



'Our School is a Christian community in which pupils, staff, parents, governors and parishioners are working together, within a safe, healthy and stimulating learning environment, to achieve education of the highest possible quality, in order to prepare pupils to meet the challenge of their futures.

We celebrate the value of each child and set high expectations of them in our endeavours to sustain and develop their gifts and talents.'

Date Adopted	
Signed (Governors)	
Signed (Headteacher)	
Date for review	

Rationale

Regular and punctual attendance is an essential prerequisite to effective learning. At Holy Trinity C of E Primary School, we aim to develop an ethos which demonstrates to children, parents/carers and the wider community how much we value good attendance and punctuality to support every child to learn to the best of their ability and achieve to the highest standard. Our school expected level of attendance over a school year is 96%.

Types of Absence

The parent/carer of a child of compulsory school age is required by law to ensure that the child attends the school at which he/she is registered. Should a parent fail to ensure that his/her child attends that school then the parent is guilty of an offence. When a child of compulsory school age is absent from school, the attendance register must indicate whether the absence is authorised or unauthorised and the appropriate register code will be used.

Authorised Absence

Authorised absence is where the school has either given approval in advance for the child to be absent or where an explanation offered afterwards has been accepted as satisfactory justification for absence.

Absence may generally be authorised for the following reasons:

- Illness where medical evidence has been provided, medical or dental appointments;
- days of religious observance;
- exclusion;
- traveller child travelling for the purposes of parents' employment;
- family bereavement;
- involvement in a public performance;
- 'exceptional' occasions (the nature of such occasions will be determined by school on an individual basis);

Unauthorised Absence

Unauthorised absence is where no explanation has been given for the child's absence or where the explanation offered is considered by the school to be unacceptable.

Absence will **not** be authorised in the following circumstances:

- no explanation is offered by the parent/carer;
- the explanation offered is unsatisfactory (e.g. shopping, minding the house, etc);
- family holidays during term time (unless granted under 'exceptional' circumstances which will then be reviewed by the Headteacher and Governors).

Persistent Absence

Persistent Absence (or PA) is absence of 10% or more. An individual child is deemed to be a persistent absentee, therefore, if his/her attendance is less than 90% (regardless of whether or not the absences have been authorised). All schools are required to submit data pertaining to persistent absentees to the local authority for local and national monitoring.

Approved Educational Activity

Children who are educated off site, dual registered, or who are engaged in supervised educational activities away from school premises, need not be marked as authorised absent, and will be recorded as on an approved educational activity. This means that for statistical purposes such as educational visits, or approved sporting activities can be counted as

statistically 'present'. The nature of the activity must, however, be recorded by use of appropriate code. This is important in order to ensure that an accurate record of those children physically present on site at any given time is instantly available.

Registers and Expectations

We are required by law to call attendance registers twice daily - once at the start of the morning session and again during the afternoon session.

Holy Trinity expects parents/carers to ensure that children are on the school premises by 8.55 a.m. for registration which is taken again at 1:00 p.m. The morning register closes at 9.15 a.m. so pupils arriving between 8.55 a.m. and 9.15 a.m. having missed the registration in class will be marked with an 'L' indicating they are late for school. However, pupils arriving after the register has closed at 9:15 a.m. will be registered with a 'U' showing they are present in school but were late enough to affect their learning. 'U' codes are categorised as an unauthorised absence.

Parents should notify school with the reason(s) for their child's absence by 10:00 a.m. on each day of absence. If the school does not receive any reason for absence after this time, even following a phone call from school, the child will receive an unauthorised absence mark in the register.

Children will be expected to arrive appropriately dressed for school in accordance with information in the school prospectus and to bring appropriate resources and equipment for the day e.g. home learning, PE/Games kit, reading books, packed lunch (if required) and any other personal equipment required for the day.

In considering attendance levels, the register is of paramount importance. Registers are legal documents. Should the parents/carers of a persistent non-attender be prosecuted by the Local Authority under Section 444 of the 1996 Education Act, then the information which the register contains will be the main source of evidence presented to the court. The regulatory requirements placed on schools with regard to the keeping of registers are to be found in the Education (Pupil Registration) Regulations 2006.

