

ST. FRANCIS' CATHOLIC PRIMARY SCHOOL
Whyteleafe Road
Caterham
Surrey
CR3 5ED

ATTENDANCE POLICY



Policy: Summer 2019

Review Date: Summer 2022

ATTENDANCE POLICY

Within a Christian setting, our mission is to provide the best possible learning environment and curriculum to enable all of the children, who are entrusted to us, to reach the potential of their unique gifts and talents. Good school attendance is essential for the best possible learning outcomes for all our children

As a school we do all that we can to ensure maximum attendance for all pupils. Any problems that prevent full attendance will be identified and addressed as speedily as possible.

It is the policy of our school to celebrate achievement. Attendance is a crucial factor to a productive and successful school career. Our school will actively promote and encourage 100 per cent attendance for all our pupils.

Our school will give a high priority to conveying to parents and pupils the importance of regular and punctual attendance. We recognise that parents have a vital role to play and that there is a need to establish strong home-school links and communication systems that can be utilised whenever there is concern about attendance.

If there are problems which affect a pupil's attendance we will investigate, identify and strive, in partnership with parents and pupils, to resolve those problems as quickly and efficiently as possible. We will adopt a clearly focused approach aimed at returning the pupil to full attendance at all times.

OBJECTIVES

- To encourage full attendance and punctuality
- To record and monitor attendance and absenteeism and apply appropriate strategies to minimise its occurrence
- To acknowledge and reward a successful record of attendance
- To ensure a consistent approach throughout the school

STATUTORY DUTY OF SCHOOLS

The Education Act 1996 requires parents or guardians to ensure their children receive suitable, full-time education, either by regular attendance at school or otherwise. Schools are responsible for recording pupil attendance twice a day, once at the start of the morning session and once during the afternoon session. Any entry must be made in the attendance register for all pupils of compulsory school age who are on the school's admission roll.

PRINCIPLES

- Parents are legally responsible for ensuring that a child of compulsory school age attends school regularly.
- We will work towards ensuring that all pupils feel supported and valued.
- We will send a clear message that if a pupil is absent they will be missed, and checks made to establish reason for absence.
- We will encourage parents/carers to be actively involved in promoting their child's attendance.

- We will ensure that all staff are aware of the requirements of the registration process and that they receive training on registration regulations and the law relating to attendance.
- The prime benefit derived from regular attendance is that continuity and progression in learning are ensured.
- Certificates are awarded to individual children at the end of the year for 100% attendance. This is celebrated in the end of term achievement assembly.
- Weekly Class attendance will be celebrated in the Newsletter.

DEFINITIONS

Authorised absence

An absence is recorded as authorised when a child has been away from school for a legitimate reason (e.g. being unwell) and the school has received notification from a parent or carer. Only the school can authorise an absence authorised.

Unauthorised absence

An absence is recorded as unauthorised when a child is away from school without good reason and without the permission of the school.

ABSENCE FROM SCHOOL

It is the responsibility of parents to ensure regular attendance of their children at school. It is recognised that it may be necessary for children to be absent during term time on occasions due to sickness or a medical appointment but these should be kept to a minimum.

The school must always be informed on each day of any absence by 10 am with a reason for absence either by telephone or email. A message can be left on the school answer phone if necessary. This must be followed by a letter when the child returns to school. If we have not been notified by noon on the first day then the absence will be marked as unauthorised.

If your child is unable to come to school for any reason, or will be out of school during the day for hospital, doctor or dental appointments etc, please telephone or write to let us know in advance. The school is now required by law to register the reason for any absence from school.

Monitoring First Day Absence

If a child is absent from school and the school has not received a telephone call, email or other message from the parent/carers, a first day absence call will be made.

We follow this system if we have no notification by 10am:

- Phone parents' contact number(s).
- Repeat this during the first morning of absence if no response.
- Phone emergency contact number(s) to check we have the correct numbers and to get an up-to-date contact number for the parent/carers and update the school system accordingly.

- Once contacted the parent/carer is asked to provide a reason as to why the child is not in school and parents must follow this up in writing.
- The absence reason is recorded next to the child's name on the register system
- Any unexplained absences will be marked as unauthorised.
- If the School has not been able to contact parents the school will write to parents/carers requesting for a reason for absence, if no reason provided and other agencies informed as appropriate.

Note: There is a **statutory duty** for schools to refer to the Local Authority designated EWO after 10 days of unexplained absence. **However, they can seek advice or assistance sooner.**

Punctuality/ Lateness

Punctuality to school is crucial and registration at the beginning of the day with the class teacher is one of the most important periods of the day. Lateness into school causes disruption to that individual's learning and to that of the other students in the class. It is paramount therefore that all students arrive to school on time.

Registration takes place at **9:10am** and students who arrive after this will be recorded as late.

Registers close at **9:30am** and after this, lateness is recorded as an unauthorised absence for the morning session.

