

A St. Michael's CE (VA) Junior School Policy



ATTENDANCE & PUNCTUALITY POLICY (In conjunction with Galleywood Infant School)

[Draft]

<i>Reviewed by Headteachers at Galleywood Infants & St. Michaels Junior:</i>	
<i>Ratified by Full Governing Body:</i>	
<i>To be reviewed:</i>	



St Michael's CE VA Junior School
and
Galleywood Infant School



Attendance & Punctuality Policy

Rationale

St Michael's Junior School (SM): We believe that regular school attendance and good punctuality is essential to maximise children's academic achievement as well as their overall development, physically, mentally, spiritually, emotionally and socially. We aim to encourage maximum attendance by creating a strong Christian community which is welcoming, caring and nurturing that provides a stimulating learning environment where children can thrive. The parent handbook reminds parents that there is a legal requirement to ensure that their child attends school.

Galleywood Infant School (GIS): Galleywood Infant School is committed to providing a full and successful education for every child so that they achieve very well, establish good and lasting relationships with their peers and are well prepared for Key Stage 2. Regular and punctual attendance is crucial and the school works closely with all parents and families to establish the strong home school links and communication systems to underpin these.

School Attendance and the Law

Under the 1996 Education Act, parents and carers are responsible for ensuring their children attend school regularly and punctually. Failure to do so could result in legal action being taken against them by the Local Authority.

The register is a legal document and schools must, under the Education (Pupils Registration) Regulations 2006, take a Register at the start of the morning session, and again during the afternoon session. Since September 2006, schools have been required to use the statutory registration codes (see Appendix).

Under the Education (Pupil Registration) Regulations 2006, only the school, and not parents/carers, can authorise an absence. Where the reason for a pupil's absence cannot be established at the time the register is taken, that absence shall be recorded as unauthorised. If a reason for the absence is provided by the parent/carer, the school may decide to grant leave of absence which must be recorded as authorised using the appropriate national code.

Leave of absence is not a legal right, and from September 2013, the Education (Pupil Registration) Regulations 2013, all references to family holidays have been removed from the Regulations, together with the right for parents to apply for up to ten days holiday during term time. Schools have the discretion to authorise absence in exceptional circumstances. Applications for a leave of absence must be made in advance to the Headteacher in accordance with school procedures (GIS; in writing, SM; Holiday Form appendix 2).

If a holiday is taken without prior permission from the school, or where the request for leave was not agreed, the absence will be recorded as unauthorised. This may result in a penalty notice(s) being issued by the Local Authority (Educational Welfare Service).

N.B. The DfE have not provided any guidelines as to what they consider to be exceptional circumstances. This is solely at the discretion of the Headteacher. Where possible, both schools will try to have a consistent approach to all leave of absence requests so that siblings at both schools receive a consistent response from each Headteacher.

Why regular attendance is so important.

Safeguarding

Your child may be at risk of harm if they do not attend school regularly. Safeguarding the interests of each child is everyone's responsibility and within the context of this school, promoting the welfare and life opportunities for your child encompasses:-

Attendance
Behaviour Management
Health and Safety
Access to the curriculum
Anti-bullying

Failing to attend this school on a regular basis, will be considered a serious safeguarding matter.

Learning

As absence affects the pattern of a child's schooling and regular absence will seriously affect their learning. Any pupil's absence disrupts teaching routines so may affect the learning of others in the same class. Ensuring your child's regular attendance at school is a parent's legal responsibility and permitting absence from school, without a good reason, creates an offence in law and may result in prosecution.

School Procedures

Both schools give a high priority to conveying to parents and pupils the importance of regular and punctual attendance. We recognise that parents have a vital role to play and that there is a need to establish strong home school links and communication systems that can be utilised whenever there are concerns about attendance.

If there are problems, which affect a pupil's attendance, we investigate, identify and strive in partnership with parents and pupils to resolve those problems as quickly and efficiently as possible.

In June 2015 OFSTED inspectors reported national findings of inconsistent practices for recording and reporting cases where children are removed from schools. This raised serious concerns about safeguarding issues with children potentially exposed to the risk of harm, exploitation or radicalisation. Her Majesty's Chief Inspector, therefore, recommended that the Government strengthen regulations to ensure that schools provide regular and accurate information to their Local Authority about children as they are added to, or removed from school admissions registers.

