



St Hilary's School

Attendance Policy

Introduction

At St Hilary's School, we see education as a partnership between the family and the school. Our school is dedicated to preparing our children for their adult life beyond formal education and ensuring that it promotes and reinforces British Values to all our children. We actively promote democracy, the rule of the law, individual liberty and those with different faiths and beliefs. These are fundamental British Values which underpin all that we offer, as does our School Motto 'Not for oneself but for all.'

We are committed to providing the highest quality of education for our pupils, and we look to parents to support this objective. Regular attendance at school is essential to ensure uninterrupted progress and to enable pupils to attain their potential. The attendance pattern for all children is monitored weekly with the school seeking to work actively with parents to ensure a regular pattern is maintained. We expect all children on roll to attend every day, when the school is in session, as long as they are fit and healthy enough to do so, unless there are extenuating circumstances, i.e. serious illness or bereavement of a family member or close relative. Poor attendance can seriously affect each child's progress and attainment in school, relationships with other children and their ability to form lasting friendships, confidence to attempt new work and to learn alongside others. The Governors and Headteacher, in partnership with parents, have a duty to promote full attendance at school and take their responsibility to Safeguard Children, KCSIE (2023), Children Absent/Missing Education extremely seriously. All pupils are required to be in school before 8.45am, although some pupils may arrive earlier to attend Before School Care and/or Breakfast Club. The school day ends at 3.30pm for Pre-Prep and 4.00pm for Prep, although many pupils remain later to take part in extra-curricular activities, or to attend After School Care, supervised by staff employed by the School.

The Law and ISI guidelines

Every school is required by law to maintain two separate registers of its pupils:

- an Admissions Register, known as the 'school roll'
- an Attendance Register

The Regulations covering school admission and attendance are very prescriptive reflecting the importance that successive Governments have attached to ensuring that all children of compulsory school age attend school. Schools are required to ensure that an attendance register is taken twice a day, at the start of the morning session, and during the afternoon for all day pupils. The Regulations specify the contents of both registers and the manner in which they are operated and maintained.

The Government expects schools and local authorities to:

- Promote good attendance and reduce absence, including persistent absence.
- Ensure every pupil has access to full-time education to which they are entitled.

- Act early to address patterns of absence.
- Parents to perform their legal duty by ensuring their children, of compulsory school age and who are registered at school, attend regularly.
- All pupils to be punctual to their lessons.

St Hilary's understands that we have a legal duty to report certain attendance issues to the local authority: ten days of unauthorised absence (other than for reasons of sickness or leave of absence), failure to attend regularly, and deletion from the school register when the next school is not known. In this last case, independent schools are required to report the circumstances as soon as possible to the local authority in which the child lives. Working Together to Safeguard Children (WTSC) states the importance of inter-agency working in order to promote the welfare of children. For further information, please see the **Admissions Policy** which includes information regarding the Admissions Register and procedures regarding pupils joining and leaving the school. This policy should also be read in conjunction with the Supervision Policy and Missing Child Policy.

Registers

Class/Form teachers complete a register at the beginning of each morning and afternoon session. Registers are completed online through our School Management System. Marking the attendance registers twice daily is a legal requirement. The DfE publication, Children Missing Education (2016), and regulatory requirements, describe the legal requirements in relation to registers. Teachers mark pupils according to the register guidelines (**Appendix 1**). Pupil attendance is monitored weekly to identify concerns regarding attendance of individual pupils and the appropriate action is then taken. The morning register is taken by 8.50am and closes at 8.55am where pupils, who are not present, will be marked with an N if the reason is unknown. This will be changed when the reason for absence has been established. A pupil arriving after the register has closed will be marked as late (L) by the School Office, once the pupil has arrived. The lunch register is completed after lunch break and is closed at 1.45.

Pupils attending Before and After School Care will be registered by the member of staff supervising the children.

