



St. Augustine's Catholic Primary School Hoddesdon



Attendance Policy

October 2023

Renewal: October 2024

MISSION STATEMENT

*We come to school to live and learn happily together
by loving ourselves and each other as Jesus taught us.*

Our vision:

We aim to provide our children with an education that prepares them for the responsibilities and opportunities that arise throughout life in the 21st Century.

Our active partnership between Home, Parish and the wider community continues to grow with each playing a role in the continual development of our School.

We strive to provide a curriculum that reflects on learning and teaching practice to create a stimulating educational environment that caters for individual needs.

We aim for every person that comes into our school to be touched by our compassionate ethos where the gospel values are seen to be at work.

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Introduction

Good attendance at school is important for a pupil's education and establishes a positive working ethos early in life. It is essential that the school is informed of the reasons for absence on the first day of absence. Under current government legislation, unauthorised absence is regarded as truancy and all absence figures have to be reported to the Local Authority (LA), the Government Department for Education, as well as to the school's Governing Body. Attendances are also recorded on a pupil's annual school report. It is important that pupils arrive on time for school, as a prompt start to the day establishes the learning activities for the day. Parents/guardians must ensure that they have read the School's attendance policy in respect of authorised absence and unauthorised absences as poor attendance has a detrimental effect on a pupil's learning. Regular school attendance is essential and parents/guardians, pupils and teachers all have their part to play in ensuring this happens.

Pupils are expected to attend school for the entire duration of the academic year, unless there is a good reason for absence. There are two types of absences:

Authorised Absence: is when the Headteacher (or her nominated representative) approves a pupil's absence.

Unauthorised Absence: is when the Headteacher (or her nominated representative) will not approve, for example a family holiday during term time.

The achievement and maintenance of high levels of attendance is the shared responsibility of parents/guardians, St Augustine's Catholic Primary and Nursery School, its Governing Body and the LA.

There is a clear connection between regular attendance and achievement.

As attendance deteriorates, so does performance and achievement.

Expectations:

The responsibility of good attendance is shared between the school, parents and pupils supported by Herts Local Authority.

The Department for Education has published data on their website expressing that full attendance of 100% is the expectation, 96% needs to be looked at; 93% is a concern and 90% is persistent absence since September 2015 when the threshold figure changed from 15% (85%) to 10% (90%) – appendix 1.

School Practice

The school follows the Government circulars and Hertfordshire County Council Guidelines on attendance.

Registers are completed on-line using SIMS by 9am and 1.30 pm.

Daily attendance/absence marks are checked by the School Secretary on SIMS attendance modules.

Parents/guardians should always telephone the school office by 9am if their child will not be attending school. First day calls are made by the School Secretary if the school has been given no prior notification of a pupil's absence.

Every absence by a pupil is checked. It is then rigorously followed up by the School Secretary. Written explanations where provided are forwarded to the school office to file at the end of each day.

At the end of each week the School Secretary will check absences and any, which are found to be without explanation are investigated usually by sending out a

“regarding unexplained absence” letter (see appendix 2) asking the parent/guardian to give details of the absence. Parents must inform the school by letter or email if their child will be absent for more than 3 days.

Staff should bring to the attention of the Headteacher those pupils who are seen to be developing a pattern of absence. The Attendance Improvement Officer (AIO) also inspects the registers on-line on a termly basis and monitors absence patterns. Parents/guardians are asked, on occasions, to visit the school to discuss absence. Usually this happens prior to the problem being brought to the attention of the Attendance Improvement Officer.

No holiday during school time will be allowed to comply with Hertfordshire County Council Attendance Strategy.

In exceptional circumstances the Headteacher may sanction a request for leave of absence. Any leave of absence granted will be at the discretion of the Headteacher and based on individual circumstances including the overall attendance pattern of the pupil.

Pupils learn best when:

They arrive punctually at school.

Absence and lateness are monitored and action taken when necessary.

Parents/guardians and staff work in partnership to maximise pupils’ attendance at school and everyone is clear about the procedures.

If a pupil is going to be absent from school for a long period of time and unable to attend school at all, a referral for home tuition can be made via school, who will contact the appropriate external agencies. Please contact the School Office in these circumstances.

Lateness

The school day begins at 8.40am for Nursery and 8.50am for the main school. All pupils are expected to be in school at this time. Registers open at 8.50am and close at 9.00 am. A pupil receives a late mark if they are not in their classroom by the time the class register is taken at 9.00 am. Parents/guardians are encouraged to make dental/doctor’s appointments outside school hours.

