St. Helen's College

Attendance Policy Including Children Missing In Education

This policy applies to all children at St. Helen's College. It is available to all parents/carers on the school website and by hard copy on request.

Key Contacts

Senior Attendance Champion	M. Gilbert	mgilbert@sthelenscollege.com
Welfare and Attendance Officer	G. Oakshott	goakshott@sthelenscollege.com
Email for reporting absence	absence@sthelenscollege.com	
School office phone numbers	01895 234371 Upper School 01895 272967 Lower School	
Emails for requesting absence	Ms. S Green sgreen@sthelenscollege.com	

Background

As a school, we realise that for a pupil to reach their full educational potential, a high level of school attendance is essential. An ethos of high levels of attendance and punctuality is recognised and valued across our whole school community. We aim to work with parents/carers to ensure that all pupils registered at school attend every day and on time, unless the absence is unavoidable. We expect that all pupils will achieve 100% attendance but recognise that there may be exceptional or unavoidable reasons for absence, or absences relating to persistent health issues. Our policy applies to all pupils of statutory school age, to promote good attendance habits school wide.
The following guidance has been taken into consideration when developing this policy: Working Together to Improve School Attendance 2024.

Attendance Aims

As a school we aim to:

- Maintain an attendance rate of 97% and above.
- Increase parents' and pupils' awareness of the importance of regular attendance.
- Ensure all children are given the maximum potential to achieve by attending school regularly.
- Ensure that our policy applies to Early Years children in order to promote good habits at an early age.
- Keep all children safe and healthy by monitoring attendance rates.
- Work in partnership with parents/carers and the local authority to improve attendance.
- Communicate clearly and consistently with parents and carers regarding attendance.
- Recognise the key role of all staff, and especially class teachers, in promoting good attendance.
- Consider an individual plan for pupils with medical needs.

We aim to promote and ensure good attendance because:

- Statistics show a direct link between under-achievement and poor attendance.
- Regular attenders make better progress both socially and academically.
- Regular attenders find school routines, schoolwork and friendships easier to cope with.
- Regular attenders find learning more enjoyable and satisfying.
- Regular attenders make the transition to destination schools more easily.

Parents/carers should:

- Ensure their child attends school regularly. Absence should only happen when a child is significantly ill.
- Email absence@sthelenscollege.com by 8.30 a.m. and each subsequent morning of absence unless the school attendance officer advises otherwise, informing the school of the specific reason for absence; 'ill/unwell' is not sufficient.
- Make all non-emergency medical appointments out of school hours or during school holidays.
- Provide medical evidence where a pupil's illness/absence is frequent or prolonged (over three days).
- Ensure the school has current contact numbers for parents and other emergency contacts.

Reporting an Absence

All absences must be reported by email to absence@sthelenscollege.com (copying in the class teacher) by 8.30 a.m. on each morning of a child's absence. It is not sufficient to inform just the class teacher.

All year groups, including Ducklings and Nursery, must follow these procedures.

Walking to School

Some Year 6 children may begin walking independently to school as part of their transition to senior school. This will depend on the distance and manner of their journey to school. Parents must seek permission from the school if children are travelling to school alone, in writing. The school does not permit Year 6 children to bring younger siblings to school or take them home.

All listed contacts will be phoned if no reason is obtained by 9.15am for the absence of a walk-to-school child. If parents/carers fail to advise the school on more than one occasion of a walk-to-school child being absent, the school will remove them from the walk-to-school register and the child will need to be escorted to and from school.

Unexplained Absence

The school will:

- Ensure that registers are taken twice daily and recorded on the school MIS using the approved attendance codes in Appendix 1.
- Follow up unexplained absences by phone call by 10.00 a.m.
- Telephone all listed contacts on a pupil's records if the number one contact is unobtainable.
- If a satisfactory reason for absence cannot be obtained for a 'walk to school' child, the school will notify the police.

Promoting Good Attendance

The school will:

- Remind parents/carers of the importance of regular attendance and punctuality.
- Publish each child's attendance rate on her/his annual school report (Reception – Year 6) and recognise pupils who achieve 100% attendance through the award of attendance certificates.
- Inform parents if there are concerns regarding a child's attendance and punctuality. Children with 90% attendance or less, whatever the reason for the absence, are classified as persistent absentees.
- Discuss concerns without delay.
- Share attendance data with the Local Authority.
- Meet termly with the Local Authority School Attendance Officer to discuss attendance that is a cause for concern.

