they do not have any discretion to authorise up to ten days of absence each academic year.

Deletion from Roll

For any pupil leaving St Nicholas CE VA Primary School, other than at the end of year 6, parents/carers are required to complete a '**Pupils moving from school**' form which can be obtained from the school office. This provides school with the following information: Child's name,

class, current address, date of leaving, new home address, name of new school, address of new school. This information is essential to ensure that we know the whereabouts and may appropriately safeguard all our pupils, even those who leave us.

It is crucial that parent/carers keep school updated with current addresses and contact details for the pupil and key family members, in case of emergency.

Under Pupil Regulations 2006, all schools are **legally required** to notify their Local Authority of **every new entry** to the admission register **within five days** of the pupil being enrolled. In addition to this, **every deletion** from the school register must also be notified to the Local Authority, as soon as the ground for deletion has been met in relation to that pupil, and in any event no later than the time at which the pupil's name is deleted from the register. This duty does not apply when a pupil's name is removed from the admission register at a standard transition point – when the pupil has completed the final year of education normally provided by that school.

13. The Summary of responsibilities for school attendance

The full summary table of responsibilities for school attendance are given in Annex A: DfE guidance Summary table of responsibilities for school attendance. From 19th August 2024

[https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/65e8ae343649a2001aed63aa/Summary_table_of_responsibilities_for_school_attendance_applies_from_19_August_2024 .pdf](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/65e8ae343649a2001aed63aa/Summary_table_of_responsibilities_for_school_attendance_applies_from_19_August_2024.pdf)

All pupils

Parents are expected to:	Schools are expected to:	Academy trustees and governing bodies are expected to:	Local authorities are expected to:
<p>Ensure their child attends every day the school is open except when a statutory reason applies.</p> <p>Notify the school as soon as possible when their child has to be unexpectedly absent (e.g. sickness).</p> <p>Only request leave of absence in exceptional circumstances and do so in advance.</p> <p>Book any medical appointments around the school day where possible.</p>	<p>Have a clear school attendance policy on the school website which all staff, pupils and parents understand.</p> <p>Develop and maintain a whole school culture that promotes the benefits of good attendance.</p> <p>Accurately complete admission and attendance registers.</p> <p>Have robust daily processes to follow up absence.</p> <p>Regularly monitor data to identify patterns and trends and understand which pupils and pupil cohorts to focus on.</p> <p>Have a dedicated senior leader with overall responsibility for championing and improving attendance.</p>	<p>Take an active role in attendance improvement, support their school(s) to prioritise attendance, and work together with leaders to set whole school cultures.</p> <p>Ensure school leaders fulfil expectations and statutory duties.</p> <p>Use data to understand patterns of attendance, compare with other local schools, identify areas of progress and where greater focus is needed.</p> <p>Ensure school staff receive training on attendance.</p>	<p>Have a strategic approach to improving attendance for the whole area and make it a key focus of all frontline council services.</p> <p>Have a School Attendance Support Team that works with all schools in their area to remove area-wide barriers to attendance.</p> <p>Provide each school with a named point of contact in the School Attendance Support Team who can support with queries and advice.</p> <p>Offer opportunities for all schools in the area to share effective practice.</p>

Persistently absent pupils

Parents are expected to:	Schools are expected to:	Academy trustees and governing bodies are expected to:	Local authorities are expected to:
<p>Work with the school and local authority to help them understand their child's barriers to attendance.</p> <p>Proactively engage with the formal support offered – including any parenting contract or voluntary early help plan to prevent the need for legal intervention.</p>	<p>Continue support as for pupils at risk of becoming persistently absent and:</p> <p>Where absence becomes persistent, put additional targeted support in place to remove any barriers. Where necessary this includes working with partners.</p> <p>Where there is a lack of engagement, hold more formal conversations with parents and be clear about the potential need for legal intervention in future.</p> <p>Where support is not working, being engaged with or appropriate, work with the local authority on legal intervention.</p> <p>Where there are safeguarding concerns, intensify support through a referral to statutory children's social care.</p> <p>Work with other schools in the local area, such as schools previously attended and the schools of any siblings.</p>	<p>Regularly review attendance data and help school leaders focus support on the pupils who need it.</p>	<p>Continue support as for pupils at risk of becoming persistently absent and:</p> <p>Work jointly with the school to provide formal support options including attendance contracts and education supervision orders.</p> <p>Where there are safeguarding concerns, ensure joint working between the school, children's social care services and other statutory safeguarding partners.</p> <p>Where support is not working, being engaged with or appropriate, enforce attendance through legal intervention (including prosecution as a last resort).</p>

