



## Sacred Heart Primary School Attendance Policy

### **Aims**

Our attendance policy aims to:

- Support pupils and their parents/carers in the establishment of the highest possible levels of attendance and punctuality;
- Ensure that all pupils have full and equal access to the best education that we can offer in order to maximise learning;
- Enable pupils to progress smoothly, confidently and with continuity through the school;
- Making parents/carers aware of their legal responsibilities;
- Ensure attendance meets Government and Local Authority targets.

### **Rationale**

School education lays the vital foundations of a child's life. Research clearly demonstrates the link between regular attendance and educational progress and attainment. Parents/carers and the school staff should work in partnership in making education a success and in ensuring that all children have full and equal access to all that the school has to offer. As a school, we will encourage parents and carers to ensure that their child achieves maximum possible attendance and that any problems that prevent this are identified and acted on promptly. As parents, it is their responsibility to ensure that their children arrive at school and return home safely.

### **Expectations**

We expect that all *pupils* will:

- Attend school every day.
- Attend school punctually.
- Attend appropriately prepared for the day.
- Discuss promptly with their class teacher or school office any problems that may affect their school attendance.

We expect that all *parents/carers* will:

- Ensure regular school attendance and be aware of their legal responsibilities.
- Ensure that their child arrives at school punctually and prepared for the school day.
- Ensure that they contact the school daily of absence or if known in advance, whenever their child is unable to attend school.

We expect that *the school* will:

- Provide a welcoming atmosphere.
- Provide a safe learning environment.
- Provide a sympathetic response to any child's or parents concerns.

- Keep regular and accurate records of AM and PM attendance and punctuality, monitor every child's attendance and punctuality.
- Contact parents when a child fails to attend and where no message has been received to explain the absence.
- Follow up all unexplained absences to obtain explanations from parents. Although parents may offer a reason, only the school can authorise the absence. In the case of long term or frequent absence due to medical conditions, verifications from a GP or other relevant body may be requested.
- Encourage good attendance and punctuality through a system of reward and recognition.
- Regularly inform parents of the % attendance of all pupils.
- Make initial enquiries regarding pupils who are not attending regularly.
- Meet regularly with the attendance Officers to monitor and support school attendance and punctuality.
- Refer irregular or unjustified patterns of attendance to education Welfare. Failure by the family to comply with the planned support set by Education Welfare may result in further actions, e.g. a Penalty Notice, or parental prosecution.

### **Authorised and Unauthorised Absences**

The school has, by law, to classify every absence mark a child has as either 'authorised' or 'unauthorised'. Schools have to report their absences termly to the Educational Welfare service at the Local Authority who may contact parents about high rates of absence.

### **Authorised Absences**

- ✓ Illness
- ✓ Medical/Dental ( We may ask to see an appointment card – every effort should be made to make appointments outside of school hours)
- ✓ Bereavement
- ✓ Agreed special occasion or exceptional circumstances

### **Unauthorised Absences**

School cannot authorise absences for:

- ✗ Going to the shops or hairdressers
- ✗ Going on holidays
- ✗ Visiting relatives
- ✗ Children not wanting to come to school
- ✗ Staying off because a sibling is off poorly
- ✗ Birthdays
- ✗ Oversleeping because of a late night
- ✗ Getting up late and not wanting to come into school for that day
- ✗ Keeping your child off because you are ill
- ✗ Appointments for other family members

## **Illness**

We know that young children can be susceptible to illness and understand that if they are poorly they may need time off to recover. This is reflected in our school target for every child to have at least 97% attendance.

*In all cases of absence parents should:*

- Only keep their child away from school if really necessary.
- Telephone school on the first day of absence. If no contact has been made by 9.30am from parents/carer, school will phone. If contact can still not be made, the information will be passed onto our attendance Officers who may come and visit children's homes to investigate why they are not in.
- Keep school informed if more than one day's absence is necessary.
- Avoid medical appointments in school time, but if absolutely necessary, bring their child to school before and/or after the appointment.
- Speak to the class teacher who will be able to provide parents with work for their child if appropriate.

## **Registers, punctuality and Lateness**

Punctuality is crucial. Lateness into school causes disruption to that individual's learning and to that of the other pupils in the class. It is paramount therefore that all pupils arrive at school on time at 8.55am.

By law, schools must take a morning and afternoon register and record the attendance or absence of every pupil.

