



OUR LADY & ST HUBERT'S CATHOLIC PRIMARY SCHOOL

ATTENDANCE POLICY

October 2019

ATTENDANCE POLICY AND GUIDELINES

1. Rationale

Regular school attendance for all children is important to ensure continuity and progression in their education. It is a school's responsibility to monitor and actively pursue the goal of regular attendance. The school should use strategies to promote full attendance, with 90% being a minimum expectation for pupils and a total of 95% or above the norm.

At Our Lady & St Hubert's Catholic Primary School we expect all our pupils to want to come to school. They should want to come because they will find a welcoming environment which is bright and stimulating, the curriculum is relevant and interesting, good behaviour is praised and everyone feels valued and secure.

The school has a duty to make our children's time at school interesting and worthwhile. Parents have a duty to make sure that their children attend. The school is committed to working with parents as the best way to ensure a high level of attendance in line with our Mission Statement:

At Our Lady & St. Hubert's, home, school and parish work together as we grow and learn, knowing that God is with us in all we do.

The school has a legal duty to publish its absence figures to parents and to promote attendance. Parents will receive information in their child's report detailing their attendance record. Good attendance is rewarded by verbal praise and recognition during the year and by individual certificates which are presented in front of the whole school as well as prizes termly for those achieving 100% attendance. The suggestions of parents and children about how to encourage attendance are especially welcome.

2. Parents

Your child should come to school every day

Absences from school are classed as authorised or unauthorised.

Authorised absence are mornings or afternoons away from school for a good reason e.g. illness or other unavoidable causes.

Unauthorised absences are those which the school does not consider reasonable and for which no "leave" has been given. This includes keeping children off school for trivial reasons, term time holidays other than in exceptional and unavoidable circumstances, absences which have never been properly

explained and children who arrive at school after 9am.. Providing a note may not be sufficient if the reason given is not “unavoidable”.

- Amendments to the Education Regulations mean that from 1st September 2013 Head Teachers **may not authorise any leave of absence during term time unless there are exceptional circumstances**. Exceptional circumstances **do not include** family holidays, visiting relatives or friends, spectating at sporting or other events, cheaper holidays, looking after unwell family members, baby sitting younger family members, birthdays or shopping, parental work circumstances, parental access arrangements, treats, schools having holidays at different times etc.
- If you choose to take your child out of school during term time without leave of absence being granted then it will be recorded as an **unauthorised** absence on the school register.
- If you consider that a request for leave of absence during term time is for ‘exceptional circumstances’ then a written request should be made in advance of the date requested to the Head Teacher on a form available from the school office, stating the exceptional circumstances.
- Parents who fail to ensure their child’s regular attendance can be fined £60 (per parent, per child). If the payment is not made within 21 days this increases to £120. The definition of “regular attendance” and the penalties open to schools for failing to ensure regular attendance were clarified by a Supreme Court judgement in May 2017 (see Appendix 1).
- **As part of school policy we will make a referral to the Attendance & Prosecution Service for pupils who take unauthorised leave of ten days or more over a school year and/or who have 10 unauthorised absence sessions (1 session = ½ day) in a four week period.** Arrival after the register closes is classed as an unauthorised absence. Such a referral may lead to a Penalty Notice being issued.
- Children’s absence due to illness where it leads to them missing days before or after a school holiday will also be classed as unauthorised unless a parent is able to provide medical proof of illness e.g. a prescription, stamped and dated surgery appointment card as we have several children who are frequently “ill” on these days according to parents, yet we know from other sources that they have gone on holiday.
- Dental and GP appointments during the school day will only be authorised in exceptional circumstances such as for emergency or orthodontic treatment. Proof must be provided of all such medical, dental or hospital appointments and we

would request that parents try to arrange any hospital appointments for school holidays or, if more urgent, the start or the end of the school day.

We encourage parents to be honest with us, even if we cannot authorise the request as children are not comfortable when keeping secrets or telling lies on their parents' behalf and this should not be encouraged.

Any problems about attendance are best sorted out between the school, parents and the child. It is better for parents not to give in to pressure from their child to excuse them from school. This gives the impression that attendance does not matter and may make things worse. When there are difficulties parents are expected to contact school at an early stage and to work with the head of school and designated safeguarding and inclusion lead to resolve problems together. This is nearly always successful.

3. Procedures

The school applies the following procedures in deciding how to deal with individual absences.

Illness and other legitimate reasons

If a child is unfit for school, parents should contact the school as soon as possible – either by telephone or by sending a message by letter at the earliest opportunity.

If school does not receive notification of why a pupil is absent parents will be contacted to provide an explanation and to provide information where the child is on the day of absence. Where a child's attendance falls below 90%, a letter will be sent home and parents invited into school to discuss further. Should there be frequent absence for illness, the school may request proof of illness; where this is not provided, the absence will be recorded as unauthorised. The school also holds the right to carry out safe and well visits where a child is off school, particularly where there are ongoing concerns about attendance or health.

