

Attendance Policy

St Helen Auckland Community

Primary School



Academic Year

2025 - 2026

Author of document:	Lisa Brown	Job role:	Deputy Head/ SENCO/ Attendance Champion
Date document created:	September 2025	Approval by Governing Body:	Mrs H. Airey

Attendance key contact List

Name	Role	Contact details
Janet Elmes	Head Teacher / Senior Attendance Champion	01388 604168 sthelenauckland@durhamlearning.net
Lisa Brown	Deputy Head/ SENCO/ Attendance Champion	01388 604168 sthelenauckland@durhamlearning.net
Mandy Bostock	Office Manager	01388 604168 sthelenauckland@durhamlearning.net
Helen Lyon	Attendance Improvement Team School Link	Helen.Lyon@durham.gov.uk
Heather Airey	Attendance Governor	01388 604168 sthelenauckland@durhamlearning.net

Who in school can help if you are experiencing difficulty / require help and support:

Name	Role / type of help	Contact details
Janet Elmes	Head Teacher / Senior Attendance Champion	01388 604168 sthelenauckland@durhamlearning.net
Lisa Brown	Deputy Head/ SENCO/ Attendance Champion	01388 604168 sthelenauckland@durhamlearning.net
Mandy Bostock	Office Manager	01388 604168 sthelenauckland@durhamlearning.net
Yours child's class teacher.		01388 604168

Help and Support

If concerns arise around attendance, it is important that the school is made aware as early as possible. The sooner we know, the sooner we can work together to provide the right support. Where necessary, this may include involving other services to ensure that pupils and their families receive timely and appropriate help from the most suitable professionals.

Children Missing from Education

If a pupil's whereabouts cannot be established after thorough enquiries, schools are legally permitted to remove them from the admission register (school roll) after 20 consecutive school days of unauthorised absence. To prevent this, it is essential that parents keep the school informed of any changes to contact details or addresses. Failure to do so may place a child's school place at risk. All cases of Children Missing from Education must be reported to the Local Authority, and such situations may be treated as safeguarding concerns.

Our Commitment to Attendance

At St Helen Auckland Community Primary School, we are dedicated to ensuring that every pupil receives an education that enables them to achieve their full potential. We provide a calm, safe, and supportive environment where pupils feel motivated, valued, and ready to learn, within a culture that actively promotes the benefits of good attendance.

Regular attendance is vital for children's well-being, learning, and long-term success. Being in school every day not only ensures that current learning needs are met but also builds the foundation for future progress and achievement. National evidence shows that pupils with the highest attendance achieve the best outcomes at every stage of education.

Improving attendance is a shared responsibility. It requires the commitment of pupils, parents, all school staff, governors, the local authority, and other partners working together to secure positive outcomes for every child.

We recognise that some pupils face greater challenges in attending school. Where this is the case, we are committed to working closely with pupils and families to identify and remove barriers to attendance, building strong, trusting relationships and putting the right support in place.

Good communication between home and school is essential. We ask that parents keep contact details, addresses, and emergency information up to date and inform us promptly of any changes. This ensures that we can contact families in an emergency, keep parents informed, and work together effectively if concerns arise.

To benefit fully from the learning and pastoral opportunities we provide, we expect pupils to attend every session they are able to. Attendance is the foundation for academic progress, personal development, and well-being.

The specific roles and responsibilities of schools, parents, and partners in promoting good attendance are outlined in the statutory guidance *Working Together to Improve School Attendance*.

The School Day

The school day runs from 8:45am to 3:10pm. Pupils are expected to arrive promptly and use the allocated entrances and drop-off points. Staff will supervise arrivals from 8:40am and ensure pupils are ready to start learning calmly and safely.

Registration and Punctuality

- Morning registration takes place at 9:00am. Registers will close no later than 30 minutes after this time.
- Pupils must be present at the start of registration to be marked as present. If they arrive after registration begins but before registers close, they will be marked as late (Code L).
- Pupils arriving after registers close will receive a Code U, recorded as an unauthorised absence unless another code is more appropriate. It is still important that pupils attend school even if they are late.

The DfE makes clear that pupils cannot be recorded as present if they are not in school during registration. Regular lateness is disruptive both to the child and the class. Parents are encouraged to contact Mandy Bostock if there are issues preventing punctual arrival.