Persistent lateness by a student will be investigated and an appropriate action taken in conjunction with the parents and if there is no further improvement may be referred to Education Welfare.

St Francis' Catholic Primary School 'Exceptional Circumstances Application Form'

Parents wishing to take their child out of school due to exceptional circumstances must complete an 'Exceptional Circumstances Application Form', available from the School Office. An absence can only be authorised for exceptional circumstances at the discretion of the Headteacher.

Please complete and submit this form if you want the Headteacher to consider your request for your child's leave of absence for exceptional circumstances. We may ask for proof to back up your request.

LEAVE OF ABSENCE DURING TERM TIME

As parents, you have a legal responsibility to ensure your child's attendance at school. During the academic year, pupils are at school for 190 days and at home for 175 days.

Failure to ensure regular school attendance

The Local Authority retains control of the Education Welfare Service, and every effort is made to maintain close links with the Education Welfare Officer attached to the school.

Where school interventions have failed to secure regular attendance, an official referral may be made to the Education Welfare Officer.

Penalty Notices

The Education Welfare Service, acting on behalf of Surrey County Council may issue a Penalty Notice as an alternative to the prosecution of a parent/carer for their child's unauthorised absence from school and requires the recipient to pay a fixed amount.

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

If the Penalty Notice is not paid within 28 days, the Local Authority must prosecute the parent/carer for failing to ensure regular school attendance under Section 444 Education Act 1996.

Circumstances when a Penalty Notices may be issued

Pupils identified by police and education welfare officers engaged on Truancy Patrols and who have incurred unauthorised absences.

The Education (Pupil Registration) (England)(Amendment) Regulations 2013, state that Head teachers may not grant any leave of absence during term time unless there are exceptional circumstances. The Head teacher is required to determine the number of school days a child can be away from school if leave is granted.

Where a child is taken out of school for 10 sessions or more and the 'leave of absence' is without the authority of the head teacher, **each parent** is liable to receive a penalty notice for **each child** who is absent. In these circumstances, a warning will not be given where it can be shown that parents had previously been warned that such absences would not be authorised and that they will be liable to receive a Penalty Notice if the leave of absence is taken.

The issue of a Penalty Notice will also be considered where a pupil has incurred 7 or more unauthorised sessions during the preceding 6 school weeks. The parents' failure to engage with supportive measures proposed by the school or Education Welfare will be a factor when considering the issue of a Penalty Notice. Unauthorised absence will include late arrival after the close of registration without good reason.

With the exception of unauthorised leave of absence taken in term time, parents will be sent a formal warning of their liability to receive such a notice before it is issued.

Why has it been introduced?

Reducing absence from school is a key priority nationally and locally because missing school damages a pupil's attainment levels, disrupts school routines and the learning of others and can leave a pupil vulnerable to anti-social behaviour and youth crime.

Above all, missing school seriously affects children's longer term life opportunities.

What is a Penalty Notice?

Under existing legislation, each parent/carer commits an offence if a child fails to attend school regularly and the absences are classed as 'unauthorised' (those absences for which the school has not given permission). Depending on circumstances such cases may result in prosecution under Section 444 of the Education Act 1996.

A Penalty Notice is an alternative to prosecution, which does not require an appearance in Court but is used as a means of enforcing a pupil's attendance where there is a reasonable expectation that their use will secure an improvement.

If the Penalty Notice is paid in full and on time, then you will not be prosecuted for this particular offence.

The Authority does not take the decision to issue a Penalty Notice lightly and would prefer to work with parents/carers to improve attendance without having to resort to any enforcement actions.

Poor school attendance can affect a child's future employment and life opportunities, and the Authority will use the powers if this is the only way of securing school attendance. Each parent is liable to receive a Penalty Notice for each child who is failing to attend school regularly.

Please remember every day of school missed is a day a child is disadvantaged

Expectations and Procedures:

1. School will monitor attendance regularly.
2. School will check that 'reasons for absences' have been received in writing and that these are recorded on the Register System.
3. School will send 2 reminders (phone call or text and reminder letter) asking for Parents to send in letters confirming reasons.
4. If absences are showing a repeated pattern, or there is no authorised reason the Headteacher will write to ask the Parent to come in for a meeting. This is a supportive measure to see if the school can offer help.
5. If attendance does not then improve a referral may be made to the EWO.
6. Surrey County Council's Education Welfare Officer visits school regularly to check registers and attendance.

Some points to consider:

- Taking a child out of school is disruptive to the child concerned both at the time, before and after the event.
- Absence may be disruptive to others in the class.
- Children away from school miss the scheduled work. The learning experiences cannot be packaged and sent home and are part of the ongoing work. For this reason, children may not be able to maintain progress.
- Confidence and self-esteem may be damaged as the child no longer feels part of the class and the learning situation has moved forward without them.