Attendance Policy

Date approved	Committee responsible for review of policy	Next review date	Policy on website	Statutory policy
September 2025	FGB	September 2026	Yes	Yes

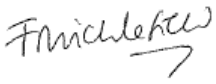
Headteacher: Mrs Fiona Micklefield

Policy Consultation & Review

This policy is available on our school website and is available on request from the school office. We also inform parents about this policy when their children join our school and regularly thereafter through our school newsletter and other relevant opportunities.

We recognise the expertise our staff build by managing school attendance daily and we therefore invite staff to contribute to and shape this policy and associated attendance and safeguarding arrangements.

This policy will be reviewed in full by the Governing Body on at least an annual basis. This policy was last reviewed and agreed by the Governing Body on 2nd October 2025. It is due for review in October 2026.

Signature	Headteacher	Date:
		September 2025
Signature	Governors	Date:
		September 2025

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1. Introduction/Aim

At St Lawrence CE Primary School we believe that regular school attendance is essential if children are to achieve their full potential. We value the attendance of all pupils. Missing out on lessons leaves children vulnerable to falling behind and can put them at risk of wider harm. There is a wide range of evidence as to the health and wellbeing benefits of school-age education. Research commissioned by the Department for Education shows missing school for even a day can mean a child is less likely to achieve good grades, which can have a damaging effect on their life chances. As set out in this policy, we will work with families to identify the reasons for poor attendance and try to resolve any difficulties at the earliest opportunity.

Our attendance policy aims to give clear guidance to staff, parents, pupils, and governors to:

- Promote good attendance, enabling pupil's achievement by establishing the highest possible levels of attendance and punctuality.
- Recognise the key role of all staff in promoting good attendance.
- Provide a clear framework for monitoring and responding to pupil absences, acting early to address patterns of absence.
- Building strong relationships with families to ensure pupils have the support in place to attend school.
- Promote positive support systems and advocate multi-agency approaches to improve attendance.
- Make parents aware of their legal responsibilities and ensure their children have access to the education to which they are entitled.

We recognise that attendance is a matter for the whole school community. Our Attendance Policy should not be viewed in isolation; it is a strand that runs through all aspects of school improvement, supported by our policies on safeguarding, prevention of bullying, behaviour, and inclusive learning. This policy also considers the Human Rights Act 1998, the Equality Act 2010, UN Convention on the Rights of the Child, and other relevant legislation.

2. Legal Framework

This policy meets the requirements of the Working together to improve school attendance from the Department for Education (DfE), and refers to the DfE's statutory guidance on school attendance parental responsibility measures.

Section 7 of the 1996 Education Act states that parents must ensure that children of compulsory school age receive efficient full-time education suitable to their age, ability, and aptitude to any special educational needs they may have, either by regular attendance at school or otherwise. A child is of compulsory school age at the beginning of the term following their 5th birthday. A child ceases to be of compulsory school age on the last Friday in June of the school year in which they reach the age of 16.

The government expects all schools and local authorities to:

- Promote good attendance and reduce absence, including persistent and severe absence.
- Ensure every pupil has access to full-time education to which they are entitled.
- Act early to address patterns of absence.

Parents are expected to perform their legal duty by ensuring their children of compulsory school age who are registered at school attend regularly.

In accordance with the Education Act 1996, we will work with parents and carers and the Local Authority to ensure that parents and carers are supported to secure education for children of compulsory school age. Where required, we will formalise support and where necessary, work with the LA to use legal measures.

A "Parent" is defined as:

- Any natural parent, whether married or not.
- Any parent who, although not a natural parent, has parental responsibility as defined in the Children Act (1989) for a child or young person.
- Any person who, although not a natural parent, has care of a child or young person.

3. Roles and Responsibilities

At St Lawrence CE Primary School, we believe that improving school attendance is everyone's business. It is a shared responsibility by governors, all school staff, parents, pupils, the wider school community and multi-agency partners. We aim to always work in partnership with our parents.

