

ST. STEPHEN'S CATHOLIC



PRIMARY SCHOOL

Attendance and Punctuality Policy

July 2019

Introduction:

For the children of St. Stephen's Catholic Primary School to gain the greatest benefit from their education and reach their full potential, it is vital that they have a high level of attendance and that they arrive at school, on time, ready to learn, every day that the school is open; unless the reason for their absence is unavoidable. It is very important therefore that everyone strives for all children to, at the very least meet our school and the national target of **96%** for attendance. This policy sets out how together we will achieve this. We encourage regular attendance and good punctuality by:

- Providing a caring and welcoming learning environment and learning that is engaging and enjoyable so that children have a positive attitude, are happy, and want to attend school
- Responding promptly to a child's or parent's concerns about the school or other pupils;
- Celebrating good and improved attendance;
- Monitoring pupil attendance and punctuality each half term and responding to high and low levels of attendance;
- Making clear the school expectations of good attendance and punctuality through:
 - o Information on the school website/app for all new parents.
 - o Regular reminders about the importance of good attendance.
 - o Contacting or meeting with parents whose child's attendance is causing concern.

Under the Education (Pupil Registration) Regulations 1995, the Governing Body is 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 the absence was authorised or unauthorised.

St. Stephen's Catholic Primary School Attendance Team:

Mr Hatton	Headteacher
Mrs Georgiou	Deputy Headteacher/Safeguarding Lead
Mrs Burton	School Business Manager
Mrs Bellis	Office Admin Assistant

Why is regular attendance so important?

Any absence affects the pattern of a child's schooling and regular absence will seriously affect their learning. Any pupil's absence disrupts teaching routines, thus affecting the learning of others in the same class. Ensuring a child's regular attendance at school is a **parent/carers' legal responsibility** and permitting absence from school without a good reason creates an offence in law and may result in prosecution.

Promoting Excellent Attendance:

Helping to create a pattern of regular attendance is everybody's responsibility: parents/carers, pupils and all members of school staff.

To help us all to focus on this we will:

- Talk about/celebrate attendance in every school assembly.
- Give parents/carers details and information on attendance in our regular newsletter and the school web site/app;
- Tell parents/carers regularly how their child is performing in school, what their attendance and punctuality rate is and how this relates to their attainment;
- Invite parents/carers into school to work alongside the school attendance team at an attendance meeting where concerns about attendance and punctuality can be raised and support provided.
- Reward good attendance through our weekly attendance and punctuality rewards and termly attendance prize giving assemblies to celebrate individual, class and whole school achievements.
- Provide parents/carers with an overview of their child's attendance at the end of the academic year.

Expectations of all those involved in promoting good attendance/punctuality:

Pupils:

- To attend school regularly unless absence is genuinely unavoidable.
- To arrive on time and with the correct equipment for the school day ahead.
- To inform a trusted adult if they feel that they are unhappy/anxious or there are barriers to them attending school.

Parents/Carers:

- To ensure their child attends school on every day at 8.45am.
- To ensure that their child arrives at school on time, properly dressed, with the right equipment and in a condition to learn. A reason must be offered for any lateness and recorded at the school office.
- To inform a member of staff of any problem that may hinder their child from attending school.
- To ensure they contact the school promptly whenever their child is unable to attend on the first day of their child's absence before 9.00am.
- To send a letter/medical evidence into school if their child has been absent on their return to school.
- To inform the school in advance, in writing, when their child has a medical/dental appointment (Ideally, where possible, these appointments should be arranged out of school hours).
- To provide correct contact details and inform and inform of any changes to these immediately.
- To avoid wherever possible term time absence especially during KS1/2 SATS (May) and KS1 Phonics Screening (June) weeks as this may seriously affect your child's progress.

- To work closely with the school and Local Authority Attendance Team to resolve any problems that may impede a child's attendance.

Headteacher:

- To highlight the importance of good attendance and punctuality to pupils through assemblies and individually
- To reward good attendance of individuals and classes through whole school assemblies
- To work with and challenge parents where there are concerns about poor school attendance
- To provide parents with regular information about their child's attendance
- To report to Governors information about attendance linked to school targets
- To ensure that all necessary attendance returns are completed for the LA and DFE
- To ensure the school provides a climate that is welcoming and a curriculum that supports and encourages all pupils
- To chair half termly Attendance Panel meetings with parents/carers of children who are causing concern and support/action is needed.
- To provide attendance and punctuality data for class teachers to set termly targets with individual pupils to improve their attendance and punctuality.
- To monitor procedures within the policy
- To support staff who have concerns over poor attendance and punctuality
- To liaise regularly with the School Attendance Team to evaluate impact of attendance strategies

School Attendance Team:

- To ensure there are effective procedures in place to identify poor attendance and punctuality
- To provide support in the management of SIMS attendance and punctuality data.
- To document punctuality on a daily basis.
- To record reasons for absence in the school attendance diary.
- To provide the Attendance Service with contact details of pupils causing concern with their attendance.
- To work closely with the class teacher to improve attendance/punctuality
- To work closely with individual pupils and families to support them in removing the barriers to poor attendance and punctuality
- To keep teachers informed of any information received from parents or attendance service
- To ensure the Headteacher is regularly informed of attendance data and individual pupil attendance issues
- To collate weekly and half termly attendance figures

Class Teachers:

- To ensure that registers are completed accurately and on time.
- To record all reasons for absence in the register.