Parents/Carers are therefore requested to:

- Make any routine medical appointments out of school hours wherever possible e.g. doctors/dentists/opticians
- Attend meetings regarding attendance with a positive intention to identify problems and work towards solutions for improving attendance.

The School will:

- Keep regular, accurate and informative records of attendance and time keeping.
- Contact parents/carers when a pupil fails to attend and no genuine reason for absence is given.
- Contact parents/carers when a child's level of attendance, punctuality, or reason given for absence is a cause for concern.
- Conduct positive meetings to help overcome difficulties and inspire a commitment to good attendance and punctuality.

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- Work with the Education Welfare Service to promote good attendance and punctuality and request the serving of a Penalty Notice, where necessary.
- Provide a relevant education of high quality.
- Celebrate and reward pupils with 100% attendance for the whole term with no lates.

The data which is extracted from accurate and up-to-date attendance registers will be used to support the more effective management of whole-school attendance matters. Such data can be used to:

- support and underpin the target-setting process (for individual pupils, year groups, identified cohorts, the whole school) in relation to overall attendance and unauthorised absence on a (half-)termly and yearly basis;
- identify individual children and particular groups of children who are or may be at risk of becoming persistent absentees;
- facilitate and encourage early intervention;
- identify particular types or patterns of absenteeism;
- identify possible inconsistencies in the implementation of school policy;
- report attendance matters to parents/carers.

First Day Response

As a vigilant and caring school, we apply first-day response to pupil absence. This means making a determined and sustained effort to respond to unexplained absence on the first morning of absence, usually through a telephone call. Any unexplained absences will be considered as unauthorised.

Punctuality

In addressing punctuality at Holy Trinity we:

- have clear procedures - registers close at 9.15 am
- publicise this policy in School and communicate it to parents/carers;
- balance any sanctions with positive encouragement;
- praise and acknowledge punctuality and improvements in punctuality;
- ensure that teachers set a good example by arriving punctually for registration and for lessons;
- follow up the reasons for lateness and be alert to any emerging patterns or problems.

It is the responsibility of the Headteacher to monitor attendance and punctuality. The Governing Body set attendance targets annually and are kept informed on attendance figures.

Leave of Absence

There is no entitlement in law for any leave of absence from school in term time. Any applications for leave of absence must be made in advance using the 'Leave Request' form and any request can only be authorised where School accepts there are 'exceptional circumstances'. Any parent/carer requesting leave of absence of more than 5 days will be asked to make an appointment to see the Headteacher/Chair of Governors to explain the circumstances. Where parents/carers take children out of school without authorisation, penalty notices will be issued where the trigger of 5 (cumulative) days is met.

Parents/carers risk losing their child's place on the School roll if the pupil does not return to School for 20 consecutive school days or by an agreed date of return and re-admission cannot be guaranteed as defined in legislation. The specific circumstances which outline when a pupil can be removed from roll are laid out in Regulation 8 (1) (f) (i-iii) of the Education (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2006 (amended 2013). Any extended leave should be accompanied by any relevant documents which verify the dates of leave e.g. travel documents, medical/doctors' notes etc.

Leave of absence in term-time will not be authorised:

- during the first term, when a pupil is just starting at School, as it is very important for the child to settle into their new class;
- during an assessment/test period e.g. Key Stage 2 SATs
- when a pupil's attendance record already includes **any** level of unauthorised absence.

Extended Leave of Absence

Where a pupil is absent from school for 10 or more consecutive days the school must inform the Local Authority. Extended leave of absence must be requested and risks the child's school place being revoked and filled by another pupil. The school will take the following steps;

- Request sight of travel and or accommodation tickets.
- Agree a return date.
- Inform parents of loss of place after 20 day absence – pupils will be 'off rolled'.
- Parents are expected to contact school if any circumstances change.
- Parents should sign an agreement acknowledging the risk.

Penalty Notices

With effect from September 2022, Oldham Council agreed to apply the previous protocol of providing a penalty notice for unauthorised term-time absences amounting to 10 sessions or more (each morning and afternoon are counted as separate sessions). This includes taking holidays during term time.

