

Mission Statement

St Hugh's School provides a welcoming, safe and secure environment for all.

Our school aims to be a community which reflects real gospel values of love and forgiveness. A community in which each individual, child or adult, can work in an atmosphere of mutual respect and understanding; so as to broaden their appreciation of the world, its cultures and its people.

Every day ... Growing in God's Love

Introduction:

This is a successful and happy school and your child plays their part in making it so. However, for our children to gain the greatest benefit from their education it is vital that they attend regularly and your child should be at school, on time, every day the school is open unless the reason for the absence is unavoidable.

It is very important therefore that you make sure that your child attends regularly and this Policy sets out how together we will achieve this.

Why Regular Attendance is so important:

Any absence affects the pattern of a child's schooling and regular absence will seriously affect their learning. Any pupil's absence disrupts teaching routines so may affect the learning of others in the same class.

Ensuring your child's regular attendance at school is your legal responsibility and permitting absence from school without a good reason creates an offence in law and may result in prosecution.

Promoting Regular Attendance:

Helping to create a pattern of regular attendance is everybody's responsibility - Parents/Carers, Pupils and all members of school staff.

To help us all to focus on this we will:

- Give you details on attendance in our newsletter
- Report to you at least termly on how your child's attendance and punctuality rate
- Celebrate good attendance by displaying individual and class achievements
- Reward good or improving attendance through class mascots, class rewards, certificates and individual prizes

Understanding types of absence:

Every half-day absence from school has to be classified by the school (not by the parents), as either AUTHORISED or UNAUTHORISED. This is why information about the cause of each absence is always required, preferably in writing.

Authorised absences are mornings or afternoons away from school for reasons such as illness, medical/dental appointments which unavoidably fall in school time, emergencies or other unavoidable cause.

Unauthorised absences are those which the school does not consider reasonable and for which no "leave" has been given. It is this type of absence which can lead to the Authority using sanctions and/or legal proceedings and includes:

- Parents/carers keeping children off school unnecessarily
- truancy before or during the school day
- absences which have never been properly explained
- children who arrive at school too late to get a mark
- shopping, looking after other children or birthdays
- day trips and holidays in term time which have not been agreed.

Whilst any child may be off school because they are ill, sometimes they can be reluctant to attend school. Any problems with regular attendance are best sorted out between the school, the parents and the child. If your child is reluctant to attend, it is better not to cover up their absence or to give in to pressure to excuse them from attending. This gives the impression that attendance does not matter and usually makes things worse.

Persistent Absenteeism (PA)

A pupil is a persistent absentee when they miss 10% or more of their schooling across the school year **for whatever reason**. Absence at this level can impact on a child's educational attainment and progress. We need parent's fullest support to address this.

We will give priority to any pupil either at the PA level **or at risk of reaching it** and parents will be informed of this immediately so that together we can put a plan in place to get that child back into school. All PA cases are also automatically made known to the Education Welfare Officer.

Absence Procedures:

If your child is absent you must:

- Contact the school by 8.30am, on the first day of absence;
- If your child is absent for more than 3 days you must make contact with the school again.

If your child is absent we will:

- Text you on the first day of absence if we have not heard from you;
- If we do not receive a response we will telephone you;
- If we do not receive a response we will make a home visit;
- If your child is absent on a regular basis, we will invite you in to discuss the situation with the Welfare Officer. This matter may then be referred to the Education Welfare Officer

Telephone numbers:

There are times when we need to contact parents about lots of things, including absence, so we need to have your contact numbers at all times. So help us to help you and your child by making sure we always have an up to date number – if we don't then something important may be missed. There will be regular checks on telephone numbers throughout the year.

The Education Welfare Officer:

Parents are expected to contact school at an early stage and to work with the staff in resolving any problems together. This is nearly always successful. If difficulties cannot be sorted out in this way, the school may refer the child to the Education Welfare Officer. He/she will also try to resolve the situation by agreement but, if other ways of trying to improve the child's attendance have failed and unauthorised absences persist, these officers can use sanctions such as Penalty Notices or prosecutions in the Magistrates Court. Full details of the options open to enforce attendance at school are available from the school or the Local Authority.

Alternatively, parents may wish to contact the EWO themselves to ask for help or information. They are independent of the school and will give impartial advice. Their telephone number is available from the school office or by contacting the Local Authority on 0151 233 3916.

Lateness

Poor punctuality is not acceptable. If your child misses the start of the day they can miss work and do not spend time with their class teacher getting vital information and news for the day. Late arriving pupils also disrupt lessons and can be embarrassing for the child. Lateness can also encourage absence.

How we manage lateness:

The school day starts at 8.55am and we expect your child to be in at that time. If they arrive after 8.55am, they will be marked late. Your child can arrive in school from 8.45am.

If your child has a persistent late record you will be asked to meet with the Welfare Officer to resolve the problem, but you can approach us at any time if you are having problems getting your child to school on time.

Leave of absence in Term Time:

Leave of absence in term time will affect your child's schooling as much as any other absence and we expect parents to help us by not taking children away in school time.

There is **no** entitlement in law to time off in school time to go on holiday.

All applications for leave must be made in advance to the Executive Headteacher. In making a decision the school will consider the circumstances of each application individually, including any previous pattern of leave in term time. **Please be aware however that in line with Local Authority and Government guidance, leave of absence in term time will only be considered in the most exceptional of circumstances.**

It is important that you understand the circumstances when leave in term time will **never** be agreed by us:

- When a pupil is just starting the school. This is very important as your child needs to settle into a new environment as quickly as possible.
- Immediately before and during assessment periods (SATS)
- When a pupil's attendance record already includes any level of unauthorised absence
- Where a pupil's attendance rate is already below (90%) or will fall to or below that level as a result of taking holiday leave.

Any period of leave taken without the agreement of the school, or in excess of that agreed, will be classed as unauthorised and may attract sanctions such as a Penalty Notice.

School targets, projects and special initiatives:

The school has targets to improve attendance and your child has an important part to play in meeting these targets.

The minimum level of attendance for this school is **97%** and we will keep you updated regularly about progress to this level and how your child's attendance compares to this level.

Our target is to achieve better than **97%**. We are aiming for this level because that is the attendance needed for pupils to achieve the best from their schooling and we believe we can achieve this and be amongst the best attended schools in the city.

Through the school year we monitor absences and punctuality to show us where improvements need to be made.

Information on any projects or initiatives that will focus on these areas will be sent out to Parents/Carers and we ask for your full support.

Summary:

The school has a legal duty to publish its absence figures to parents and to promote attendance. Equally, parents have a duty to make sure that their children attend. School staff are committed to working with parents as the best way to ensure as high a level of attendance as possible.