Any pupil arriving later than 08.50 a.m. should enter the school via the main entrance and report to the School Office. The parent or guardian should give a reason for the lateness. When a pupil arrives after the register has closed and fails to provide a satisfactory explanation, he/she will be marked as “unauthorised absent” for that session. A member of the office staff will then send the junior pupil to their classroom and a member of the office staff will escort the infant pupil to their classroom. Pupils who are consistently late are disrupting not only their own education but also that of the other pupils. Where persistent lateness gives cause for concern further action may be taken.

Lateness is considered to be an equally serious absence. Parents/guardians of pupils who seem to be developing patterns of lateness are reminded about the importance of good time-keeping by sending a “good timekeeping reminder” letter (see Appendix 3). Parents/guardians will be asked to visit school to discuss the problem if they have three or more late marks in a half-term.

Leaving and Returning to School during the school day

In unavoidable circumstances, when pupils leave or return to school during the school day, office staff must be notified. Parents must sign their child both in and out of school at the front entrance.

Penalty Notices

Where a parent is deemed capable of securing their child's attendance but is not willing to take responsibility to do so, the AIO will become involved. Meetings will be arranged to discuss the attendance problems.

A letter will be sent to parents warning of a possible fine.

The Local Authority issues penalty notices on behalf of Hertfordshire schools to ensure consistency and in the event that a prosecution may need to be brought against the parent(s).

Publication of Information

St. Augustine's School shares information on individual pupils' attendance as necessary with parents, pupils and staff. Parents, pupils, staff and governors are informed of whole school attendance issues and statistics on a regular basis.

The Role of the School Management

Pupils learn best when parents and staff work in partnership to maximise pupils' attendance at school and everyone is clear about the procedures.

1. The school staff has an obligation to enquire about the reasons for pupils' absences and/or lateness and do insist upon written evidence for any such occurrences.
2. There is, likewise, an equally important task for the staff to report concerns over absence and lateness to the Headteacher.
3. The school sends out letters to ascertain reasons why pupils are absent or late (see appendix 1 and appendix 2).
4. The school collects information daily and weekly from the registers on authorised and unauthorised absence and enters this information on a termly return.
5. The School Prospectus emphasises to parents the importance of full attendance for a satisfactory delivery of the National Curriculum to each pupil and for testing procedures.
6. At the end of each school year, attendance figures for every individual pupil are put on the end of year report along with the number of unauthorised absences for that year, hence, parents are made fully aware of their responsibilities and know that the school is keeping a long term record.

The role of the Attendance Team

1. To visit the school to check on absence, lateness and any perceived problem raised by the school. The Education Welfare Service also has statutory responsibility under the Education Act 1996 to pursue non-school attendance and persistent lateness.
2. To follow up with a letter, telephone call or home visit in cases where attendance or lateness is habitual, after pre-referral action by the school.
3. To report back to the school the outcome of their investigations.
4. To work in partnership with the school and with parents.

We strive to encourage a team effort from staff, parents, pupils and the Attendance Improvement Officer so that pupils appreciate the importance of their own regular attendance and punctuality.

What Parents can do to help

Parents must ensure that they know the rules about the school's attendance policy in respect of authorised absence and unauthorised absences as this has a huge impact on a pupil's learning if it is not managed.

Parents must:

Let the school know as soon as possible why their child is away (by 9:30am at the latest).

Send a written note when their child returns to school.

Try to make appointments for their child outside school time.

Not allow their child to have time off school unless it is really necessary or with the prior agreement of the Headteacher.

If parents/guardians are worried about their child's attendance at school they should: Talk to their child; it may be something simple that needs resolving.

Talk to their child's class teacher.

Absence from school is taken seriously and reasons for absences are followed up. If absences continue, then the school may refer to the Attendance Improvement Service.

Governors

The percentage attendance and unauthorised/authorised absences are presented to the Governing Body on a termly basis.

SAINT AUGUSTINE'S CATHOLIC PRIMARY SCHOOL

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 Headteacher: Mrs G Napier



'WE COME TO SCHOOL TO LIVE AND LEARN HAPPILY TOGETHER BY LOVING OURSELVES AND EACH OTHER AS JESUS TEACHES US'

Dear Parents

Changes to Persistent Absence Threshold

I am writing to inform you of the changes made in September 2015 to the persistent absence threshold, when the Government reduced the threshold from 15% to 10%. This will now class a student with attendance below 90% as a persistent absentee, compared with the previous figure of 85% in 2014, regardless of whether the school has authorised or unauthorised the absence. This equates to 38 sessions/19 days of absence across the year.

Schools are no longer judged solely on their overall attendance figures but also on the number of students who fall into the persistent absence category.