Severely absent pupils

Parents are expected to:	Schools are expected to:	Academy trustees and governing bodies are expected to:	Local authorities are expected to:
<p>Work with the school and local authority to help them understand their child's barriers to attendance.</p> <p>Proactively engage with the formal support offered – including any parenting contract or voluntary early help plan to prevent the need for legal intervention.</p>	<p>Continue support as for persistently absent pupils and:</p> <p>Agree a joint approach for all severely absent pupils with the local authority.</p>	<p>Regularly review attendance data and help school leaders focus support on the pupils who need it.</p>	<p>Continue support as for persistently absent pupils and:</p> <p>All services should make this group the top priority for support. This may include a whole family plan, consideration for an education, health and care plan, or alternative form of educational provision.</p> <p>Be especially conscious of any potential safeguarding issues, ensuring joint working between the school, children's social care services and other statutory safeguarding partners. Where appropriate, this could include conducting a full children's social care assessment and building attendance into children in need and child protection plans.</p>

Support for cohorts of pupils with lower attendance than their peers

Parents are expected to:	Schools are expected to:	Academy trustees and governing bodies are expected to:	Local authorities are expected to:
<p>Not applicable.</p>	<p>Proactively use data to identify cohorts with, or at risk of, low attendance and develop strategies to support them.</p> <p>Work with other schools in the local area and the local authority to share effective practice where there are common barriers to attendance.</p>	<p>Regularly review attendance data and help school leaders focus support on the pupils who need it.</p>	<p>Track local attendance data to prioritise support and unblock area wide attendance barriers where they impact numerous schools.</p>

Support for pupils with medical conditions or SEND with poor attendance

Parents are expected to:	Schools are expected to:	Academy trustees and governing bodies are expected to:	Local authorities are expected to:
<p>Work with the school and local authority to help them understand their child's barriers to attendance.</p> <p>Proactively engage with the support offered.</p>	<p>Maintain the same ambition for attendance and work with pupils and parents to maximise attendance.</p> <p>Ensure join up with pastoral support and where required, put in place additional support and adjustments, such as an individual healthcare plan and if applicable, ensuring the provision outlined in the pupil's EHCP is accessed.</p> <p>Consider additional support from wider services and external partners, making timely referrals.</p> <p>Regularly monitor data for such groups, including at board and governing body meetings and with local authorities.</p>	<p>Regularly review attendance data and help school leaders focus support on the pupils who need it.</p>	<p>Work closely with relevant services and partners, for example special educational needs, educational psychologists, and mental health services, to ensure joined up support for families.</p> <p>Ensure suitable education, such as alternative provision, is arranged for children of compulsory school age who because of health reasons would not otherwise receive a suitable education.</p>

Support for pupils with a social worker

Parents are expected to:	Schools are expected to:	Academy trustees and governing bodies are expected to:	Local authorities are expected to:
<p>Work with the school and local authority to help them understand their child's barriers to attendance.</p> <p>Proactively engage with the support offered.</p>	<p>Know who the pupils who have, or who have had, a social worker are.</p> <p>Understand how the welfare, safeguarding, and child protection issues that they are experiencing, or have experienced, can have an impact on attendance – whilst maintaining a culture of high aspiration for the cohort.</p> <p>Provide additional academic support and make reasonable adjustments to help them, recognising that even when statutory social care intervention has ended, there can be a lasting impact on children's educational outcomes.</p> <p>Work in partnership with the local authority at a strategic and individual level, sharing data on attendance including, at an individual level, informing the pupil's social worker if there are any unexplained absences and if their name is to be deleted from the register.</p>	<p>Regularly review attendance data and help school leaders focus support on the pupils who need it.</p>	<p>Ensure that all Children's Social Care practitioners, understand the importance of good attendance for pupil's educational progress, for their welfare and their wider development – and understand their role in improving it.</p> <p>Through the work of Virtual School Heads, they should:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Undertake systemic monitoring and data sharing of the attendance of children with a social worker in their area: developing and implementing targeted cohort level interventions to improve attendance. Provide advice, challenge and training to schools on how to promote and secure good attendance for children with a social worker. Develop whole system approaches, with social care, to support the attendance of children in need.

