

**ST. MARY'S CATHOLIC PRIMARY SCHOOL,  
STUDLEY**



**Attendance & Punctuality Policy**

**Headteacher**

O. Finnegan

**Chair of Governors**

S. Coyne



# Policy on Attendance

## 1 Introduction

- 1.1 We expect all children on roll to attend every day, when the school is in session, as long as they are fit and healthy enough to do so. We do all we can to encourage the children to attend, and to put in place appropriate procedures. We believe that the most important factor in promoting good attendance is development of positive attitudes towards school. To this end, we strive to make our school a happy and rewarding experience for all children. We will also make the best provision we can for those children who, for whatever reason, are prevented from coming to school.
- 1.2 Under the Education (Pupil Registration) Regulations 1995, the governing body are responsible for making sure the school keeps an attendance register that records which pupils are present at the start of both the morning and the afternoon sessions of the school day. This register will also indicate whether an absence was authorised or unauthorised.

## 2 Definitions

### 2.1 Authorised absence

- An absence is classified as authorised when a child has been away from school for a legitimate reason and the school has received notification from a parent or guardian. For example, if a child has been unwell, the parent writes a note or telephones the school to explain the absence.
- Only the school can make an absence authorised. Parents and carers do not have this authority. Consequently, not all absences supported by parents and carers will be classified as authorised. For example, if a parent takes a child out of school to go shopping during school hours, this will not mean it is an authorised absence.

### 2.2 Unauthorised absence

- An absence is classified as unauthorised when a child is away from school without the permission of both the school and a parent.
- Therefore, the absence is unauthorised if a child is away from school without good reason, even with the support of a parent.

### 2.3 Head teachers may now only grant leave in term time where the circumstances are exceptional, for example:

- death of parent/carer or sibling of the pupil
  - life threatening or critical illness of parent or sibling of the pupil
  - parent/carer recuperation and convalescence from critical illness or surgery
- Family emergencies need careful consideration. It is not always in the best interest of the child, nor appropriate for them to miss school for family emergencies that are being dealt with by adult family members. Being at school, friendships and support from staff can provide children with stability and care during difficult times. The routine of school can provide a safe and familiar background during times of uncertainty.

If you have exceptional circumstances, which have lead you to request leave in term time for your child/ren, please complete the required form, which you can obtain from the school office. The Head Teacher will then make a decision, on whether or not the leave can be lawfully authorised and will do so only if there is a genuine, exceptional and urgent reason for a child to be absent during term time.

### Penalty Notices

If a child is taken out of school without the Head Teacher's authorisation, it will be recorded as unauthorised absence. This may lead to the issuing of a penalty notice and legal action being taken.

### Section 23(1) Anti-Social Behaviour Act 2007:

Penalty notices may be issued to the parent of pupils who have unauthorised absence from school. The amount of the penalty is £60.

- If this is not paid within 21 days the amount rises to £120.
  - If not paid within 28 days the Local Authority will prosecute under section 444(1) unless it comes to our attention that the penalty notice had been issued in error.
- Section 444(1) Education Act 1996:

“If you are the parent of a child of compulsory school age who fails to attend school regularly, you are guilty of an offence.”

The court can fine each parent up to £1,000 per child, order payment of the prosecution costs and/or make a Parenting Order.

Please note that:

- Penalties and prosecutions are in respect of each parent for each child.
- Parent' includes any person who is not a parent of the child but who has parental responsibility for the child (and applies whether or not that person lives with the child) or who has care of him/her.

These prosecutions are criminal proceedings and could result in you having a criminal record.

### **3 If a child is absent**

- 3.1 When a child is absent unexpectedly, the class teacher will record the absence in the register.
- 3.2 When the child returns to school, a note should be brought from a parent or guardian to explain the absence.
- 3.3 A note may be sent to the school prior to the day of absence, e.g. if a child has a medical appointment.
- 3.4 If there is any doubt about the whereabouts of a child, the class teacher should take immediate action by notifying the school office. The school will then be in contact straight away with the parent or guardian, in order to check on the safety of the child.

#### 4 Authorised and Unauthorised Absences

1. The DfE recognises the importance of regular attendance and it is a statutory requirement for the Headteacher to decide with every absence whether it is authorised or unauthorised.
2. Wherever possible parents are expected to make routine appointments (e.g. medical, dental) outside of school time.
3. If a child is absent from school for any reason the parent must inform the school in person, in writing or by telephone as soon as possible. For the majority of parents the normal routine is to telephone the school on the first morning of absence. Such calls are always logged and the class teacher informed.
4. Unauthorised absences are those absences for which the school received no reason/explanation or if the school has good reason to doubt the explanation given.

