



ST HILDA'S
CE HIGH SCHOOL

Attendance Policy (Years 7 – 11)

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ATTENDANCE POLICY YEARS 7-11

Introduction

This is a successful school and your child plays their part in making it so. We aim for an environment which enables and encourages all members of the community to reach out for excellence. For our children to gain the greatest benefit from their education it is vital that they attend regularly and your child should be at school, on time, every day the school is open unless the reason for the absence is unavoidable.

Ensuring your child's attendance at school is your legal responsibility and permitting absence from school without a good reason creates an offence in law and may result in prosecution.

Why attendance is so important

Any absence affects the pattern of a child's schooling and recurrent absence will seriously affect their learning. Any pupil's absence disrupts teaching routines so may affect the learning of others in the same class.

Table showing the link between attendance and attainment at GCSE

| % Attendance | = Average absence | % 5 A*-C | % 5 A-G |
|---------------------|--------------------------|-----------------|----------------|
| 100-93.5% | | 74.3 | 96.8 |
| 93.5-92.5% | ½ day/ fortnight | 60.4 | 94.6 |
| 92.5-91.5% | ½ day/fortnight + | 53.1 | 92.8 |
| 91.5-90% | ½ day/week | 44.6 | 89.5 |
| 90-85 | 1½ days/fortnight | 34.7 | 84.8 |
| 80% and below | 1 day/week+ | 26.7 | 77.9 |

Promoting high attendance

Helping to create a pattern of high attendance is everybody's responsibility: parents, students and all members of school staff.

To help us all to focus on this we will:

- Make your child's attendance record available to you online via Parent Portal and when a Registration Certificate is requested.
- Report to you on how your child is performing in school, what their attendance and punctuality rate is and how this relates to their attainment
- Celebrate good attendance by rewarding individual and class achievements through **the allocation of house/reward points and certificates**
- Ask parents/carers to come into school when there are concerns over attendance so that we can work together on raising attendance levels

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Understanding types of absence

Every half-day absence from school has to be classified by the school (not by the parents), as either AUTHORISED or UNAUTHORISED. This is why information about the cause of any absence is always required.

Authorised absences are mornings or afternoons away from school for a good reason like illness or hospital/orthodontic appointments which unavoidably fall in school time, emergencies or other unavoidable causes. The school will request appointment cards or a doctor's letter before choosing to authorise an absence. Every effort should be made to ensure that appointments are organised outside school time.

Unauthorised absences are those which the school does not consider reasonable and for which no "leave" has been given. This type of absence can lead to the authority using sanctions and/or legal proceedings. This includes:

- parent/carers keeping children off school unnecessarily
- truancy before or during the school day
- absences which have never been properly explained
- children who arrive at school too late to get a mark
- shopping, looking after other children or birthdays
- day trips and holidays in term time

Whilst any student may be off school because they are ill, sometimes they can be reluctant to attend school. Any problems with regular attendance are best sorted out between the school, the parents and the child. If your child is reluctant to attend you should work with school in trying to support them. It is never advisable to condone/cover up their absence or to give in to pressure to excuse them from attending. This gives the impression that attendance does not matter and usually makes things worse.

Persistent Absenteeism (PA)

A student becomes a 'persistent absentee' (PA) when they miss 10% or more schooling across the school year **for whatever reason**. Absence at this level is doing considerable damage to any child's educational prospects and we need parents' full support and co-operation to tackle this.

We monitor all absence thoroughly. Any case that is seen to have reached the PA mark or is at risk of moving towards that mark is given priority and you will be informed of this immediately.

PA students are tracked and monitored carefully through our pastoral system and we also combine this with mentoring where appropriate.

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Absence procedures

If your child is absent you must:

- Contact us by ringing or emailing school between 8.00 – 8.30am advising us of the name and form of the pupil, the reason for absence and the expected date of return if known. If the date of return is not known a telephone call will be required every day for continued absence.
- E-mails will only be accepted if from the registered e-mail address on SIMS. These should be forwarded to attendance@st-hildas.co.uk
- Explanations for absence must be received within five working days of the last day of absence or the absence will be classed as unauthorised.

If your child is absent we will:

- Telephone, text or e-mail you if we have not heard from you
- **Write home to alert you to the fact that your child is at risk of being classified as Persistently Absent or is now classified as a Persistent Absentee**
- Invite you in to discuss the situation with the appropriate member of staff and/or the Pupil Attendance & Education Welfare Officer if absences persist.
- Refer the matter to the school attendance support worker if attendance moves towards/below 90%.

If your child has been classified as a Persistent Absentee we are less likely to authorise absences and we will consider at the end of each month/term whether to proceed with a penalty notice for absences that have been unauthorised.

Explanations for absence received outside the time frames detailed above will not be accepted and the absence will be classed as unauthorised.

If your child is at risk of being classified as a Persistent Absentee we will take steps to try and support/improve attendance.

If your daughter/son has poor attendance, we will ask for medical evidence to be provided before authorising an absence and seek advice from the school nurse or other health professionals.