During spring 2016 the DfE consulted on Improving Information in Identifying Children Missing Education, which set out to improve communication and co-ordination between schools, including independent schools, and Local Authorities.

The outcome of the consultation lead to amendments to the Education (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2006 being made on 22nd July 2016 which came into effect on 1st September 2016. Under Regulation 12 schools are now legally required to notify their Local Authority of every new entry to the admission register and every deletion from the school register. Notifications must be received by the Local Authority, **within five days.**

To enable schools to fulfil this new statutory duty, an online form has been devised for completion. This can be accessed via the link below (Statutory Notification of Admission/Deletion to/from Essex School Roll). The Education (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2006 provide the original regulations, including regulation 8 which stipulates the grounds under which a school may remove a pupil from roll.

1. School Day at St. Michael's

8:30 – School gates open (children have unsupervised access to the school playground)

8:40 – School opens (children have access to their classrooms for early work)

8:55 – School starts

3:20 – School finishes and classes are dismissed from the front playground

2. Notification of Absence

Parents are requested to telephone the School Office on the first day of any absence and every subsequent day by **9.00am (SM)**. If no call is received, the school office or Pastoral Care Manager (**SM**) will telephone the parents of the absent child until contact is made. If contact is not made, 2 members of staff will visit the child's home. If contact still cannot be made, other agencies will be contacted for example Social Care or Children Missing Education and Employment Service (MECES).

Once contact has been made, a notification of absence slip is completed and passed to the class teacher (**SM**). The absence slips are retained in the child's school file. Parents are then required to provide written notification when their child returns to school to be attached to the absence slip and put on their file. Office staff pass daily lists of any children considered to be within a vulnerable group, or those who are persistent absentees to the Headteacher (**GIS**) or Pastoral Care Manager and Headteacher (**SM**) to follow up immediately.

3. Attendance Registers

Both schools keep manual registers which are updated twice a day and an electronic register which is updated daily (**SM**) and weekly (**GIS**) by the School Office. Registers are taken at 9am and 1.10pm at **GIS** and 8.55am and 1.15pm at **SM**, by the class teacher or another member of staff who completes the register. To ensure that the Registers are accurate and consistent throughout the school, the register is taken by calling out individual names and each child responding. At both morning and afternoon registration, the register is sent to the Office immediately after registration. Administration staff log attendance information onto the Pupil Management Information System. The Registers are kept in the School Office during the day and locked in a filing cabinet at night. Registers are kept for a minimum of three years following completion at the end of the academic year.

Marking of Registers

Registers must be marked accurately in ink as shown below. Where alteration is necessary, this must be clearly identified showing both original and changed entry. Correction fluid must not be used.

Present am (red pen) /

Present pm (red pen) \

Absent am/pm (black pen) O

3. Authorised and Unauthorised Absence

Authorised absences will be marked by using the relevant code (see Appendix 1) inside the black absence circle. Unauthorised absence will be denoted by Code 'O' (or alternative, see Appendix 1).

Only the Headteacher and Deputy Headteacher (in his/her absence) (via delegation from the Governing Body) is able to authorise absence, but delegates this responsibility to office staff e.g. doctors' appointments, sickness. This delegation is with the exception of requests for leave of absence due to exceptional circumstances.

Authorised Absence

Absence for the following reasons could be authorised where parents have advised school of the absence in writing. (Consideration will be given to alternative procedures where parents have difficulty with the written word, or where English is not the first language):

- Educational Visit
- Illness
- Unavoidable medical appointments
- Children who are excluded
- Days set aside exclusively for religious observance
- If permission for absence has been granted in advance by the Headteacher
- Traveller children who migrate and show every intention of returning
- Music examinations
- Children attending specific off-site tuition e.g. dyslexia
- Transport arranged by the LA has failed to arrive where the pupil lives beyond statutory walking distance
- Exceptional family circumstances (e.g. bereavement)

It may be necessary for the school or Children Missing Education and Employment Service (MECES) to ask the parent/carer to provide the school with written evidence of the reason for absence e.g. appointment cards/letters, Medical Certificate, letter from GP.