- To discuss attendance and punctuality with class and parents/carers on a regular basis.
- To liaise with the Headteacher and School Attendance Team over any concerns.
- Encourage a positive attendance and punctuality ethos in class time.

Strategies used to promote/ensure good attendance and punctuality:

- Certificates/rewards half termly and termly for full, good and improved attendance.
- Weekly award for best class attendance.
- Half termly rewards to promote good attendance and punctuality.
- Promoting school attendance strategies through newsletters, displays, school website, Facebook/Twitter and notice boards.
- School app and school website details term dates, attendance guidance for parents/carers and information about punctuality.
- School provides a daily Magic Breakfast (bagels) each day from 8.45am to enable pupils to be on school on time and have a breakfast to start their day on a full stomach.
- School provides short term support to families by picking children up for school using the school minibus to ensure pupils come to school each day.
- Promote the importance of good attendance and punctuality by informing parents half termly of their child's attendance level. Those deemed to be unsatisfactory will be invited to meet with the School Attendance Team.
- Regular attendance meetings to be held in school with members of the Attendance Team.

Absence Procedures:

If a child is absent, parents/carers must contact school as soon as possible (by 9:00am) on the first day of absence, by telephone or email or speaking with any member of staff at the school office. In addition to this, they must send a note in on the first day that they return, with an explanation of the absence. This will be recorded by a member of our office staff.

If a child is absent we will:

Day 1 - Contact parents/carers by telephone on the first day of absence if we have not heard from them by 9.00am. In the case of a persistent absentee or if we have safeguarding concerns, we will contact the Local Authority School Attendance Officer.

Day 2 - Contact parents/carers again by telephone and leave a phone message if we have still not heard from them, school concerns are to be raised with the school safeguarding team.

Day 3 - Refer the matter to our Local Authority Attendance Team, who will try to contact parents/carers via telephone or a potential home visit. The Attendance Team will provide feedback to school and school may conduct a meeting with the child's family on their return to school to offer support and guidance, if deemed necessary.

Telephone numbers:

There are many occasions when we need to contact parents/carers, for various reasons, including absence. Therefore, we need to have the correct contact numbers at all times. Parents/carers must ensure that school always has the correct contact details and must inform school of any changes.

Understanding types of absence:

Every half-day absence from school must be classified by the school (not by the parents), as either AUTHORISED or UNAUTHORISED. This is the reason why information about the cause of any absence is always required, preferably in writing.

Authorised absences are mornings or afternoons away from school for reasons such as illness, medical/dental appointments (which unavoidably fall in school time), emergencies or other unavoidable causes. These are usually given an 'I' or an 'M' mark in the register. However, it is preferable that parents/carers try to make dental and non emergency medical appointments outside of school time. If this isn't possible, they are required to show appointment letters/cards/text messages at the school office, so that we are able to authorise this absence.

Unauthorised absences are those which the school does not consider reasonable or for which no reason for absence has been given. These are usually given a 'U' mark in the register. It is this type of absence which can lead to the Local Authority using sanctions and/or legal proceedings such as fixed penalty fines and prosecution, these include:

- Parents/carers keeping children off school unnecessarily
- Absences which have never been properly explained
- Shopping, looking after other children, birthdays and other celebrations
- Day trips and holidays in term time.

Whilst any child may be off school because they are ill, sometimes they can be reluctant to attend school. Any problems with regular attendance are best sorted out between the school, the parents/carers and the child. If a child is reluctant to attend school then contact should be made with Mr. Hatton, Mrs Georgiou or the child's class teacher. It is never better to cover up an absence or to give in to pressure to excuse a child from attending, as this gives the impression that attendance does not matter and usually make things worse.

We will inform parents/carers, both verbally and in writing at regular intervals throughout the year, if a child's attendance falls below the expected standard and we will closely monitor this until it improves and reaches the expected target. If there is no improvement then an action plan will be instigated and the Local Authority Attendance Team may become involved.

Local Authority School Attendance Improvement Officer:

Parents/carers are expected to contact school at an early stage, to work with the staff in resolving any problems together and this is almost always successful. If difficulties cannot be sorted out in this way, we may need to refer a child to the Local Authority School Attendance Improvement Officer. He/she will also try to resolve the situation by agreement but, if other ways of trying to improve the child's

attendance have failed and unauthorised absences persist, these Officers can use sanctions such as fixed penalty notices or prosecutions, in the Magistrates Court. Full details of the options open to enforce attendance at school are available from school or the Local Authority.

