



Managing Attendance Guidance for Parents 2024-2025

This guidance provides parents and carers with information about how St Louis responds to school absences and late arrival in school. We work in partnership with the Suffolk County Council School Attendance Team to manage school attendance.

School absence

Regular school attendance is an important part of giving children the best possible start in life. The aim should be to attend 100% of the time. Students who miss school frequently can fall behind with their work and do less well in their learning. The table shows how children's percentage attendance equates to the amount of school time lost. Children with the highest levels of attendance are most likely to report the highest learning progress and attainment.

Attendance	Days of learning lost
95%	9 days
90%	19 days
80%	29 days
75%	48 days
70%	57 days
65%	67 days

Late arrival

It is also important to arrive at school on time. If a child arrives late to school every day, their learning begins to suffer. Below is a graph showing how being late to school every day over a school year adds up to lost learning time over one academic year.



Unauthorised Absence

Please note that unauthorised absence of ten or more sessions (5 or more days) may result in a Fixed Penalty Notice being issued by Suffolk County Council.

Arrival time– Is my child late?

8.40am to 8.50am **Your child is on time and is recorded as present on the school register.**

8.50am to 9am **Your child is recorded as late on the school register.**

After 9am **Your child's absence is recorded as unauthorised on the school register.**

Being around teachers and friends in a school or college environment is the best way for pupils to learn and reach their potential. Time in school also keeps children safe and provides access to extra-curricular opportunities and pastoral care.

What happens if your child does not arrive in school?

We check at 9am to see who is not in school. Our admin team will contact you to check where your child is. If we cannot contact you, we'll contact other relatives and friends that you have told us are on your emergency contact list. If we cannot make contact this way, we'll visit your home to establish that your child is safe. If you have left a message on the school answerphone or sent us an email, we will still call you to speak to you personally, establish the reason for the absence and provide support.

We prioritise calls to home for those children in Years 5 & 6 who have permission to walk to school alone. If we cannot speak to you or your emergency contacts to establish where your child is, we will contact the emergency services to help us to locate your child and ensure that they are safe.

For sickness absence immediately before or after a school holiday, we may make a home visit on the first day of absence to confirm that you are not on holiday or that the child is missing.

Medical appointments

Please try to make these in the school holidays or outside the school day. Where this is not possible, reasonable travel time will be authorised, however, extended time off will not be given and we do expect your child to be in school before and after the appointment. We require evidence of the time of your appointment and its purpose. We do not authorise overseas medical appointments except in exceptional circumstances.

What happens when my child is unwell?

We understand that children become unwell from time to time.

However, we are keen to welcome children into school with minor ailments and are happy to administer GP/ Nurse Practitioner prescribed medication and over the counter remedies including Calpol and other similar products that can be used to treat many conditions including headaches, toothache, earache, teething, sore throats, colds, aches and pains. We ask that GP prescribed medicine is in the bottle dispensed by your pharmacist and for over the counter remedies, please provide it in sealed packets or bottles. We have a fridge in the Office Reception where we keep clearly labelled medication alongside a consent form that we ask you to complete.

Following the advice of the Suffolk Attendance Service, we DO NOT require 48 hours absence following a stomach upset and they can return the following day if they appear well. If your child is prone to asthma and/or allergy related sickness absence, we can make a referral to the School Nurse Service to support you and your child to help them to attend school regularly.

What happens when your child is sick for longer than one day?

On each day that your child is absent you should phone the school; we do need to speak to you in person. On the second or third day, depending upon the reason for the absence, the class teacher will speak to you and your child to offer reassurance, ensure that your child is with you and begin to plan for their return. Where their illness is longer term, we will request medical evidence of their illness and evidence that they have seen a medical practitioner. We will continue to maintain contact in this way throughout their absence. For children with a poor history of attendance, we may call to speak to your child on day 1 of the absence and/or visit as part of our support to keep your child in school.

How can we help if you are struggling to get your child to school?

Our Safeguarding Team is:

- Mrs Blakeley Designated Safeguarding Leader (DSL);
- Mrs White Deputy DSL ;
- Mrs Smith, Mrs Wyatt and Mrs Conway, Alternate DSLs. You can speak to any of them to help you. We may be able to help with pick up and drop off, provide wraparound services, counselling or signpost you to other services that are available. We are always happy to help you work through any difficulties. Of course, you can also speak to the Class Teacher or Admin Team too.

