Mission Statement:

Building relationships with God and each other, working hard in faith and hope to give our best in all things.

Core Values: ***Respect, Honesty, Tolerance, Justice, Forgiveness***

Holy Cross Catholic Primary School

Attendance Policy 2025-2026

Senior Lead for Attendance:
Mrs S Power – Headteacher

Attendance Officer:
Mrs L Strange – Office Manager

Approved: ***September 2025***

Approved by: ***Holy Cross Catholic Primary School Governing Committee***

Next review: ***September 2026***

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Holy Cross Catholic Primary School

Attendance Policy

Mission Statement

Holy Cross is a Catholic Primary School. Its religious dimension lies at its heart and is fundamental to its existence. Its ethos is based around Christian values as laid down by the person of Jesus Christ and exemplified in His teaching.

Our Mission Statement expresses this clearly: Holy Cross is a Catholic school which seeks to build a closer partnership with parents, the parish and the wider community.
We work hard to provide an environment which is secure, stimulating and happy and where everyone is appreciated and enabled to give of their best.
We encourage all to have respect for each individual, to be honest, tolerant, just and forgiving and to develop a closer relationship with each other and through this, a closer relationship with God.

We recognise Jean Baptiste Debrabant's vision that: "A Christian based education is a sure hope for the future of religion and society."

Our Rationale

Holy Cross Catholic Primary is a successful school that aims to provide the best available learning opportunities for children living in our local community. For our children to gain the greatest benefit from their time at school, it is vital that they attend regularly and arrive at school, on time, every day that the school is open unless the reason for their absence is unavoidable. Regular attendance at school helps to ensure children get the most out of their school experience, including their attainment, their well-being and wider life chances.

"The law entitles every child of compulsory school age to an efficient, full-time education suitable to their age, aptitude and any special educational needs they may have. Parents have a legal responsibility to make sure their children receive that education either by attendance at a school or by education otherwise than at a school." ***(Section 7, Education Act 1996)***

At Holy Cross Catholic Primary, attendance is an integral part of our ethos. We are committed to working in partnership with our parents and carers to achieve the highest standards of attendance. We aspire to build a culture where every pupil wants to be in school and ready to learn. We know that good attendance starts with productive relationships with parents and pupils and this is our aim.

"Where parents register their child at school, they have an additional legal duty to ensure their child attends that school regularly. This means their child must attend every day that the school is open, except in a small number of allowable circumstances." ***(Working Together to Improve School Attendance 2024)***

The Department of Education (DfE) has produced statutory guidance for maintained schools, academies, independent schools and local authorities. Working together to improve school attendance (applies from 19 August 2024). Our Attendance Policy reflects the key principles of that guidance. It has been developed in consultation with school governors, teachers and the Local Authority. It will be shared widely with parents/carers and is available on our school website and from the school office upon request.

Holy Cross Catholic Primary will work with children, families, the Local Authority and other partners to identify barriers to good attendance and provide additional support to overcome them. In cases where this support fails to improve a child's attendance, it may be necessary for statutory intervention to be implemented.

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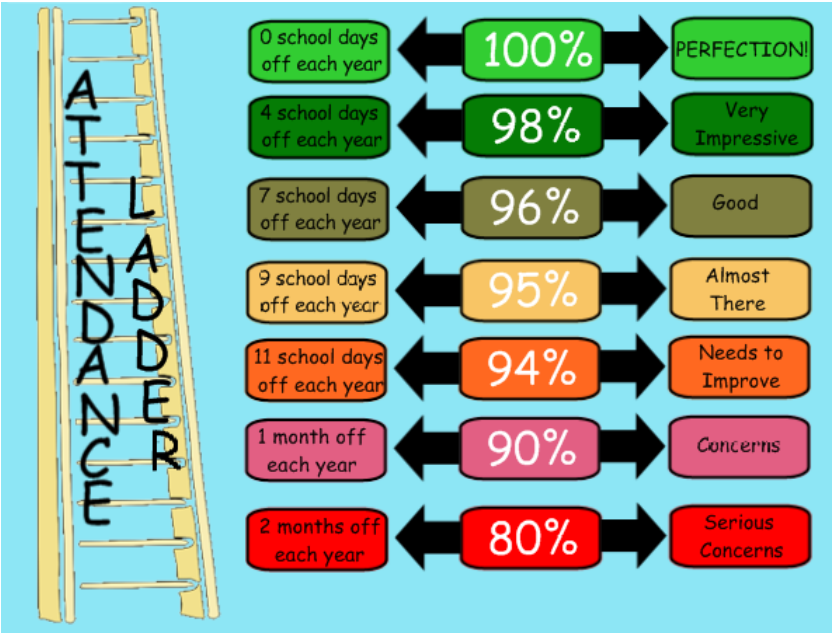
Why regular attendance is so important

Any absence that a child has from school affects them. Both learning and social interactions are impacted upon. Regular absences will have a serious effect on their academic progress and can affect a child's confidence and emotional well-being within school. Attendance is the essential foundation to positive outcomes for all pupils including their safeguarding and welfare.

