



“Christ’s ministry, as recounted in the Gospels, and the values he promoted through his teachings are fundamental to the life of our school in fulfilling its purpose as a Catholic institution.” (Mission Statement)

ATTENDANCE POLICY

Reviewed June 2019

This policy reflects the vision and aims of St Aidan’s Catholic Primary School by:

- Encouraging staff, parents and children to maximise the learning experience in order that all children reach their full potential
- Encouraging the development of high self-esteem
- Providing a framework for parents and staff
- Providing clear procedures for involving parents
- Providing clear procedures for referring to external agencies. St Aidan’s School encourages all parents/carers to work in partnership with the school in order to improve attendance and punctuality and recognises that ‘parents have the primary responsibility to ensure that pupils of compulsory school age attend school regularly.’ (DCSF 1999)

Principles

Regular and punctual school attendance is of paramount importance in ensuring that all children have full access to the curriculum. Valuable learning time is lost when children are absent or late. Children should be at school, on time, every day the school is open unless the reason for the absence is unavoidable. Permitting absence from school without a good reason is an offence by the parent. Children are sometime reluctant to attend school. Any problems with regular attendance are best sorted out between the school, the parents and the child. If a child is reluctant to attend, it is never better 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 may make things worse. Every half-day absence has to be classified by the school, NOT THE PARENTS, as either AUTHORISED or UNAUTHORISED. This is why information about the cause of each absence is always required, preferably in writing. Authorised absences are mornings or afternoons away from school for a reason such as genuine illness of the pupil or unavoidable cause. Unauthorised absences are those which the school does not consider reasonable and for which no “leave” has been given. This includes:

- Parents keeping children off school unnecessarily
- Parents taking children on holiday during term time when permission has not been sought beforehand and/or granted
- Truancy before or during the school day
- Absences which have not been requested beforehand
- Absences which have never been properly explained

Parents are expected to contact school at an early stage and to work with the staff in resolving any problems together. If difficulties cannot be sorted out in this way, the school may refer the child to the Education Welfare Officer (EWO) from the Local Authority. The EWO will also try and resolve the situation by agreement but, if other ways of improving the child's attendance have failed, these Officers can use court proceedings to prosecute parents or to seek an Education Supervision Order on the child. The maximum penalty on conviction is a fine of £2500 and/or 3 months imprisonment.

Aims

1. To improve the overall percentage of pupils at school
2. To make attendance and punctuality a priority for all those associated with the school including parents, pupils, teachers and governors
3. To develop a framework which defines agreed roles and responsibilities and promoted consistency in carrying out designated tasks.
4. To provide support, advice and guidance to parents and pupils
5. To develop a systematic approach to gathering and analysing attendance related data
6. To further develop positive and consistent communication between home and school
7. To implement a system of rewards and sanctions
8. To promote effective partnerships with the Education Welfare Service and with other services and agencies
9. To recognise the needs of the individual pupil when planning reintegration following significant periods of absence

Absence for Medical Reasons

It is the parents'/carers' responsibility:

- a. To notify the school on the morning of the first day of absence before 10.00 a.m. or as early as possible.
- b. To send a dated letter explaining the absence on the child's return to school.
- c. To inform the office in writing of any medical appointments that the child has to attend.
- d. If a child needs regular medical attention before coming to school, to agree a later registration time.
- e. To liaise with the school re. specific problems that might cause absence or lateness, e.g. a sick child or parent/carer. For more details on the first day absence contacting, see Appendix 1: 'What schools should do on the first day of absence'.

Requests for Holidays during Term Time

Parents should not take their children on family holidays during school time. However requests may be authorised in very exceptional circumstances. Holiday requests must be made in writing to the Head Teacher. All authorisation for holiday absence is at the discretion of the Headteacher.

The School's role

The school has the responsibility to ensure that all children receive a minimum of 21 hours teaching time per week for the Infant department and 23 ½ hours teaching time per week for the junior department. This does not include time for registration or assembly.

The school's role is:

- To ensure that the children are safe by shutting the doors at 9.05a.m.
- To register the children promptly, and close registers for 'lates' at 9.15 a.m.
- To maintain registers and record absence appropriately.
- To maintain a First Day Contact System
- To check registers daily for unexplained first day absences
- To telephone parents who have not contacted the school by 10.00 am
- To monitor lateness and absence, look for patterns and take appropriate action, this might involve closer supervision of individual pupils, standard letters to parents, meetings with parents in school, etc.
- To publish yearly authorised and unauthorised absence rates for each form in each year in staff meetings
- To include authorised and unauthorised absence figures on pupils' annual school reports.
- To discourage parents from taking children out of school for odd days and holidays
- To write to parents regularly, raising the profile of attendance issues, reminding them of their responsibilities and requesting up to date information regarding contact numbers
- To report accurate whole school annual absence figures to the DCSF and monitor attendance and set targets to reduce absence based on these results.
- To liaise regularly with the Education Welfare Officer informing her of any concerns regarding absence, punctuality or parents/carers repeatedly failing to contact the school and make referrals if appropriate.

The Education Welfare Service's role

The Education Welfare Service, acting on behalf of the LA, is responsible for the enforcement of attendance of all registered pupils and has an obligation to ensure this, if necessary, through legal action. The Educational Welfare Service has a statutory duty to ensure that attendance registers are completed in accordance with regulations and checked regularly.

It will:

- Act on requests made by the school re lack of contact on first day of absence, this may include standard letters, home visits.
- Inspect registers annually and sign them to show this has been done
- Assist the school in the development and implementation of whole school attendance policy and accurate register maintenance and in the large setting to improve attendance
- Meet with school staff on a regular basis in term time to discuss individual pupils and accept referrals if appropriate
- Liaise with other LA departments, Connexions Personal Adviser, ACCPAG representative, Special Educational Needs Co-ordinator, Social Inclusion Officer and Educational Psychologist regarding individual pupils and blocks to their attendance.
- Work with a caseload of parents/carers and pupils to encourage regular attendance, pursuing legal action if appropriate.