All lateness will be recorded, with reasons noted. Where there are repeated instances of lateness after registers close, the school will contact parents to discuss concerns. Continued issues may result in further support or interventions, including access to breakfast club, early morning meet-and-greet, or referral to the local authority if unauthorised absences persist.

Term Dates and INSET Days

Details of term dates and INSET days are published on the school website and shared with parents in advance.

Leave of Absence in Term Time

Headteachers can only grant leave of absence in exceptional circumstances, as set out in *The Education (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2024*. Each request will be considered individually, and applications must be made in advance using the school's request form, completed by the parent the child normally lives with.

The Headteacher will decide the length of time, if any, that a pupil may be absent. Absences not authorised through this process will be recorded as unauthorised. Holidays or absences for leisure will not normally be considered exceptional circumstances.

Day-to-Day Attendance Procedures

- **First day of absence:** Parents must notify the school by telephone or Parent Mail on the first day of absence, giving a clear reason.
- If no contact is received, the school will call home to establish the reason for absence. If necessary, other emergency contacts will be tried, or a home visit may be arranged if welfare concerns arise.
- Absences without explanation will be recorded as unauthorised. Repeated unauthorised absences may lead to formal action.
- Medical or other appointments should, where possible, be arranged outside school hours. If unavoidable, pupils should miss the minimum amount of school and attend before or return afterwards where possible.
- For extended absences (e.g., illness), parents are expected to follow public health guidance and maintain agreed contact with the school.
- Parents should keep the school informed at regular intervals throughout the absence. If a phone call is not received, the school will contact the family or conduct a home visit to verify the absence and ensure the child's welfare.

Absence Authorisation

The Headteacher authorises all absences. A parent's confirmation that a child is ill will usually be accepted, unless there are genuine reasons to doubt the authenticity of the absence. In such cases, medical evidence may be requested to ensure absences are recorded correctly.

Promoting Good Attendance and Punctuality

The school recognises and values the efforts families make to ensure children attend regularly. Good attendance is encouraged through:

- Sharing weekly attendance achievements in the Celebration Assembly.
- Weekly “Top Table” at lunchtime for the class with the highest attendance, with each child receiving a sticker.
- 10 minutes extra playtime for every child who attended school 5 days the previous week.
- Messages home to parents whose children have improved attendance.
- Attendance certificates each term using a traffic light system:
 - Green: 96% and above
 - Yellow: 93–95.9%
 - Orange: 90–92.9%
 - Red: below 90%

Certificates include an explanation of how these percentages translate into days absent.

- 96% attendance prize draw each half term (£20 supermarket voucher).
- Attendance discussions at parents’ meetings.
- Attendance leaflet for parents summarising key points.
- Early Years support to establish good attendance habits.
- Sharing attendance information via newsletters, Facebook, website, and letters home.
- Maintaining accurate registers and following up promptly on absences.
- Supporting pupils to understand the benefits of regular attendance.
- Submitting daily attendance returns to the DfE.
- Building strong, supportive relationships with families.

Using Attendance Data

Attendance and absence data are regularly monitored at school, year group, class, and individual levels to identify patterns and target support. Particular attention is given to vulnerable groups, such as pupils with SEND, pupils eligible for free school meals, children with social workers, and those in care.

This information informs interventions, supports discussions with families, and evaluates the impact of strategies. Attendance concerns and data may also be shared with the local authority and other professionals where appropriate.

Persistent and Severe Absence

- **Persistent absence:** Pupils who miss 10% or more of sessions. The school works with families to understand and address barriers, offering support and involving external services as appropriate.
- **Severe absence:** Pupils who miss 50% or more of sessions. The school adopts a formal, multi-agency approach, working with the local authority and partners through Attendance Support Meetings and targeted interventions.

Legal Interventions

Where there are 10 unauthorised absences in any rolling 10-week period, schools must consider whether to escalate to the local authority for possible legal action. Options may include:

- Penalty Notices (£160, reduced to £80 if paid within 21 days).
- Education Supervision Orders.
- Court prosecution where parents fail to secure attendance.