4. Registration

The school at present uses a computerised registration system. The register is taken electronically at the start of each morning and afternoon. Data is sent remotely to the Office.

- (1) Staff should ensure there is a mark in the box for each child present for each session
- (2) Registers are marked at the start of the morning (8.50am) and afternoon (1.15pm) sessions and closed morning at 9am and afternoon 1.25pm.
- (3) The Office staff and Designated Safeguarding and Inclusion Lead update absence data daily following first day calling and by checking late book entries, letters, verbal and phone messages. Codes for absence are applied

using up to date DfE, guidance. Parents may be required to give the address where their child is not in school and the school may visit to check on the child's welfare.

(4) Teachers should add a note to the register or in form the office if they have been informed of the reason for absence.

5. Authorised Absence

If an absence has been authorised, the appropriate coding, should be entered on the SIMS system.

Where children are unable to attend due to bad weather and the reason for non-attendance seems reasonable, they will be given a Y code rather than an authorised absence mark. However, if it seems as if a child should have been able to come to school and children in similar circumstances are attending, an unauthorised absence mark will be given.

6. Unauthorised Absence

Where no explanation is given to a child's absence or if the school does not accept the explanation given, the absence must be recorded as unauthorised. Routine dental/medical appointments other than hospital appointments will manually be recorded as unauthorised.

The class teacher and Head of school have a duty to monitor each child's unauthorised absences. Ten sessions absence within a four week period may lead to a penalty notice.

7. Monitoring Attendance

While the Learning Mentor has key responsibility for monitoring attendance and punctuality, working with parents and pupils to improve this where needed, it is important that the class teacher, Designated Safeguarding and Inclusion Lead and the Head of school also monitor attendance and, where necessary, involve the Education and Prosecution Service. At present the school's allocated EPO provides termly reports on attendance to inform monitoring and they can be contacted regarding any concerns and with referrals for support/prosecution notices as required.

The following monitoring arrangements will be used to ensure attendance is 95% or more.

- (i) The Learning Mentor will stand at the school gate daily and monitor for late comers. Following this, they will review the registers daily and reconcile absences with messages received and records of latecomers. Where pupil absence has not been explained, the office or learning mentor will phone contact numbers for the child to establish their whereabouts and the reason for absence.

- (ii) Any member of staff concerned about a pupil's attendance or punctuality should report their concerns to the Learning Mentor in the first instance. They will take the appropriate action, informing the Head of school.
- (iii) The Learning Mentor will work with the School Administrator to review class attendance at least half termly, focussing on target pupils and trends. They will share their findings with the Head of school and report on actions taken and their outcomes.
- (iv) The Learning Mentor will work with families of pupils where attendance or punctuality shows a sign of slipping below expected levels and identify what support is needed or can be provided.
- (v) Parents of children whose attendance falls below 90% will be sent a letter pointing out their child's attendance. A printout will be attached.
- (vi) Parents of children whose attendance falls below 90% whose attendance has not improved since previous monitoring will then be either contacted by phone or invited by letter to discuss any problems and look at strategies for improvement either in school or a visit made to the home. Any attendance printout will be attached
- (vii) Good attendance will be rewarded in school. Pupils who achieve 100% will receive certificates on a termly basis, to celebrate achievement.

8. Holidays

Holiday leave in term time should be avoided at all times. In the event of exceptional circumstances, leave of absence may be requested on a holiday form completed by the parent in advance. Leave for up to 10 days per school year may be requested. The Governors decided in December 2005 that holiday absence/leave of absence would only be considered in exceptional circumstances e.g. close family bereavement/wedding, holidays only permitted by the parents' employers in term time (proof will be required).. Holiday absence of over 5 days will not be authorised in any circumstances. Parents will be asked to justify how they will compensate for the child's absence and the impact of this on their education.

Holiday requests for a family holiday will never be authorised in year 2 or in year 6 or when it causes a child to miss a significant school event.

Parents must be aware that children who miss out on education suffer personal impact and are at an immediate disadvantage relative to their peers. The Academy Committee of this school wish to emphasise the detrimental effect that this can have on your child's education.

Parents should also note that unauthorised holiday absence may be counted towards absence thresholds which trigger a penalty notice.

9. Lateness

We actively discourage lateness by a pupil. Any child's lateness should be recorded in the school's lateness monitoring book. When children arrive in class after the door closes but before the register closes, the number of minutes late will be recorded. Children not arriving in class until after the register closes will be given an unauthorised absence mark. If lateness persists then the school will contact the parent and if no improvement is noticed, the EPO. This may result in giving children an unauthorised absence mark where a child arrives late but before the register closes.

