



St Patrick's Catholic Primary School
Attendance Policy

Attendance Matters

St. Patrick's is a successful and happy school and every 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. Every child should be at school, on time, every day the school is open unless the reason for the absence is unavoidable.

Regular attendance is so important for 3 main reasons:

1. To give children the best opportunity to learn, and therefore opportunities for life.
2. To give children the opportunity to socialise and have friends, that in turn helps children to be happy.
3. Regular attendance at school is a legal requirement that parents/carers must fulfil.

It is very important therefore that school works together with parents/carers to make sure that their child attends regularly and this Policy sets out how we will achieve this.

Our aim:

We aim to ensure that every child, and their family, are supported to achieve good standards of attendance so that children can get the most out of their education, and school life.

Responsibilities:

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.

Parents should inform school about absences on the first day that their child is off school, or in advance if the child is attending an appointment.

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

School targets and rewards:

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 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.

Attendance is a whole school and family approach:

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 parents/carers updates on their child's attendance;
- Remind everyone of our high standards in assemblies, letters and displays, etc.;
- Encourage parents/carers, pupils and staff to work together on raising attendance levels across the school.
- Aim to support children and families with issues effecting attendance
- Aim to make school a safe, caring and nice place to be

What to do if your child is absent:

On the first day of your child's absence you must phone the school to inform them that your child will be absent and why.

If your child's absence is planned, e.g. for a medical appointment, you should tell the school in advance. It is recommended that you bring your appointment letter or card in so it can be copied and kept on file.

School record all reasons for absence. If you do not provide a reason for why your child was off school we have to record that absence as unauthorised.

What school do if your child is absent:

Everyday staff check who is absent and follow routine procedures.

If you have not informed school about your child's absence we will try to contact you. We will phone and may make a home visit to try and find out why your child is absent.

If you have told the school why your child is absent but they are off school for longer than a week, school may phone to check on how they are.

What to do if your child is late or needs to leave school early for an appointment:

If children are late they must come to the office with their parents and sign in on the electronic system stating a reason. This system will then register them as in school, if children do not sign in, they might be missed off the electronic register.

If children are collected early from school, whoever collects them from school must use the electronic signing in/out system, with the reason why they are leaving.

If children arrive at school after 9.30am they will automatically be marked on the electronic system as absent for the morning.

Types of absence:

Registers are marked twice a day and each mark counts towards a child's overall attendance.

Each half of the day is a marked session, therefore a child who is in school all day has attended 2 sessions.

A child who comes in very late, or goes home at lunchtime has attended 1 session and missed 1 session.

A child who is absent all day has missed 2 sessions.

This is why each half of the day is important for attendance.

Every half-day absence has to be classified by the school as either AUTHORISED or UNAUTHORISED. This is why information about the reason for absence is important.

Authorised absences are absences that are deemed to be reasonably or unavoidable.

For example;

- a reasonable length of absence for an illness,
- an essential medical appointment that could not be arranged out of school hours.

Please remember that even if your child has a good reason to be off school they are still absent and will be marked as such.

Unauthorised absences are those that the school does not consider reasonable and are therefore unacceptable.

Some examples are;

- *parents/carers keeping children off school unnecessarily,*
- *absences that are longer than necessary, e.g. a week off for a minor illness.*
- *absences that have never been explained*

- *children who arrive at school too late to get a mark*
- *routine medical appointments that could be made out of school time*
- *because children are tired, or overslept*
- *holidays in term time*

Unauthorised absences can lead to the Local Authority using sanctions and/or legal proceedings.

Whilst any child may be off school occasionally because they are ill, sometimes there can be other difficulties causing their absence. Any problems are best sorted out between the school, the parents/carers and the child. School will always do their best to help families with any problems that are effecting attendance.

Being on time:

Poor punctuality is not acceptable. If your child misses the start of the day they will miss out on working time, and arriving late can disrupt lessons for your child and everyone else. Arriving late can be very embarrassing for children and in severe cases can lead to the child not wanting to come to school at all if they are late.