Names and contact details:

Senior Attendance Champion:	Mrs Beth Shaw
SENDCO:	Mrs Abbie Norgate
School Business Manager:	Mrs Sue Lintott
School Admin Assistant:	Mrs Jackie Gaul
Named Governor for Attendance:	Ms Jane Clabon

St Lawrence CE Primary School

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Alton

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GU34 2BY

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The **Governors** of St Lawrence CE Primary School recognise the importance of school attendance and promotes it through the school's ethos and across its policies. They may take an active role in attendance improvement by:

- Setting high expectations of all leaders, staff, pupils, and parents so that children attend school every day and are safeguarded.
- Identifying a member of the governing body to lead on attendance matters and ensuring that there is a named senior manager to lead on attendance.

- Prioritising attendance in strategies, such as raising attainment, behaviour and combatting bullying, special educational needs and disabilities, wellbeing, and safeguarding.
- Ensuring school leaders fulfil expectations and statutory duties by rigorously evaluating the effectiveness of the school's attendance procedures so that consistent attendance support is provided for all pupils.
- Ensuring the schools' attendance management processes are delivered effectively, and that consistent attendance support is provided for pupils who require it most by prioritising the staff and resources needed. This includes ensuring schools engage and work effectively with the local authority School Attendance Support Team and wider local partners and services.
- Regularly reviewing attendance data, discussing, challenging trends, and helping school leaders focus improvement efforts on the individual pupils or cohorts who need it most.
- Ensuring high aspirations are maintained for all pupils and processes for support are adapted to the individual needs of pupils including those with long term illnesses, special educational needs and disabilities, pupils with a social worker, those pupils under the Virtual School and pupils from cohorts with historically lower attendance such as those eligible for free school meals.
- Ensuring all school staff receive adequate training on attendance and that relevant staff have access to opportunities to share and learn from good practice in other schools.
- Ensuring that attendance data is shared with the Local Authority or Department for Education in line with statutory reporting deadlines.
- Reviewing the school's Attendance Policy on at least an annual basis, ensuring that the required resources are available to fully implement the policy, which is published and publicised regularly so that it is easily accessible to pupils, parents and staff.

The **Senior Leadership Team** at St Lawrence CE Primary School will:

- Actively promote the importance and value of good attendance to pupils and their parents.
- Form and maintain positive relationships with pupils and parents.
- Ensure that there is a whole school approach which reinforces good school attendance, with good teaching and learning experiences, with a whole school culture that encourages all pupils to attend and to achieve.
- Make sure all teaching and non-teaching staff know the importance of good attendance, are consistent in their communication with pupils and parents, and receive the training and professional development they need.
- Have a clear school attendance policy which all staff, pupils and parents understand. Monitor the implementation and effectiveness of the Attendance Policy and ensure that the policy is reviewed annually.
- Ensure the school have accurate, complete admission and attendance registers and have effective day to day processes in place to follow-up absence.
- Regularly monitor and analyse attendance and absence data to identify pupils or cohorts that require support with their attendance and put effective strategies in place.
- Share information and work collaboratively with other schools in the area, local authorities, and other partners where a pupil's absence is at risk of becoming persistent or severe.
- Ensure that there is a named Senior Attendance Champion to lead on attendance and allocate sufficient time and resource.
- Attend the termly school attendance supporting meetings with the local authority, focusing on those pupils with severe absence, making sure a regularly reviewed plan is in place.

All staff at St Lawrence CE Primary School will:

- Actively promote the importance and value of good attendance to pupils and their parents.
- Form positive relationships with pupils and parents.
- Contribute to a whole school approach which reinforces good school attendance; with good teaching and learning experiences that encourage all pupils to attend and to achieve.
- Know the importance of good attendance, are consistent in their communication with pupils and parents, and receive the training and professional development they need.

The member of staff responsible for attendance will work to further develop relationships with families to bring about improved attendance. This may involve seeking multi-agency support.

If a child is currently under Children's Services, the school will alert their allocated social worker by email or phone if the child has not arrived at school.

St Lawrence CE Primary School requests that **parents**:

- Take a positive interest in their child's work and educational progress.
- Ensure their child has regular attendance at school.
- Instil the value of education and regular school attendance within the home environment.
- Contact the school if their child is absent to let them know the reason why and the expected date of return, following this with a note wherever possible.
- Avoid unnecessary absences; for example, by making medical and dental appointments for outside of school hours.
- Ask the school for help if their child is experiencing difficulties with any aspect of their schoolwork or home and family life.
- Inform the school of any change in circumstances that may impact on their child's attendance.
- Support the school by becoming involved in their child's education, forming a positive relationship with school, and acknowledging the importance of children receiving the same messages from both school and home.

- Maintain effective routines at home to support good attendance.
- Attend all meetings requested to discuss attendance issues.

Further information can be found at: Attendance guidance for parents | Hampshire County Council (hants.gov.uk)

Pupils will:

- Be aware of the school's attendance policy and when and where they are required to attend. This will be communicated to them by school staff, parents and through the school timetable.
- Speak to their class teacher or another member of staff if they are experiencing difficulties at school or at home which may impact on their attendance.
- Attend all lessons ready to learn, with the appropriate learning tools requested and on time for the class.
- Follow the school procedure if they arrive late. This will help the school to monitor attendance and keep accurate records for the child's individual attendance. This is also vital for health and safety in the event of a school evacuation.

4. Categorising Absence and Attendance

When marking our registers, we will apply the national codes as outlined and regulated by the Department for Education guidance to accurately record and report attendance.

4.1 Leave of Absence

Since September 2013, changes to Government regulations and guidance mean that Headteachers can no longer authorise leave of absence unless there are exceptional circumstances. Generally, the DfE does not consider a need or desire for a holiday or other absence for the purpose of leisure and recreation to be an exceptional circumstance. Leave of absence should not be granted for a pupil to take part in protest activity during school hours.

All absences associated with a holiday or other absence for the purpose of leisure and recreation during term time will be marked as unauthorised within the register. Any parents known to have removed their child from school for the sole purpose of a holiday or other absence for the purpose of leisure and recreation may be referred to the Local Authority and be issued with a penalty notice fine or referred to the Local Authority to consider prosecution.

We believe that children need to be in school for all sessions so that they can make the most progress possible. However, we do understand that there are times where a parent may legitimately request leave of absence for a child due to 'exceptional circumstances'. At St Lawrence CE Primary School, leave of absence is only granted at the discretion of the Headteacher and shall not be granted unless there are 'exceptional circumstances'. St Lawrence CE Primary School will respond to all applications for leave of absence in writing.

Under the amended legislation, 'exceptional circumstances' are **one-off events which are unavoidable**. Examples may include: the death of a close relative; attendance at a funeral; respite care of a child looked after by the Local Authority; or a housing crisis which prevents attendance.

Parents wishing to apply for leave of absence during term time must apply in writing to the Headteacher **at least a month** before the planned leave (see Appendix 2). If a written request for leave of absence is not completed and the leave is taken without a request being submitted, the leave will not be considered by the Headteacher, and it will be marked as unauthorised. St Lawrence CE Primary School will treat each application individually and discuss with you the circumstances of the application before a decision is made. Retrospective requests will not be considered and therefore will result in the absence being categorised as unauthorised.

A penalty notice request or a referral for prosecution may be submitted to the Local Authority should: -

- The parent fails to submit a leave of absence request in advance of taking the leave.
- An application for a leave of absence is not agreed by the Headteacher but is still taken.
- A longer period is taken more than the agreed number of days.

When absence is granted by the Headteacher, the parents will need to agree a date of return. If a pupil fails to return on the expected date and contact is not received from, or made with the parents, school will seek advice from the Local Authority. This could result in possible children missing from education procedures being instigated.

The 1996 Education Act also sets out the circumstances in which a pupil has not failed to attend school regularly and therefore the parent has not committed an offence.

4.2, 4.3, 4.4 are examples of these.

The full list is in the Appendix 6.

4.2 Medical Appointments and absence due to illness

Parents should try to make appointments outside of school hours wherever possible. Where appointments during school time are unavoidable, we ask that parent notifies the school in advance of the appointment wherever possible. The pupil should only be out of school for the minimum amount of time necessary for the appointment. In most circumstances, a child should not miss a whole day at school for an appointment. If a pupil must attend a medical appointment during the school day, they must be signed out and back in again at the school office. No pupil will be allowed to leave the school site without parental confirmation.

In line with Department for Education guidance, if we do have a genuine concern about the authenticity of the illness, we may ask the parent to provide medical evidence, such as a prescription, appointment card, or other appropriate form of evidence. If the school is not satisfied about the authenticity of the illness, the absence will be recorded as unauthorised.

Where a child has an emerging pattern of non-attendance, we will discuss the reasons for absence with the child's parent. We will invite parents to attend a support meeting as an appropriate early intervention strategy. As part of this support, we may seek consent from parents and the pupil as appropriate to make a referral to the School Nursing Team and/or to liaise with the child's healthcare professional.

Where a pupil has a verified and chronic health condition, we will aim to work with parents to ensure children have access to education and provide appropriate support in line with Supporting pupils with medical conditions at school and Hampshire policies regarding supporting children with health issues, Behaviour and attendance resources for schools | Hampshire County Council (hants.gov.uk). We will also consider whether an Individual Healthcare Plan is required.

4.3 Pupil Absence for the purposes of Religious Observance

St Lawrence CE Primary School acknowledges the multi-faith nature of British society and recognises that, on some occasions, religious festivals may fall outside school holiday periods or weekends and is recognised as such by a relevant religious authority. Where this occurs, the school will consider either authorising the pupil absence or making special leave for religious observance. Parents are requested to give advance notice to the school.

Working together to improve school attendance - GOV.UK (www.gov.uk) page 86

4.4 Parent travelling for occupational purposes

The pupil is a mobile child and their parent(s) is travelling in the course of their trade or business and the pupil is travelling with them. A mobile child is a child of compulsory school age who has no fixed abode and whose parent(s) is engaged in a trade or business of such a nature as to require them to travel from place to place.

To ensure we can effectively support all our pupils, we ask that parents:

- Advise the school of their forthcoming travelling patterns as soon as these are known and before they happen; and
- Inform the school regarding proposed return dates.

4.5 Unauthorised Absence

Absence will not be authorised unless parents have provided a satisfactory explanation and it is accepted as such by the school. The decision to authorise absences is at the discretion of the Headteacher. Examples of unsatisfactory explanations include but are not limited to:

- A pupil's/family member's birthday.
- Shopping for uniforms.
- Arrangements or appointments for cutting the pupil's hair.
- Closure of a sibling's school for INSET (or other) purposes.
- An unwillingness to attend school, or inability to attend owing to inadequate personal/family organisation.
- A refusal to attend school on health grounds but where the pupil is considered well enough to attend.
- Absences taken without the authorisation of the school.

5.Our Procedures

5.1 Register Keeping and Recording

The Education (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2006, as amended by 2016 regulations, require schools to take an attendance register twice a day, once at the start of the morning session and then again during the afternoon session.

For the purpose of this policy, the school defines:

"Absence" as:

- Arrival at school after the register has closed.
- Not attending school for any reason.

"Regular" attendance as:

- Attendance at every session the school is open to pupils unless their absence has been authorised.

The school day starts at 8.45am and pupils should arrive in school by 9.00am. Any child arriving between 9.00am and 9.15am will be marked as late. The register closes at 9.15am and any child who arrive after that would be marked as unauthorised.

The register for the second session will be taken at 1.00pm and will be kept open until 1.30pm.

Registers are legal records and all schools must preserve every entry in the attendance or admission register for 6 years from the date the data was entered. As the attendance register is a record of the pupils present at the time it was taken, the register should only routinely be amended where the reason for absence cannot be established at the time it is taken and it is subsequently necessary to correct the entry.

Where amendments are made, all schools must ensure the register shows the original entry, the amended entry, the reason for the amendment, the date on which the amendment was made, and the name of the person who made the amendment.

On each occasion the register is taken the appropriate national attendance and absence code must be entered for every pupil (of both compulsory and non-compulsory school age) whose name is listed in the admission register at the time. The codes enable schools to record and monitor attendance and absence in a consistent way and are used to collect statistics. The data helps schools, local authorities, and the government gain a greater understanding of the delivery of education and the level of, and reason for, absence.

Reporting to parents

The school will regularly inform parents about their child's attendance and absence levels via half termly Arbor Attendance records.

5.2 Late Arrival at School

At St Lawrence CE Primary School all pupils are expected to arrive on time for every day of the school year. The school day begins at 9.00am. We advise all parents to ensure their child is on site prior to this (the gates open at 8.45am). The school register will be taken at 9.00am. All pupils arriving after this time are required to report to the main office with their parents, who will be expected to sign the late book and provide a reason for their absence. If their arrival is before 9.15am, it will be recorded as late - L code (Late before the close of register).

The school register will officially close at 9.15am. All pupils arriving on or after this time will be marked as having an unauthorised absence for the session - U code (Late after the close of register). **This is categorised as an unauthorised absence for the session**. Parents will be contacted to discuss any patterns of late arrival. Repeated arrival after the close of registration will result in appropriate interventions being instigated and may also result in a penalty notice being issued or prosecution.

5.3 Expected absence procedure for parents:

A parent has a legal responsibility to ensure that their child attends school regularly. If a child is unavoidably absent from school parents are expected to contact school by telephone call on the morning of the first day of absence and on each subsequent day, identifying the reason for absence and the expected date of return. If no contact is received, then absence protocols will be instigated.

If a child is absent, the following actions will be initiated by the school:

- The first day calling procedures will be activated for all pupils who are not in school after close of register at 9.15am and where no reason for absence is known.
- If there is still no contact made from the pupil's parents, a further telephone call home will be made again that morning. If no response can be gained, the child's named emergency contact will be telephoned.
- If school cannot contact a parent a home visit may be carried out.
- If a child is under Children's Services, the allocated social worker will be contacted
- School will telephone home if a pupil leaves the school without permission

In certain circumstances the school may also:

- Visit the home of the pupil.
- Write to the parents of a pupil to highlight attendance or punctuality issues.
- Invite parents to discuss how school can support the family to make improvement.
- Refer to Inclusion Support Service for support, guidance, and advice.

- Refer to the Local Authority for joint enquiries to be made to establish the whereabouts of the child through Inclusion Support Service (ISS) | Hampshire County Council (hants.gov.uk) and Behaviour and attendance resources for schools | Hampshire County Council (hants.gov.uk)
- Refer to the Local Authority to consider issuing a penalty notice or to consider prosecution when all other interventions have failed, or an unauthorised leave of absence has been taken.
- Refer the matter to an appropriate external agency for multi-agency support, such as implementing a Family Support Plan or consulting with the Children's Social Care or the police, where there are safeguarding concerns.

5.4 Attendance Rewards & Interventions

At St Lawrence CE Primary School, we endeavour to ensure that school is a place where our children want to be; where learning is irresistible and where children feel loved and cared for as part of our school family.

- We firmly believe that relationships and communication are the key to good attendance and will always want to work with parents to support and encourage.
- We highlight attendance in regular newsletters and share individual attendance records from Arbor with parents.
- We will always meet with parents when attendance is a concern (dips below 96%), wanting to understand and to then help remove any barriers to attendance
- We have a staggered/systematic approach to highlighting attendance if this is a concern from texts, emails, letters, phone calls, meeting with parents (see Appendix 5 for our strategy for reducing persistent and severe absence)
- Support can come in different ways: meeting parents, setting up Attendance Contracts, referring to Parent Support Worker, Early Help, Inclusion Team at County
- Our attendance target is 96% and above.

Monitor and Analyse attendance

St Lawrence CE Primary School will:

- Monitor and analyse weekly attendance patterns and trends and deliver intervention and support in a targeted way to pupils and families. This should go beyond headline attendance percentages and should look at individual pupils, cohorts and year groups (including their punctuality) across the school.

- Use this analysis to provide regular attendance reports to class teachers to facilitate discussions with pupils and to leaders (including any special educational needs coordinators, designated safeguarding leads and pupil premium leads).
- Undertake frequent individual level analysis to identify the pupils who need support and focus staff efforts on developing targeted actions for those cases.
- Conduct thorough analysis of half-termly, termly, and full year data to identify patterns and trends. This should include analysis of pupils and cohorts and identifying patterns in uses of certain codes, days of poor attendance and where appropriate, subjects which have low lesson attendance.
- Benchmark attendance data (at whole school, year group and cohort level) against local, regional, and national levels to identify areas of focus for improvement.
- Devise specific strategies to address areas of poor attendance identified through data.
- Monitor in the data the impact of school wide attendance efforts, including any specific strategies implemented. The findings should then be used to evaluate approaches or inform future strategies.
- Provide data and reports to support the work of the board or governing body and local authority when appropriate.

At St Lawrence CE Primary School, we will investigate any pupils who are on track to be persistently absent (PA) and will not wait until attendance is below 90%.

"Persistent absenteeism" (PA) as:

- Missing 10% or more of schooling across the year for any reason.

"Severe absence" (SA) as:

- Missing 50% or more of schooling across the year for any reason.

5.5 Support Systems

At St Lawrence CE Primary School, we recognise that poor attendance can be an indication of difficulties in a family's life. This may be related to problems at home and or in school. Parents are encouraged to inform school of any difficulties or changes in circumstances that may affect their child's attendance and/or behaviour in school, for example: bereavement, divorce/separation, emerging health concerns. This will help the school identify any additional support that may be required.

We also recognise that some pupils are more likely to require additional support to attain good attendance. The school will implement a range of strategies to support improved attendance based on the individual needs and circumstances of the child.

Strategies we may use to support you include:

- Meeting up to discuss specific barriers to attendance
- Putting a plan in place to help remove those barriers
- Working together to complete an Attendance Contract
- Referral to Early Help Hub
- Referral to Alton Family Support Worker
- Referral to School Listening Ear
- Referral to School TALA
- Referral to School ELSA

To plan the correct support, we will always invite parents and pupils to attend a meeting to discuss the concerns and devise a plan to support the child's regular attendance. Support offered to families will be child-centred and planned in discussion and agreement with both parents and pupils.

5.6 Persistent Absence, Severe Absence and the use of legal interventions

A pupil becomes a 'persistent absentee' (PA) when their attendance drops to 90% and below for any reason. Over a full academic year this would be 38 sessions (19 days). Absence at this level could cause considerable damage to a child's educational outcomes.

A pupil becomes a 'severe absentee' (SA) when their attendance drops to 50% and below for any reason. Over a full academic year this would be 90 sessions (45 days). Absence at this level is causing considerable damage to a child's educational outcomes.

The attendance of all pupils at our school are monitored to identify children who are PA, or are on track to becoming PA. Where emerging concerns are identified we will instigate appropriate and timely interventions as outlined in the section above. Referrals may also be made to external agencies for targeted support.

Inclusion Support Service (ISS) | Hampshire County Council (hants.gov.uk)

If parents fail to engage with support and their child continues to have unsatisfactory attendance/ punctuality, a request may be made to the Local Authority to pursue legal proceedings either through a penalty notice, consideration of an Education Supervision Order or prosecution via the Magistrates' Court.

Parents found guilty of failing to secure their child's regular attendance at school under the provisions of the Education Act 1996, will receive a criminal record and a maximum penalty of a £1000 fine under a Section 444 (1) offence or a £2500 fine or up to a 3-month prison sentence, under a Section 444 (1a) offence.

In line with Hampshire County Council guidance, we will notify the Inclusion Support Service of all reduced timetables as soon as a plan has been agreed.

6. Related Policies

To underpin the values and ethos of our school and our intent to ensure that pupils at our school attend school regularly and reach their full potential, the following policies are integral to this approach:

- Safeguarding including child protection
- Medical needs
- Admissions
- Anti-bullying
- Behaviour
- Suspension and permanent exclusion
- Special Educational Needs

7. Statutory Framework

This policy has been devised in accordance with the following legislation and guidance:

- Working together to improve school attendance, DfE, (August 2024)
- School attendance parental responsibility measures, DfE (January 2015)
- Children missing education, DfE (September 2016)
- Keeping children safe in education, DfE (September 2024)
- Working together to safeguard children, DfE (July 2023)

8. Appendices

The following pages contain appendices relevant to this policy.

Appendix 1: Fixed penalty notice whole school warning letter

Dear Parent,

Date: xx/xx/xxxx

Attendance at school and legal intervention

As you will be aware, the Government have released new guidance on attendance. This has had an impact on the policy that we have had in place at St Lawrence CE Primary School. The Governing Body have met and agreed to adopt these guidelines whilst making it very clear that first and foremost, we firmly believe in relationships being at the heart of what we do here. We want to be able to support and encourage parents in breaking down any barriers to attendance. This letter sets out the County position on attendance and is part of an appendix in our attendance policy.

Where parents decide to have their child registered at school, they have an additional legal duty to ensure their child attends that school regularly.

Research commissioned by the Department for Education shows missing school for even a day can mean a child is less likely to achieve good grades, which can have a damaging effect on their life chances. At St Lawrence CE Primary School our aim is to work with parents to ensure that all our pupils receive the most from their education and reach their full potential.

This letter is to remind all parents about the law that requires them to ensure that their child attends school regularly. The Government is very clear that no child should miss school apart from in exceptional circumstances and schools must take steps to reduce absence to support children's attainment.

The DfE policy document entitled, 'Working together to improve school attendance' states:

All schools are able to grant a leave of absence at their discretion. A leave of absence from school maintained by a local authority or a special school not maintained by a local authority, must not be granted unless there are exceptional circumstances. Generally, a need or desire for a holiday or other absence for the purpose of leisure and recreation would not constitute an exceptional circumstance.

If the school does not receive a request for leave, the head teacher will be unable to consider your individual circumstances and the absence will be recorded as unauthorised. There will be no obligation on the head teacher to reconsider authorising the leave if an application has not been made in advance. The County policy states that requests should be made in writing at least one month before the planned leave.

The Local Authority operates a system where any pupil will meet the criteria for legal intervention if they have **at least 10 sessions (5 school days) lost to unauthorised absence by the pupil during 10 school weeks**. The intervention could be in the form of a fixed penalty notice. We will issue a Notice to Improve before this. However, a Notice to improve letter is not to be used for an authorised holiday. Only if there is still no improvement to the child's attendance after support in various forms, then we will have no other option than to refer the pupil to the Local Authority for action to be considered**.**

If a fixed penalty notice is issued, the arrangement for the payment will be detailed on the notice. The first penalty notice issued to a parent in respect of a particular pupil will be charged at £160 if paid within 28 days. This will be reduced to £80 if paid within 21 days. A second penalty notice issued to the same parent in respect of the same pupil is charged at a flat rate of £160 if paid within 28 days. A parent may receive more than one separate penalty notice resulting from unauthorised absence. When penalty notices are issued each parent will receive one per child. Therefore, each parent could receive multiple notices if they have more than 1 child who has been absent. You should be aware that failure to pay the total amount within the timescale will result in legal action being taken.

In some circumstances, the Inclusion Support Service may choose not to issue a further penalty notice in the same academic year and may instead choose to prosecute a parent under the Education Act 1996 S444. There is no right of appeal by parents against a fixed penalty notice.

Please remember that the school register will officially close at 9.15am. All pupils arriving on or after this time will be marked as having an **unauthorised absence** for the session - U code (Late after the close of register). This is categorised as an unauthorised absence for the session. We will contact you if we are concerned about your child being late to school and will work with you to support you getting them to school on time.

I hope we can count on your support in this matter, please do not hesitate to contact me if you have any questions.

Yours sincerely,

Headteacher

Appendix 2: Example leave of absence request form

Hampshire County Council

Hampshire Services
HIAS SCHOOL IMPROVEMENT

Request to authorise absence from school due to exceptional circumstances

Schools are only able to authorise absence from school in exceptional circumstances. In making a request for an authorised absence from school you will need to explain why the circumstances are exceptional. **Please note**: There is no general right to authorised absence for a family holiday. If you take your child out of school without permission the absence will be unauthorised, and the local authority will consider legal action.

You are advised not to make any arrangements until your request has been considered.

Section A – to the headteacher, I wish to apply for

Child's name: _____ Class: _____

To be authorised as absent from school (please include dates and time):

from _____ to _____ (inclusive dates)

If your child has siblings that are also applying for a leave of absence, please enter their name and school below:

Child's name(s): _____ School(s): _____

Section B Please explain why you are applying for an authorised absence and the **circumstances** which make your **application exceptional**; and therefore, the leave cannot be taken within the normal 13 weeks holiday your child has from school. If you are requesting authorisation to attend a specific event please confirm the date of the event and explain your travel arrangements. If you require additional space, please continue on the other side of the page.

Section C I am the parent/carer with whom the pupil normally resides. The information I have given on this form is correct.

Signature (parent/carer): _____ Date: _____

Education (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2006 have been amended (as of 1 September 2013) to prohibit the proprietor (headteacher) of a maintained school granting leave of absence to a pupil except where an application has been made in advance and the proprietor considers that there are exceptional circumstances relating to the application.

Section D – for school use only.

Tick as appropriate.

☐ Request approved for ____ number of days from the dates and times _____

_____

☐ A personal discussion with you is requested. Please contact: _____

☐ Request not approved as the circumstances are not considered to constitute an exceptional reason and/or the impact of this absence will affect your child's educational progress.

PLEASE NOTE: This leave of absence form serves as a Warning to parent/carer. Any unauthorised absence during this period may be subject to a Penalty Notice OR may result in a prosecution if two previous penalty notices have been issued in a rolling three-year period

A Penalty Notice may be issued per parent/carer, per child (i.e. if two parents have two children this may result in four Penalty Notices – two Penalty Notices per parent).

Headteacher: _____ Date: _____

Current attendance rate: _____

Continuation of section B (if required):

Appendix 3: Example reply to leave of absence request

Dear Parent's name,

RE: Absence during term time – Child's Name (Child DOB)

Dates:

Thank you for your application for absence in term time for Child's name. Whilst we appreciate your circumstances, St Lawrence CE Primary School is not able to approve any absences during term time unless they are due to exceptional circumstances as per the guidance from the Department of Education. The rationale behind this decision is that the Government has provided evidence that satisfactory progress at school is highly dependent on attendance.

Unfortunately, this request does not meet the criteria for government authorised absence and does not meet the Governing Body criteria for exceptional circumstances. Exceptional circumstances are one-off events which are unavoidable and may include the death of a close relative; attendance at a funeral; attendance at a wedding (1 day); respite care of a child looked after by the Local Authority; or a housing crisis which prevents attendance. Therefore, this leave is unauthorised.

The dates that Child's Name will be absent from St Lawrence CE Primary School have been recorded on our register system. Dates of leave and the registers will be marked with the G code (unauthorised family holiday) for this period.

……'s attendance currently stands at…… and his attendance for the academic year 2024-25 was……..

Regular school attendance is important for more than just attainment: it can also facilitate positive peer relationships, which is a protective factor for mental health and wellbeing.

Thank you for your co-operation and understanding in this matter.

If you would like to discuss the matter further, please contact the school on 01420 84400.

Yours sincerely,

Mrs Fiona Micklefield

Headteacher

Appendix 4: Attendance Policy Quick Guide for Parents

Attendance Policy Quick Guide for Parents

We expect pupils to attend school for 100% of the academic year.

You can support your child to have excellent attendance by taking these steps:

- Ensure your child arrives on time for school every day and is ready to learn. Arriving after registration is recorded as an unauthorised absence. Pupils must be in school by 9.00am.
- If your child appears to be only slightly ill, please send them in to school. Our staff will contact you if their condition deteriorates.
- Please book any medical appointments outside of school hours. If this is unavoidable, please book for as late in the afternoon as possible if you can and inform the school of appointments in advance.
- Supply a copy of the appointment card or hospital letter if your child has an appointment during school hours.

If your child becomes reluctant to go to school or you need help, please contact the school immediately; we want to work together to solve any problems and if we act early, this will help.



'On the day' absences: what should I do if my child is not 'fit' to go into school?

On each day your child is unfit to come to school, please report this absence by calling the school on 01420 84400 to let us know. In the message you must leave your child's full name, year group and give the specific reason for absence. The information you give will be recorded on our official register.

Leave of Absence

There may be exceptional circumstances where you need to request a leave of absence for your child. Please use our 'Leave of absence request' form to make these types of requests. The form should be submitted in advance of the leave of absence, via adminoffice@st-lawrence.hants.sch.uk

You will receive a letter in response, to advise if the request has been granted or declined.

Punctuality

Pupils are expected to arrive on time for school in the morning. If they are not in school when the register is taken at 9.00am, they will be marked late.

The Government remains very clear that no child should miss school apart from in exceptional circumstances and schools must continue to take steps to reduce absence to support children's attainment.

Please contact your child's class teacher, Mrs Shaw or Mrs Micklefield if you require any support with ensuring your child's regular school attendance. We will be happy to help.

Appendix 5: Attendance interventions flow chart