If the child arrives after the close of registration then he/she would have been initially marked absent. The administrator will amend the register. This is very important especially in the case of an evacuation of the building. Arriving after registration has closed without a good reason may be recorded as an unauthorised absence.

Unauthorised late arrival will be counted in absences when considering if the threshold for a penalty notice has been reached.

10. EWO/Other Agencies

The school's Learning Mentor should be involved, as soon as concerns arise regarding attendance/punctuality. The school's EPO needs to work closely with the school in monitoring attendance and lateness.

It is important to fill in the EPO forms where support is requested stating:-

- (a) Why the school requires the support of an EPO
- (b) What action the school has already taken.

This allows any follow up needing to take place by the EPO to be more structured. In the event of prosecution, the school's registers and documentation would be used.

The school will refer children to the school nurse, children's services, or any other agency, where it is deemed appropriate, to offer support and guidance regarding attendance issues. This is done in collaboration with the EPO service.

The school and the EPO will always seek to resolve attendance difficulties by agreement but, if other ways of trying to improve a child's attendance have failed, these officers can use penalty notices or court proceedings to prosecute parents or to seek an education supervision order on the child.

11. Conclusion

Parents should feel supported and not threatened by the school's attendance policy. Parents should be aware of the attendance monitoring procedures in place and of actions that will be taken to address poor attendance/punctuality.

Parents are welcome to discuss attendance concerns with the class teacher, DSL, head of school or the EWO (contact details from the school office) whenever they feel it is appropriate. The school's policy should be conveyed to the parents by the school prospectus, website, information/newsletters and by talking to them as and when appropriate.

INFORMATION FROM SANDWELL ATTENDANCE AND PROSECUTION DEPARTMENT MAY 2017

The Supreme Court judgment on whether a father acted lawfully when he took his daughter to Florida in term-time has implications for anyone with a child at school. The Supreme Court has decided that a parent cannot, unless authorised by a Head teacher to do so, be absent from school without potentially being liable for a Penalty Notice and/or Magistrates Court proceedings. The Court's judgment applies to all pupils registered at a school in England

Can I take my children out of school for a 'holiday' during term-time?

- The short answer is NO, unless for some reason the Head teacher considers that the 'holiday' is an 'exceptional circumstance' for that individual child. (Such instances will be rare).
- Parents have the right to request/apply for a 'leave of absence' by providing a Head teacher / Principal (in advance of the absence) any details or circumstances they would want the Head teacher to take into consideration in deciding if the reason/s provided can be considered as 'exceptional circumstances'.
- **Parents should appreciate that it is the Head teachers/school's definition and not the parent's definition of what is an 'exceptional circumstance' that decides the matter.**
- In determining an 'exceptional circumstance' Head teachers have access to 'advice and guidance' from a range of organisations as to what might constitute an 'exceptional circumstance'. Any 'exceptional circumstance' should be "rare, significant, unavoidable and short".
- It is for individual Head teachers to decide, given the information and detail provided to them by a parent (in the application/request) whether they consider these meet their definition of an 'exceptional circumstance'.
- Should an absence not be 'authorised' by the Head teacher / Principal then the education provider may make a Referral to the Local Authority to issue a Penalty Notice/s and/or consider Magistrates Court action for irregular attendance.

What is defined as an 'unauthorised' absence?

- Any absence where a reason has not been provided to the school for that absence, or,
- When a reason has been provided and the school have not accepted that reason. (This at the Head teacher's discretion), or,
- When an application/request for a 'leave of absence' has not been agreed.

How do I get permission to take my child out of school?

- The office have forms to allow a parent to request/apply for a 'leave of absence' by explaining and detailing the circumstances the parent would want the head teacher to take into consideration.
- Each school may have their own individual process.
- The school should respond to your letter stating whether authorisation is granted and which dates it applies to.
- Parents will need to ensure that the school have sufficient time to consider and process any request and respond to you before you take the leave.
- Parents should not assume that their request/application will be granted and are advised not to make plans or make payments that could not be refunded.

What are the consequences if the rules are ignored?

- Where parents choose to take their children out of school for an unauthorised holiday / leave of absence they may be liable for a fixed penalty fine.
- In England, local authorities can, at the request of the school fine parents £60 per parent, per child. If the fine is not paid within 21 days, the fine goes up to £120 per parent, per child.
- If the fine is not paid within 28 days, it is regarded as a breach of section 444 of the 1996 Education Act and parents are liable for prosecution.
- The maximum sentence, if found guilty, is a fine of £2,500, a three-month jail term and other penalties / costs.

If you need more help please get in touch with the Attendance and Prosecution Service on 0121 569 8147 or Email: attendance_service@sandwell.gov.uk

Approved by Academy Committee.....

Signed by Chair of Committee:.....

Review Date: