

# ENGLISH MARTYRS CATHOLIC PRIMARY SCHOOL

*'A Learning Community in Christ'*



## ATTENDANCE POLICY

### Introduction

Parents/carers want their children to get on well in life. Children only get one chance at school, and their chance of a successful future is likely to be affected by not attending school regularly. Poor attendees may not be able to keep up with school work or miss out on parts of the curriculum. This can affect their rate of progress and overall level of attainment. It's not only the academic work: missing out on the social side of school life can affect children's ability to make and keep friendships. Setting good attendance patterns from an early age will also help children later on at secondary school. Being on time is also vital. Arriving late at school can be very disruptive for the late child, the teacher and other children in the class.

As a school we aim to

- Maintain an attendance rate of a minimum of 95%
- Maintain parents' and pupils' awareness of the importance of regular attendance
- Maintain good time keeping.

Good attendance is important because

- Statistics show a direct link between under-achievement and poor attendance
- Regular attenders make better progress, both socially and academically
- Regular attenders find school routines, school work and friendships easier to cope with
- Regular attenders find learning more satisfying
- Regular attenders settle into high school more easily.

## Legal Note

Attendance regulations have been changed from September 2013:

“Amendments to the 2006 regulations remove references to family holiday and extended leave as well as the statutory threshold of ten school days. The amendments make clear that Headteachers may not grant any leave of absence during term time unless there are exceptional circumstances. Headteachers should determine the number of school days a child can be away from school if the leave is granted.” DFE June 2013

## Expectations

We expect that all pupils will

- Attend school regularly
- Attend school punctually
- Attend school appropriately prepared for the day
- Discuss with their class teacher any problems preventing them from attending school.

We expect all parents and carers to

- Encourage regular school attendance and be aware of their legal responsibilities
- Ensure that their child(ren) arrive punctually by 8.50am and prepared for the school day  
(Please note that the school gate opens at 8.40am and parents and carers are responsible for their child(ren) before this time)
- Contact the school whenever the child(ren) is unable to attend school
- Inform the school by 9.30am, at the very latest, on the first day of the child's absence
- Inform the school of the reason for absence by phone or letter
- Contact the school whenever any problems occur that may keep the child away from school
- Book family holidays during school holidays unless there is an exceptional circumstance or significant educational benefit
- Arrange wherever possible for medical appointments to be made outside school hours. If this is unavoidable then the child should be removed from school for the minimum amount of time possible.

We expect the school (staff and Governors) to

- Encourage good school attendance by providing a safe and welcoming learning environment
- Keep regular and accurate records of attendance and monitor all pupils' attendance
- Contact the parents or carers as soon as possible when there is unexplained or irregular absence
- Refer irregular or unjustified patterns of attendance to the EWO (Education Welfare Officer) on one of their regular monitoring visits to the school, if not resolved with parent/carers
- Work with the EWO if further action, such as the issuing of a penalty notice or a court prosecution is required. (Fine of up to £2,500 and/or 3 month's imprisonment)
- Keep parent/carers informed about attendance issues and report annually to them on their child(ren's) attendance record
- Work with other local schools and agencies to improve attendance
- Keep to DfES and local authority guidelines
- To set and publish attendance targets as statutorily required.

The local authority expect an average of at least 95% attendance of pupils. This allows for an average of 9½ days of authorised absence per child in each school year. This should cover **all** absence including sickness, medical appointments and authorised holiday absence. The local authority is responsible for monitoring attendance through the EWOs. OfSTED will pay special attention to primary schools that have an overall attendance rate of less than 95%.

## **Absence During School Term Time**

Holidays will not be routinely authorised, following statutory changes from September 2013. The school strongly advises parents and carers to book family holidays during the school holidays to minimize any disruption to their education. Absence will only be authorised in exceptional circumstances. Holidays should not be booked until the exceptional circumstance has been put in writing to the Headteacher and the absence is authorised. The procedure for requesting holiday in school time will be

- The parent or carer will obtain a "Request for Absence" form and information sheet from the school office or the school website
- The parent or carer will fill in and return the form which should include a full explanation of why the request is exceptional. Parent/carers may submit a separate letter if they wish
- The Headteacher will decide whether to authorize the holiday in line with this policy, local guidelines and DfES guidelines.

The Headteacher will consider

- The form and any letters from the parent or carer
- The age of the pupil
- The time of year proposed for the trip (and the impact on the planned curriculum and assessment)
- The nature of the absence and the parental wishes
- The overall attendance pattern of the pupil (including sickness and medical appointments over the last 12 months)
- The pupil's stage of education and progress (based on discussion with the class teacher and including consideration of any Special Educational Needs)
- Any other specific guidelines as previously agreed with Governors, such as overall attendance record to date
- The Headteacher may request to meet the parent/carer to discuss the form. The Headteacher will return the form to the parent or carer, indicating whether authorization is given and signed by the Head (or an Assistant Headteacher in the Head's absence)
- The Head has the authority to authorize exceptional absences that are unavoidable at short notice (e.g. a funeral). This does not include cheap last minute holiday offers
- Planned absence will not be authorised during the first half of the Summer Term when tests and preparation for tests are arranged for all pupils (and from the Spring half term for Years 2 and 6) The maximum amount of time that can be authorised per academic year is 10 days. Anything over this will usually be recorded as unauthorised.

## **Punctuality**

It is important to be on time as the first part of the school day is used to give out instructions or organise schoolwork for the rest that day. It is also a time for children to settle down by reading or another quiet activity so they are ready for lessons immediately after registration.