The school doors open at 8.45am so children are in school by 8.50am when the learning day starts, and we expect your child to be in at that time.

When the doors close children will enter school via the front office. Parents and pupils must sign in using the online system stating the reason for their lateness. Registers are marked by 9.00am.

At 9.30am the registers will be closed – in accordance with the regulations. This means that if your child arrives after that time they will be recorded as on site for fire regulations, but this will not count as a present attendance 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 afternoon registration. Depending on what year group your child is in this may be at 1.00pm or 1.30pm. 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 staff to resolve the problem, if problems persist the Pupil Attendance & Education Welfare Officer may become involved. Parents/carers can approach us at any time if they are having problems getting their child to school on time.

Holidays in School 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, similar events, and cheaper holidays 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, and are as follows:

- You must request permission for holidays during term time, giving your reasons for taking the holiday during school time.
- When considering requests, school must abide by the rules set by the Local Authority and the Government and school is required to ensure that the attendance level of all pupils is good.
- If your circumstances are deemed to be truly exceptional school may either agree your absence, or record the absence as not agreed but choose not to take any further action.
- If school do approve the absence due to exceptional circumstances there will be an agreed date for the child to return to school.
- Even if there are exceptional circumstances, if your child has a poor attendance record school may decide not to authorise the absence.
- If you do not ask for permission in advance the absence will automatically be unauthorised.
- If your request is not agreed by the school the absence will be unauthorised.
- If you chose to take holiday leave even though the school has not agreed it will be an unauthorised absence, further action will be taken, and you may attract sanctions
- If you have agreed a return date with school and your child does not return that 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 may then be registered as a Child Missing from Education (see below). 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.

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 (fine) from the Local Authority.

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 even for exceptional circumstances, so some of your trip may be unauthorised.

If you intend to have 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).

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.

The Local Authority will then take further action.

What happens if a child has poor attendance?

School has a statutory duty to address poor attendance and punctuality, in order to do this we will always try to work with parents/carers to help, and must take further action if necessary.

If attendance falls below acceptable standards we would work with parents/carers to see an improvement.

We usually involve the Pupil Attendance and Education Welfare Officer before attendance falls below acceptable levels.

If a pupil's attendance falls below 90% the Pupil Attendance and Education Welfare Officer automatically becomes involved.

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

School interventions may include;

- Contacting parents/carers to discuss the issue
- Referring the matter to the Local Authority Pupil Attendance & Education Welfare Officer (PAEWO) for our school
- Inviting parents/carers in to school to discuss the situation with the mentor, PAEWO and/or head teacher
- If necessary we may involve other organisations to help, and therefore it may be necessary to open an EHAT to co-ordinate this
- If necessary we may involve the School Governors if absences persist
- If necessary Local Authority sanctions may be used, these include fines and legal action.
- If we feel that this is a problem that is not improving we may inform Careline and refer on the grounds of Educational Neglect.

Parents/carers can approach us at any time if they are having problems that effect them getting their children into school regularly.

What is a Persistent Absentee?

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 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 the child back into school regularly.

The Pupil Attendance & Education Welfare Officer from the Local Authority education department also automatically monitor all persistent absentee cases.

The Pupil Attendance & Education Welfare Officer:

Every school has an allocated PAEWO from the Local Authority. They work to help parents/carers to improve children's attendance, and to support the school to make sure they are doing all they can to achieve good standards of attendance across the school. It is the schools responsibility to report to the Local Authority on attendance and punctuality of all pupils in the school every two weeks.

Should attempts to resolve attendance problem by working with parents/carers not result in improved attendance the PAEWOS can use sanctions such as Penalty Notices or prosecutions in the Magistrates Court (see below).

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 by contacting the Local Authority on 0151 233 3916.

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.

