

# ST. PATRICK'S CATHOLIC PRIMARY

## ATTENDANCE POLICY

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## **Introduction:**

St. Patrick's is a successful and happy school and your child plays their part in making it so. For our children to gain the greatest benefit from their education it is vital that they attend regularly. Your child should be at school, on time, every day the school is open unless the reason for the absence is unavoidable.

It is very important therefore that you make sure that your child attends regularly and this Policy sets out how together we will achieve this.

## **Why Regular Attendance is so important:**

Any absence affects the routine of a child's schooling and regular absence will seriously affect their learning. Any pupil's absence disrupts teaching routines so may affect the learning of others in the same class. Children are learning all the day in school, being absent or even late means that they are missing out on valuable learning time.

Regular attendance is also important for your child's personal and social development. School is also a social place where children make and maintain friendships and enjoy a variety of activities and opportunities that are all part of their quality of life.

Ensuring your child's regular attendance at school is your legal responsibility and permitting absence from school without a good reason creates an offence in law and may result in prosecution.

## **Promoting Regular 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:**

- Give you details on attendance in our regular newsletters;

- Report to you during the year on how your child is performing in school, what their attendance and punctuality rate is and how this relates to their attainments;
- Celebrate good attendance by displaying and rewarding individual and class achievements;
- Reward good or improving attendance and good punctuality through certificates and rewards such as prizes;
- Encourage parents/carers, pupils and staff to work together on raising attendance levels across the school.

### **Understanding types of absence:**

Every half-day absence from school has to be classified by the school (not by the parents/carers), as either AUTHORISED or UNAUTHORISED. This is why information about the cause of each absence is always required.

Authorised absences are mornings or afternoons away from school for reasons such as illness, medical or dental appointments which unavoidably take place during the school day, emergencies or other unavoidable cause.

Unauthorised absences are those which the school does not consider reasonable and for which no "leave" has been given. It is this type of absence which can lead to the Local Authority using sanctions and/or legal proceedings and includes:

- parents/carers keeping children off school unnecessarily
- truancy before or during the school day
- absences which have never been properly explained
- children who arrive at school too late to get a mark
- shopping, looking after other children or birthdays
- day trips and holidays in term time which have not been agreed.

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 your child is reluctant to attend, it does not help to cover up their absence or to give in to pressure to excuse them from attending. This gives the impression that attendance does not matter and usually make things worse.

### **Persistent Absenteeism (PA)**

A pupil is a persistent absentee when they miss 10% or more of their schooling across the school year **for whatever reason**. Absence at this level is doing great harm and we need parent's fullest support to address this.

School have to look at levels of individual absence to check for potential persistent absentees every half term. Pupils who have missed a significant amount of school time would be considered to be persistent absentees or at risk of becoming persistent absentees.

We will give priority to any pupil either at the persistent absentee level **or at danger of reaching it** and parents/carers will be informed of this immediately so that together we can put a plan in place to get that child back into school. All persistent absentee cases are also automatically made known to the Pupil Attendance & Education Welfare Officer.

### **Absence Procedures and First Day Response:**

**If your child is absent you must:**

- Contact us as soon as possible on the first day of absence, either by phone or by sending a note in to school;
- If you know in advance that your child will be off, e.g. a dental appointment, you can let staff know the day before;
- You can speak with any member of staff and ask them to inform the school office;
- If you cannot contact us, we will try to contact you, but please also send a note in on the first day they return with an explanation of the absence.

**If your child is absent we will:**

- Telephone you on the first day of absence if we have not heard from you;
- We may make a home visit if we cannot contact you.

**If your child is off school for some time we will:**

- Write to you during a longer absence if we have not heard from you;
- Refer the matter to the Pupil Attendance & Education Welfare Officer;
- Invite you in to discuss the situation with the Head Teacher and/or Governors if absence persists.

At St. Patrick's we check absences and lateness daily. We meet with the Pupil Attendance & Education Welfare Officer every two weeks, at this meeting we must give them a report on absences and lateness. It is the schools responsibility to report to the Local Authority on attendance and punctuality of all pupils in the school.

**Medical Evidence:**

Though we always ask you for a note when your child has been absent, sometimes we may need more evidence, particularly if there are repeat absences for medical reasons.

This may mean we will ask you for a prescription or an appointment card. In more serious cases however and particularly when absences are so severe that legal action by the Authority may be considered, we may ask you for a Doctors Certificate. In some cases too we may need to ask you about getting School Health involved in talking to you and or your Doctor if there are particular concerns about health-related absences.