When attendance becomes a concern, the school will:

- In the first instance, the Form Teacher will arrange a meeting with parents to raise any concerns about a pupil's attendance. This meeting will provide an opportunity to discuss the child's attendance, explore any underlying issues, and consider whether there is any additional information the school should be aware of or any further support the school can offer.
- Send a letter to parents of pupils whose attendance falls below 95% for the term to highlight concerns and encourage improvement. If attendance does not improve and subsequently drops below 90%, parents will be invited to meet with a member of the Senior Leadership Team to discuss the child's attendance concerns and agree appropriate next steps.
- If the attendance does not improve then the school will make a referral to the Local Authority Attendance Support Team to highlight the child's attendance concerns.
- The school will make reasonable enquiries which may include home visits.

Persistent Absence

Once a child's attendance falls to 90% for whatever reason, he/she is automatically defined by the Department for Education (DfE) as a Persistent Absentee, *irrespective of the reason for absence*. Persistent absence is a serious problem for pupils. Much of the work they miss when they are off school is never made up; these gaps in their learning leave children at a considerable disadvantage for the remainder of their school career. Statistics show a direct link between poor attendance and under-achievement.

Persistent absence is well below St. Helen's College's expectations and as such, the school will work in partnership with parents to improve matters. In extreme circumstances, where parents are unable or unwilling to improve their child's attendance, the school may require parents to remove the child from the school.

Authorised Absence

Some absences are allowed by law and are known as 'authorised absences'. For example, if a child is ill and the school has been notified.

Other authorised absences, such as for a family bereavement or for religious observance, are classed as exceptional leave and must be requested in writing by sending an email to Ms Green, Mrs Gilbert (Upper School) or Ms Matthews (Lower School), with as much notice as possible.

Where a family has suffered bereavement within the extended family, two days will be authorised leave and any subsequent days will be recorded as unauthorised, unless an arrangement has been made with the school.

In addition to the absence request email, the school may request copies of documentation to support applications for exceptional leave e.g. copies of flight tickets, medical letters etc.

Unauthorised Absence

There are times when children are absent for reasons which are ***not*** permitted by law. These are known as 'unauthorised absences'. Examples of unauthorised absence are:

- Waiting for a delivery or repair
- Going for a family day out/going shopping
- Interpreting or supporting a parent at a meeting
- Sleeping in after a late night
- Because it is your child's birthday
- Term time holiday
- Parent's illness (other than in an emergency)
- Where there is no explanation for an absence or the school considers the reason given for the absence unsatisfactory.
- Absence before or after a period of school closure or authorised leave, unless satisfactory evidence to justify has been provided.

Unauthorised absences are reported to the Local Authority. The School Attendance Service may contact parents where unauthorised absence continues to be a problem. The school will work in partnership with parents until matters improve.

The government has made it clear that a Headteacher may not authorise absence during term time for holidays. Leave of absence is only granted in exceptional circumstances (e.g. if there is an emergency) at the discretion of the Headteacher and in accordance with the

school policy as agreed by the governing body. There is no entitlement to time off during term time.

PLEASE NOTE THAT ABSENCE TAKEN WHICH HAS NOT BEEN AUTHORISED COULD BE LIABLE FOR A FIXED PENALTY FINE BY THE LOCAL AUTHORITY (SEE THE NATIONAL FRAMEWORK FOR FIXED PENALTY NOTICES) AND THAT EXTENDED ABSENCES WITHOUT PERMISSION MAY PUT A CHILD'S PLACE AT ST. HELEN'S COLLEGE AT RISK.

Pupils With Additional Needs

Identified pupils with specific medical, psychological or educational needs who have a high level of absence will be supported by the following strategies:

- Weekly monitoring of attendance and absence
- Working with the Local Authority to record such absences as authorised to reflect attendance as good as can be expected for these pupils and the school
- Home visits where appropriate
- Recognising that some pupils are not 'available for learning' and working with the LA and other agencies to allocate appropriate provision which may not be within our school.

Children Missing Education

In accordance with the DfE Children Missing Education Statutory Guidelines 2025, schools must monitor pupils' attendance through their daily register. Schools should agree with their local authority the intervals at which they will inform local authorities of the details of pupils who fail to attend regularly or have missed ten school days or more without permission. Schools should monitor attendance closely and address poor or irregular attendance. It is important that pupils' poor attendance is referred to the local authority.

Where a pupil has not returned to school for ten days after an authorised absence or is absent from school without authorisation for twenty consecutive school days, the pupil can be removed from the admission register after making 'reasonable enquiries' to establish the whereabouts of the child. This only applies if the school does not have reasonable grounds to believe that the pupil is unable to attend because of sickness or unavoidable cause.