Authorised Absence

An absence is classified as authorised when a pupil has been away from school for a legitimate reason and the school has received notification from a parent or carer. For example, if a child has been unwell and the parent writes a note or telephones the school to explain the absence. Only the Headteacher can authorise absence for approved reasons where the absence must be unavoidable. The Headteacher is not obliged to accept a parent's explanation and if the absence is not authorised, parents will be notified.

Unauthorised Absence

An absence is classified as unauthorised when a child is away from school without the permission of the Headteacher. Unauthorised absences are those which the school does not consider reasonable and for which no authorisation has been given. This includes parents keeping children off school unnecessarily, absences that have never been properly explained, holidays not agreed, persistent non-specific illness, absence of siblings if one child is ill, parental illness, oversleeping, inadequate clothing/uniform, confusion over school dates, medical/dental appointments of more than half a day without very good reason and child's/family birthdays. The school will follow the guidelines for reporting absence to the local authority in view of KCSIE (2023) and Children Missing Education (2016).

According to KCSIE (2023), all staff should be aware that children absent from education, particularly repeatedly, can act as a vital warning sign of a range of safeguarding possibilities. This may include abuse and neglect, which may include sexual abuse or exploitation and child criminal exploitation. It may indicate mental

health problems, risk of substance abuse, risk of travelling to conflict zones, risk of female genital mutilation or risk of forced marriage. Early intervention is necessary to identify the existence of any underlying safeguarding risk and to help prevent the risks of a child being absent/going missing in future. Staff should be aware of the unauthorised absence and children absent from education procedures.

KCSIE for 2023 highlight the difference between children absent from education and children missing education.

Definitions: a child absent from education is a child who is on roll at a school, but is very regularly not attending; a child missing education is a child of compulsory school age who isn't on a school roll or being educated elsewhere

Parental Responsibility

Parents have a legal duty to ensure that their child attends school regularly and arrives on time. Full attendance is essential to the all-round development of a child and they should be allowed to take full advantage of the educational opportunities available to them by law. Poor attendance undermines their education and sometimes, puts pupils at risk. Parents are able to view their child's/children's attendance by logging into the Parent Portal. It is the parents' responsibility to contact the school on the first day their child is absent and every subsequent day after that. This is a safeguarding matter so that all parties know that every child is safe.

Pupils are expected to arrive between 8.30 and 8.45am, when the front gate is opened and children go to class. Some pupils may attend Before School Care which begins at 7.45am for Breakfast Club. Children have the choice of either having breakfast at 8am or staying in the classroom until 8.30am; both are supervised by members of staff. Parents book their children in for Breakfast Club and are charged for this service. All pupils who arrive late must report to the school office where they are registered.

Pupils are not normally allowed to leave the site during the school day, unless accompanied by a member of staff, for a trip, a visit or a sporting fixture. The dates of these are published in the Calendar or will have been notified to parents in advance. Pupils will also be granted absences for school visits and external examinations. Requests for leave of absence on compassionate grounds, or in exceptional circumstances, should be made in writing to the Headteacher (see **Appendix 2** for medical absence requests and **Appendix 3** for non-medical absence requests) well in advance of the proposed absence.

Term dates are published in the school calendar so that holidays can be arranged without disrupting the pupil's education. Please note that it is our policy not to allow holidays to be taken during term, unless there are exceptional circumstances or the pupil is below compulsory school age.

Illness and Medical Appointments

If your child is unwell, please contact (via email or telephone) the School Office before 8.40am on the first day, and every subsequent day, of absence informing the school of the reason for absence. The absence will then be marked in the register. As part of our Safeguarding Procedures, the school office will contact the parent or carer and other emergency contacts if no message has been received regarding the reason for the absence to check on the safety of the child. In order to be compliant with safeguarding guidelines and KCSIE (2023), parents/caregivers are required to give more than one emergency number for each pupil.

Every effort should be made to arrange medical appointments outside of school hours. If it is necessary for a child to be out of school for this reason, the child should be returned to school directly after the appointment.