### **Parent/Carer Telephone Numbers:**

There are times when we need to contact parents/carers about lots of things, including absence, so we need to have your contact numbers at all times. So help us to help you and your child by making sure we always have **two** up to date numbers - if we don't then something important may be missed. There will be regular checks on telephone numbers throughout the year. It is a very serious matter if there is an emergency in school and we cannot contact you.

### **The Pupil Attendance and Education Welfare Officer:**

Parents/carers are expected to contact school at an early stage and to work with the staff in resolving any attendance problems together. This is nearly always successful. If difficulties cannot be sorted out in this way, the school may refer the child to the Pupil Attendance & Education Welfare Officer from the Local Authority.

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 Penalty Notices or prosecutions in the Magistrates Court (see below). Full details of the options open to enforce attendance at school are available from the school or the Local Authority.

Alternatively, parents/carers or children may wish to contact the PAEWO themselves to ask for help or information. They are independent of the school and will give impartial advice, although they will discuss matters with the school to keep them informed. Their telephone number is available from the school office or by contacting the Local Authority on 0151 225 4980

### **Local Authority Penalty Notices and legal action:**

Parents/carers have a legal responsibility to ensure that children attend school regularly. The Local Authority can issue Penalty Notices when a pupil does not do so. Usually the school and the Pupil Attendance &

Education Welfare Officer will attempt to work with parents/carers to improve attendance before a penalty notice becomes necessary. A written warning is sent from the Local Authority giving parents/carers 20 school days to improve attendance, if this is achieved the Penalty Notice is withdrawn. If there is no improvement a fine will be issued. However, in the case where a pupil has taken a holiday in term time that has not been agreed by the school a Penalty Notice will be issued immediately without prior warning.

The Local Authority might consider a prosecution in the Magistrates Court if further periods of poor attendance occur after a Penalty Notice has been used.

### **Being Late:**

Poor punctuality is not acceptable. If your child misses the start of the day they will miss work, they will miss out finding out vital information and news for the day, they may miss out on the beginning of a lesson when they work will be explained by the teacher.

Pupils arriving late disrupt lessons. Arriving late can be very embarrassing for the child and in severe cases can lead to the child not wanting to come to school at all if they are running late.

### **How we manage lateness:**

The school doors open at **8.45am** and the school day starts at **8.50am** and we expect your child to be in at that time. The doors close at 8.55am after which time children will enter school via the front office and will be recorded in the late book. Registers are marked by **9.00am**.

At **9.30am** the registers will be closed - in accordance with the regulations, if your child arrives after that time they will receive a mark that shows them to be present on site, **but this will not count as a present mark** in law and it will mean they have an unauthorised absence. This means that you may face the possibility of a Penalty Notice if the problem persists.

In the afternoon your child must be in school for **1.00pm for Reception to Year 2 and 1.30pm for years 3 to 6**. Children who arrive in school during the lunch break having been absent during the morning cannot go onto the playground for fire safety reasons because they will not be marked in a register. The registers will be closed again at **1.45pm** and again arrival after this time will be treated as an absence.

If your child has a persistent late record you will be asked to meet with the Head Teacher or Governors to resolve the problem, but you can approach us at any time if you are having problems getting your child to school on time. If problems persist the Pupil Attendance & Education Welfare Officer may become involved.

### **Holidays In Term Time:**

Taking holidays in term time will affect your child's schooling as much as any other absence and we expect parents/carers to help their children and us by not taking children away in school time.

Remember that any savings you think you may make by taking a holiday in school time are offset by the cost to your child's education.

There is **no** automatic entitlement in law to time off in school time to go on holiday. In recent years Government and Local Authority guidelines about holidays in term time have changed considerably and are much more strict.

**Please be aware therefore that in line with Government and Local Authority requirements, leave of absence in term time will only be considered in the most exceptional of circumstances. Family holidays and similar events are not counted as exceptional.**

Any period of leave taken without the agreement of the school, or in excess of any that may be agreed, will be classed as unauthorised and may attract sanctions such as a Penalty Notice.