There are 365 days in a calendar year

There are 190 school days in an academic year

175 days are NOT spent at school, these are for family time



Best chance of success for your child. This is in line with Ofsted and national attendance expectations. Well done!

Less chance of success for your child and harder for them to make progress. This is below Ofsted and national expectations. We will work with you to identify and overcome barriers.

Your child has very poor attendance and has missed significant learning. The Government classes your child as persistently absent.

A few days a week/month can quickly build up. One day off a month equals 2 weeks of missed school each year.

1 or 2 days a week doesn't seem much but …

If your child misses	That equals…	Which is…	And over 13 years of school that's…
1 day a fortnight	20 days per year	4 weeks per year	Nearly 1.5 years
1 day a week	40 days per year	8 weeks per year	Over 2.5 years
2 days a week	80 days per year	16 weeks per year	Over 5 years
3 days a week	120 days per year	24 weeks per year	Nearly 8 years

If you want your child to be successful at school then YES, attendance does matter!

EVERY DAY COUNTS!

Attendance and Safeguarding

All schools, governors and local authorities have a legal responsibility to safeguard the interests of every child (Section 175 of the Education Act 2002). Frequent absence from school and failure to attend school regularly can be an indicator of a risk of harm and it is our duty to consider this a safeguarding matter.

Attendance Procedures

If your child is absent from school, it is vital that the school is told as early as possible.

- Contact us by telephone on 01708 853000 – you will be able to leave a message on our absence line or alternatively speak to a member of our office staff from 8.00am.
- Speak to a member of the office staff in person.
- Send an in-app message through Arbor.
- In cases of medical appointments, please provide us with an appointment card/letter/screenshot of text.

If your child is not in school and we have not heard from you, we have a duty to try and contact you. It is essential that you notify us of your latest contact telephone number, email address or change of address. We will contact you by telephone and send a follow-up email if we have not heard from you.
Failure to give the school an acceptable reason for an absence will result in an ***'unauthorised absence'*** mark. If you leave a message on the absence line or send an in-app message via Arbor, it is essential that you give full details of the reason for your child's absence - 'unwell', 'under the weather' or 'not feeling themselves' will not be classed as acceptable reasons.
For safeguarding reasons, parents are required to provide at least 2 emergency contact numbers to the school to enable us to communicate with someone if we need to. If we are unable to contact a parent/carer, we will contact other persons listed as a contact on our records.
If the parent/carer doesn't contact the school and we cannot contact the parent/carer or other contacts, the school will have to make a home visit and may have to report the child as a 'missing person' to the Police or Social Care. **This is for safeguarding reasons.**
If, after 3 days of absence, we have not been able to make contact, we will seek advice from the Multi-Agency Safeguarding Hub (MASH) and may also report this to the Police as a safeguarding concern.
If your child has a medical appointment, they should only be out of school for the minimum amount of time necessary and should attend school before and after the appointment.
If your child is absent for more than 5 consecutive days, we must be provided with medical evidence (i.e. medical note, medical appointment card, medicine bottle – named and dated).
If your child's attendance is below 90%, we will require medical evidence for all future illnesses. Please note that the burden of proof with regards to provision of medical evidence lies with parents. Therefore, if medical evidence is not provided upon request, the absence will be recorded as 'unauthorised'.
Attendance is monitored on a daily basis and the attendance team meet regularly to monitor every child's attendance. As a result, letters / stage escalation will occur when needed and the threshold met. (Please note that earlier intervention may be applied, depending on case-by-case knowledge.)
Please note: any unauthorised absence due to a holiday or leave of absence may automatically put your child into the 'below 96% attendance' / 'persistent absence' category – the school is obliged to still follow absence procedures even if this is the case.

Stage 1

Attendance drops below 96% - letter to parent/carer informing them of below 96% attendance; opportunity to discuss barriers to attendance with a member of our attendance team.