Repeated or serious cases may result in higher fines or custodial sentences, as set out in the Education Act.

Pupils with Specific Needs

The school is committed to fairness and consistency while recognising that some pupils and families face additional challenges. Attendance procedures are adapted as needed to meet individual requirements, in line with the Equality Act 2010 and the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child.

This policy works alongside safeguarding, behaviour, inclusion, and anti-bullying policies.

The school and all partners will work together to:

EXPECT

Aspire to high aspirations of attendance from all pupils and parents and build a culture where all can, and want to, be in school and ready to learn by prioritising attendance improvement across the school.

MONITOR

Rigorously use attendance data to identify patterns of poor attendance (at individual and cohort level) as soon as possible so all parties can work together to resolve them before they become entrenched.

LISTEN AND UNDERSTAND

When a pattern is spotted, discuss with pupils and parents to listen to understand barriers to attendance and agree how all partners can work together to resolve them.

FACILITATE SUPPORT

Remove barriers in school and help pupils and parents to access the support they need to overcome the barriers outside of school. This might include and early help or whole school family plan where absence is a symptom of wider issues.

FORMALISE SUPPORT

Where absence persists and voluntary support is not working or not being engaged with, partners should work together to explain the consequences clearly and ensure support is also in place to enable families to respond. Depending on the circumstances this may include formalising support through an attendance or education supervision order.

ENFORCE

Where all other avenues have been exhausted and support is not working or not being engaged with, enforce attendance through statutory intervention or prosecution to protect the pupil's right to an education.

Expect

We recognise that attendance and achievement are closely linked. Regular school attendance is essential to maximise pupil progress, enjoyment of learning, and access to the full curriculum.

The school will ensure that:

- All pupils have an equal right and access to an education in line with the national curriculum or agreed alternatives.
- Attendance is a priority across the school.
- High standards of attendance are actively promoted.
- Pupils are not deprived of educational opportunities due to their own or others' absence or lateness.
- Action is taken to secure improvements in attendance where necessary.
- A positive culture exists among staff, pupils, and families regarding the importance of regular attendance.
- Staff monitor attendance and its impact on pupil progress.

What is expected of parents:

- Contact the school on the first day of absence and provide reasons, maintaining communication throughout the absence.
- Ensure children arrive on time and prepared for the school day; provide reasons for lateness.
- Take holidays during school breaks and only request leave of absence in exceptional circumstances.
- Promote the value of education and the importance of regular attendance.
- Engage with their child’s learning and support them at home.
- Work closely with the school to resolve barriers to attendance.

Monitor

Attendance is rigorously monitored at weekly, half-termly, and annual intervals. Data is analysed to identify patterns of poor attendance, whether for individual pupils or specific cohorts. Benchmarking against local and national data allows the school to respond quickly and put appropriate support in place before issues become entrenched.

Listening to and Understanding Barriers to Attendance

When patterns of poor attendance are identified, the school engages with pupils and parents to understand the underlying barriers. Initial discussions may be informal, but if needed, a structured plan will be developed to support improvements in attendance. Attendance is everyone’s responsibility and is led by the Senior Attendance Champion from the school leadership team.

Facilitate Support

The school works proactively to remove barriers to attendance, both within school and through access to wider services. Support strategies include:

- Listening to pupils and parents about reasons for absence or lateness.
- Regular meetings with parents to review and improve attendance.
- Multi-agency meetings, such as Team Around the Family (TAF).
- Reasonable adjustments within school to support attendance.
- Liaising with health professionals, including referrals to the school nurse.
- Referrals to external support services, including One Point.
- Home visits where appropriate.

Janet Elmes (Senior Attendance Champion) and Lisa Brown (SENCO & Attendance Champion) support families in accessing these services. Where persistent or severe absenteeism continues and external support is not effective, the Attendance Improvement Team may be engaged.

Formalise Support

Where absence persists and voluntary support is not effective or engaged with, the school and partners will work with families to explain the consequences clearly and provide targeted support. Depending on circumstances, formalised support may include:

- Parenting contracts
- Education Supervision Orders

Enforce

If all support measures fail and absence persists without engagement, statutory interventions may be taken to protect the pupil’s right to an education. This may include legal action, prosecution, or other measures in line with national guidance.