Persistent Absenteeism (PA)

In our school, a pupil is regarded as a persistent absentee (PA) when their attendance drops below 90% across the school year, **for whatever reason**. Absence at this level will be causing considerable damage to a child's education and welfare and we therefore need the parents'/carers' full support to address this.

Any case that is seen to have reached the PA mark, or is at risk of moving towards that mark is given priority and parents/carers will be informed of this immediately, so that together we can put an action plan in place to get the child back into school and attending school regularly.

Holidays During Term Time:

Taking holidays during term time will affect a child's schooling as much as any other absence and we expect parents/carers **not** to take children away during school time. Any savings that parents/carers may make by taking a holiday during school time are offset by the cost to a child's education.

It is important that parents/carers understand that leave during term time will NEVER be agreed by school unless clear evidence is provided that the holiday is being taken in exceptional circumstances.

To have a holiday in term time, because the cost is cheaper, or due to work commitments, does not constitute an exceptional circumstance.

If you have exceptional circumstances, which have led you to request leave in term time for your child/ren, please complete the required form, which you can obtain from the school office or school website. The headteacher 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 Headteacher'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 may 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.

The 5 Stages of concern of School Attendance Team:

- Stage 1:** School Monitor Attendance when attendance falls below 95%, parents/carers notified
- Stage 2:** Attendance Panel meeting with parents/carers required when attendance falls between 93-90%
- Stage 3:** Attendance Panel meeting with parents/carers required when attendance falls below 90% to confirm persistent absenteeism with parents/carers
- Stage 4:** Involvement of Local Authority Attendance Team to work with school and specific families to bring about improvements in a child’s attendance
- Stage 5:** Issue of penalty notice and potential legal action taken

Medical Appointments:

Every effort should be made to arrange medical appointments outside school hours. If it is necessary for a child to be out of school for this reason, the child should be returned to school directly after the appointment.

Long Term Absence:

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 their school work. 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. All medical absences must now be accompanied by medical evidence. This can be an appointment card or letter from a GP or hospital doctor.

Missing Children:

If a child has not attended school for 10 days and no reason has been given the child is then reported to the Local Authority Attendance Team as a missing child. The child is known as a **CME (child missing in education)**. Missing children procedures are then followed by the Attendance Service. This also applies if the child has left the area and no future destination has been given. St. Stephen’s Catholic Primary School will only remove pupils from roll when it has been confirmed by the new school that they have arrived.

Lateness:

Poor punctuality is unacceptable as this impacts on the school day for the child who is late, as well as others. If a child misses the start of the day, they can miss vital input from their teacher, as well as missing any important news for the day. Late arrival of pupils disrupts lessons and can be embarrassing for the child. Lateness can also encourage absence. Parents/carers are asked to bring their child to the school office and sign their child in and provide a reason for their lateness. We will also inform parents /carers in writing if a child is persistently late or appears to have a regular pattern of lateness which parents/carers will be invited to discuss at a half termly attendance panel with members of the school attendance team.

How we manage lateness:

The school day starts at **8.45am** and we expect every child to be in class and seated at their desk/on the carpet by **8.55am**. A child will receive a late mark if they are not in class by that time. If a child arrives late to school after 8.55am then they must report to the school office with an adult who must sign them into school providing a reason for lateness. School will keep a record of late pupils and how many minutes/hours of learning time are lost over a period of time.

At **9.15am** the registers will be closed – in accordance with the Local Authority guidance. If a child arrives after that time, they will receive a mark that shows them to be present on site for the morning session, **but this will not count as a present mark** in law and it will mean they have an unauthorised absence. The child will then receive a present mark for the afternoon.

If a child does have a persistent late record then parents/carers will be asked to meet with the School Attendance Team to resolve the problem. Parents/carers can approach us at any time if they are having problems getting their child to school on time.

If a pupil 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.



Appendices:

I. Attendance expectations and breakdown to be shared with parents/carers

<p>98-100% Gold</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Excellent attendance! • Accessing all learning opportunities • Rewards and incentives
<p>96-97% Green</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Good attendance! • Very few learning opportunities missed • This is line with our target, will support your child and given them a very good chance of achieving their true potential
<p>93-95% Amber</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Risk of under achievement • Attendance is starting to fall below target which may mean that your child is at risk of not achieving their full potential • Letters outlining concern will be sent home • Some parents/ carers will be invited to Attendance Meetings
<p>90-92% Red</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Severe risk of under achievement • Attendance is now too low and you child's education will be suffering • Pupil is at risk of becoming a persistent absentee • Important to remember that while 90% attendance may sound high, it is actually the same as 1/2 day EVERY WEEK missed from school • Parents/ carers will be invited to Attendance Meetings
<p>89% or less</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Extreme risk of under achievement • Pupil is considered to be persistently absent: they are not in school enough to make good enough progress • Meeting arranged with School Attendance Team and referral to WBC Attendance Team considered • Legal action considered

2. School register codes and their meanings:

A set of standard codes are used consistently within the register. These codes are input into the electronic register as required and are used to give depth of meaning to the register and provide statistical meaning to the absences.