We are aware that even one or two days off in the first term will impact significantly upon attendance percentage. We aim to work in partnership with parents to discuss any concerns as early as possible.

Any further medical/illness absences will require medical evidence (if not received, attendance will be recorded as 'unauthorised').

Three week monitoring and review period.

Stage 2

2a – No improvement or further drop in attendance - letter to parent/carer with invitation to meet with Attendance Leads to discuss barriers to attendance and support.

CAF (Common Assessment Framework) discussion as way to secure further support.

2b – Further drop in attendance – action plan initiated and meeting held with Attendance Leads.

CAF (Common Assessment Framework) expected as further support.

If parents/carers do not attend meeting or fail to engage, the meeting will still be held and absence recorded on the minutes. Action plan agree and review meeting arranged. Parents/carers to be given a copy of action plan.

Three week monitoring and review period.

Stage 3

No improvement or further drop in attendance – Attendance Lead letter to parents/carers and meeting scheduled. Formal warning of the risk of statutory action and notice to improve given at this meeting.

Six school week monitoring and review period.

If no improvement statutory action to be considered and an application for a penalty notice may be made.

Stage 4

Referral to Local Authority and letter sent with evidence from actions at Stage 1-3 to be submitted for assessment.

School Attendance Support Team (Thurrock Local Authority) – Stage 4

Thurrock School attendance Support Team (SAST) are a team of experienced and highly professional officers providing the highest quality service to families, schools and other agencies in respect of school attendance matters. SAST supports schools and academies in the promotion of positive attendance and provide a service where school attendance levels are a concern in line with the Education Act 1996.

Regular and punctual attendance at school is a legal requirement ***(Section 7 of the Education Act 1996)*** for pupils and is essential if pupils are to maximise the opportunities available to them. It is a parent's responsibility to ensure that their child attends school regularly.

A child is of compulsory school age from the start of the term after their 5th birthday up until the last Friday of June in Year 11.

An offence occurs:

- if a parent fails to ensure a child's attendance at a school at which they are a registered pupil and that absence is not authorised by the school; or

- an excluded child is found in a public place, without reasonable justification, during the first 5 school days of a formal exclusion from school.

Section 576 of the Education Act 1996 defines "parent" as "all natural parents, whether they are married or not; any person who, although not a natural parent, has parental responsibility (as defined in the Children Act 1989) for a child or young person; and any person who, although not a natural parent, has care of a child or young person. Having care of a child means that person with whom the child lives and who looks after a child, irrespective of what their relationship is with that child, is considered to be a parent in education law."

Penalty Notices
Holy Cross Catholic Primary School has adopted Thurrock Council Code of Conduct for issuing Penalty Notices for school absence as part of its Attendance Policy.

Circumstances in which a Penalty Notice may be issued:

Irregular Attendance
Penalty Notices can only be issued in respect of unauthorised attendance, when the following criteria are met:

- At least 10 sessions of unauthorised absence are recorded against the pupil's name within 100 available sessions (one session is a half day).

  Parents must first be issued with a Notice to Improve warning that a Penalty Notice could be issued and allowing them 30 school days to evidence a commitment to improving their child's attendance. The Thurrock Council Code of Conduct for issuing Penalty Notices for school absence is available on Thurrock Council's website:
  Thurrock Council - Code of conduct for issuing Penalty Notices for school absence

Unauthorised Leave of Absence (including term time holidays)
The Education (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2006 were amended in 2013 so that references to family holiday, including references to Headteachers approving up to 10 school days for a term time holiday, and extended leave were removed. The amendments make clear that Headteachers may not grant any leave of absence during term time unless there are exceptional circumstances. Headteachers should determine the number of school days the child may be away from school if the leave is granted.

Penalty Notices can only be issued in respect of unauthorised absence and must meet one of the following criteria:

1. If a Headteacher does not authorise a request from a parent for term time leave of absence and the parent takes the leave.

2. There must be at least 10 sessions of unauthorised term time leave of absence OR a combination of unauthorised term time leave AND unauthorised absence totalling at least 10 sessions within a 10 school week period. These sessions DO NOT need to be consecutive.

3. Where a pupil of compulsory school age who has been excluded from school, either for a fixed period suspension or permanently is found to be present in a public place during school hours in the first 5 days of the exclusion, without reasonable justification.

Penalty Notices are issued per parent per child.

Once a person is issued with a Penalty Notice they must pay a penalty.