The chart below details what this will mean in school time:

| Term Dates | PA = 90% Missed sessions per term (morning and/or afternoon) | PA = 90% Days per term |
|-----------------------|---|-----------------------------------|
| Term 1 – Sept to Oct | 7 sessions | 3.5 days absence |
| Term 2 – Nov to Dec | 14 sessions | 7 days absence |
| Term 3 – Jan to Feb | 20 sessions | 10 days absence |
| Term 4 – Feb to April | 25 sessions | 12.5 days absence |
| Term 5 – May to June | 31 sessions | 15.5 days absence |
| Term 6 – June to July | 38 sessions | 19 days absence |

Contact details

At times we need to contact parents about a variety of issues, including absence. To do this we need parents to keep us advised of current contact numbers including mobile phones and e-mail addresses. The school text and e-mail system relies on accurate information. A data check sheet will be given to students to update at the beginning of every academic year. Parent Portal also allows parents to submit updated details throughout the year.

Pupil Attendance & Education Welfare Officer

Parents are expected to contact school at an early stage about attendance issues. In most cases this resolves the matter. If difficulties cannot be sorted out in this way, the school may refer the child to the Education Welfare Officer (EWO) from the Local Authority. He/she will also try to resolve the situation by agreement but, if other ways of trying to improve the child's attendance have failed and unauthorised absences persist, the EWO can use sanctions such as Penalty Notices or prosecutions in the Magistrates Court. Full details of the options open to enforce attendance at school are available from the Local Authority.

Alternatively, parents or children may wish to contact the EWO themselves to ask for help or information. The EWO is independent of the school and will give impartial advice. The EWO can be contacted on 0151 233 3916.

Lateness

Poor punctuality is not acceptable. If your child misses the start of the day they may miss work and may not spend time with their form tutor getting vital information and news for the day. Students arriving late also disrupt lessons; it can be embarrassing for your child and may also encourage absence.

How we manage lateness

The school day starts at **8.35 am** and we expect your child to be in registration at that time.

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Your child will receive a late mark if they are not on time **and will receive an appropriate sanction.**

In accordance with the regulations, if your child arrives after the registers have closed they will receive a mark that shows them to be on site, but this will not count as a present mark and it will mean they have unauthorised absence. This may mean that you could face the possibility of a Penalty Notice if the problem persists.

If your child has a persistent late record you will be asked to meet with the Attendance Officer, Head of House, Assistant Head, Deputy Head and/or EWO to resolve the problem, but you can approach us at any time if you are having problems getting your child to school on time.

Family holidays during term time

Taking holidays in term time will affect your child's education as much as any other absence and we expect parents to support school by not taking children on holiday in term time. Remember that any savings you think you may make by taking a holiday in school time are offset by the cost to your child's education.

There is **no** automatic entitlement in law to take a holiday in school time. All applications for leave must be made in advance in writing or via the online form on the attendance section of the school website (Leave of Absence Application form). The school will consider the circumstances of each application individually. **However, please be aware, that in line with Local Authority and Government guidance, leave of absence in term time will only be considered in the most exceptional of circumstances.**

Any period of leave taken without the agreement of the school, or in excess of that agreed, will be classed as unauthorised and will result in a Penalty Notice Fine (see below).

Penalty Notices

Penalty notices for unauthorised absences from school can be issued by the School and the School Attendance Service, School Improvement, based on requests from schools.

The following circumstances are considered as appropriate reasons for the issuing of Penalty Notices:

- truancy (eg pupils found during truancy sweeps);
- Inappropriate parentally-condoned absence or unexplained absences;
- unauthorised holidays in term time;
- excessive delayed return from a holiday without prior school permission;
- persistent late arrival at school (after the Register has closed)
- absences that may be linked to medical issues that haven't been supported by medical evidence as requested

A pupil has to be absent from school in one of these circumstances for at least 10 sessions in any term before the issuing of a Penalty Notice can be considered.

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Following a request by the school for the issuing of a Penalty Notice, a check is made by our Education Welfare Officer (EWO). In the cases of unauthorised holidays, the Penalty Fine will be issued immediately by the Local Authority. In cases of other unauthorised absence, a warning letter will be sent to the parents or carers, by the EWO, explaining that if the child has any unauthorised absences within the next 20 days, a Penalty Notice Fine will be issued.

These Notices now cost £60 per child per parent if paid within 21 days and £120 per child per parent if paid between 22 and 28 days maximum.

School targets, projects and special initiatives

The school has targets to improve attendance and your child has an important part to play in meeting these targets. The target for minimum attendance at St. Hilda's is 96% attendance and is in line with Government guidelines. Good attendance is the key to successful schooling and we believe our pupils can be amongst the best in the city.

Absence and punctuality is monitored regularly throughout the school year both at school level and independently by the EWO. This assists in identifying students with patterns of irregular attendance so that we can support those students and set targets for improvement.

The school has a legal duty to publish its absence figures to parents and to promote attendance. Equally, parents have a duty to make sure that their children attend. All school staff are committed to working with parents and students as the best way to ensure as high a level of attendance as possible.

Those people responsible for attendance matters in this home/school partnership are:

Education Welfare Officer – Ms K Williams
Deputy Headteacher (Pastoral) - Mrs C O'Neill
Assistant Headteacher Pastoral
Heads of House
Attendance Officer
Form tutors
Parents/Guardians
Students

Date of next review: June 2019

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