

## Pupil Attendance Policy

### **Introduction**

Regular school attendance is essential if children are to achieve their full potential.

- St. Philomena's Catholic School believes that regular school attendance is the key to enabling children to maximise the educational opportunities available to them and become confident and competent adults who are able to realise their full potential and make a positive contribution to their community.
- St. Philomena's School values all pupils. As set out in this policy, we will work with families to identify the reasons for poor attendance and try to resolve any difficulties.
- St. Philomena's School recognises that attendance is a matter for the whole school community. Our Attendance Policy should not be viewed in isolation; it is a strand that runs through all aspects of school improvement, supported by our policies on safeguarding, bullying and behaviour.

### **Legal Framework**

- Section 7 of the 1996 Education Act states that parents must ensure that children of compulsory school age receive efficient full-time education suitable to their age, ability and aptitude to any special educational needs they may have, either by regular attendance at school or otherwise.
- A child is of Compulsory School Age at the beginning of the term following their 5<sup>th</sup> birthday. A child ceases to be of compulsory school age on the last Friday in June of the school year in which they reach the age of 16.
- Under the Education Act 1996, the Local Authority has a statutory responsibility to ensure that parents secure education for children of compulsory school age and where necessary, use legal enforcement.
- The Education (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2006, require schools to take an attendance register twice a day, once at the start of the morning session and then again during the afternoon session.

The register must record whether the pupil was:

Present

Absent

Present at an approved educational activity or

Unable to attend due to exceptional circumstances

### **Categorising Absence**

- Where pupils of compulsory school age are recorded as absent, the register must show whether the absence is authorised or unauthorised.
- Absence can only be authorised by the school and cannot be authorised by parents. All absences will be treated as unauthorised unless a satisfactory explanation for the pupil's absence has been received.
- Parents should telephone on the first day of absence and provide the school with an expected date of return. In the interests of safeguarding if school has not been notified of a reason for absence by 09.30 the office staff will contact parents by text message and invite them to ring school.

Absence can then be categorised as follows:

- **Illness** In most cases a telephone call from the parent informing the school that their child is ill will be acceptable. Parents may be asked to provide medical evidence where there are repeated absences due to reported illness. This will usually be in the form of an appointment card, prescription etc.
- **Medical/Dental Appointments** Parents are advised where possible to make medical and dental appointments outside of the school day. Where this is not possible, pupils should attend school for part of the day. Parents should show the appointment card to school.
- **Other Authorised Circumstances** This relates to occasions where there is cause for absence due to exceptional circumstances, for example family bereavement.
- **Excluded (No alternative provision made)** Exclusion from attending school is counted as an authorised absence. The child's class teacher will make arrangements for work to be sent home.
- **Family Holidays and Extended Leave** Parents are strongly advised to avoid taking their children on holiday during term time. Parents do not have an automatic right to remove their child from school during term time for the purpose of a holiday and should be made aware that

***if their child is absent for 10 school days they will miss 5% of their education during that academic year.***

**From September 1<sup>st</sup> 2013 head teachers may not grant any leave of absence, including holidays, during term time unless there are *exceptional circumstances*.**

All holiday requests need to be made by letter outlining the dates and reasons for being taken in term time and addressed to the Head teacher- all requests will be replied to by the head teacher outlining the decision that has been made.

## **Procedures**

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

- There is no entitlement for parents to remove their child from school for the purposes of a holiday in term time.
- In exceptional circumstances parents can request to remove their child for a family holiday.
- All such request must be made by letter to the school.
- The exceptional circumstances must be clearly stated on the letter.
- The letter must be sent to the school office at least 14 days before the start date of the holiday.
- Parents should not assume that requesting leave of absence guarantees that will be approved.

The Headteacher has the authority to decide whether or not to authorise the absence. In making a decision she must take the following into account:

- the reasons given for the holiday;
- the time of the year and/or term;
- whether the child will miss any preparation for tests/exams;
- whether the child will miss test or exams;
- the child's previous attendance record – including any patterns of absences.

The Headteacher will inform parents of the decision.

Religious Observance St Philomena's Catholic School acknowledges the multi-faith nature of British society and recognises that on some occasions, religious festivals may fall outside school holiday periods or weekends and this necessitates a consideration of authorised absence or special leave for religious observance.

### **Late Arrival**

Registration begins at 08.50. The register will close at 09.00 and pupils arriving after the close of register will be recorded as late.

On arrival after the close of register, pupils must immediately report to the school office to gain a late mark in the register to ensure that we have knowledge that they are on the school site and that we can, therefore be responsible for their health and safety that day.

### **Unauthorised absence**

Absence will not be authorised unless parents have provided a satisfactory explanation and that it has been accepted as such by the school.

St. Philomena's School will inform the local authority of any pupil who fails to attend school regularly, or has been absent without the school's permission for a continuous period of 10 school days or more, at such intervals as are agreed between the school and the local authority (or in default of such agreement, at intervals determined by the Secretary of State).

*This policy is in line with the document Keeping Children Safe in Education, Statutory guidance for schools and colleges July 2015.*

### **Roles and Responsibilities**

St. Philomena's School believe that improved school attendance can only be achieved if it is viewed as a shared responsibility of the school staff, governors, parents and pupils.

As such, **the Governing Body will:**

- Ensure that the importance and value of good attendance is promoted to pupils and their parents;
- Review the school's Attendance Policy and ensure the required resources are available to fully implement the policy;
- Identify a member of the governing body to lead on attendance matters- (Dr Geldard); Ensure that the Registration Regulations, England, 2006 and other attendance related legislation is complied with.

**The School will:**

- Actively promote the importance and value of good attendance to pupils and their parents;
- Form positive relationships with pupils and parents;
- Ensure that the Registration Regulations, England, 2006 and other attendance related legislation is complied with;
- Ensure that systems to report, record and monitor the attendance of all pupils;
- Ensure that attendance data is collected and analysed frequently to identify causes and patterns of absence;

- Develop a multi-agency response to improve attendance and support pupils and their families;
- Document interventions used to a standard required by the local authority should legal proceedings be instigated.

**St. Philomena's School request that Parents will:**

- Talk to their child about school and what goes on there. Take a positive interest in their child's work and educational progress;
- Contact the school if their child is absent to let them know the reason why and the expected date of return;
- Try to avoid unnecessary absences. Wherever possible make appointments for the Doctors, Dentists etc. outside of school hours. A copy of Appointments letter/card must be brought to the School Office if these fall in term time;
- Ask the school for help if their child is experiencing difficulties;
- Inform the school of any change in circumstances that may impact on their child's attendance;
- Avoid taking their child on holiday during term-time;
- Inform the School Office **each day** if someone other than a parent is collected the child at the end of the day.

*(November 2015 – to be reviewed November 2018)*