Unauthorised Absence	Enforcement	Fee
First episode of unauthorised absence meeting criteria for Penalty Notice within 3 year rolling period.	Penalty Notice issued.	**£160** set by regulation. Reduced to **£80** if paid within 21 days after the date of issue. If paid between 22-28 days **£160** will be due.
Second episode of unauthorised absence meeting criteria for Penalty Notice within 3 year rolling period.	Penalty Notice issued.	**£160** set by regulation to be paid within 28 days. No opportunity to pay a reduced amount.
Further episode of unauthorised absence meeting criteria for Penalty Notice within 3 year rolling period.	Prosecution.	No opportunity to pay a Penalty Notice and prosecution will be considered.
Excluded pupil in public place during first 5 days of exclusion without reasonable justification.	Penalty Notice issued – there is no limit to the number that can be issued.	**£60** if paid within 21 days. **£120** if paid between 22-28 days.

Leave of Absence Requests

Parents must apply for leave of absence in writing or by email in advance of taking it. All applications need to be made at least 4 weeks before the period of absence and before personal and travel arrangements are made.

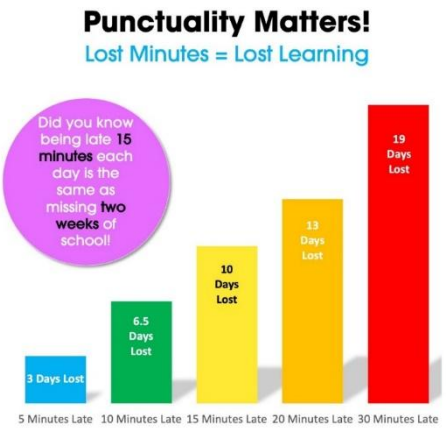
If a leave of absence request is not authorised and the holiday taken, the Absence Procedure will be followed as necessary. This can cause parents upset, but it is important that parents are kept updated on their child's attendance and how absence due to holidays contributes to poor attendance. For more information, please refer to the DfE Guidance:
School attendance and absence: Overview - GOV.UK

Staff will not set extra work for children to do during their absence or on their return.

- **Please note that medical evidence will be required if a child is absence due to illness prior to, or immediately after, a holiday.**

Punctuality

Poor punctuality is not acceptable. If your child misses the start of the day, it can have a detrimental effect on their progress as they find it hard to settle and they will inevitably miss vital introductions to lessons. It also disturbs the class routines, which has a negative effect on other children's learning.



The school gates open at 8.30am and children must be in class for registration by 8.45am. Class registers close promptly at 8.50am. If a child arrives at school after 8.50am, they will need to come to the School Office to be registered.

The school day ends at 3.15pm. All children should be collected from their external classroom doors. Unless there are exception circumstances, we are unable to release children any earlier without prior authorisation.

If a child is up to 30 minutes late, they are marked in the electronic register as 'late' (L). Pupils arriving more than 30 minutes after the close of registration will be regarded as absent from the morning or afternoon session and will be given an 'unauthorised absence' (U) mark. This will have an impact on a child's attendance record.

If a child has an appointment scheduled during the school day, we will expect the parent/carer to send their child into school and collect them nearer to the appointment time. Where practical, they should return to school immediately following their appointment. Ideally, where possible, appointments should be made for a child outside of the school day. We will contact parents to discuss reasons for lateness.

Stage 1 - 5 late marks within a term:

A letter will be sent home if your child is late on more than 5 occasions within a term and lateness will continue to be monitored from that point.

Stage 2 – 10 late marks within a term:

Further lateness will result in a 'persistently late' letter and a telephone call/meeting with the learning mentor to discuss lateness.

Stage 3 - 15 late marks within a term:

Further lateness will result in a 'persistently late stage 3' letter and a meeting with a member of the Senior Leadership team and Designated Governor.

If you are having problems getting your child to school on time, please let us know so that we can support you and help resolve the problem. This could prevent the lateness escalation policy being applied – this will be reviewed on a case-by-case basis.

Lateness when collecting children
It is essential that you let us know if you are going to be late to collect your child after school or at the end of an extra-curricular club. We are unable to provide informal child care at the end of the school day.

We do provide After School Club provision that is bookable through Arbor.

If your child is regularly collected late, they will be placed in our After School Club provision and you will be charged for the session.

Understanding types of absence
An electronic register is taken in the school every morning and afternoon (each classed as a 'session') and every half-day absence from school has to be classified by the school (not by the parent) as either ***'authorised'*** or ***'unauthorised'*** when added onto the system. This is why information about the cause of any absence is always required by the school. You can see a breakdown of the Register Codes on your child's End of Year Report which is sent annually in July.

We will analyse attendance data to ensure we identify any patterns in absence and use this information to make informed decisions when offering support and issuing actions.

Authorised absences are sessions away from the school for a valid reason such as illness, medical/dental appointments (which unavoidably fall in school time), religious observations, emergencies or other unavoidable situations. The NHS provides guidance: Is my child too ill for school? - NHS

Children do need to be kept off school if they are too ill to attend; however, if they are simply 'not feeling right' or are just tired, then this will not be authorised. It is also important that a child returns to school as soon as possible after feeling unwell; for example, it is not acceptable not to send a child back to school on Friday simply because they have been unwell Monday-Thursday. *(See Appendix 1 for further information.)*

- It is imperative that parents are honest with the school about all absences – asking pupils to tell an untruth is not acceptable and is damaging to the pupil, giving them the wrong moral message, as well as to the relationship between school and home.

- The school retains the right to convent an 'authorised' absence to 'unauthorised' should it become clear that a parent has not been truthful about an absence, e.g. where a parent has said that a child is 'sick' and it later becomes clear that a holiday/long weekend was taken.

Unauthorised absences are sessions away from school which the school deems unreasonable.
Unauthorised absences include:

- Extended periods of absence linked to unavoidable situations.
- parents/carers keeping children off school unnecessarily/without good reason
- truancy before or during the school day
- absences which have not been properly explained
- children who arrive at school too late to get a mark (children who arrive 30 minutes after registration closes will be given a 'U' mark)
- shopping, looking after other children or birthdays
- day trips and holidays in term time.

As a school, we reference Guidance on infection control in schools and other childcare settings from Public Health England to manage absences and determine authorisation.

Persistent Absence (PA)

A pupil is classed as a 'persistent absentee' when they miss 10% or more of schooling across the school year for any reason, both authorised and unauthorised absences. Please refer to the escalation policy on page 4.

At the end of the academic year, anything over 19 days of absence will result in your child being recorded as a persistent absentee. PA children are tracked and monitored carefully in terms of both attendance and academic progress. In cases where attendance remains of concern, any attendance intervention will be carried over to the new academic year.

We know that any absence during the first term can impact significantly upon attendance percentage and we work closely with our families.

Attendance Incentives

Termly Rewards: The class with the best attendance at the end of term in each key stage will receive a class certificate and participate in a fun activity afternoon/receive a prize.

Children with 98% or more attendance at the end of each term will receive a certificate.

Children with 100% attendance at the end of each term will receive a certificate and an attendance achievement badge.

- 1 term of 100% attendance = bronze attendance achievement badge;
- 2 terms of 100% attendance within the same academic year = silver attendance achievement badge;
- 3 terms of 100% attendance within the same academic year = gold attendance achievement badge.

End of Year Rewards

Children with 98% or more attendance at the end of the academic year will receive a certificate and an attendance achievement pencil.

Children with 100% attendance at the end of the academic year will receive a certificate and a gold attendance achievement badge. They will also have the opportunity to win a special prize in the attendance raffle which will be drawn during the Celebration Assembly for each key stage.

Children with 100% attendance in more than one year will receive a certificate and a book voucher.

Individual pupil incentive schemes are used for pupils with low attendance, This is done sensitively to encourage and reward pupils for achieving their personal attendance target.

Responsibility for Attendance Matters at Holy Cross

To enable the Attendance Policy to be successful at Holy Cross, all staff take responsibility to prioritise attendance and communicate this to our pupils and parents. Parents/carers need to support these views at home to ensure that children are receiving corresponding messages about the value of education.

In addition to this, the following staff have specific attendance related responsibilities:

Class Teacher – to complete the electronic register accurately and punctually twice daily; to be alert to early signs of issues which may result in non-attendance; to inform the Attendance Officer of any attendance concerns. The class teacher may also make phone calls/arrange meetings with parents/carers in order for attendance to be challenged at a very early stage. The class teacher will discuss attendance concerns at Parents' Evening meetings which take place twice a year (November and March) and will pass on any evidence to the Attendance Office that the pupil may be taking an unauthorised absence – for example, if another pupil in the class mentions that 'he/she is on holiday' or the pupil themselves says 'I am going on holiday'. This information will be logged on Arbor and it is highly likely that any absence initially recorded as 'authorised' will become 'unauthorised' and may result in a penalty notice.

Admin Assistant – to ensure children who are absent or late are added to Arbor (including reasons for absence/lateness); to ensure first day absence calls are made if the school has not received notification of a child's absence – it is the parent's responsibility to contact the school with notification and reason for a child's absence; to alert the Attendance Officer if unable to make contact as a home visit may be necessary.

Attendance Officer – to oversee the registration/punctuality process and liaise with class teachers and admin assistant over attendance concerns and/or frequent lateness and to closely monitor all identified children; to liaise with the Headteacher to promote good attendance with school assemblies, achievement certificates and rewards; to consult and liaise with the School Attendance Support Team and refer persistently absent children to them. Particular focus will be on monitoring the attendance of pupils eligible for Pupil Premium as it has been identified that this specific group of pupils have lower attendance than non-Pupil Premium children. This negativity can affect their academic progress and results may therefore be lower.

Headteacher/Senior Leadership Team/Governors – to ensure all attendance procedures are carried out in accordance with the Attendance Policy and to work with the Attendance Officer to raise the profile of attendance within the school, dealing with any attendance issues that may arise; to authorise Stage 4 of the escalation process (Local Authority Penalty Notice).

Additional Support

Where children have been absent from school for some time as a result of a specific need, we will work closely with parents to support their return to school. We will work with families and other agencies to ensure regular attendance for every pupil. At Holy Cross we use the guidance in Working Together to Improve School Attendance to:

- Understand the individual needs of the pupil and family;
- Work in partnership with the pupil and family to put school support in place and to work with the Local Authority and other agencies where external support is required;
- Regularly review and update the support approach to make sure it continues to meet individual needs.

Summary

Children are ill from time to time, but individual pupil academic attainment/progress suffers if school is missed on a regular basis. Holy Cross has a responsibility to discourage parents from removing their children from education for any reason as absences may have a negative impact on a pupil's educational attainment and progress.

Holy Cross has a legal duty to publish its absence figures to parents and to promote attendance; equally parents have a duty to ensure that their children regularly attend school.

All staff within the school are committed to working with both parents and pupils to ensure that attendance within the school is as high as possible to ensure that children receive the best education they can to improve their life opportunities.

Appendix 1

Sickness and Absence Guidance for Parents

When a child is unwell, it can be hard deciding whether to keep them off school for parents. These simple guidelines taken from the NHS website should help.

https://www.nhs.uk/Live-well/is-my-child-too-ill-for-school/

Not every illness needs a child to stay away from school. If a child is kept away from school, parents must inform the school on the first day of their absence.

Common sense needs to be used when deciding whether or not a child is too ill to attend school. Parents need to ask themselves the following questions.

- Is my child well enough to do the activities of the school day? If not, keep your child at home.
- Does my child have a condition that could be passed on to other children or school staff? If so, keep your child at home.
- Would I take a day off work if I had this condition? If so, keep your child at home.

Common Conditions

If a child is ill, it's likely to be due to one of a few minor health conditions. (see below)

- **Cough and Cold**
  A child with a minor cough or cold may attend school. If the cold is accompanied by a raised temperature, shivers or drowsiness, the child should stay off school, visit the GP and return to school 24 hours after they start to feel better. If a child has a more severe and long-lasting cough, they should go to a GP. They can give guidance on whether your child should stay off school.

- **Raised Temperature**
  If a child has a raised temperature, they shouldn't attend school. They can return 24 hours after they start to feel better.

- **Rash**
  Skin rashes can be the first sign of many infectious illnesses, such as chickenpox and measles. Children with these conditions shouldn't attend school. If a child has a rash, check with a GP or practice nurse before sending them to school.

- **Headache**
  A child with a minor headache doesn't usually need to be kept off school. If the headache is more severe or is accompanied by other symptoms, such as raised temperature or drowsiness, then the child should be kept off school and a GP consulted.

- **Vomiting and Diarrhoea**
  Children with diarrhoea and/or vomiting must be kept off school until at 24-48 hours after their symptoms have gone. Most cases of diarrhoea and vomiting in children get better without treatment, but if symptoms persist, consult a GP.

- **Sore Throat**
  A sore throat alone doesn't have to keep a child from school. But if it's accompanied by a raised temperature, your child should stay at home.

- **Chickenpox**
  If a child has chickenpox, they must be kept off school until all their spots have crusted over.