



“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

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)

Definitions

It is the Head Teacher’s discretion as to whether a child’s absence is recorded as authorised or unauthorised.

Authorised absence:

An absence is classified as authorised when a child has been away from school for a legitimate reason and the school has received notification from a parent or carer. For example, if a child has been unwell, the parent writes a note or telephones the school to explain the absence.

Only the school can make an absence authorised. Parents do not have this authority. Consequently, not all absences supported by parents will be classified as authorised. For example, if a parent takes a child out of school and gives the reason that it was to go shopping for school shoes, this will not mean it is authorised absence.

Unauthorised absence:

An absence is classified as unauthorised when a child is away from school without the permission of both the school and a parent.

Therefore, the absence is unauthorised if a child is away from school without good reason, even with the support of a parent.

Persistent absence (PA):

The DFE define a 'persistent absentee' as a pupil who, at any point in the year, has accumulated absence at 10% or more of the available sessions regardless of whether or not any of it is authorised. The PA status may change as the terms progress but these pupils are at particular risk of achieving poor outcomes at school and beyond.

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

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 leave during Term Time

Parents should not take their children on family holidays during school time. However, requests may be authorised in very exceptional circumstances. A 'Request for school leave during term time' form must be completed at least three weeks prior to an absence. All authorisation for leave is at the discretion of the Headteacher. (appendix 1)

Role of parents:

Parents have an essential role in ensuring their child's good attendance.

We ask parents to:

- Establish good attendance habits by acting as a role model and showing the children that good attendance and punctuality is important.
- Praise and reward good attendance, even small successes, e.g. getting ready quickly, even if resisting going to school.
- Talk regularly with their child about school and how they feel about it. Children are more likely to want to attend and learn if they feel supported and their anxieties are listened to.
- Contact the school by phone, text, email or letter as soon as possible to say why their child is absent, and when they are expected to return.
- Only grant days at home for genuine illness.
- If appropriate, arrange for a friend to take a child to school if a sibling is sick.
- Avoid taking holidays in school time.

- Ensure that wherever possible, medical appointments are made outside of the school day.
- Know routines of the school day to avoid issues, e.g. ensuring children have their P.E. kits on the right days.
- Establish a good bedtime routine, so that their child can sleep well, get enough sleep and make mornings less of a struggle.
- If their child is absent for five consecutive days, provide evidence of a doctor or other healthcare professional visit

The School's role

The school has the responsibility to ensure that all children receive a minimum of 32.5 hours teaching time per week.

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 celebrate punctuality and attendance through a system of awards
- 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 publish attendance data in the School Prospectus
- 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.

Intervening with Attendance Concerns:

Where we have concerns around a pupil's attendance we may intervene in one or more of the following ways:

- The Attendance Manager will review the attendance of all the school's pupils on a half termly basis and any pupils identified as a cause for concern or less than 90% attendance on a more regular basis.
- A letter may be sent to the parents of any pupil identified as having attendance or punctuality problems, informing them of the school's concerns and offering support to resolve any problems that may be impeding a child from attending. (appendix 2 and 3)
- Where patterns are identified a phone call or meeting between the Parent and Attendance Manager may take place to discuss the pattern and resolve any issues preventing attendance.

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.
- Make direct contact with parents when attendance levels are below 90% and monitor until the level increases

This policy should be read in conjunction with the school safeguarding policy.

Reviewed February 2023.

Request for leave during term time For the attention of the Headteacher

The default position of the school is that requests for absences will not be granted during term time and will only be authorised in exceptional circumstances. If an event can reasonably be scheduled outside of term time then it would not be normal to authorise absence. Absence during term time for holidays is therefore not considered an exceptional circumstance. The fundamental principles for defining 'exceptional' are rare, significant, unavoidable and short.

This form is to be completed by the Parent or Guardian and forwarded to the school office at least 3 weeks prior to the absence from school.

Parent/Guardian Name and Address	Guidance
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ The law states that we are unable to authorise requests for holiday during term time. ■ If leave is taken without the authority of the Headteacher then consideration will be given to issue a Fixed Penalty Notice in accordance with London Borough of Croydon Code of Fixed Penalty Notices. ■ A Fixed penalty notice will be issued to each parent for each child taken out of school. A penalty notice is a fine of £60 which increases to £120, if not paid within the first 21 days. If the penalty notice remains unpaid, this will result in further legal proceedings. <p>Leave will only be granted for very exceptional circumstances.</p>
How to use this form	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Use for all absences other than sickness. ■ Return form to school in <u>advance</u> of requested absence otherwise the absence will automatically be unauthorised. <p>Use a separate form for each child and each absence.</p>	
PARENT/GUARDIAN TO COMPLETE THIS SECTION	
Name of Child:	Class:
Is this the first request for absence this academic year? NO	YES
Dates of absence requested: Start date: End date:	No. of school days requested:
Reason for absence:	

Please provide the names of all siblings that attend any other schools

Name of Sibling

Name of School

_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____

Contact details whilst abroad/absent from school

If your child is being taken out of school during the term time and the details of their location is not provided, this could turn into a serious safeguarding issue. When a child is absent or missing from school, they could be at risk of harm. The school has a duty to keep children safe and this includes knowing where they are. If the Parent/Carer fails to provide required information then the school may make a referral to the Police or Social Services and report your child as 'missing in education'.

Address whilst away:

Telephone number whilst away:

Email address whilst
away _____

Please attach proof of where you will be whilst away.

I make application for my child named over the page to have authorised absence from school. I understand that if this is not agreed then any subsequent absence will be treated as unauthorised and this could lead to a penalty notice or a summons to court for irregular school attendance.

I have read and understood the guidance above.

Parent* 1: Title _____ Full Name _____ Tel: _____

Relationship to child: _____ Signature: _____
Date: _____

Parent* 2: Title _____ Full Name _____ Tel: _____

Relationship to child: _____ Signature: _____
Date: _____

*This is defined as any adult with legal parental responsibility for a child.

SCHOOL OFFICE TO COMPLETE THIS SECTION

Pupil's name _____ Class _____

Authorised: Your request has been authorised for the following dates: _____ to _____

Unauthorised: Your request has been unauthorised for the following dates: _____ to _____

It is not considered that the circumstances you described are exceptional. If you proceed to take the absence, a Penalty Notice could be issued.

Child's Current Attendance %

Comment: _____

Signed _____ Headteacher Date _____

Don't Forget:

- If you take your child out of school without permission you are committing an offence under the Education Act 1996. We may refer the matter to the Education Welfare Service who may decide to prosecute. A conviction could lead to a fine, prison sentence or both.
- Every day absent from school is an opportunity missed and we strongly advise that you do not take students out of school during term time.

- There are only 190 statutory school days which leaves 175 days for holidays, etc.
- Taking students out during term time means that students will miss out on crucial learning.
- A two-week absence taken during term time is over 50 lessons your child will miss.
- Your child will fall behind with their work, having time off school puts pressure for them to catch up.
- Statistical evidence suggests that reduced attendance at school correlates with lower grades in National examinations. Please note, we are legally bound to monitor the attendance of all children and report low attendance or patterns of non-attendance to the Local Educational Authority.

OUR AIM IS TO IMPROVE CHILDREN'S SCHOOL ATTENDANCE AND MAKE SURE THE CHILDREN GET THE BEST CHANCE IN EDUCATION.

Appendix 2

Date

Dear xxx

Re: Name: xxx

I am writing to advise you that «forename»'s school attendance is causing concern as it has fallen to «percentage_attendance»% and as a result we are becoming concerned that «forename» is missing a significant part of learning. I have enclosed a copy of «forename»'s attendance record which shows an analysis of attendance, punctuality and whether the absence is authorised or unauthorised.

We have regular visits from the EWO (Education Welfare Officer) and if their attendance falls below 90% this is something that they will want to investigate hence we would like to work with you now to keep it above that level.

Regular attendance is extremely important as missing school can have an impact on learning, and as I am sure you are aware it is a legal requirement.

I will continue to monitor «forename»'s attendance and I look forward to seeing an improvement. If the absence is due to a medical reason, which we have not already been made aware of, please ensure that we have been informed so appropriate support can be put in place.

If there are any particular circumstances that the school may not be aware of which is having an influence on «forename» attending school regularly or if you are concerned about your child's attendance, please do not hesitate to contact me so we can discuss how best to support you.

Yours sincerely,

Mrs T Paull

Appendix 3

Date

Dear xxx

Re: Child Name: xxx

I have noted during a recent attendance review that your child is beginning to show a pattern of persistent lateness.

	Period of time xxx
U (after registers close at 9:30)	
L (before register closed 9:15)	

It is the duty of parents to ensure that children attend school regularly and punctually. This encourages habits of good timekeeping and lessens any possible classroom disruption.

Please note that if your child arrives after registers close this will be recorded as an unauthorised absence.

We have regular visits from the EWO (Education Welfare Officer) and if this level of persistent lateness continues this is something that they will want to investigate hence we would like to work with you now to prevent intervention from the EWO.

If you are experiencing any difficulties regarding your child's education or getting them to school on time, I would welcome the opportunity of meeting with you to discuss this as we want to work with you to ensure your child gets the best out of their education.

Yours sincerely,

Mrs T Paull