Regular attendance at school is essential to ensure uninterrupted progress and to enable children to fulfil their potential. The attendance pattern for all children is monitored weekly with the school seeking to work actively with parents to ensure that regular attendance is maintained. The Department for Education has published data on their website that clearly shows the link between attendance and attainment. This highlights the fact that there will be an impact on your child's education and exam results if attendance is not consistently above 96% throughout their schooling.

Minor ailments, such as a headache or slight cold, are not acceptable reasons for failing to attend school. Repeated absences may require the school to request that you obtain medical evidence from your doctor's surgery or local pharmacy as recommended by the Government.

I would also like to remind you that the law does not give any entitlement to parents to remove their child from school during term-time for the purpose of a holiday. Headteachers may only grant leave of absence where an application has been made in advance and the Headteacher considers that there are **exceptional circumstances** relating to the application.

We will write to inform you if your child's attendance falls into this category, and at the end of the academic year, you will receive details of your child's attendance record in their school report. We are confident that you will be keen to work with us to ensure that your child meets the new threshold requirements since it is clear that this will have a positive effect on their learning.

Thank you in advance for your support.

Yours sincerely
 Mrs G Napier

Headteacher

APPENDIX 2

Should you fail to register your child at a school and not make suitable alternative arrangements to educate him/her, the Local Education Authority may issue a School Attendance Order requiring you to register your child at a named school.

Should your child not attend school regularly and have 15½ days of unauthorised absence in the current/previous term and you do not provide us or the Attendance Team with an acceptable explanation, you could be subject to a fixed penalty fine of £60 per parent, per child if paid within 21 days of issue. If not paid within this timescale the fine will rise to £120 per parent, per child, if paid within 22-28 days. If not paid within the given time, you will be prosecuted. If both parents receive a penalty notice, each parent needs to pay even if it is only for 1 child. The Local Education Authority may also apply for an Education Supervision Order in the Family Proceedings Court where you and your child will be directed to co-operate with Local Education Authority plans to ensure that your child attends school regularly.

Should you wish to talk to the East Herts Attendance Team or if you would like further information on their work please contact the Attendance Team Manager, East Area Attendance Team, 01992 555261



'We come to school to live and learn happily together by loving ourselves and each other as Jesus teaches us.'

SCHOOL ATTENDANCE

Information for Parents/Carers

INTRODUCTION

Receiving a good full-time education will give your child the best possible start in life.

Attending school regularly and punctually is essential if children are to make the most of the educational opportunities available to them. The law says that parents must ensure that their child regularly attends the school where he/she is registered.

This leaflet aims to explain some of the issues regarding school attendance and to inform you as a parent of your responsibilities and legal obligations.

REGULAR ATTENDANCE

Lateness

It is important that children arrive at school on time, our day starts at 8:50am. This encourages habits of good timekeeping and lessens any possible classroom disruption. If your child arrives after the register has closed without a good reason, this will be recorded as an 'unauthorised' absence for that session.

Absence

If your child has to miss school it is vital that you let us know why, preferably on the first morning of any absence. You must explain all of your child's absences in writing; you can also tell us by telephone and by coming in to see us yourself. If we have not heard from you by then we are legally obliged to contact you. If we do not receive an explanation from you, we have to record your child's absence as 'unauthorised', that is, as truancy. Absences may also be recorded as 'unauthorised' if it is considered that the explanation you have provided is unsatisfactory.

Most absences for acceptable reasons such as the following will generally be authorised by us:

Sickness

Unavoidable medical or dental appointments (you should try, if possible, to arrange these for after school or during school holidays)

Days of religious observance

Exceptional family circumstances, such as bereavement

We will not generally authorise absence for the following reasons, this is not an exhaustive list:

Shopping during school hours

Day trips

Holidays which have not been agreed

Birthdays

Looking after brothers or sisters

Weddings

If you think that your child is going to be absent it is always helpful to contact the school in advance.

HOLIDAYS DURING TERM-TIME AND EXTENDED VISITS OVERSEAS

You are strongly urged to avoid booking a family holiday during term-time. Parents do not have any right or entitlement to take their child out of school for a term-time holiday, and schools are not able to authorise leave for such holidays.

We may only authorise leave for term-time holidays in extenuating circumstances. We will not authorise leave simply because a holiday booked in term time is cheaper. We will look at each request individually and it is extremely unlikely that leave will be authorised if a child's attendance for the previous year is less than 95%. Nor can we

authorise leave near or during exam or test times, if it coincides with the start of the school year or if we otherwise believe that it may have a harmful effect on your child's education.

