

Attendance Policy

St. Michael's C.E. Infant School

Newdigate C.E. Infant School

November 2024



Children need to attend school regularly if they are to access the learning on offer at our schools, achieve well and flourish in their later life.

Research shows a clear link between poor attendance, poor academic achievement and poor life chances. Learning to be organised enough to be on time, to be resilient enough to attend and be committed enough to want to always do your best are essential life lessons that all children need in order to be successful, productive community members

The law says that all parents who have enrolled their child at school must do everything possible to ensure their child attends every day the school is open, unless they are too ill. If parents do not do this, it can have a very significant impact on learning for their child. We pride ourselves on supporting our pupils **to be the very best that they can be** at both schools and we want to do everything we can to make sure every child receives a high-quality education.

When a child's attendance, lateness or early leaving is causing a concern, we will work closely with the family to remove any barriers and support parents to improve this. Sometimes, if necessary, this may include a more structured Early Help approach.

Please note that any child whose attendance dips below 90% is classified as a **persistent absentee** and we are expected to put in place an attendance plan to identify barriers and improve attendance. This may be discussed with our Local Authority Inclusion Officer.

Illness

Young children are occasionally ill, so when this happens we do not expect them to come to school – of course they need to be at home. However, typically, children do not become too ill to attend school on a regular basis. Any patterns of illness will be identified and staff will begin conversations with the family so that learning does not suffer.

Occasionally a child will have a more serious illness or accident that will need a longer absence. Typically, this is not a regular occurrence and we will work with parents to tailor provision in order to ensure as little learning time as possible is lost. When the child returns to school, the rest of the class will have gained experiences, knowledge and understanding that the absent child will not, meaning he/she may find it difficult to fit back in with the learning that has been covered. This can then put pressure on both the child and the class teacher, who has to find extra time to support that child. Whilst we will always do all we can to manage these situations, it is important that parents are aware of the potential issues that will affect their child.

Lateness also matters

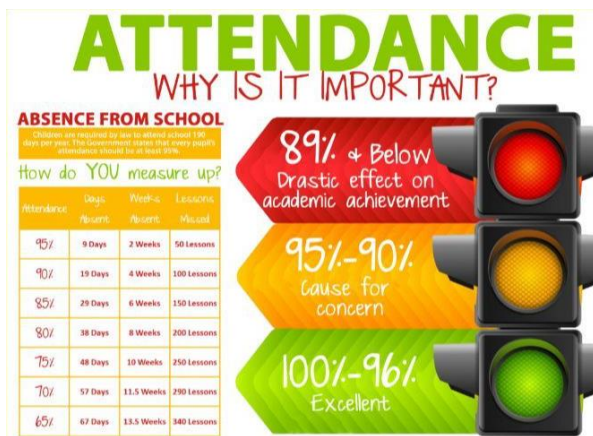
Teach your child the importance of being organised and arriving on time. Not only is this a vital part of work life, but children find it embarrassing and confusing to arrive after work has started and may miss out on essential phonics learning that usually takes place at the start of each day.

Occasionally appointments are necessary; we ask that these be organised outside school hours if possible. Early pick up before 3pm will only be authorised in exceptional circumstances.

If your child is late, arriving after 9 am, please make sure you sign your child in at the office. A child arriving after 9.30 am will be given a 'U' code on the register. This will count as an unauthorized session on your child's attendance record.

Requests for authorised absence

Legislation makes it clear that Headteachers may not grant any leave of absence during term-time unless there are **exceptional circumstances**. Our decisions about exceptionality are always in line with other local schools. Parents and carers should avoid taking children out of school during term-time to go on holiday. Whilst we are aware of the increasing issues of affordability, we will continue to prioritise children's education over holidays.



Previously we made the decision not to administer fines/penalty notices to parents, however recent **statutory** government guidance (August 2024) has made it clear that schools should consider the following stages when tackling attendance issues:

Expect

Aspire to high standards of attendance from all pupils and parents and build a culture where all can, and want to, be in school and ready to learn by prioritising attendance improvement across the school.

Monitor

Rigorously use attendance data to identify patterns of poor attendance (at individual a cohort level) as soon as possible so all parties can work together to resolve them before they become entrenched.

Listen and understand

When a pattern is spotted, discuss with pupils and parents to listen to and understand barriers to attendance and agree how all partners can work together to resolve them.

Facilitate support

Remove barriers in school and help pupils and parents to access the support they need to overcome the barriers outside of school. This might include an early help or whole family plan where absence is a symptom of wider issues.

Formalise support

Where absence persists and voluntary support is not working or not being engaged with, partners should work together to explain the consequences clearly and ensure support is also in place to enable families to respond. Depending on the circumstances this may include formalising support through an attendance contract or education supervision or

Enforce

Where all other avenues have been exhausted and support is not working or not being engaged with, enforce attendance through statutory intervention: a penalty notice in line with the National Framework or prosecution to protect the pupil's right to an education.

The new guidance also makes it clear that the school will be expected to consider the use of penalty notices. Initially we will be looking at doing this for any parent who reaches the National threshold by taking term-time holiday(s). [This threshold is **10 sessions of unauthorised absence in a rolling period of 10 school weeks. A school week means any week in which there is at least one school session. This can be met with any combination of unauthorised absence. These sessions can be consecutive (e.g. 10 sessions of holiday in one week) or not. The period of 10 school weeks can also span different terms or school years. At a later date we will consider the use of penalty notices on an individual basis for absences other than term time holidays.**

The Department for Education (DfE) has produced statutory guidance for maintained schools, academies, independent schools, and local authorities. It is called "[Working together to improve school attendance](#)" and it includes a National Framework in relation to absence and the use of legal sanctions.

The name and contact details of the Senior Attendance Champion – the senior leader responsible for the strategic approach to attendance in our school, is:

Name: Mrs Nicola Cleather (Headteacher)

Email address or contact details: info@stmichaels-dorking.surrey.sch.uk info@newdigate.surrey.sch.uk

The name and contact details of the school staff member pupils and parents should contact about attendance on a day-to-day basis is:

Name: School Office

Email address or contact details: info@stmichaels-dorking.surrey.sch.uk info@newdigate.surrey.sch.uk

01372 373717 (St Michael's) 01306 631353 (Newdigate) or via the ParentMail App.

We have a joint goal; our incentive is maximising the chances of your child making great progress and giving them the best opportunities for the future.

So, let's work together to make it happen!



More information

Illness and Medical Appointments

- Every effort should be made to arrange medical appointments outside 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 a child is absent due to vomiting or diarrhoea then they should not return to school for the next 48 hours after the last time that the child is sick. This is to reduce the risk of infection to other children and adults at the school.
- For more than three days of absence or where there is repeated absence due to illness, the school may request medical evidence (this can take the form of an appointment card or a copy of a prescription). Where there are concerns about a child's attendance (particularly when it drops below 90%) the school will request medical evidence for any absence.

Monitoring attendance

Action will be taken when attendance causes concern (i.e. falls below 90%)

Phone call - advising parent or carer that attendance has dropped and alerting them to the impact the absence will have on their child's learning. Parents will need to work closely with the school to improve the situation.

The child's attendance will be monitored closely and further contact will be made if improvement is not seen.

Letter – raising concerns that attendance has not improved and setting out the reasons for nonattendance. The expectation will be that all future absences need to be accompanied by medical evidence. Parents will be invited to attend a meeting or an additional phone call. Where appropriate, additional support will be offered.

Letter and Meeting – as above - if a child's attendance does not improve following intervention or/and support, next steps may include a penalty notice. (also refer to information above re term time holidays and penalty notices)