The law gives powers to the Local Authority and other designated bodies to issue Penalty Notices where a parent/ carer is considered able but unwilling to ensure their child's school attendance. Reducing absences from school is a key priority nationally and locally because missing school damages a pupil's attainment levels, disrupts school routines and the learning of others.

Parents/carers commit an offence if a child fails to attend school and those absences are classed as unauthorised. A Penalty Notice is an alternative to prosecution, which does not require an appearance in court unless the fine is unpaid after 28 days.

Full payment of the Penalty Notice means that parents/carers can avoid being prosecuted and convicted. Penalty notices are issued per parent, per child at £120. However, if paid within 21 days the cost is £60. In every case a pupil must have had a minimum of 5 school days / 10 sessions lost to unauthorised absence before a Penalty Notice is considered.

Penalty notices are issued to each parent, for each child. For example, if two children are taken out by two parents for a week's holiday during term time then the initial fine will be £240, rising to £480 after 21 days.

In cases of unauthorised persistent absences (**except** where absences are due to holidays in term time), parents/carers will receive a written warning of the possibility of a Penalty Notice being issued. This will state the extent of the child's absences and give parents/carers 15 days to bring about an improvement. In that time the child should have no unauthorised absences from school.

In cases of unauthorised holidays, Penalty Notices may be issued without a warning where the known unauthorised absence exceeds 10 sessions.

Absence for Religious Observance

The school will authorise one day of absence per religious festival, up to a maximum of 3 days in any one academic year, on the day specifically set aside by the Religious Body of which the parent/carer is a member and this will be marked as 'R' in the register. If parents/carers require an additional day this must be requested in advance and this can only be authorised if it is felt that exceptional circumstances apply (this would be marked in the register as 'C').

Exceptional, Unavoidable and Genuine Reasons For Absence During Term Time Which Might Be Authorised By The Headteacher

(Evidence of any of the conditions below, must be provided. See Appendix 2)

- Genuine illness of the child or incapacity due to injury, to access school safely.
- A bereavement of a close family member.
- Hospital or orthodontic appointments.
- Acute medical appointments.
- One off external examinations.
- One off special tuition events e.g. for members of regional and national teams.
- Transition visits to other schools.

Absence Due To Family Holidays

Absence from school due to family holidays cannot, by law, be authorised by the Headteacher. Parents and carers will receive penalty notices should unauthorised holidays be taken during term time. This includes family weddings, moving house, and parents' leave from work.

If there is an unforeseen, unplanned situation, in which there is no alternative but for a child to be absent during term time for the purpose of a family situation, parents/carers may apply to the Governors for leave of absence for "Exceptional Circumstances", giving evidence of the unique nature of the request. As a general guide, any activity, holiday or event that could be arranged during the 13 weeks of holiday time, must be undertaken during this time.

Request for Leave of Absence during term time for exceptional circumstances, can be made by enquiring at the school office for the relevant form.

Children Missing in Education

The school recognises that children missing education are at risk of underachieving and may be at risk of abuse, neglect or exploitation. We follow the LA guidelines in monitoring such children. If a child is apparently “missing”, we endeavour to find that child as soon as possible, working with partner agencies, including the Police and Social Care if necessary. Our Attendance Officer works closely with families to support good attendance. Where there are serious concerns, we work closely with Education Welfare and other agencies to ensure that children are safely in school. Where a child goes missing, we make every attempt to contact the family by phone, letter and home visits. Children missing for more than 10 days MUST be referred to the LA (or earlier where there are existing safeguarding concerns), who will attempt to trace the family. Children who do not attend for more than 20 days without notification are removed from the register.

Other Exceptional Circumstances

Parents/carers may apply to Governors (through the school office) for leave of absence for some regular and external personal development activities. Any approval of such would be on condition that the child continued each half term, to achieve academically beyond personal Key Stage targets.

Request for Leave of Absence During Term Time, can be made by enquiring at the office for the relevant form.

Unauthorised Absence

In accordance with the Local Authority Attendance Procedures, the school will refer unauthorised absences in excess of 5 days, for a Fixed Penalty Notice.

Appendix 1 – Penalty Notices – Information for Parents/Carers

Appendix 2 – Exceptional Circumstances

Appendix 3 – Leave in Term Time Request Form

Appendix 4 – Example Letter to Parents – Absence request unauthorised

Appendix 5 – Example Letter to Parents - Absence request authorised

Appendix 1 - Penalty Notices - Information for Parents/Carers

What is a Penalty Notice?