#### 5 Leave of Absence in Term Time

1. The Government issued new regulations in September 2013 regarding Leave of Absence; The Education (Pupil Regulations) (England) Regulations 2006 as amended by Education (Pupil Regulations) (England) (Amendment) Regulations 2013.
2. The Headteacher shall not grant any Leave of Absence during term time unless they consider there are exceptional circumstances relating to the application.
3. Parents do not have any entitlement to take their children on holiday during term time. Any application for leave must establish that there are exceptional circumstances and the Headteacher must be satisfied that the circumstances warrant the granting of leave.
4. The Headteacher will determine how many school days a child may be absent from school if the leave is granted.
5. St Mary's Catholic Primary School understands that holidays are generally less expensive during term time but this does NOT count as an exceptional circumstance. Leave for example, which is taken for the following reasons will not be authorised:
  - Availability of cheaper holidays
  - Availability of desired accommodation
  - Poor weather experienced in school holidays
  - Overlap with beginning or end of term
  - Booked the wrong dates by mistake
  - Booked by another family member
  - The school can only consider applications for Leave of Absence which are made by the resident parent.
  - Attending a wedding that is not immediate family
  - Family birthdays
6. Applications for Leave of Absence must be made in advance on the official form with additional information as necessary. Failure to do so will result in the absence being unauthorised which may result in legal action against the parent, by Fixed Penalty Notice.
7. Failure to make an application for leave in advance can also result in a Fixed Penalty Notice being issued to the parent(s).
8. **It is important to note**, Fixed Penalty Notices are issued to each parent of each absent child, (for example 2 children and 2 parents, means each parent will receive 2 invoices

in the amount of £120 each, totalling £240 for both children, this is reduced to £60 per child if paid within 21 days).

9. Where a Fixed Penalty Notice is not paid within the required timeframe as set out on the notice, the matter will be referred to Warwickshire County Council's Legal Services to consider instigating criminal proceedings under S444 Education Act 1996.
10. Fixed Penalty Notices are issued in accordance with Warwickshire County Council's Code of Conduct for Penalty Notices.
11. Each application for a Leave of Absence will be considered on a case by case basis and on its own merits.
12. Why attendance matters:
  - Less than 5 days absence = 98%+ attendance
  - 14 days absence (approx.) = 93.5% attendance
  - 20 days absence (approx.) = 90% attendance
  - 30 days absence (approx.) = 88% attendance
  - If a child achieves 80% attendance this means that they have missed approximately 40 days of education over the academic year, averaging 1 day per week.

## **6 Long-term absence and Persistent Absence**

- 6.1 When children have an illness that means they will be away from school for over five days, the school will do all it can to send material home, so that they can keep up with their school work.
- 6.2 If the absence is likely to continue for an extended period, or be a repetitive absence, the school will contact the support services, so that arrangements can be made for the child to be given some tuition outside school.

### Persistent absence

The Department for Education's (DfE's) guidance on the 2016/17 explains that from September 2015, the persistent absence threshold is 10%. The previous threshold was 15%.

The guidance explains that pupils are now classed as persistently absent based upon their individual absence level rather than a comparison to a national threshold.

The calculation for persistent absence is represented as:

$$\frac{\text{A pupil's individual overall absence}}{\text{A pupil's individual possible sessions}} \times 100 \geq 10.0$$

#### *Worked example*

Pupil A's total number of possible sessions is 380. Over the course of the year, he/she misses 38 of these sessions.

$$(38 \div 380) \times 100 = 10$$

The DfE guidance explains that if a pupil's individual overall absence rate is greater than or equal to 10%, he/she will be classified as a persistent absentee.

## **7 Repeated unauthorised absences**

- 7.1 The school will contact the parent or guardian of any child who has an unauthorised absence. If a child has a repeated number of unauthorised absences, the parents or guardians will be asked to visit the school and discuss the problem. If the situation does not improve, the school will then contact the LA support services, who will visit the home and seek to ensure that the parents or guardians understand the seriousness of the situation.
- 7.2 The governors, supported by the LA, reserve the right to consider taking legal action against any parents or guardians who repeatedly fail to accept their responsibility for sending their children to school on a regular basis. (see 2.3)

## **8 Monitoring and Review Roles & Responsibilities**

- 8.1 It is the responsibility of the governors to monitor overall attendance, and they will request an annual report from the headteacher. The governing body also has the responsibility for this policy, and for seeing that it is carried out. The governors will therefore examine closely the information provided to them, and seek to ensure that our attendance figures are as high as they should be.
- 8.2 The school will keep accurate attendance records on file for a minimum period of three years.
- 8.3 The rates of attendance will be reported in the school prospectus, and in the annual governors' report.
- 8.4 All members of school staff have a responsibility for identifying trends in attendance and punctuality. The following includes a more specific list of the kinds of responsibilities which individuals might have.