If your child is absent due to vomiting, they should not return to the School for the next 48 hours after the last bout of sickness. This is to reduce the risk of infection to other children and adults at school. If your child has symptoms of COVID-19 (a new repetitive cough, high temperature or loss of smell / taste) they should not attend School. Please contact the Lead First Aider, Ms Trew via the School Office or email office@sthilarysschool.com and the Headteacher, Mrs Whittingham via head@sthilarysschool.com.

Medical certificates may be required for an absence greater than five days.

Persistent Absenteeism (PA)

A pupil becomes a 'persistent absentee' when they miss 10% or more schooling across the school year **for whatever reason**. Absence at this level may do considerable damage to any child's educational prospects and missing school seriously affects children's longer-term life opportunities. We expect parents/carers' fullest support and co-operation regarding attendance and PA.

We carefully monitor all absences. Significant priority is given if a pupil's attendance reaches the PA level, or is at risk of moving towards that mark and parents will be informed immediately. PA pupils are tracked and monitored carefully through our pastoral system.

If attendance at school does not improve the School will make a referral to the Education Welfare Service who offer support to parents/carers and to the school to ensure the student attends regularly. If necessary, the Education Welfare Service will arrange home visits and/or contact other agencies to meet with the family to ensure attendance improves.

Attendance records

It is the responsibility of the School attendance team to ensure that attendance and lateness records are up to date. If no reason for absence has been provided, parents are contacted on the first day of absence. Where it is not possible to make contact, letters are sent to parents requesting reasons for absence with a seven-day reply deadline before the absence is recorded as unauthorised.

The school should follow up any absences to:

- Ascertain the reason.
- Ensure the proper safeguarding action is taken.
- Identify whether the absence is approved or not.
- Identify the correct code to use before entering it on to the school's electronic register.

Non-attendance is an important issue that is treated seriously. However, each case is different and the school acknowledges that no one standard response will be appropriate in every case. Consideration is given to all factors affecting attendance before deciding what intervention strategies to apply. It is essential that parents keep the school fully informed of any matters that may affect their child's attendance.

Procedure

If, when collating the registers, staff in the school office find that a child is absent without this absence having been accounted for, they will follow the following procedure:

- Check to establish whether the child is on a late-running school bus (AM only)

- Check that the pupil and their parent/carer has not signed in/out
- Check office documentation (notification of absence via letter/ email from parents etc.)

● Carry out internal enquiries: check that the child is not in a Learning Support, Music lesson or LAMDA lesson and that he/she is not in the Wellbeing Centre; check that the child is not in an early morning club (AM registers), or lunchtime club (PM registers) and is running late.

- Check with the Form Teacher and go to the classroom to check
- Check with the Headteacher and Deputy Head

If the child's whereabouts still cannot be established, contact both the parents to inform them that their child has not been registered and try to establish their whereabouts, using email as well as telephoning all given numbers and leaving messages.

If parents respond and inform us that the child should be in school

- Go back to the classroom and check again

If the child is present

- Establish why he/she was not registered (and send report accordingly)
- Contact parents to inform them that he/she is safe

If child is missing

- Inform the Headteacher and carry out 'reasonable enquiries.'

If parents do not respond

- If no response from either parent is received after 10 minutes, go to classroom to check whether the child is present.

If child is present

- Establish why he/she was not registered (and send report accordingly)
- Contact parents to inform them that he/she is safe

If child is missing

- Inform the Headteacher and carry out 'reasonable enquiries.'

What are reasonable enquiries?

Making 'reasonable enquiries' is a joint responsibility with your LA and includes 1 or more of the following:

- Contacting parents, relatives and neighbours using known contact details
- Checking local databases within the LA, or the DfE's Key to Success or school2school systems
- Following local information sharing arrangements, making enquiries to:
- Other local databases and agencies
- Agencies known to be involved with the family

- Checking with UK Visas and Immigration and/or the Border Force
- Checking with the LA and school from which your pupil moved from originally, or any past LAs or schools that have educated your pupil
- Checking with the LA where your pupil lives, if it's different from the one where your school is
- In the case of children of service personnel, checking with the Ministry of Defence Children's Education Advisory Service
- Conducting a home visit, following your own policies and risk assessment procedures. If appropriate, making enquiries with neighbours and relatives

