

Saint Anne's Catholic Primary School



Attendance Policy January 2018

1 Introduction – “Saint Anne’s School considers regular school attendance to be 96% and above”

- 1.1 It is a legal requirement in the UK, for your child to receive education from the school term following their fifth birthday and the end of June, following their sixteenth birthday. If your child is enrolled in school, any absence which is not authorised, will be considered in breach of this requirement.
- 1.2 School begins at 8:45am, when the register is taken. Arrival after the register has been taken will be marked as late. Failure to arrive after 9:00am will mean that this will be marked as unauthorised absence.
- 1.3 At Saint Anne’s, we expect all children on roll to attend every day, when the school is open, as long as they are fit and healthy enough to do so. We do all we can to encourage the children to attend, and to put in place appropriate procedures. We believe that the most important factor in promoting good attendance is the development of positive attitudes towards school. To this end, we strive to make our school a happy and rewarding experience for all children.
- 1.4 Once a child is enrolled at school, parents have a legal responsibility to ensure that their child attends every day, unless prevented from doing so by illness or other exceptional circumstances for which absence is authorised by the school.
- 1.5 Under the Education (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2006, the governing body are responsible for making sure the school keeps an attendance register that records which pupils are present at the start of the morning session and during the afternoon session. This register will also indicate whether an absence was ‘authorised’ or ‘unauthorised’.
- 1.6 Attendance is monitored by the attendance leader and attendance officer, however it is the responsibility of all teaching staff to understand the attendance policy, to be aware of attendance in their classes, to properly record lateness and absence in the register and to pass on any concerns they may have to the attendance leader.
- 1.7 Definition of ‘authorised absence’:
 - an absence is classified as authorised when the school has ascertained that a child has been away from school for a legitimate reason and the school has received notification from a parent or guardian. For example, if a child has been unwell, the parent writes a note or telephones the school to explain the absence. Exceptional cases of religious observances or particular family circumstances may also result in an authorised absence being granted by the school.
 - only the school can make an absence authorised. Parents and carers do not have this authority. Consequently, not all absences supported by parents and carers will be classified as authorised. For example, if a parent takes a child out of school to go shopping during school hours, or allows a child to stay away from school to celebrate a family birthday or go on a family outing, this will not mean it is an authorised absence.
 - You **may** receive authorisation from the Headteacher for the following reasons:
 - Religious Observance
 - Bereavement/Other Family Emergency
 - Medical Appointment which cannot be held outside of school hours
 - Exclusion
 - Off-site education

Authorisation will not be given for any holidays in term-time.

1.8 Definition of 'unauthorised absence':

- an absence is classified as unauthorised when your child is away from school without the permission of both the school and a parent.
- therefore, the absence is unauthorised if your child is away from school without good reason, even with the support of a parent.

1.9 Requirement to provide medical evidence

- If your child's attendance falls below 95% for any reason you may be required to provide school with some form of medical evidence. Failure to provide such evidence will result in the absence being unauthorised and can leave parents, vulnerable to legal action being considered.

1.10 Definition of medical evidence

- A doctor's certificate (optional)
- Medication containing child's name and date of issue
- Counterfoil from repeat prescription
- Hospital appointment letters

This list is not exhaustive and other evidence may be offered and the school may make a judgement on whether to accept it or not.

2 Aims and objectives

2.1 Our aims and objectives in relation to pupils' attendance are to:

- maximise attendance so that all pupils can gain full access to our curriculum and be enabled to reach their full academic potential and achieve a high level of personal and social well-being;
- ensure that pupils are safe and that their whereabouts are known;
- eliminate unauthorised absence;
- discourage families from arranging holidays during school terms;
- ensure that parents and carers understand clearly when it is appropriate to keep their children off school and when this constitutes unauthorised absence;
- ensure that school staff and parents and carers are familiar with and adhere to our procedures for registering pupils' attendance, and reporting, recording and following up a pupil's absence or lateness;
- ensure that pupils and their parents and carers understand the importance of regular and consistent attendance;
- make clear to parents and carers the consequences of failing to ensure that their children attend school;
- ensure that children enjoy coming to school and are highly motivated to attend regularly and consistently.

3 Procedure if a child is absent

3.1 When your child is absent unexpectedly, the class teacher will record the absence in the register, and will inform the school office staff, who will endeavour to contact parents or carers.

3.2 The school encourages parents to telephone the school to inform us of your child's absence through illness, on the first morning of absence. This prevents school office staff having to make numerous phone calls and provides reassurance of a child's safety in the

event that you cannot be contacted by telephone, for any reason. Parents **should not** use e-mail or text messaging to inform the school of a child's absence.

- 3.3 When your child returns to school, a note should be brought from their parents or carers to explain the absence, and confirm its duration, even if you have telephoned the school on the first day of absence.
- 3.4 A note may be sent to the school prior to the day of absence, e.g. if your child has an unavoidable medical appointment.
- 3.5 If there is any doubt about the whereabouts of your child, the class teacher should take immediate action by notifying the school office. The school will then be in contact straight away with parents or guardians, in order to check on the safety of your child.

4 Requests for leave of absence for a child

- 4.1 We believe that children need to be in school for all sessions, so that they can make the most progress possible and do not miss out on crucial learning which may put them at an educational disadvantage. However, we do understand that there are exceptional circumstances in which parents may legitimately request leave of absence for your child to attend, for example, a special religious or family event (such exceptional circumstances would not include normal events such as birthdays or regular religious ceremonies). We expect you as parents and carers to contact the school to obtain authorisation at least a week in advance. Normally such exceptional requests will be granted.
- 4.2 Parents and carers have no statutory right to withdraw their children from school for a family holiday. Children are required to attend school for 190 days in a school year, leaving 175 days of weekends and school holidays. Parents and carers can be issued with a penalty notice should holidays be taken during school term time.
- 4.3 Saint Anne's considers pupils' continuous attendance at school to be so essential for their academic achievement that it is not our policy to routinely authorise an allocation of term time leave of absence to families. Each case will be considered individually by the Headteacher.

5 Long-term absence

- 5.1 When children have an illness that means they will be away from school for over five days, the school will do all we can to send work home, so that, where possible, the child can keep in touch with the learning going on in their class.
- 5.2 If the absence is likely to continue for an extended period, or be a repetitive absence, the school will contact the Local Authority (LA) support services, so that arrangements, in exceptional circumstances, can be made for the child to be given some tuition outside school, where possible.

6 Repeated unauthorised absences

- 6.1 The school will contact the parent or carer of any child who has an unauthorised absence. If a child has a repeated number of unauthorised absences, the parents or carers will be asked to visit the school to discuss the reasons. If the situation does not improve, the school will then contact the Education Welfare Service, who will visit the home and seek to ensure that the parents or carers understand the seriousness of the situation.
- 6.2 The governors, supported by the Education Welfare Service, reserve the right to consider taking legal action, or issuing a fixed penalty notice, against any parents or carers who repeatedly fail to accept their responsibility for sending their children to school on a regular basis.
- 6.3 Absence from school affects your child's education. As a school, we believe your child will not get the best out of their education if they do not have an acceptable level of

attendance. Any level of attendance below 95%, is considered unacceptable. 95% attendance through the school year, means almost fifty hours of learning missed. This can be extremely difficult for children to catch up and seriously affects their ability to achieve. For this reason, we will **always** follow up unauthorised absence.

6.4 If unauthorised absence is reoccurring, legal action will be taken. We will take every reasonable measure to avoid this outcome, however we will follow the legal recourse, should we find no other option successful.

6.5 **Legal Penalties**

Under **Section 23(1) Anti-Social Behaviour Act 2007**: *“Penalty notices may be issued to the parent of pupils who have unauthorised absence from school.*

- The amount of the penalty is £60.
- If this is not paid within 21 days the amount rises to £120.
- If not paid within 28 days the Local Authority may prosecute.

Under **Section 444(1) Education Act 1996**:

“If you are the parent of a child of compulsory school age who fails to attend school regularly, you are guilty of an offence.”

The court can fine each parent up to £1,000 per child, order payment of the prosecution costs and/or make a Parenting Order. This means that if there are two parents/guardians and two children with regular absences the total fine could be up to £4,000.

These court proceedings could result in you having a criminal record.

7 Rewards for good attendance - Rewards

7.1 St Anne’s school believes in a positive approach to all aspects of education. While we recognise that 100% attendance is not always possible, it is always our aim. While we would always seek to avoid disadvantaging children who, through illness or other circumstances, have been unavoidably absent from school, we do, from time to time reward consistently high attendance wherever possible through the following ways:

- Our golden stamp system. Children can receive one golden stamp every day they attend school. Golden stamps are awarded for; arriving at school on time, wearing correct uniform/PE Kit/Shoes, good behaviour and reading at home. Throughout the year, prizes are awarded for the number of golden stamps achieved. You can win prizes for 60, 100, 140 and 180 (check numbers) Golden Stamps.
- Termly certificates for 100% attendance for individual children.
- Any class who achieves 100% attendance for the whole class for one week, will receive a whole class reward.
- Attendance incentive rewards/trips or certificates for children with 100 per cent attendance over a term or a whole school year, in order to maintain a focus on the importance of regular attendance.

8 Attendance targets

8.1 The school sets attendance targets each year. These are agreed by the senior staff and governors as part of our annual target-setting process. The targets are challenging yet realistic, and based on attendance figures achieved in previous years. The school

considers carefully the attendance figures for other similar schools when setting its own targets.

9 Monitoring and review

- 9.1 The governing body monitors overall attendance, and they request an annual report from the headteacher. The governing body also has the responsibility for this policy, and for seeing that it is carried out. The governors, attendance lead and the school attendance officer will therefore examine closely the information provided to them, and seek to ensure that our attendance figures are as high as they can be.
- 9.2 The school will keep accurate attendance records on file for a minimum period of three years.
- 9.3 The rates of attendance for each class will be reported in the school newsletter and on the school website.
- 9.4 Class teachers will be responsible for monitoring attendance in their class and for following up absences in the appropriate way. If there is concern about a child's absence, they will contact the school office immediately. If there is a longer-term general worry about the attendance of a particular child, this will be reported to the Headteacher and Attendance Officer, who will contact the parents or carers.
- 9.5 This policy will be reviewed every three years by the governing body or sooner if necessary.

Signed: W. Gopaul (Headteacher)

Signed: (Chair of Governors)

Date: January 2018

Next reviewed: January 2020

School Policy (Guidance for Staff)

Following Birmingham Local Authority Guidelines, our school takes a whole school approach to attendance. Attendance is monitored by the attendance leader, however it is the responsibility of all teaching staff to understand the attendance policy, to be aware of attendance in their classes, to properly record lateness and absence in the register and to pass on any concerns they may have to the attendance leader.

Records and Reminders

Daily attendance of all children must be recorded in the school register. The completion of the register twice daily is a legal requirement. The registers must be completed accurately and on time.

Children must be marked late if they arrive after 9:00am.

Inaccurate completing of the register with respect to attendance and punctuality constitutes a safeguarding issue.

With any single incidence of absence, we will remind all parent/guardians that they must inform us if their child will be absent and of the consequences of repeated unauthorised absence.

Authorised absence:

- If a child is unwell and the parent/guardian has informed us of this, their absence may be recorded as authorised.
- If they remain absent for longer periods, a medical note may be required to continue recording absences as authorised.
- If we have been informed ahead of time of an absence and this has been authorised by the Headteacher, this may be recorded as authorised.

These instances are recorded absences and will impact the individual child's attendance record and whole school attendance.

Unauthorised absences:

- An absence of which we have not been informed.
- An absence of which we have been informed, but do not accept as a valid reason for absence, i.e. family holidays.

Every instance of unauthorised absence will be followed up on the day of absence, with a text to parents. If this receives no response, parents will receive a letter the following morning. If attendance falls below 96%, whether authorised or unauthorised, steps will be taken to make improvements.

Action Plan

We aim for 100% attendance of every child.

We recognise that reasonable absences for illness or other authorised absence may be unavoidable. Where absence may be considered to be unreasonable, where it is consistent and unauthorised, legal action may be required.

Before any legal action is taken, we will make every reasonable effort to assist parents in improving their child's attendance.

- We will work with parents and offer considerable prior warning to any legal action taken.
- We will offer free breakfast club, to encourage a change in routine and offer more flexibility to working parents.
- We offer family support, should parents/guardians be struggling with getting their child/ren to school, or to arrive on time.

To encourage parent/guardians to feel involved in whole school attendance, we will:

- Print the up to date attendance figures of the school in the newsletter every week.
- Give individual attendance sheets to every parent/guardian on parents evening.
- Inform parents of our reward system and the rewards their child and their class could receive for consistently high attendance.

Should none of these steps result in improvement in attendance, we will begin the 'Spotlight on Attendance' procedure. This is a whole school procedure. A meeting will be had with any parent who falls into the spotlighted category, to offer assistance and to make clear the legal steps which will be taken should their child/ren's attendance not improve.

UK Law on attendance states that:

If a registered pupil of compulsory school age fails to attend school regularly the parent could be guilty of an offence under **Section 444 Education Act 1996**. There are two offences:

- [Section 444\(1\) Education Act 1996](#) - If the child is absent without authorisation then the parent is guilty of an offence. This is a strict liability offence i.e. all that needs to be shown is a lack of regular attendance. Sanctions can include a fine of up to £1000.
- [Section 444\(1A\) Education Act 1996](#) - an aggravated offence. If the child is absent without authorisation and the parent knew about the child's absence and failed to act then the parent is guilty of an offence. Sanctions can include a fine of up to £2500 and a prison sentence of up to 3 months.

Legal proceedings begin with a fixed penalty notice to the parent/guardian. There is no right of appeal against a Fixed Penalty Notice. If this is not paid the local authority may proceed to prosecution. The local authority also can prosecute parents for non-attendance without issuing a Fixed Penalty Notice. Only the local authority can prosecute parents.

Safeguarding

Unauthorised absence from school is a safeguarding issue. If a child is not present and we do not know why, we must be aware of a potential risk to that child.

To comply with UK Law regarding compulsory education and for the safeguarding of all children on our school roll, we must ensure:

- We have recorded proof of identity for children and parent/guardians.
- We follow up on every unauthorised absence as per the attendance policy.
- We are aware of and follow up on incidents of Children Missing from Education (CME).

Statutory Guidance on Children Missing Education (2015) states: Children Missing Education are defined as those who are not on a school roll or receiving suitable education

otherwise than at school. Those who are regularly absent or have missed 10 school days or more without permission may be at risk of becoming 'children missing education'.

- We follow a 'first contact' procedure, to ensure we are aware of CME.

First contact procedure:

If a child registered to the school is absent on their first day, we will attempt to contact parent/guardians. Should this be unsuccessful, or should the parent/guardian state that the child is being home schooled or has been admitted to another school, we will contact Admissions through the local authority to ensure the child/ren are in full time education.

See *School Safeguarding Policy* for child safety indicators relating to attendance and punctuality.