**Our procedures adhere to Government regulations regarding holidays and leave during term time are as follows:**



- You must request permission for leave during term time. You must do this in advance before booking the holiday and await the school's decision.
- If you do not do this, the absence will automatically be unauthorised.
- Your request will be considered at the discretion of the school in accordance with the regulations of the Local Authority (city council). Please note that the Local Authority guidelines say that only in exceptional circumstances should schools approve leave.
- If you chose to take leave even though the school has not agreed to it you may attract sanctions, such as fines or other legal action from the Local Authority.
- Even if there are exceptional circumstances, if your child has a poor attendance record school may decide not to authorise the holiday.
- If school do approve the leave as there are exceptional circumstances there will be an agreed date for the child to return to school.
- If a child does not return to school on the agreed date, or if a child takes unapproved leave and does not return within 10 days, the school may take your child off the register and is legally obliged to inform the Local Authority. Your child will be registered as a Child Missing from Education. This may also result in your child having to reapply for their place in our school, and places cannot be held if other pupils apply for a place in the meantime.
- A Child Missing from Education is defined as any child of compulsory school age who is not registered at an educational establishment (eg school) and has been out of education provision for a substantial period of time. The Local Authority will then take further action

Any holiday leave taken without the agreement of the school, or in excess of that agreed, should be classed as unauthorised and can attract sanctions such as a Penalty Notice from the Local Authority. Agreeing to authorised holidays during term time will be at the Head Teacher's discretion and only in truly exceptional circumstances. However, the school must also abide by the rules set by the Local

Authority and the Government. School is required to ensure that the attendance level of all pupils is good.

#### **Extended holidays to country of origin or to visit family living in country of origin:**

As with holidays in term time (above) any arrangements for extended family trips abroad must be discussed in advance with the Head Teacher. We understand that some families originate from another country and wish to visit family who live there, or keep a connection with their country of origin, however **this should not disrupt their child's education as visits could be made during school holiday times.**

If the Head Teacher does approve such a visit you must provide a return to school date, please note that the school are limited as to how many days absence they can authorise so some of your trip may be unauthorised. If it is a long visit your child is likely to be taken off the school register for the duration of the visit, this may mean that your child loses their place in this school. If your child fails to return to school on the given date school are legally obliged to inform the Local Authority and your child will be registered as a Child Missing from Education (see below). This may also result in your child losing their place in our school.

It is expected that families only take leave during the school holiday times as the 6 week summer holiday allows enough time for extended trips.

#### **Children Missing from Education (CME):**

A Child Missing from Education (CME) is defined as any child of compulsory school age (5-16) who is not registered at any formally approved education activity (eg school, alternative curriculum or home education) and has been out of education provision for a substantial period of time (usually agreed at four weeks). The Local Authority (city council) will then take further action.

This may be the case if a child goes on a holiday and does not return on the given date, or if a child does not attend school without reason being given and school are unable to contact parents/carers.

### **School targets, projects and special initiatives:**

The school has targets to improve attendance and you and your child have an important part to play in meeting these targets.

Targets for the school are displayed in the school and on the website and you should take time to study them.

**The minimum level of attendance for this school is 97%** and we will keep you updated regularly about progress to this level and how your child's attendance compares to this level.

**Our target is to achieve better than 97%.** We are aiming for this level because that is the attendance needed for pupils to achieve the best from their schooling and we believe we can achieve this and be amongst the best attended schools in the city.

Anything less than this we would work with parents/carers to see an improvement. If a pupil's attendance falls below 90% the Pupil Attendance and Education Welfare Officer from the council automatically becomes involved. We also usually involve the Pupil Attendance and Education Welfare Officer before attendance falls this low.

Through the school year we monitor absences and punctuality to show us where improvements need to be made.

Information on any projects or initiatives that will focus on these areas will be provided in our newsletter and we ask for your full support.

We have an excellent reward scheme that rewards good attendance and time keeping with certificates, pencils, vouchers, etc. and the opportunities to win a prize draw for other prizes.

**Those people responsible for attendance matters in this school are:**

- The Head teacher, who decides on the classification of absences and puts cases forward for further action or Penalty Notices.
- The Attendance Co-ordinator, who monitors school attendance and refers on to the Pupil Attendance and Education Welfare Officer. The Learning Mentors make first day absence telephone calls and home visits.
- All Class teachers, who monitor their pupil's attendance and promote attendance on a daily basis.
- All school staff, who promote good attendance and punctuality on a daily basis.

**Summary:**

The school has a legal duty to publish its absence figures to parents/carers and to promote attendance.

Equally, parents/carers have a duty to make sure that their children attend.

School staff are committed to working with parents/carers as the best way to ensure as high a level of attendance as possible.

**Date of Policy: September 2015**

Date of review: September 2017