Under existing legislation, parents/carers commit an offence if a child fails to attend school regularly and the absences are categorised as unauthorised (the school viewing reasons provided as unacceptable or no explanations received or 'truancy'). Depending on circumstances such cases may result in prosecution under Section 444 of the Education Act 1996.

A Penalty Notice is seen as a simpler sanction to focus parents on their responsibilities and does not require an appearance in Court. Payment of a Penalty Notice enables parents to discharge potential liability for conviction for the period identified.

How are they issued and who are they issued to?

They are issued by post to your home. Each parent/carer issued with a Penalty Notice has to pay a Penalty Fine.

When are they used?

Oldham considers that regular attendance at school is of such importance that Penalty Notices may be used in a range of situations where unauthorised absence occurs:

- overt truancy;
- pupils identified as truanting during a truancy patrol;
- parentally-condoned absences;
- unauthorised holidays and unauthorised extended absences during term-time;
- persistent late arrival at school after the register has closed (which is categorised as an unauthorised absence);
- an emerging pattern of unauthorised absences; and
- pupils on the 'fast-track to attendance' project who have failed to achieve the required improvement in attendance.

Is a warning given?

You will receive a written warning of the possibility of a Notice being issued, which will tell you the extent of your child's absences and give you 15 school days to effect an improvement. There is no limit to the number of formal warnings which can be issued.

Parents may also receive a Penalty Notice without a warning letter for the offence of failing to secure regular school attendance under the following circumstances:

- Their child is stopped on a truancy sweep more than once
- They go on holiday in term time without school's permission
- The child fails to return to school following a fixed term exclusion

Is there an appeal process?

There is no statutory right of appeal once a Notice has been issued, but you can make representation to the address overleaf if you believe the Notice contains factually inaccurate information and been wrongly issued.

What are the costs & how do I pay?

If payment is made within 21 days of receipt of a Notice the fine is £60 per parent per pupil, rising to £120 if paid after 21 days but before 28 days.

Details of payment arrangements will be included on the Penalty Notice. You need to be aware that payment in part or by instalment is not an option with Penalty Notices.

What happens if I don't pay?

You have up to 28 days from receipt to pay the Penalty Notice in full, after which the Authority is required under the Act to commence proceedings in the Magistrates' court for the original offence of poor attendance by your child. If the case is proven at court, this can attract a range of fines up to £2,500 and/or a Custodial Sentence, Parenting Order or Community Sentence depending upon circumstances.

Can I be prosecuted if I pay the Penalty Notice but my child is still missing school?

Not for the period included in the Penalty Notice – payment discharges your liability in this respect. However it may be the case that a prosecution might be considered for further periods of poor attendance not covered by the Notice, depending on the circumstances. If this is an issue, it is vital that you work closely with your child's school and support agencies such as the School Attendance Improvement Service.

Can I get help if my child is not attending regularly?

Yes, the Local Authority and your child's school will give you advice and support if you need help to secure an improvement in your child's attendance.

It is very important that you speak with the school or with the School Attendance Improvement Service at the earliest opportunity if you have any worries at all about securing your child's attendance.

Contact

You can access fact sheets in a number of ways:

Download: <http://www.oldham.gov.uk/learning/school-attendance.htm>

Tel: 0161 770 6620/1

Email: sais@oldham.gov.uk

Write to: Education Attendance Service
Access & Inclusion
Oldham Council
Civic Centre
West Street
Oldham
OL1 1LJ

Call in: to any council office and request them

Appendix 2

Leave of absence in Exceptional Circumstances

Headteachers may only grant leave of absence for exceptional circumstances. The following are examples of agreed exceptional circumstances to guide Headteachers when considering leave of absence requests.

Before deciding whether to authorise leave of absence Headteachers will consider

- The impact on the student's academic progress of any absence.
- The pupil's attendance over the academic year.
- Whether the leave falls within any key stage national tests or exams.

