
Regular and punctual attendance is essential if pupils are to receive the full benefit of everything that school has to offer. St Luke's C.E. Primary School is therefore committed to promoting regular attendance by all pupils, and to working in partnership with parents to achieve this aim.

Parents have a legal duty to ensure that their children attend school regularly. **Schools** have responsibilities for promoting good attendance, for daily registration, and for reporting rates of absence.

Authorised and Unauthorised Absence

If a child is absent from school for a legitimate reason, then the absence will be **authorised**.

Types of absence which are more likely to be authorised include:

- illness; unavoidable medical or dental treatments
- religious observance
- external exams or assessments

Under the 2013 school attendance regulations, leave of absence from school shall not be granted unless a) an application has been made in advance, and b) the Headteacher considers that the leave of absence should be granted due to the 'exceptional circumstances' of the application. The Department for Education does not define 'exceptional circumstances' and this is for the Headteacher to decide.

The 2013 Regulations have changed the way in which requests for family holiday are now treated; see panel opposite for more information.

Absences are **unauthorised** if they are either unjustified or unexplained. Merely telling us that your child will be away does not mean the absence will be authorised – only the school can authorise absence.

Examples of absences which are very unlikely to be authorised include:

- days out for family birthdays, celebrations or treats
- shopping
- looking after family members

What is 'good' attendance?

The school's overall attendance rate is around 96.5%. This may sound high, but is in fact only in line with the national average. For an individual pupil, 95% attendance is the equivalent of half a day per fortnight away from school, or ten days in the school year. Many of our children have attendance rates far above this, and some children achieve 100% attendance. However, several children have attendance rates below 90%, i.e. nearly twenty days of absence in the year.

Unless children are unwell for extended periods, we would therefore expect most children to have attendance rates above 95%.

The Role of the Education Welfare Service

The school has an attached Education Welfare Officer (EWO), who makes regular visits to check registers and to monitor pupil attendance. If patterns of absence or lateness are detected, the EWO will discuss the matter with us, and may contact parents or make a home visit if necessary. The EWO's role is to work with parents to improve attendance, but is also able to provide more general support and advice if needed.

Persistent absence and broken weeks

Attendance below 90% is classified as 'persistent absence', and is monitored closely by the school and the EWO. The EWO also monitors patterns of attendance, and may contact parents if children rarely complete a full week in school (i.e. they often have 'broken weeks').

Punctuality

The school day begins at 8.50am. It is important that children arrive punctually to ensure that they do not miss the beginning of the lesson, and to avoid disruption for the rest of the class. If children arrive after the register has been completed they will be marked as late. Regular lateness will be followed up and discussed with parents. If children arrive after the official close of the register (9.30am) and no adequate explanation is given, this will be recorded as an unauthorised absence.

Family Holidays In Term Time

Previously, the school exercised its discretion to authorise up to 5 days per school year for family holiday, assuming that the child's attendance was good. This is no longer the case.

The 2013 Regulations make no specific reference to 'family holiday', and such requests for absence will therefore be considered under the category of 'exceptional circumstances'.

For the sake of consistency, and to ensure compliance with the 2013 Regulations, family holidays will not as a general rule be classified as meeting the criterion of 'exceptional circumstances' and will therefore not be authorised.

Participation in amateur and professional productions

The school has the discretion to authorise time off for children to take part in amateur productions, and any such request will be considered on its merits in the same way as for other discretionary absences.

Children's participation in any professional work (acting, singing, modelling etc.) falls within child employment regulations, and a performance licence must be obtained from the local authority (Kingston upon Thames).

Penalty notices

The school's approach is always to work with families where attendance is causing a concern, and to aim to work effectively with the Education Welfare Service to improve attendance. Therefore, the school does not issue Penalty Notices for children's unauthorised absence from school.

For further details please refer to the full Attendance Policy, available from the school website.

Summary of procedures

- If your child is unwell, please telephone the school as early as possible on each morning of the absence by 9.30am. Please let us know the nature of the illness and how long you expect your child to be away. A verbal message from another child or sibling is not acceptable, and absences will not be authorised on this basis. You do not need to ring every day if you have already told us that your child will be away for a specified number of days.
- If your child is away and, by 9.30am, we have not heard from you, a member of the office staff will contact you. This will be a phone call or a text message (if you are registered with ParentMail).
- For other planned absences (e.g. if you are requesting leave for a holiday) please complete the **Absence from School Application Form** which is available from the office or the school website. We will return the form to let you know if the absence has been authorised or not.
- If your child has been away and you have not let us know why, we will write to you requesting an explanation for the absence. We will then decide whether the absence should be authorised or not.
- If your child's attendance is significantly below average or is a cause for concern for any other reason, we will liaise with the Education Welfare Officer, who may contact you.

For more information on issues relating to attendance and absence, please refer to the school's full Attendance Policy, which is available from the school office and the school website.

If you have any questions regarding attendance, please see your child's teacher or a member of the office staff.

Information and advice on attendance issues is also available from:

***Kingston Education
Welfare Service:***

020 8547 5004

ews@achievingforchildren.org.uk

September 2017



**ST LUKE'S C.E.
PRIMARY SCHOOL**

Attendance and Absence

***Information for
Parents***

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High expectations by all, for all,
reflecting the example of Jesus