

A Parent/Carer's Guide to School Attendance

What should I do if my child is absent from school?

By law, school must record absences and the reasons given. You are, therefore, required to contact the school immediately if your child is absent. On their return to school, you must then send a note explaining the reason for the absence.

The school office should be informed in writing of absences, known in advance, such as dental appointments. If you wish to request a longer absence—which may or may not be authorized (see overleaf) - please use a Leave of Absence form available from the school office and submit with a letter, detailing in full why the application is truly exceptional.

Please note:

The fundamental principles for defining 'exceptional' are events that are "rare, significant, unavoidable and short". Unavoidable means an event that could not reasonably be scheduled at another time.

ABSENCE FROM SCHOOL

Are you aware of the potential impact on your child's education of absence during term time?

1 day off per school year = 99.5% attendance

10 days off per school year = 94.7% attendance

20 days off per school year = 90% attendance.

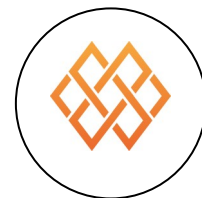
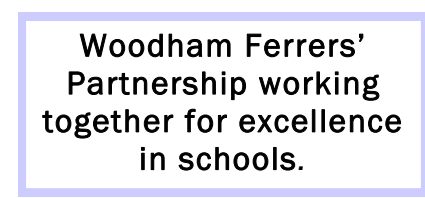
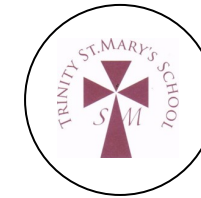
90% attendance = 4 whole weeks off school
90% attendance in years 1-6 means more than HALF A YEAR off school!

90% attendance for your child through Primary and Secondary school, means they will have missed a WHOLE YEAR off school in their education!!

90% or less attendance is classified as a "Persistent Absentee"

If a pupil has reached the level of a Persistent Absentee (PA), or is at risk of doing so, their parents or carers will be informed and the child will be monitored carefully. All PA pupils and their parents will be the subject of a school based meeting and other relevant professionals, including the Local Authority, may be involved. If there is not clear and sustained improvement in attendance, then more formal procedures will follow, possibly leading to a Penalty Notice or prosecution.

(November 2020)



Woodham Ferrers' Partnership working together for excellence in schools.

Raising pupil and student achievement through regular school attendance.

School Attendance

For all children to gain the greatest benefit from their education, it is vital that they attend regularly and be at school, on time, every day the school is open, unless the reason for the absence is unavoidable. Any absence affects the pattern of a child's schooling and regular absence will seriously affect their learning.

Our Attendance Policy aims to raise and maintain levels of attendance by:

- Promoting a positive and welcoming atmosphere in which pupils feel safe, secure and valued.
- Raising awareness of the importance of good attendance and punctuality.
- Ensuring that attendance is monitored effectively, in line with Government and Local Authority requirements and reasons for absences are recorded promptly and consistently.
- Working in partnership with parents/carers so that they are aware of their own child's attendance record and the impact that this is having on their education.

The school's Attendance Policy provides more detailed information and is available from the office or on the school website.

Understanding different types of absence.

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

Authorised absences are mornings or afternoons from school for a good reason like illness, emergencies or other unavoidable cause.

Unauthorised absences are those which the headteacher, following Government guidelines, does not consider exceptional and for which no 'leave' has therefore been given. This type of absence can lead to the Local Authority using sanctions and/or legal proceedings including penalty notices and fines.

An absence is likely to be unauthorised:

- if parents / carers keep children off school unnecessarily eg. because they had a late night or for non-infectious illness or injury, that would not affect their ability to learn;
- for truancy before or during the school day;
- for absences which have never been properly explained;
- when children arrive at school too late to get registered;
- for shopping trips, day trips, birthdays, holidays in term time;
- if a child is looking after other siblings or accompanying siblings or parents to medical appointments;
- when the absence is at the start of a new year; during or prior to exam or national test periods; or if a child is a persistent absentee.

Holidays in Term Time

There is no longer any entitlement in law for pupils to take time off during the term to go on holiday.

In addition, the Supreme Court has ruled that the definition of regular school attendance, is "in accordance with the rules prescribed by the school".

Leave of absence during term time may only be granted by the head teacher, or his/her designate, (not the Local Authority) and only if there are reasons which are considered to be truly exceptional (see over).

It is important for parents / carers to be aware that while decisions will be made on a case by case basis, requests will normally be refused.

We will not agree leave during term time:

- At any time in September. This is very important as your child needs to settle into their new class as quickly as possible.
- During assessment periods in February, May and October. Year 1 pupils will also need to be in school throughout the period set aside each year by the Government for statutory phonics tests;
- When a pupil's attendance already includes any level of unauthorised absence or they have already been granted authorised leave within that academic year;
- Where a pupil's attendance rate (in the last 12 school weeks) is already below 95% for any individual, or if it will fall below that level as a result of taking leave.