

All Saints' C of E Primary School

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Inspire Challenge Succeed

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Dear Parents/Carers

Attendance & Penalty Notice Referrals

A school academic year consists of 190 school days and it is the parent's responsibility to ensure that their child attends school whenever possible to maximise the educational opportunities available to them. Absence from school during term time may hinder academic progress.

All schools within the Bury Schools Partnership are committed to improving attendance levels and adhere to detailed guidance when recording absences as authorised or unauthorised.

Leave during term time will only be granted where an application is received from the child's parents on the appropriate form in advance of the proposed absence **and** where the Headteacher of the school deems there to be exceptional circumstances to justify removing the child from school.

Where leave is not granted but is still taken, the absence will be recorded as unauthorised. Absences may also be unauthorised in other circumstances for example: where a child arrives in school after the register is closed and the reason for their lateness is not accepted by the school, or where the school is not satisfied by the reason given for a child's absence. Please see your school's attendance policy for more detailed information.

A Penalty Notice is a fine issued to parents by the county council where a child has had unauthorised absence from school. From 1st September 2014 the local authority, Suffolk

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County Council, revised their 'Penalty Notice Code of Conduct' which details the circumstances in which a Penalty Notice is issued.

Following a meeting of representatives from local schools it has been agreed that schools within the Bury Schools Partnership will make a Penalty Notice referral to the local authority ***where a child has had their 8th unauthorised session within an academic year. Please note that there are 2 sessions per school day, therefore 8 sessions equates to 4 days unauthorised absence in an academic year.***

Although only one penalty notice can be issued within an academic year for each child, if the unauthorised absences continue or more holiday absence if accrued then the school will make a fast track referral to the Educational Welfare Officer for further action, which may include court action.

We would remind all parents/carers to support their child's education by sending their child to school on time fully equipped for the school day. Where a child is unwell please follow the school procedures to promptly report their absence. Where a child's attendance rate falls the school will notify parents/carers in line with their attendance policy.

If you have any concerns about your child's attendance please do not hesitate to speak to your child's class teacher at the earliest opportunity to enable the school to offer their full support.

Kind Regards,

Clare Lamb
Headteacher

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All Saints' CEVC Primary School Attendance: A Guide for Parents/Carers

When does my child need to be in school?

Your child should arrive at school in good time for registration. The morning register is called promptly at 8.55am and the afternoon register is taken at 1.05pm (for, Reception, and KS1 pupils) and at 1.20pm (for KS2 pupils). Children may come into their designated gate/door from 8.45am onwards. External doors are closed promptly at 8.55am. If your child arrives after that time they **must** enter school via the main entrance and follow the procedure below.

What happens if my child is late?

- If your child arrives between 8.55 am and 9.05 am he/she will be marked late.
- If your child arrives after 9.05 am he/she will be marked as absent (unauthorised) unless an acceptable reason is given.
- Pupils who arrive after the start of registration should report to the school office, and parents/carers should sign the pupil book giving the reason for their lateness. Where a child is late on more than one occasion in any 4 week period the Local Authority, Suffolk County Council requires the school to write to the parents/carers of the child regarding their child's punctuality. If a pupil is consistently late a meeting will be arranged to discuss reasons/ difficulties for lateness.

What should I do if my child cannot come to school?

We would expect a parent/carer to telephone the school on the first day of absence, and on every day of absence that follows. A message can be left on our Absence Line 01284 828223. If you do not contact us, we will try to telephone you. We also require a written explanation of your child's absence on your child's return to school. A reminder will be sent to you if we have not received your letter. If we do not receive an explanation, or if the explanation is unsatisfactory, we may not authorise the absence and this will be shown on your child's end of year report. School staff, the Senior Leadership Team, School Governors and the Education Welfare Officer all monitor absence.

Examples of reasons that the school will accept for absence include:

- Illness (unless there is a genuine cause for concern about the legitimacy of an illness)
- Emergency dental/medical appointment. (Please make all routine appointments before or after school or during the school holidays.)
- Day of religious observance
- Family bereavement or other exceptional family circumstances

Except in the case of illness, permission for your child to miss school should be requested well in advance, giving full details of the proposed absence. By giving sufficient advance notice you will ensure that there is time available for the school to make any necessary further enquiries and for written notification of whether the absence will be

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authorised/unauthorised to be sent. In cases of recurring absences through illness you may be asked to produce a medical certificate or other medical evidence or to provide details of medical personnel to enable the school to make direct contact.