Registration takes place as soon as the children come into class. Any child arriving after 9:00am will receive a late mark. Any children who are late must report to the main reception and report to Mrs Ayre and Mrs Simpson to receive their mark and give the reason why they are late.

## **Holidays**

Holidays should not be taken during term time. In line with Government policy on school attendance, we will NOT authorise holiday absences unless there are exceptional circumstances.

If parents would like their child to have time off school for any reason - including holidays and medical appointments – they are required to make an appointment to meet with the Headteacher to discuss their circumstances.

Medical/Dental Appointments should be supported by evidence i.e. appointment card/hospital letter.

Parents are advised that we always look at every case individually and take into account their child's attendance record over the previous year before making a decision about whether the absence will be authorised or not. Mrs Brown will want to talk to them about it before making a decision. If leave is taken without prior authorisation by the school, it will be recorded as an unauthorised absence and education Welfare will be notified.

## **Penalty Notices**

Penalty Notices can be issued for unauthorised leave or if a parent/carer fails to ensure regular school attendance.

In line with the amendments made to the Education (Penalty Notices) (England) Regulations 2007 the Headteacher can now request that the local authority issue a Penalty Notice to parents, when pupils are taken out of school for 5 days or more holiday or leave of absence without school authorisation.

The amount payable on issue of a Penalty Notice is £60 if paid within 21 days of receipt of the notice, rising to £120 when paid within 28 days.

If the Penalty Notice is not paid within 28 days the local authority is then obliged to prosecute for failing to ensure regular school attendance.

Penalty notices are issued to each parent, for each child.

## **Working with parents and families**

Sacred Heart staff are very willing and able to help parents/carers who are experiencing difficulties with attendance or punctuality. Some of the ways in which staff can help are:

- Offering to meet and discuss parental/pupils needs with class teacher, headteacher or our Attendance Officers.
- Contacting the school nurse about medical issues they may be worried about.
- Working with their child to help them understand how important it is to get ready in the mornings and not “play up!”
- Putting parents in touch with parenting advice groups who offer support.
- Rewarding children with good or improved attendance and punctuality with certificates.

## **Incentives**

As part of our commitment to improving punctuality and raising attendance levels in our school;

- a trophy is rewarded to the class each week in Friday’s assembly which has the best attendance.
- Children who have 100% attendance for the week are given a sticker each Friday.
- Children who come into class from 8.45am and complete their ‘In and Active’ activity are given two ‘On Time’ slips, children who are in the classroom before 8.55am are given one ‘On Time’ slip. All ‘On Time’ slips are put into a draw on Friday’s assembly and the winner is given a £5 reward.
- The class with the best attendance for the year will be taken out for a meal to celebrate.

## **Appendix One**

The Education (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2006 Amendments have been made to the 2006 regulations in the Education (Pupil Registration) (England) (Amendment) Regulations 2013. These amendments, as described below, will come into force on 1 September 2013.

The Education (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2006 currently allow Headteachers to grant special leave of absence for the purpose of a family holiday during term time in “special circumstance” of up to ten school days leave per year. Headteachers can also grant extended leave for more than ten school days in exceptional circumstances. Amendments to the 2006 regulations remove references to family holiday and extended leave as well as the statutory threshold of ten school days. The amendments make clear that head teachers may not grant any leave of absence during term time unless there are exceptional circumstances.

Headteachers should determine the number of school days a child can be away from school if the leave is granted. The Education (Penalty Notices) (England) Regulations 2007 Amendments have been made to the 2007 Regulations in the Education (Penalty Notices) (England) (Amendment) Regulations 2013. These amendments, as described below, will come into force on 1 September 2013. The 2007 regulations set out the procedures for issuing penalty notices (fines) to each parent who fails to ensure their children’s regular attendance at school or fails to ensure that their excluded child is not in a public place during the first five days of exclusion. Parents must pay £60 if they pay within 28 days; or £120 if they pay within 42 days.

Amendments to 2007 regulations will reduce the timescales for paying a penalty notice. Parents must, from 1 September 2013, pay £60 within 21 days or £120 within 28 days. This brings attendance penalty notices into line with other types of penalty notices and allows local authorities to act faster on prosecutions.

**Policy Originator:** Mrs Brown

**Next review Date:** 2019 (review cycle annual)