If there is an extensive period of absence due to medical reasons, the school or an Investigation Officer from MECES may ask for the permission of the parent/carer to contact the child's GP to confirm that the medical condition prevents the child from attending school and to establish a possible return date for the child.

On some occasions, if the school is concerned over the level of attendance, a referral may be made to MECES for support for the family in improving their child's attendance.

Unauthorised Absence

Absence may be recorded as unauthorised when it is due to:

- Truancy
- Minding the house
- Slept late
- No uniform
- Looking after brothers and sisters or unwell parents
- Shopping
- Haircuts
- Missed bus
- Birthdays
- Unapproved absence

Appeals

A parent/carer can appeal to the Chair of Governors in writing should they feel their request for absence has been unfairly dealt with. Appeals should be submitted in writing c/o the

school office. The Chair of Governors will reply in writing. Only in exceptional circumstances will the leave be authorised.

- If absence is not authorised and leave of absence is taken anyway, the case can be referred to MECES who may issue a Penalty Notice for £120 (£60 if paid within 21 days) to **each parent** for **each child** taken out of school.

4. Children Leaving School during the Day

Where a parent collects a child during the school day for whatever reason, the child is signed out in the 'Off-Site' book by the parent, giving the reason. When a child returns to school during the day, they should be 'signed in' by the parent, noting the time. Where a child goes home due to illness, the Headteacher is responsible for authorising the absence, but delegates this responsibility to Office Staff. Children who go home to dinner are also 'signed out' and 'signed in' again by their parent.

5. Punctuality

Punctuality is strongly encouraged and along with absence, persistent lateness can be prosecuted.

Children who arrive late at school must enter school via the main entrance and report to the School Office. If they have been marked absent in the register, they should be signed in, usually by the parent/guardian, in the 'Off-Site book' stating time of arrival in school and the reason for lateness. Lateness after 9.30 a.m. is classed as an absence for the whole session. If the reason can clearly be authorised e.g. doctor's appointment/illness, the Headteacher will authorise the absence. The child will then go to class and the teacher will check that the child has reported to the Office. There is no requirement for a parents' note when the child is signed in late by a parent. A note or telephone call is, however required if a child arrives late at school on their own.

6. Monitoring Attendance

A member of the Office Staff, under the direction of the Headteacher, monitors attendance and contacts any parents where notification of absence has not been received. If attendance falls below 95%, or if a pattern of intermittent absence appears to be emerging (e.g. Mondays), parents be contacted by the Pastoral Care Manager and may be invited to a meeting to discuss ways to improve attendance. Concerns are followed up initially by the school, but if they remain unresolved, the Investigating Officer from MECES will become involved.

We recognise and value the support and guidance of the Investigating Officer, both in helping families deal with absence and punctuality issues as well as implementing the law with regard to attendance.

Long Term Absences

If a child is absent for a long period of time, for example, due to illness, the class teacher may arrange for work to be sent home. Children returning to school after long periods of absence, are supported and assisted with their reintegration into school.

Promoting attendance/punctuality

Both schools work hard to provide a curriculum which is lively, engaging and meets the needs of all learners.

At GIS, stickers are awarded for those pupils achieving 100% attendance during each term and Certificates for 100% attendance over the academic year. The registration group with

the highest % attendance over a week is awarded the School Attendance trophy for the week.

At SM, children are awarded a certificate and gift for 100% attendance over the academic year.

Attendance statistics are collected and used to inform pastoral and curriculum practices. Expectations are made clear to parents with regard to attendance and punctuality in the Home School Agreement, School Prospectus and School Profile **(GIS)** and Pupil Handbook **(SM)**. Opportunities to maintain awareness of attendance and what constitutes authorised and unauthorised absence, through newsletters, parents' evenings and pupil reports are used.

Pupils with a known attendance problem will be interviewed with the parents and will be set targets for improvement. If attendance does not improve, parents are invited to a school meeting and our Pastoral Support Advisor **(GIS)**.