Examples of exceptional circumstances where leave may be granted during term time

- Funeral of parent, grandparent or sibling – Headteachers should use their discretion having heard from parents about travel and funeral arrangements and taking into account the distance to be travelled.
- Sudden loss of housing through eviction or domestic violence – up to a maximum of 3 days.
- Serious illness of a close relative – only if Headteacher is satisfied that the circumstances are truly exceptional.
- Out of school programmes such as music, arts or sport operating at a high standard of achievement and agreed by the LA – as appropriate.
- Time-off relating to Child Entertainment Performances, subject to a license being issued by Education Social Work Service.
- Religious observance – The Education Act 1996 S444(3) (c), states 'on any day exclusively set apart for religious observance by the religious body to which his/her parent belongs'. This would include the Islamic Eid, as well as religious observance days of orthodox Christian, Jewish and other religions. Headteachers may specify that only one day will be authorised at a time.

Examples of circumstances NOT considered as exceptional

- Holidays abroad for the purpose of visiting a sick relative, excepting where that person is seriously ill. Medical evidence may be requested.
- Pilgrimages by parents.
- Holidays taken in term time due to lower cost/parent work commitments.

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Appendix 3 - LEAVE IN TERM TIME REQUEST FORM

Before requesting leave in term time you need to think about :

The lessons your child will miss

The difficulty your child will have in catching up

The effect it will have on your child's friendship groups

The effect it will have on how well your child performs in school

For your information

- Governors have agreed that no leave will be granted during term time unless there are exceptional circumstances (please see back of form),
- All term time holiday/leave requests must be submitted to the Headteacher with the exceptional circumstances fully explained. In order to make the decision whether to authorise leave or not, parents/carers may be asked to provide evidence supporting their circumstances.
- Parents/carers need to be fully aware that Penalty Notices can be issued per parent, per child for unauthorised absences from school or for unauthorised leave taken in term time.

Please complete and return to the School Office at least **TWO WEEKS** before the proposed leave.

Name(s) of child(ren): Class(es)

.....

.....

Date(s) of leave:

Dates of leave already requested this academic year:

Please provide a DETAILED reason why the leave MUST be taken during term time (continue on a separate piece of paper if necessary):

Signed:(Parent/Carer) Print name Date

FOR SCHOOL USE ONLY :

Present attendance record

- Leave not authorised – Penalty notice not to be issued on this occasion
- Leave not authorised – Penalty notice to be issued on this occasion
- Leave authorised

Comments:

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Signed(Headteacher)

Date

Appendix 4 – Example Letter to Parents – Unauthorised Absence



Holy Trinity C of E Dobcross Primary School

Delph New Road, Dobcross, Oldham, OL3 5BP

Tel: 01457 872860

Email: info.dobcross@oldhamlea.org.uk

Website: www.dobcross.oldham.sch.uk

Headteacher: Miss E. A. Travis B.Ed. (Hons), NPQH

<Date>

Dear <Parent/Carer>,

Child(ren's) Name(s):

.....
.....

Start and End Date

Number of School Days

<Absence dates requested>

.....

Further to your application for leave of absence during term time on the above dates, we are unfortunately unable to authorise the absence for the following reason(s):

<reason absence is not authorised>

On this occasion a penalty notice <has/has not been issued>. Please note that future unauthorised absences may result in the School Attendance Improvement Service issuing one.

Regards,

Miss E A Travis
Headteacher

Appendix 5 – Example Letter to Parents – Absence Authorised



Holy Trinity C of E Dobcross Primary School

Delph New Road, Dobcross, Oldham, OL3 5BP

Tel: 01457 872860

Email: info.dobcross@oldhamlea.org.uk

Website: www.dobcross.oldham.sch.uk

Headteacher: Miss E. A. Travis B.Ed. (Hons), NPQH

<Date>

Dear <Parent/Carer>,

Further to your application for leave of absence during term time, we are able to authorise the absence for the following period:

Child(ren's) Name(s):

.....
.....

Start and End Date

Number of School Days

<Absence dates requested>

.....

However, failure to return on the agreed date could result in your child(ren) being removed from roll.

It is essential that parents contact the school if anything delays their child's expected return.

Please note than any future unauthorised absence may result in the School Attendance Improvement Service issuing a Penalty Notice.

Regards,

Miss E A Travis
Headteacher