Key to Codes	
/	Present (AM)
\	Present (PM)
B	Educated off site (not Dual Reg.)
C	Other authorised circumstances
D	Dual registration (attending other estab.)
E	Excluded
G	Family holiday (not agreed or days in excess)
H	Annual family holiday (agreed)
I	Illness (not medical/dental)
J	Interview
L	Late (before reg closed)
M	Medical/Dental
N	No reason yet provided for absence
O	Unauthorised circumstances
P	Approved sporting activity
R	Religious observance
S	Study Leave
T	Traveller absence
U	Late (after registers closed)
V	Educational visit
W	Work Experience
#	Planned whole or partial school closure
Y	Unable to attend due to exceptional circumstances
X	Non-compulsory school age absence
Z	Pupil not on roll
-	All should attend / No mark recorded

3. Example of Stage I Letter

Dear Parents/Carers of:

After reviewing our attendance data, I am writing to inform you that your child's attendance is causing concern and falling below school and national expectations.

Current Attendance:	
Below national expectation (96%) by:	
Number of days missed:	
Attendance Category:	AMBER 93-95%

Your child's attendance will be monitored closely over the next half term to ensure that they improve to at least 96% or above in the first instance. It will also prove that you are working with school to improve your child's attendance and by getting back above 96% which is the national expectation.

If your child's attendance does not improve then you will be invited into school for an official meeting and further action may be taken. Hopefully this will be avoided now that this letter has brought to your attention the seriousness and importance of the matter.

If you wish to discuss this matter in more detail then please feel free to contact me and arrange an appointment to meet.

Thank you in advance of your support with this matter.

Yours sincerely,

Mr Hatton
Headteacher

4. Example of Stage 2 Letter

Dear Parents/Carers of:

After reviewing our attendance data, I am writing to inform you that your child's attendance is causing concern and falling way below school and national expectations. As a school, we promote attendance of 96% and above as this is the national requirement set by the government. Your child's attendance currently falls below this figure and we would like to meet with you to discuss and support you in any way that we can to improve their attendance.

Current Attendance:	
Below national expectation (96%) by:	
Number of days missed:	
Attendance Category:	RED 90-92%

In the first instance, we would like to invite you to an Attendance Panel Meeting on:
******* at ****am**

We will meet so that I can explain why your child's attendance is a concern and discuss what we can do to try and help improve this. It will also provide you with the opportunity to share any information or evidence that you feel may be necessary to help us plan a way forward to improving your child's attendance. This is an informal meeting initially however if you are unable to attend and do not work with us, we will have no other choice but to pass this information on to the Local Authority Attendance Team.

Please confirm your attendance at the meeting by contacting the school office.

I look forward to meeting with you.

Yours sincerely,

Mr Hatton
Headteacher

5. Example of Stage 3 Letter

Dear Parents/Carers of:

After reviewing our attendance figures, I am writing to inform you that your child's attendance is causing concern. As a school, we promote attendance of 96% and above as this is the national requirement set by the government. Your child's attendance currently falls below this figure and is below 90%. This means that your child is classed as a Persistent Absentee.

Current Attendance:	
Below national expectation (96%) by:	
Number of days missed:	
Attendance Category:	BELOW 90%

We would like to invite you to an Attendance Panel Meeting on:
***** **at ****am**

The aim is now to at least get above 90% and off the school's Persistent Absentee register. If this is not achieved, the Attendance Team at the Local Authority may become involved and further action may be taken.

As a parent/carer, you have a legal requirement to ensure your child attends school on a regular basis. Therefore, you hold the responsibility to promote good attendance and punctuality. We do understand there are times when children will need to be absent from school for a number of reasons. As a result, we will only consider authorising absences in the following instances:

- For sickness or ill health
- For medical or dental appointments which fall during school hours
- For religious or cultural observances

It is now possible for parents/carers to be issued penalty notices for unauthorised absences. Following failure of these payments, the local attendance officer may decide to prosecute a parent.

If you have any questions or concerns about your child's attendance, please don't hesitate to get in touch with myself or Mrs Georgiou, our Deputy Headteacher, who explain things in more detail, if necessary.

I thank you in advance of your support with this matter and I look forward to seeing your child's attendance improve over the coming months.

Yours sincerely,

Mr Hatton
Headteacher