WHAT PARENTS CAN DO TO HELP

If you know or think that your child is having difficulties attending school you should contact us. We will do our best to help you. It is better to do this sooner rather than later, as most problems can be dealt with very quickly.

If the problems continue, either you or we can ask for help from an Attendance Improvement Officer.

ATTENDANCE TEAM

The Attendance Improvement Team act on behalf of the County Council which has a legal responsibility to monitor school attendance. Each school in Hertfordshire has an Attendance Improvement Team.

If your child is experiencing any attendance difficulties the Attendance Improvement Team may write to you or ask to meet with you and your child at home or at school to discuss these difficulties and work with you to improve the situation.

THE LAW

Hertfordshire must, by law, ensure that every child of compulsory school age is provided with an education suitable to his/her age, ability and aptitude and any special needs which he/she may have. Parents must either register their child at a school or make alternative arrangements approved by the Local Education Authority.

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Date:

Dear Family,

I note from the class register that is frequently late.

May I remind you that school begins at 8.50 am promptly each day and pupils should make their way to their classroom from 8.40 am. Please ensure your child arrives on time as it can be very disruptive to their own education and that of the whole class.

Please sign the slip below to acknowledge receipt of this letter.

Yours sincerely,

Mrs G. Napier
Headteacher

PLEASE COMPLETE AND RETURN TO THE CLASS TEACHER

Pupils Name.....Class.....

I acknowledge receipt of your letter regarding my child's punctuality and will ensure he/she arrives on time for each school session in future.

Signed.....Parent

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Date:

Dear Family,

Your child did not attend school on the following day/s.....

The Attendance Improvement Team inspects the school registers weekly and, at present, your child's absence is recorded as unauthorised.

It is important that your child's class teacher receives a written explanation regarding the above absence.

Please complete and return the slip below as soon as possible.

Yours sincerely,

Mrs G. Napier
Headteacher

TO BE COMPLETED AND RETURNED TO THE CLASS TEACHER AS SOON AS POSSIBLE.

Pupil's Name.....Class.....

Date/s of absence.....

Reason for absence.....

Signed.....Date.....

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Dear

We are writing to you with regards toattendance. We completely appreciate that over the last term there have been a number of reasons as to why he/she has been absent, however as a school it is a legal requirement to monitor attendance closely and, when asked, the Education Welfare Service has to be informed if attendance falls below 90%.

Currently our records show that attendance is

As mentioned earlier we are very aware of the reasons for these absences and thank you in advance for communicating with us. As it is our statutory responsibility to inform you, please find attached a copy of the attendance record for your information.

We would ask you to continue to communicate with the school either via the Class Teacher or via the School Office. If there is anything you wish to discuss, please do not hesitate to contact us.

Thank you for your continuing support.

Yours sincerely

Mrs. G. Napier
Headteacher

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address

date

RE: (name of student)

Dear

I am very concerned that 's attendance has not improved since our previous letter dated Whilst we may be aware of the reasons for such absences, we feel that we must draw this to your attention again as we have not yet seen a significant improvement. At present the attendance figure is%, with unauthorised absences. A copy of the attendance record is enclosed.

You should be aware that regular attendance is a legal requirement and that the Education Welfare Service has to be informed if attendance falls below a certain level.

I would ask you to continue to communicate with the school either via the Class Teacher or via the School Office, on a regular basis so that we can work towards improving the situation. If there is anything you wish to discuss, please do not hesitate to contact me.

Thank you for your continuing support.

Yours sincerely

Mrs. G. Napier
Headteacher

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Address

date

RE: (name of student)

Dear

.....'s attendance for this academic year has fallen to% which equates todays absent. Unfortunately, there has been no significant improvement in her attendance since this being discussed with you and as such this is continuing to cause concern. A copy of the attendance record is enclosed for your reference.

Whilst we may be aware of some of the reasons for whichis **having trouble coming into school at times/is not in school**, I need to confirm to you, as mentioned **on the phone/when we met**, that absences can no longer be authorised without medical evidence. This could be in the form of a letter from your Doctor, confirmation of a medical appointment, a copy of a prescription or copy of packaging with prescription labels. This is required for each period of absence.

As I am sure you are aware, regular attendance is a legal requirement and it is important that any issues which may be the cause of this poor attendance are addressed as soon as possible. As such, attendance will continue to be monitored. If there is little improvement, I should inform you that this may lead to a referral being made to the Education Welfare Service.

I would ask you to continue to communicate with the school via your Class Teacher or the School Office, on a regular basis so that we can work towards improving the situation.

Please do not hesitate to contact me should you wish to discuss this matter further.

Yours sincerely

Mrs. G. Napier
Headteacher