How will we keep you informed about attendance?

Each term we write to all parents and carers to confirm each child's attendance in a letter. As soon as a child's attendance becomes a concern to us, we will request a meeting with you together with one of the Safeguarding Team and the Class Teacher. In the meeting, we will develop a plan to improve attendance going forward. Where attendance fails to improve, we ask for the support of the Suffolk School Attendance Officer to work with you and the school to make changes. This is a supportive act that usually helps to improve attendance. We meet with you regularly over a number of weeks to monitor progress against an agreed Attendance Improvement Plan.

You can view your child's record of attendance at any time using your Arbor login. Please contact the Admin team if you need help logging in.

Who can collect my child at the end of the school day?

We will only return children to named adults on the school records that we hold. We require the collecting adult to approach the member of school staff to allow us to ensure safe handover. Please notify the admin team if there are any changes to the named adults collecting your child. If there is a known safeguarding issue around the collection of your child, please contact the Safeguarding Team immediately. Children in Years 5 & 6 are permitted to walk home once we have obtained a written consent form from their parent or carer. We will not usually permit siblings under the age of 14 years of age to collect a child. We will consider granting consent on a case by case basis with you taking into account the safety of the children involved.

The Our Lady of Walsingham MAT Attendance Policy and Procedure is available in full on the school website: <https://www.stlouisacademy.co.uk/policies>

Government Changes to Fines

From August 2024, the fine for school absences across the country will be £80 if paid within 21 days, or £160 if paid within 28 days.

In the case of repeated fines, if a parent receives a second fine for the same child within any three-year period, this will be charged at the higher rate of £160.

Fines per parent will be capped to two fines within any three-year period. Once this limit has been reached, other action like a parenting order or prosecution will be considered.

If you're prosecuted and attend court because your child hasn't been attending school, you could get a fine of up to £2,500.

Money raised via fines is only used by the local authority to cover the costs of administering the system, and to fund attendance support. Any extra money is returned to the government.

Fines are a last resort, and parents will be offered support to help improve their child's attendance first. The vast majority of fines for unauthorised absence (89%) are issued for term time holidays.

Please note that fines apply to each parent or carer and each child.

Penalty Notice Fines for School Attendance are changing from 19th August 2024

With the introduction of the new National Framework for Penalty Notices issued by DfE, the following changes will come into force for School Penalty Notice Fines issued after 19th August 2024.

National Threshold

There will be a single consistent national threshold for when a penalty notice must be considered by all schools in England of 10 sessions (usually equivalent to 5 school days) of unauthorised absence within a rolling 10 school week period.

These sessions do not have to be consecutive and can be made up of a combination of any type of unauthorised absence.

The 10-school week period can span different terms or school years.

Please note: The DfE does not consider a need or desire for a holiday or other absence for the purpose of leisure and recreation to be an exceptional circumstance.

First Offence

The first time a Penalty Notice is issued for unauthorised absence the amount will be:

£160 per parent, per child paid within 28 days.

Reduced to £80 per parent, per child if paid within 21 days.



Second Offence (within 3 years)

The Second time a Penalty Notice is issued for unauthorised absence the amount will be:

£160 per parent, per child paid within 28 days.



Third Offence and Any Further Offences (within 3 years)

The third time an offence is committed a Penalty Notice will not be issued and the case could be presented straight to the Magistrate's Court. Prosecution can result in Criminal records and fines of up to £2,500

Cases found guilty in Magistrates' Court may show on the parent's future DBS certificate due to 'failure to safeguard a child's education'.

Per Parent*, Per Child

Penalty Notice Fines are issued to each parent*, for each child that was absent.

For example: 3 siblings absent for term time leave, would result in each parent receiving 3 separate fines.

*Parent

Section 576 of the Education Act 1996 defines "parent" as:

- All natural (biological) parents, whether they are married or not.
- Any person who, although not a natural parent, has parental responsibility for a child or young person.
- Any person who, although not a natural parent, has care of a child or young person.