### ***Class teacher***

Class teachers are responsible for:

- Keeping an overview of class and individual attendance looking particularly for either poor overall attendance, anomalies in patterns of attendance and/ or unusual explanations for attendance offered by children and their parents/ carers
- Informing the Heads where there are concerns and acting upon them
- Providing background information to support referrals
- Monitoring follow-up once actions have been taken to correct attendance concerns
- Emphasising with their class the importance of good attendance and promptness
- Following up absences with immediate requests for explanation which should be noted inside the register
- Discussing attendance issues at consultation evenings where necessary

### ***Headteacher***

- The Headteacher is responsible for:
- Overall monitoring of school attendance
- Trends in authorised and unauthorised absence
- Contacting families where concerns are raised about absence including arranging meetings to discuss attendance issues
- Monitoring individual attendance where concerns have been raised
- Making referrals to the ACE service
- Providing reports and background information to inform discussion with other professionals
- Liaising with other professionals to determine potential sources of difficulties and reasons for absence.

### **Administration staff**

- Staff in the School Office are responsible for:
- Collating and recording registration and attendance information.
- Taking and recording messages from parents regarding absence
- Ensuring the Absence/Late Book is completed
- Contacting parents of absent children where no contact has been made.
- Recording details of children who arrive late or go home
- Keeping an overview of class and individual attendance looking particularly for either poor overall attendance, anomalies in patterns of attendance and/ or unusual explanations for attendance offered by children and their parents/ carers and reporting concerns to the Headteacher
- Sending out standard letters regarding attendance

### **Parents**

Parents/Carers are responsible for:

- Ensuring that their child attends school regularly and punctually unless prevented from doing so by illness or attendance at a medical appointment.
- Contacting the school office on the first morning of absence.
- Informing the school in advance of any medical appointments in school time. For the absence to be recorded as a medical absence we do require evidence from the doctor or dentist. (Appointment card/letter)
- Making requests for authorised absence in term time, only if absolutely necessary as these are not automatically authorised.
- Talking to the school as soon as possible about any child's reluctance to come to school so that problems can be quickly identified and dealt with.

Returns of school data are made annually to the DfE and benchmark data exists to compare our school within local and national contexts.

The school sets attendance targets each year. These are agreed by the Senior Leadership Team and Governors at the first Full Board meeting of the school year. Targets are challenging yet realistic, and based on attendance figures achieved in previous years.

8.5 This policy will be reviewed by the governing body every two years, or earlier if considered necessary.

## **9 Punctuality**

1. All doors in the main school open at 8.45 am and close at 9.00 am. After these times children are directed through the main reception entrance as they are late. Names of children are noted in the 'Lateness Book'. The 'Lateness Book' is monitored regularly by the Head. Where there are concerns about punctuality, the school will make verbal contact with parents/carers. If the concerns persist, the Headteacher will write to the parents/carers. If there is no improvement, the school will arrange a meeting with the parent/carer. In the event of persistent lateness, the school will make a formal referral to ACE.
2. For recording purposes, 9.00 – 9.15 (L) = Late. After 9.15 children will be classed as late after register closed = (U).

## **10 Truancy**

If truancy is suspected, the Headteacher is notified, who then contacts the parent and the ACE. Parents are encouraged to bring their child to school so that reasons for the child not wanting to attend can be discussed and hopefully resolved. In the event of not being able to talk to the parent then the Headteacher talks to the child concerned to find out if there are any worries or problems in school that might make that child not want to attend, if there are, then these are discussed with the class teacher and appropriate action taken.

## **11 Role of ACE**

- 11.1 On those occasions when a pattern of poor attendance or lateness is developing the Headteacher will work directly with the family to seek solutions. Should the problem drop below 85% then a referral to the Attendance Compliance and Enforcement department (ACE) will follow. The function of ACE at this stage is the Compliance / Enforcement part of the service which delivers the Local Authorities statutory response where attendance has fallen below 85%.

## **12 Reward to Encourage Regular Attendance and Punctuality**

100% attendance stickers are given out termly. Children are encouraged to ask their parents if dentist/non-urgent medical visits can be done outside school hours in order to gain 100% attendance.

- The school attendance is announced each month on the newsletter.
- The class with the highest attendance is also announced each month.
- The classes with the highest attendance each year are allowed to wear their own clothes during the last week of term as a reward.
- Class with the highest attendance for the year is given a cup.
- House points may be gained for good attendance and punctuality.
- Teachers praise children for regular attendance and punctuality during registration as frequently as possible.
- A positive comment accompanies an above average attendance rate on the annual school report.

- 12.1 It is our belief that good attendance and punctuality is at the heart of a child's progress and is, therefore, fundamental to our school's success.

- 12.2 St Mary's Catholic Primary School greatly appreciates parental support to reduce the total amount of days lost due to holidays. The Headteacher is committed to working in partnership with parents to enable all children to reach their academic targets and to support their social development and for this to happen individual attendance needs to be as high as possible and we all need to play our part.

This attendance policy may be viewed upon request and on the website.