Children absent from education

Schools are required to alert their Local Authority after a pupil of compulsory school age:

Haven't returned to school for 10 days after an authorised absence, or

Have been absent without authorisation for 20 consecutive days

At St Hilary's we will also alert the authorities if the child fails to attend school regularly, or is removed from the school roll without his or her next school being known. Tutors and/or office staff should report to the Headteacher and DSL any cases of unauthorised, unexplained or prolonged absence (five continuous days). Children will not be removed from our School roll until we have been notified by another school that a place has been offered and accepted. Children who stop attending, and who cannot be traced, will not be removed from the school roll until the Local Authorities advises the school to do so. Where a child is missing from education, Local Authority guidance will be followed. The school will notify the local authority when they remove or add a pupil's name to the admission register at non-standard transitions, i.e. when a compulsory school-aged child leaves a school before completing the school's final year or joins a school after the beginning of the school's first year.

Reviewed: June 2019, June 2020, June 2021, August 2021, June 2022, July 22, July 2023

Next review date: June 2024

Person(s) responsible: Mrs Jane Whittingham (Headteacher) Mrs Gemma Mitchell (Deputy Head) Ms Jackie Trew (Office Manager)

Appendix 1: Register Codes

<u>Code</u>	<u>Meaning</u>	<u>Notes on use</u>
#	School closed	
\	Present	
B	Educated off site	Senior School Visits
C	Other authorised	Where parents have requested absence from JW e.g. horse riding comp, cricket, theatre trips and she has agreed and said it will be authorised
D	Dual registration	DO NOT USE
E	Excluded	
F	Extended family holiday	DO NOT USE
G	Family holiday (unauthorised)	
H	Family holiday (authorised)	
I	Illness	
J	Interview	DO NOT USE
L	Late	
M	Medical/Dental appointment	
N	No reason yet provided for absence	Teacher doesn't know why they're absent
O	Unauthorised absence	Where parents have requested absence from JW e.g. horse riding comp, cricket, theatre trips and she has agreed but said it will be unauthorised.
P	Approved sporting activity	e.g. netball tournaments
R	Religious observance	Office use only
S	Study leave	DO NOT USE
T	Traveller absence	DO NOT USE
U	Late (after register closed)	DO NOT USE
V	Educational visit/trip	Accompanied by school
W	Work experience	DO NOT USE
X	Un-timetabled sessions for non-compulsory school age pupils	DO NOT USE
Y	Enforced closure	Office use only
Z	Pupil not on roll	Nursery/KG only

Key
For staff use
Office use only
DO NOT USE
Nursery/KG only

Appendix 2: LEAVE OF ABSENCE - Medical

This is to request that my child/ren

..... Class
..... Class

Be permitted to be absent from school on (date)

- Doctor's appointment
- Dentist's appointment
- Hospital appointment
- Other Please specify

They will leave school at and return at

Signature of parent/guardian Date

✂ -----

TEACHER COPY

..... (name) will be absent on(date)

- Doctor's appointment
- Dentist's appointment
- Hospital appointment
- Other Please specify

They will leave school at and return at

Appendix 3: LEAVE OF ABSENCE – Non Medical

This is to request that my child/ren

..... Class
..... Class

Be permitted to be absent from school on (date)

- Senior School Open Day Name of School
- Scholarship / Interview Please Specify
- Entrance Exam Name of School
- Music/Art/Ballet/other External Exam Please Specify
- Other Please specify

For Holiday Requests, please email the Head’s PA: secretary@sthilarysschool.com

They will leave school at and return at

Signature of parent/guardian Date

✂ -----

TEACHER COPY

..... (name) will be absent on (date)

- Senior School Open Day Name of School
- Scholarship / Interview Please Specify
- Entrance Exam Name of School
- Music/Art/other External Exam Please Specify
- Other Please specify

They will leave school at and return at