Can we take family holidays during term-time?

In line with government legislation, the school policy and Local Education Authority policy all family holidays should be taken in school closure periods. A 'Leave of Absence' from school may be granted in exceptional circumstances where an application has been made by the parent/carer with whom the pupil normally resides on the relevant form. The Headteacher will only grant a leave of absence if they consider there to be exceptional reasons for absence from school during term time. Applications must always be made in advance and evidence may be requested to support any application. Where an absence has been unauthorised by the school and the time off school is taken, the school has a duty to notify the Local Authority's Education Service.

What is a Penalty Notice and when would one be issued?

The law says that parents/carers are committing an offence where their children (of compulsory school age) are absent from school without good reason.

A Penalty Notice is a financial penalty issued by the Local Authority for unauthorised absences from school. The school has a duty to share their attendance data with the Education Attendance Service and to notify them when unauthorised absence has been taken in term time. Penalty Notices are also issued where a pupil is stopped with parents/carers during a truancy sweep and the absence is not authorised by the school. From 1st September 2014 there will no longer be a warning letter prior to the issue of a Penalty Notice. Suffolk County Council will issue each parent/carer with a Penalty Notice fine where there have been 8 sessions (4 days) of unauthorised absence within a school year. Where the penalty is not paid in full and/or within the prescribed time limit the Local Authority is required to start legal proceedings against the parents/carers in the Magistrates Court.

I am thinking about taking my child on a trip overseas to visit relatives, what should I do?

The school recognises that such trips help children keep in touch with their extended family although parents would always be encouraged to make such trips during school holiday periods. We appreciate that due to the long distances often involved there may however be some overlap with term time. Should you be considering such an absence you will need to put your request in writing to the Headteacher explaining the reasons and family circumstances for this visit. We may request evidence that this is not just a holiday.

What can I do to encourage my child to attend school?

Make sure that your child gets enough sleep and gets up in plenty of time each morning. Ensure that he/she leaves home in the correct clothes and properly equipped for the school day. Show your child that you value his/her learning by asking them about their school day. Attend Parents Evenings and other information sessions at school to enable you to support your child's learning and progress.

My child is trying to avoid coming to school, what should I do?

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Contact your child’s teacher immediately and openly discuss your worries. Your child could be avoiding school for a number of reasons – difficulties with schoolwork, friendship problems, bullying or family difficulties. It is important that we identify the reason for your child’s reluctance to attend school and work together to tackle the problem looking at all appropriate support available. In some cases you may find it helpful to discuss the circumstances of your child’s difficulties with an Education Welfare Officer. The Service is based at: West Suffolk House, Western Way, Bury St Edmunds, Suffolk. IP33 3YU.

What does my child’s overall attendance percentage mean?

99% - 100%	We consider attendance to be excellent.
98%	We consider attendance to be very good.
96% - 97%	We consider attendance to be good.
95%	We consider attendance to be satisfactory.
94% and below	Attendance requires improvement. Please see the intervention actions detailed below.

What will happen if my child’s attendance level falls?

The school monitors the attendance rate of all children as requested by the Local Authority, Suffolk County Council. Where a child’s attendance rate is considered too low the Local Authority, Suffolk County Council requires the school to take intervention action. The following actions will therefore be taken in accordance with Local Authority guidelines.

Attendance rate falls below 95% - A letter will be sent home from the school to inform the parent(s)/carer(s) that their child’s attendance level requires improvement and the child’s attendance will continue to be closely monitored.

Attendance rate falls to 93% - A letter will be sent home from the school to inform the parent(s)/carer(s) that the school are unable to authorise any further absences unless satisfactory medical evidence is provided to the school.

Attendance rate falls to 90% – A meeting will be arranged with the parent(s)/carer(s) at the school to discuss attendance and support that the school can offer.

Where attendance does not improve the Educational Welfare Officer will be contacted by the school.

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