Looked after and previously looked after children

Parents are expected to:	Schools are expected to:	Academy trustees and governing bodies are expected to:	Local authorities are expected to:
<p>Work with the school and local authority to help them understand the child's barriers to attendance – including the development of Personal Education Plans.</p> <p>Proactively engage with the support offered.</p>	<p>Have high expectations for the cohort – with expert support and leadership provided by the designated teacher for looked-after and previously looked-after pupils.</p> <p>Work in partnership with the local authority Virtual School Head to develop and deliver high quality Personal Education Plans for looked-after children that support good attendance.</p> <p>Work directly with parents to develop good home-school links that support good attendance. For previously looked-after pupils this could include discussion on use of the Pupil Premium Plus funding managed by the school.</p>	<p>Designate a member of staff to have responsibility for the promotion of the educational achievement of looked-after and previously looked-after pupils.</p> <p>Monitor and review attendance of the cohort and consider how school policies, including behaviour policies, are sensitive to their needs and support good attendance.</p>	<p>Promote the educational achievement of looked-after and previously looked-after children – doing everything possible to minimise disruption to education when a pupil enters care.</p> <p>(LA that looks after the child:) Appoint an expert Virtual School Head (VSH) – will:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Monitor, report on, and evaluate the education outcomes of looked after children, including their attendance, as if they attended a single school- whenever they live or are educated. • Ensure schools know when they have a pupil looked after by the authority on their role and that information is shared with the school on issues that may impact on their attendance. • Ensure that all looked-after pupils have high quality, up to date, effective Personal Education Plans developed in partnership with schools, social workers and carers – including, where necessary, clear interventions and use of pupil premium plus funding to support good attendance. • Provide expert advice and information on the education of previously looked-after pupils to schools and parents – including their attendance.

Monitoring

Parents:	Schools:	Academy trustees and governing bodies:	Local authorities:
<p>Schools regularly update parents on their child's attendance.</p> <p>(If parents feel the school and or local authority have not delivered what they are expected to they should discuss the case with the school and/or local authority's attendance support team.)</p>	<p>The school's Senior Attendance Champion will ensure all school based staff complete their attendance responsibilities in line with the school's policies and procedures.</p> <p>The governing board or academy trust will hold the headteacher or executive leadership to account for their delegated responsibilities and for compliance with regulatory and statutory requirements. They will review progress and provide challenge when required. The board will help school leaders focus improvement efforts on the individual pupils or cohorts who need it most and ensure that school staff receive adequate training on attendance.</p> <p>Ofsted will expect schools to do all they reasonably can to achieve the highest possible attendance as part of the behaviour and attitudes judgement. This includes, where attendance is not consistently at or above what could reasonably be expected, that schools have a strong understanding of the causes of absence (particularly for persistent and severe absence) and a clear strategy in place that takes account of those causes to improve attendance for all pupils.</p> <p>Ultimately, in cases where a school has not met expectations or statutory duties the Secretary of State can consider a complaint.</p>	<p>DfE Regions Group considers multi academy trusts' efforts on attendance as part of decision making.</p> <p>Ofsted considers governing bodies' efforts as part of inspections.</p>	<p>DfE Regions Group monitors local authority efforts as part of regular interaction.</p> <p>Ofsted may consider the local area partnership's approach to improving attendance of children and young people with SEND as part of the SEND Area Inspection, and the local authority's approach to improving attendance for children with a social worker through inspecting local authority children's services.</p> <p>Ultimately, in cases where a local authority has not met expectations or statutory duties the Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman or the Secretary of State can consider a complaint.</p>

Annex B

HERTFORDSHIRE CODE OF CONDUCT: PENALTY NOTICES FOR PARENTS OF TRUANTS AND PARENTS OF PUPILS EXCLUDED FROM SCHOOL ANTI-SOCIAL BEHAVIOUR ACT 2003 SECTION 23

Penalty notices for unauthorised absence | Hertfordshire County Council

Annex C – Illness Absence Guidance

https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/626669cb8fa8f523b7221b98/UKHSA-should-I-keep-my_child_off_school_guidance-A3-poster.pdf

DfE external document template (childrenscommissioner.gov.uk)

Wellbeing: national resources - Hertfordshire Grid for Learning (thegrid.org.uk)

Illness and your child's education - GOV.UK (www.gov.uk)

Appendix 1

Dear Parent/Carer,

REQUEST FOR TERM TIME LEAVE

To be completed at least three weeks before the proposed holiday.

Research undertaken by the Department of Education shows that holidays taken in term time have a serious negative effect on a student's progress and achievement. Parents should therefore avoid absenting their child from school for a holiday in term time.

Government guidance states that only Headteachers are able to authorise absence from school, but this should only be in exceptional circumstances. A holiday in term time is therefore not a right and is rarely granted. It is understood, however, that there are occasions when a situation occurs, outside the family control, when a holiday will be requested. In such situations holidays up to five days' duration may be authorised.

The student is responsible for catching up work missed through holidays. Parents are expected to ensure this work is completed.

When a holiday is taken and the Headteacher has not authorised the absence, it will be marked in the register as an 'unauthorised absence'. Such unauthorised holiday absence may result in a Fixed Penalty Fine which, if not paid, could result in a prosecution for failing to ensure a child's regular attendance at school. Fixed Penalty Fines are issued per parent per child.

Parent to complete:

Name of pupil	Class Teacher
Purpose of absence:	
Reason of absence during term time	
Proposed start date of absence:	Day of return
Signed	Date:

Office to complete:

Number of days' absence requested:	
Percentage of attendance	
Has holiday during term time been requested previously? If so, when?	
Headteacher's resolution	
Signed:	Date: