

St Vincent De Paul R.C. Primary School, Knutsford

Mission Statement

Believe, Trust and Be Ready

"That they may have life, and to the full" John 10:10



ATTENDANCE POLICY

Policy Date: October 2025

Review Date: October 2028



Introduction

In August 2024 the Department for Education (DfE) announced important amendments to legislation surrounding holidays in term time. From the 19th August 2024, the new legislation does not give any entitlement to parents/ carers to take their child on holiday during term time. Any application for leave of absence must be in exceptional circumstances and the Head Teacher must be satisfied that the circumstances warrant the granting of leave of absence. Parents/ carers can be fined by the Local Authority for taking their child on holiday during term time without consent from the school.

The reason for this policy is that there are only 190 days in a student's school year and it undermines the potential for achievement and socialisation if time is missed unnecessarily.

At St. Vincent de Paul Primary School we work in partnership with parents / carers to ensure that children regularly attend school to ensure maximum benefit from the education we provide. Regular and punctual attendance is also regarded highly and forms an important aspect of a child's all-round social development.

We expect all children on roll to attend every day, when the school is in session, as long as they are fit and healthy enough to do so. We do all we can to encourage the children to attend, and to put in place appropriate procedures. We believe that the most important factor in promoting good attendance is development of positive attitudes towards school. To this end, we strive to make St. Vincent de Paul Primary School a happy and rewarding place for all children.

Roles and Responsibilities

Under the terms of the 1944 education Act it is the duty of every parent/ carer to ensure that their child attends school regularly and punctually. Equally it is the role of the school to support attendance and to ensure that children derive the maximum benefits from that attendance, and to take seriously, any problems which may lead to non-attendance.

We recognise that for many reasons a child may not be able to attend school but within the framework of the 1994 Education Act only the school may 'authorise' the absence. There may be occasions where, due to lack of explanation or otherwise, the school will be unable to sanction the absence. This is to be regarded as 'unauthorised'.

The school recognises it has a duty to chase up unauthorised attendance and does so in a number of ways as described in this policy.

Safeguarding and Attendance

Attending school every day reduces the chances of children and young people becoming vulnerable to harm. School has a responsibility to ensure a pupil is attending school. If they are not we have a duty to find out why not and where the child is. Safeguarding the interests of each child is everyone's responsibility. As a school we safeguard children and promote the welfare and future life opportunities for them by:

- expecting regular attendance to school
- having a clear Behaviour Policy
- ensuring health and safety within the school
- allowing them access to a broad and balanced curriculum
- having a clear Anti – Bullying Policy
- having a robust Safeguarding Policy

Reporting Absences

It is the parents' / carers' responsibility to inform school of the reason for a child's absence as soon as possible. At St. Vincent de Paul Primary School we expect parents / carers to notify school beforehand or, if unexpected, to contact us on the first day of absence before 9 am.

When a parent / carer phones school, a note is made of the call with the reason for the child's absence recorded and the date a child is expected to return. This note is put on SIMs in the class register and dispenses with the need for the parent / carer to write a note of explanation on the child's return to school.

St. Vincent de Paul Primary School also has a 'phone home' policy if we have not heard from a parent / carer before 9.30 am. The class teacher notifies the school office if a child is absent without notification and a member of staff in the office will then contact home or phone the other contact numbers available on the child's school record.

Such a phone call usually takes the following form:

Hello, my name is ...

I'm phoning from St. Vincent de Paul Primary School.

I understand that ... is not in school today and as we don't appear to have had a message from you, I thought I'd find out why and see if there is anything we can do at school to help.

As before, a note is made of this conversation on SIMs in the class register.

The following procedures are in place for safeguarding:

- A minimum of 3 contacts to be held by school for each child/family whom we would be able to contact either in case of emergency or non-attendance.
- If we have not been notified of your child's absence from school by 9.30 am, a phone call will be made to the primary contacts. If we can't get through a voicemail will be left asking that you make contact with the school by 11 am.
- If we have still had no contact by 11am the school office will ring the third emergency contact.
- If we are still unable to make contact and have heard nothing by 1 pm and have a safeguarding concern a member of the Senior Leadership Team from St. Vincent de Paul Primary School will visit the family home. If there is no answer then they will call the police.

This is to make sure your child is safe.

The Importance of Registration

Under regulation 3 of the Pupils' Registration regulations 1956, all schools must keep an attendance register on which at the beginning of each morning and afternoon session, pupils are marked present or absent. The Education (Pupils' Attendance Records) Regulations 1991 which amended the 1956 Regulations introduced a further requirement that attendance registers must show whether an absence is authorised or unauthorised.

Both staff and children should see the taking of registers as an integral and key part of the school day. Careful attention should be paid to accurate registration and to the preservation and security of registers.

The registers are electronic. Laminated computer print-outs of the register are annotated each day, this forms the fire register. In the event of computer failure, the register is completed manually and is taken to the office via the red box system.

Lateness

Punctuality is strongly encouraged. The bell is rung on the playground at 8:55am and then the register is taken at 9:00am. At St. Vincent de Paul Primary School, children are expected to be in school for registration at this time. This is key as learning starts immediately and often intervention groups / 1:1 work can commence at this point. Children are also recording their dinner choices and organising their bags and coats. Arriving after other children has a negative impact on the start of the first lesson as these housekeeping items will need to be completed during a lesson and it stops the flow of teaching and impacts everyone's learning.

Any lateness is recorded if the child has to sign in at the office. If the signature is between 9.00am and 9.30am they will receive an L in the register for late. Any children arriving after that time are recorded as unauthorised unless there is a reasonable explanation for lateness. If lateness forms a pattern or becomes a problem, parents are then reminded of the merits of their child/ren arriving on time. Therefore, lateness after 9.3am can contribute to an unauthorised mark and a Fixed Penalty Notice.

Attendance Percentage	Day missed over an average school term (approximately)	Days missed over a school year (approximately)
100%	0	0
95%	3 ½	10
90%	6 ½	20
85%	10	30

Late Collection of Children at the End of the Day

We ask parents / carers to call the school office if they are running late to help appropriate provision to be made and children can be kept informed and reassured (please note that calling will not exempt a parent from late charges).

At the end of the school day, teachers will take any uncollected children to the office to wait for collection. On many days, teachers have professional development or professional meetings and cannot look after children who are not collected on time.

If children are not collected at the end of the day, the following procedures will be implemented:

- Messages are checked to see if there are any changes to the end of day arrangements
- Parents / carers are contacted at home or work
- If this is unsuccessful, other authorised adults and emergency contacts are contacted

If the child is not collected after 15 minutes, the child will be taken to our After School Club for which parents / carers will be charged the relevant fee by After School Club.

If the child has not been collected after one hour (and the three contacts of the child are not responding to calls), we will follow our safeguarding procedures and contact social services.

Early Pick Up From School Before 3.25pm

Parents / carers should email the headteacher via the office email admin@stvincents.cheshire.sch.uk for early pick up requests. Please provide copies of appointment cards / appointment letters.

Categories of Attendance

Authorised Absences may include:

Illness, medical and dental appointments, special circumstances such as bereavement, religious observance, residential visit, public performance, music exams, attendance at another school eg to sit exam, temporary exclusion, etc

Unauthorised Absences may include:

Lateness i.e. arriving after 9.30am, truancy, accompanying family members to a medical appointment, illness that would not stop them attending school, taking a full day for a medical appointment, minding the house, looking after other children or parent, family holidays, oversleeping, getting up late, shopping during school hours, etc.

Persistent Absence

It is our policy to intervene if a child's attendance is below 95% (in the first instance) and then 90% then this will be classed as persistent absence. The child's attendance will be recorded at 4 weekly intervals.

The following procedures will be followed:

1. Initially, parents will be informed by letter that attendance is below 90%
2. If no improvement is seen after four weeks, parents / carers will be asked to attend a meeting with the headteacher to discuss attendance.
3. Regular monthly meetings will continue with the Senior Leadership Team until attendance improves.
4. An Early Help Assessment may be discussed with parents. Every effort will be made to address any barriers to attendance. Attendance is expected to improve.
5. If attendance still fails to improve after a further four weeks, parents will be invited to a meeting with the headteacher and the local authority attendance team.
6. The local authority reserves the right to consider taking legal action against any parents or guardians who repeatedly fail to accept their responsibility for sending their children to school on a regular basis. If there is no improvement, parents may be issued with a fine / Fixed Penalty Notice.

Unauthorised Absence – Fixed Penalty Notices

Parents / carers should be aware that St. Vincent de Paul Primary School has a duty to inform the local authority if a pupil has 10 or more unauthorised absences in any one term (5 school days), with a view to issuing a Fixed Penalty Notice. The Penalty Notice is issued individually to each parent or carer who fails to ensure their child's regular attendance at school regardless of whether parents live together.

Application for Exceptional Circumstances

St. Vincent de Paul Primary School asks for parents / carers to notify the school of absence in advance. The headteacher may not grant leave of absence in term time unless they are exceptional circumstances. If you continue with your plans and take your child out of school, the absence will be recorded as unauthorised. The school must then inform the local authority and a Fixed Penalty Notice will be issued. Failure to pay the penalty fine within the required time may result in prosecution.

Penalty Notices

Penalty notices will be issued by the local authority for:

Term time leave: Penalty Notice fines will be issued for term time leave of 5 or more consecutive days.

10 Sessions of Unauthorised absence in a rolling 10 week period: A Penalty Notices may be considered when there have been 10 sessions of unauthorised absences in a 10 week period.

However, we retain the discretion to issue a Penalty Notice before the threshold is met. For example, where parents are deliberately avoiding the national threshold by taking several term time holidays below the above thresholds.

Penalty Notice fines will be issued per parent per child. For example: 3 siblings absent for term time leave, would result in each parent receiving 3 separate fines.

First Offence	Second Offence	Third Offence
The first time a Penalty Notice is issued for term time leave or irregular school attendance the fine will be charged at: £160 per parent, per child if paid within 28 days of the issue, reducing to £80 per parent, per child if paid within 21 days. (Unpaid penalty notices may result in a parental prosecution)	Where it is deemed appropriate to issue a second penalty notice to the same parent for the same pupil within 3 years of the first penalty notice, for either term time leave or irregular attendance the second penalty notice will be charged at: £160 if paid within 28 days. (Unpaid penalty notices may result in a parental prosecution)	On the third time that an offence is committed within 3 years of the first penalty notice for either a term time leave or irregular attendance a penalty notice will not be issued. The case may proceed to Parental Prosecution under the Single Justice Procedure. If found guilty of the offence of 'Failure to send a child to school' the Magistrates can impose a fine up to £1000 or legal proceedings under Section 444 (1a) can include a fine of up to £2500.

Non-attendance is an important issue that is treated seriously. However, each case is different and the school acknowledges that no one standard response will be appropriate in every case. Consideration is given to all factors affecting attendance before deciding what intervention strategies to apply.

Long-term absence

If the absence is a planned one e.g. following an operation, we would be happy to work with parents to ensure that their child is supported upon their return to school. In certain circumstances we can make reasonable adaptations so that their needs can be catered for.

If the absence is likely to continue for an extended period, or be a repetitive absence, the school will contact the support services such as the Early Intervention Team (previously known as 'Educational Welfare Officer') and/ or Hospital Teaching for advice regarding how to support a child.

Occasionally school may be able to offer a part time timetable in order to ease a child back into school particularly after an extended absence for ill health.

It is important that parents and school work together in these cases so that the child does not develop anxiety around returning to school.

Admittance into School

By law children must attend school from the start of the term following their fifth birthday. However, children reaching the age of five years between September 1st and August 31st are generally admitted into school earlier than the law requires i.e. at the start of September in the Autumn term.

At St. Vincent de Paul Primary School this is standard practice. All children start together in September as one cohort.

Published Authorised and Unauthorised Absences

All schools are now obliged to record and publish the number of authorised and unauthorised absences. The rates of absence at St. Vincent de Paul Primary School are included on in the dashboard for parent link (DFE).

Equal Opportunities

Fundamental to the aims of the school being achieved is a belief that all parents and children will receive equal entitlement without prejudice and that individual potential should be developed to the full.

We do not discriminate against any child or adult because of gender, age, ethnic origin, social class, religion, marital status, sexual orientation, disability or special needs.

Monitoring and Review

This policy will be monitored and reviewed every three years by the Headteacher in consultation with staff and governors.

It is the responsibility of the Governors to monitor overall attendance, and they will request an annual report from the Headteacher. The Governing Board also has the responsibility for this policy, and for seeing that it is carried out. The Governors will therefore examine closely the information provided to them, and seek to ensure that our attendance figures are as high as they should be.

The rates of attendance will be reported through relevant Governor's sub-committees and at the full Governor Board meeting each term.

The Headteacher will be responsible for monitoring attendance and attendance patterns. Reporting attendance / punctuality data to Governors termly.

This policy was reviewed by the Headteacher in consultation with staff and governors in October 2025