There are two types of penalty notice, one with a warning period that allows for improvement to take place before a decision is made about issuing a fine, and one where a fine is issued immediately.

A penalty notice with a warning period:

This is usually issued where there are on-going attendance concerns. Before a penalty notice would be used the school and the PAEWO will try to work with parents/carers to improve attendance.

If it becomes necessary to issue a penalty notice a written warning is sent from the Local Authority giving parents/carers 20 school days to improve attendance.

If attendance is improved and the child does not have any unauthorised absences during the 20 day warning period, the Penalty Notice is withdrawn.

If there is no improvement or the child incurs an authorised absence during the warning period, a fine will be issued.

An immediate penalty notice:

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.

Legal action:

Following either type of penalty notice 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.

Medical Evidence:

If your child needs to attend medical appointments during school times we recommend that you bring in appointment cards or letters.

This is particularly important if your child has regular appointments or treatment as they provide evidence for why regular absences for this reason are necessary.

In more serious cases and particularly when absences are so severe that legal action by the Local Authority may be considered, we may ask you for more evidence from your doctor/hospital/etc.

In some cases ask the School Nurse to become involved in order to help you and your children and work together to ensure that health-related absences are managed effectively and time off kept to a minimum.

We know that some children will have medical needs that make regular absences unavoidable, but we would want to ensure that it does not effect the child's education and school life too much so they have as many opportunities

to learn and participate as possible. Also medical evidence in these cases helps us to explain why further action or sanctions would not be used.

Alternative Educational Provision:

If your child needs to attend Alternative Education Provision, such as a Speech and Language support centre, this will be recorded as your child being present in education. This means that they will not lose their mark because they are in education somewhere else. We will have an agreement with the place they go to that we check or are informed of absences so that we can follow up the absence using our usual procedures.

Every member of staff plays their part in achieving good attendance in the school:

- All school staff promote good attendance and punctuality on a daily basis.
- All class teachers and teaching assistants monitor their pupil's attendance and promote attendance on a daily basis.
- Staff monitor absences daily. They also work to support children and families with attendance difficulties.
- The Attendance Co-ordinator monitors school attendance, works with the Pupil Attendance and Education Welfare Officer, and reports to Head Teacher and the Governors.
- The Head teacher has responsibility for ensure that everyone is working together to achieve high standards, and makes decisions about actions taken.

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.

Please 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. It is a very serious matter if there is an emergency in school and we cannot contact you.

Policy written by: P Price

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Appendix 1

COVID-19 Procedures

Due to COVID, the global pandemic, some of our procedures have changed:

Absences:

It is even more important that parents inform school of the reason for any absences on the first day of absence.

Parents should give details of illnesses and symptoms so we can determine if there are any possible symptoms of COVID.

School are carefully monitoring and tracking any absences that are potentially related to COVID in order to protect our children, families and staff.

If children are absent due to COVID self isolation, it will be marked in the register as an absence due to them not being required to attend school. This means that it is recorded that school have said that the child cannot come into school.

Times of the school day:

School gates open between 8.30 – 9.00am in the morning to allow children more time to come in and prevent busy times at the gates so people are able to practice safe distancing.

Addressing poor attendance:

If a child has missed school time due to being ill with COVID or having to self-isolate as part of COVID government guidance, this will not trigger a response.

If a child is shielding due to their own health issues, or that of people in their household, so long as they meet the current government guidance on high risk groups, there will be no follow up.

If a child is shielding due to their own health issues, or that of people in their household, but do not meet government guidance on high risk groups, school will work with the family to try and address concerns and minimize the amount of learning time lost. If necessary school will ask for school health or the pupil attendance and education welfare officer to help.

If a child is missing school time for unacceptable reasons, absence will be dealt with as per our usual procedures.

Rewards:

Due to the complexities of attendance during the pandemic, and the extreme likelihood of absences, we have reviewed our rewards system and will not be continuing any of our usual rewards and celebrations.