Strategies:

- In the belief that pupils are more likely to attend regularly if the curriculum is lively and meets their needs, the curriculum is regularly reviewed.
- Attendance statistics are collected and used to inform pastoral and curriculum practices.
- Expectations are made clear to parents with regards to attendance and punctuality in the Home School Agreement and Parent Handbook.
- Opportunities to maintain awareness through newsletters, parents' evenings and pupil reports are used.
- The Attendance and Punctuality policy is available via the school website.
- Pupils who have been absent for an extended period of time are re-integrated back into school through a structured and individually tailored programme.
- All issues which may cause a pupil to experience attendance difficulties are promptly investigated by the School.

Appendices

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| - Appendix 1 | Absence Authorisation Codes |
| - Appendix 2 | Leave of Absence Form |
| - Appendix 3 | Standard Letters to Parents |

Reviewed by Headteachers at Galleywood Infants & St. Michaels Dec 2014
Ratified by FGB: Autumn 2014

APPENDIX 2:
ST MICHAEL'S CE JUNIOR SCHOOL
APPLICATION FOR LEAVE OF ABSENCE DURING TERM TIME

Leave of absence may only be granted by a person authorised in that behalf by the proprietor of the school. As from 1st September 2013, the Education (Pupil Registration) (England) (Amendment) Regulations 2013 amended Regulation 7 to prohibit the proprietor of a maintained school from granting leave of absence to a pupil, except where an advance application has been made by the parent with whom the pupil normally resides, and the proprietor considers that there are exceptional circumstances relating to the application.

The 'proprietor' is the Headteacher and his/her nominated representatives. Appeals can be made to the Chair of Governors.

St Michael's CE Junior School

Taking your child out of school during term time could be detrimental to your child's educational progress. A pupil who takes 10 days absence will only attain 94.7% attendance in the year. 10 days absence also means the pupil will miss 50 hours of education.

There is no entitlement to parents to take their child out of school during term time, however, you may apply to the school for leave of absence if you believe there are exceptional circumstances.

If the absence is not authorised and the holiday is taken, the case will be referred to the Education Welfare Service who may issue a Penalty Notice for £120 (£60 if paid within 21 days) to each parent for each child taken out of school.

Name of Child(ren) _____

Date of Birth _____

Class: _____

Date of First day of Absence _____

Date of Return to school _____

Number of Days Requested _____

Important: A letter must be attached to this request, outlining the 'exceptional circumstances' for which a leave of absence is being applied for.

Signed _____ (Parent/Carer) Date _____

School /Office Use Only:

Attendance percentage preceding 12 weeks:			
Number of sessions absence this academic year:	Authorised	Unauthorised	Total
Absence Authorised/Not Authorised			
Signature _____ Position _____			
Date _____			

APPENDIX 1

Authorisation Codes for Registers

B	Educated off-site (not dual registration)
C	Other approved educational activity (not covered by other codes and descriptions)
D	Dual registered (i.e. present at another school or at a PRU)
E	Excluded but no alternative provision made
F	Agreed extended family holiday
G	Family holiday (not agreed or sessions in excess of agreement)
H	Agreed family holiday
I	Illness
J	Interview
L	Late but arrived before register closed
M	Medical or dental appointment
N	No reason for the absence provided yet
O	Other unauthorised (not covered by other codes or descriptions)
P	Approved sporting activity
R	Day set aside for religious observance
S	Study leave
T	Traveller absence
U	Late and arrived after register closed
V	Educational visit or trip
W	Work experience (not work-based training)
X	Untimetabled sessions for non-compulsory school-age pupils
Y	Partial and forced closure
Z	Pupil not on roll yet
#	School closed to all pupils

APPENDIX 3:

Standard Letters to Parents

UNAUTHORISED ABSENCE

Dear XXXXX,

I am writing to inform you that there have been four occasions last term when we were not notified of the reasons for XXXX absence from school. It is vital that you do telephone the school office by 9.15am if your child is going to be absent. An answerphone is also available outside office hours.

When we do not have a reason for a child's absence, such absence is marked as unauthorised and the information may be passed onto the Educational Welfare Officer at the Local Authority for further investigation, particularly where we have ongoing cause for concern.

Please do hesitate to contact me if you have any concerns over this matter but in the meantime would be grateful for your co-operation in this matter.

Yours sincerely,

Maria Rumsey
Headteacher

ATTENDANCE LEVEL (LESS THAN 90%)

Dear XXXXX

I am writing to you regarding XXXX attendance level since the beginning of the school term. XXX's attendance stands at XX% meaning that she has missed XX sessions of school (a session being a morning or afternoon). A full listing is enclosed for your reference.

For XXXX to meet his/her full potential, it is vitally important that she attends school so that she can gain maximum benefit from all the learning opportunities that are planned for her.

We will continue to monitor XXXX attendance levels on a weekly basis and if necessary will pass the information onto the Educational Welfare Officer at the Local Authority for further investigation if we have ongoing cause for concern.

Please do not hesitate to contact me if you have any concerns or would like to discuss the matter further.

Yours sincerely,

Maria Rumsey
Headteacher

ATTENDANCE LEVEL (< 90% > 85%)

Dear XXXX,

It is our policy to inform parents half-termly if their child's attendance falls below 90% as research demonstrates that there is a clear link between children's attendance and their levels of attainment. The government have stated that primary school attendance figures should be in excess of 95%. Obviously, a child may have a long spell of ill health in one term and then have full attendance for the rest of the year and therefore it is any ongoing pattern of lower than expected attendance over more than one term that would merit investigation by the Education Welfare Service. However, to help parents monitor their child's attendance we believe that it is helpful for parents to be informed whenever attendance falls below 90%.

XXX attendance for the first half of the XXXXXXXX Term was XX %

If you wish to discuss the above with me, please do not hesitate to contact me through the School Office.

Yours sincerely,

Maria Rumsey
Headteacher

PUNCTUALITY

Dear XXXX

It has come to my attention that XXXX is frequently late arriving at school. I enclose the Pupil Attendance Record for your information.

It can be very disruptive to your child's learning if they are not present at the start of the day. In addition it can also cause disruption to the rest of the class as well as the additional administrative burden created.

I therefore look forward to your co-operation in this matter so that a better record of regular and punctual attendance is maintained.

If you would like to discuss this further, please do not hesitate to contact me.

Yours sincerely,

Maria Rumsey
Headteacher

ONGOING PUNCTUALITY CONCERNS

Dear

I have written to you previously as there have been concerns over XXXX's punctuality. I note from the registration certificate that there has been very little improvement in this and over the last school year and XXXX has been late on XX occasions. I enclose a copy of the registration certificate for your information.

As I have previously mentioned late arrival into class causes much disruption and XXX is frequently missing out on important learning opportunities.

I will be monitoring XXXX's attendance and would ask for your cooperation so that a better record of punctual attendance is maintained.

Should XXXX continue to be late for class I may ask for you to attend a meeting with myself and the Education Welfare Officer in order to discuss this matter further.

If you would like to discuss this issue further please do not hesitate to contact me.

Yours sincerely,

Maria Rumsey
Headteacher

APPENDIX 4

EXAMPLE LETTER FROM HEADTEACHER UNAUTHORISING LEAVE OF ABSENCE

Dear

I refer to your application for leave of absence for XXXXX to be absent for XXXXX days.

The current law does not give any entitlement to parents to take their child out of school during term time. The Education (Pupil Registration) (England) (Amendment) Regulations 2013 prohibits Headteachers granting leave of absence to a pupil except where an application has been made in advance and the Headteacher considers that there are exceptional circumstances relating to the application. Following due consideration and in line with guidance agreed with the Governing Body, I am unable to agree to your request as the reason provided is not considered exceptional.

You should be advised that if you do take your child out of school for this time, the absences will not be authorised and the Education Welfare Service may issue a penalty notice to each parent of £60 for each child to be paid within 21 days. If the penalty is not paid within the time scale the penalty will increase to £120. If the higher penalty is not paid within 28 days, the Education Welfare Service will then institute legal proceedings against you in the magistrate's court under Section 444 of the Education Act 1996 for failing to ensure your child attends school regularly. The matter will also be recorded on your child's school record.

If you would like to meet with me to discuss this matter, please contact the school office to arrange an appointment.

Yours sincerely,

Maria Rumsey
Headteacher