Monitoring attendance is an essential part of safeguarding children. The school will notify Local Authority Services if there is an unexplained absence of more than two days of a pupil who is on the child protection register.

Punctuality

It is important to be on time as the first part of the school day is used to give out instructions or organise schoolwork for the rest of the day. All children are expected to arrive at St. Helen's College by 8.30 a.m. ready for registration.

The gates at Upper School and Lower School are opened at 8.00 a.m. Parents should ensure that children come through the school gates by 8.30 a.m. at the latest. The register will be taken promptly at 8.30 a.m. and the school day will start on time. Late arrivals are disruptive to the whole class and often embarrassing for the child involved. Persistent late arrival can have a negative long-term academic effect on a child. The school takes the view that there are no late children, only late parents. Parents are responsible for their child's punctuality.

Late Arrivals
Children who are not in class on time for the register will be marked late. The registers close at

09.00. After this time, it is recorded as an absence and can lead to a Fixed Penalty Notice if repeated. All lateness is recorded daily and the reason for lateness, if known, will also be recorded.

The school is alert to patterns of late arrival and will seek an explanation from parents when this occurs. This information can be made available to the courts in the form of a report should a prosecution be the outcome of repeated lateness. Persistent lateness will be referred to the Local Authority Attendance Officer.

Where a pupil has been late on ten or more occasions during a term, parents will receive a letter to highlight concerns regarding punctuality and to encourage improvement.

Collection from School

Parents/carers must collect children promptly at the end of the school day or from any after school activity or wraparound care session. Where late collection is persistent and/or significantly late, the school is obliged to take any uncollected pupil to a place of safety i.e. the local police station. We may share concerns with other agencies as necessary for safeguarding purposes.

If parents are running late or unavoidably obtained, they must contact the school by telephone. During school hours, parents should telephone the school office. After the end of the school day, parents should telephone the Funtasia phone numbers.

Leavers

If your child is leaving St. Helen's College you must provide your child's new school details. When pupils leave and the school does not have information about where they have gone, then the child is considered to be a 'Child Missing Education.' This means that the Local Authority has a legal duty to carry out investigations to try to locate the child.

Person Responsible	GO
Date	April 2026
Review Frequency	1 years
Next Review	January 2027

APPENDIX 1

REGISTRATION CODES TO BE USED

1. Present at School

/ Present in School during registration ('/' = am, '\' = pm)

L Late arrival before the register is closed. The morning register closes at 09.00 am.

U A pupil arriving after 09.00 a.m. (and before p.m. registration) should be given the appropriate absence code from sections 2,3, or 4 below. If none of those codes are appropriate a 'U' should be entered.

NB. If a child arrives after the register has been completed in class he/she must report to the School Office immediately on arrival.

2. Present at an approved off-site educational activity.

(An activity where the school is responsible for the safeguarding and welfare of the pupils)

K Attending education provision arranged by the local authority

P Participating in a supervised sporting activity

V Educational visit or trip

B Attending any other approved educational activity

D Dual registered at another school

3. Authorised Absence from School

M Medical or dental appointment

I Illness (not medical or dental appointment)

R Religious Observance

E Suspended or permanently excluded and no alternative provision made

C Leave of absence for exceptional circumstance granted by the school

C1 Leave of absence for the purpose of participating in a regulated performance or undertaking regulated employment abroad.

C2 Leave of absence for a compulsory school age pupil subject to a part-time timetable

J1 Leave of absence for the purpose of attending an interview for employment or for admission to another educational institution

S Leave of absence for the purpose of studying for a public examination

X Non-compulsory school age pupil not required to attend school

T Parent travelling for occupational purposes

Q Unable to attend the school because of a lack of access arrangements

Y1 Unable to attend due to transport normally provided not being available

Y2 Unable to attend due to widespread disruption to travel

Y3 Unable to attend due to part of the school premises being closed

Y4 Unable to attend due to the whole school site being unexpectedly closed

Y5 Unable to attend as pupil is in criminal justice detention

Y6 Unable to attend in accordance with public health guidance or law

Y7 Unable to attend because of any other unavoidable cause

4. Unauthorised Absence from School

N Where the reason for absence is not initially known, an 'N' is entered and another code entered within the 'N' at a later stage if it is known. Staff must follow up all unexplained and unexpected absences in a timely manner. Every effort should be made to establish the reason for a pupil's absence. If another code is never established the 'N' will remain as an unauthorised absence.

G Holiday not authorised by the School.

Used for Bank Holiday, Inset Days and Half Days.