Morning registration is at 8.50 am. This is the time your child must be in the line in the playground. Parent/carers need to ensure their child is coming through the school gate at 8.45am. The morning play session gives children and parents an opportunity to socialise and for the children to gain a deeper sense of community and belonging.

Late arrivals are disruptive to the whole class and often embarrassing and stressful for your child. We take the view there are no late children, only late parent/carers.

Arrival (particularly if the lateness is frequent/persistent) after the close of registration will be marked as unauthorised absence code 'U' in line with the DCFS guidance. This is effectively an absence.

All lateness is recorded daily. The number of minutes late and the reason for lateness if known will also be recorded. This information can be made available to the courts in the form of a report, should a prosecution be the outcome of repeated lateness.

Parent/carers should collect their children promptly at the end of the school day. Where late collection is persistent and/or significantly late, the school is obliged to take any uncollected pupil to a place of safety and share concerns with other agencies. Therefore Social Services will be contacted if the school cannot contact a suitable responsible adult by 4.30pm. The school will place a child into the after school club and provide the parent/carer with the bill, should this be a frequent situation.

## **Encouraging Attendance**

The school will ensure that parent/carers are well-informed about attendance issues through:

- The parent/carer information booklets and DfES booklets
- Home-school agreement
- Letters to parent/carers and general Newsletters
- Parent/carer consultation evenings (as appropriate)
- End of Year School reports (more detail if concerns are evident)
- Prospectus
- The Durrington Family Group of Schools Attendance Booklet
- Parent/carer induction evenings
- Individual letters home should concerns arise regarding attendance and lateness
- Meeting with HT/AHT if concerns persist to discuss ways to improve the situation and possible referral to an external agency, ie School Nurse
- The school will encourage good school attendance and use incentives where appropriate. The school will work with individual pupils and their families where absence is an issue to give one-to-one support, advice and incentives to improve motivation to attend school.

## **School Organisation and Procedures. (For school use only)**

Class teachers (or teaching assistants) will

- Keep regular and accurate records of attendance for all pupils twice a day. The register should be taken and returned to the office by 9.10am in the morning and by 1.10pm after lunch
- Record in the registers any reasons for lateness or absence
- Inform the office of any unexplained lateness or absence that needs further follow up
- Be alert to the early signs of disaffection which could result in non-attendance and to report this to the Head/Assistant Head
- Inform the Head/Assistant Head of any unexplained lateness or absence that warrants serious concern or requires further investigation within the school.

The Office staff will

- Ensure class registers are returned to the office by 9.10am in the morning and by 1.10pm after lunch and collect them if they are not
- Record in the registers any reasons received by the office for lateness or absence
- Follow up any unexplained lateness or absence
- Contact parent/carers as soon as possible, but before 10am if their child is absent and a reason has not been given
- Send a letter of concern to parent/carers by the end of the second day if contact has still not been possible, inviting them to contact the school to explain why the child did not attend school
- Send a second letter of concern to parent/carers if absence has not been explained within a week. The letter should ask the parent/carers to meet the Headteacher or Assistant Headteacher to discuss attendance concerns. The letter should also warn parent/carers that if there is not a satisfactory response, the EWO will be informed and this could lead to a fine of up to £2,500 and/or 3 month's imprisonment
- Monitor and record the type of absence for each child
- Inform the Head/Assistant Headteacher of any unexplained lateness or absence that warrants serious concern or requires further investigation within the school.

The Head/Assistant Headteacher will

- Highlight school attendance in assemblies, newsletters, publications etc
- Ensure that the above procedures are adhered to by meeting fortnightly with Office staff member responsible for the upkeep of the registers and attendance information
- Support staff in encouraging and maintaining good attendance
- Follow up any unexplained lateness or absence that warrants serious concern or requires further investigation within the school
- Monitor overall attendance in conjunction with the Governing Body
- Evaluate policy including effect of pupil incentives and parent information
- Compare the school's attendance record with similar schools, the local authority average and nationwide data
- Liaise with the EWO about persistent late comers or non-attenders
- Use the local authority self-review/action plan materials (This may include extending the red-amber-green scheme to individual classes/individuals).

The Governing Body will

- Monitor attendance - overall figures
- Evaluate policy including effect of pupil incentives and parent/carer information
- Review the attendance policy bi-annually
- Set attendance targets for each academic year in conjunction with the Headteacher.

The local authority will monitor attendance levels regularly.

## **Specific Guidelines:**

These guidelines agreed by Governors will be used by the Head in conjunction with DfES and locally agreed guidelines, in deciding whether to authorise absence or not:

Examples of absence that will be authorised

- An organised educational course
- An organised exam, sports competition or approved public performance
- Dental and medical hospital appointments which cannot be made at another time
- Illness, sickness and treatments – although frequent medical absences will be challenged
- Funerals and bereavement
- Weddings
- Days of religious observance
- Up to two weeks annual (one) family holiday per academic year – if it is not possible to take holiday at any other time.

Examples of absence that will NOT be authorised

- Shopping trips
- Birthdays treats involving absence
- Days out
- Visiting relatives
- Extra days tagged onto weekends throughout the year unless for exceptional reasons and with prior approval
- Days when a child could have come in late rather than not at all
- Holidays during the first half of the Summer Term (SATs, Optional Tests and preparation)
- Holidays for pupils with low attendance.

## **Leavers**

If your child is leaving our school (other than at the end of Year 6 to go to High School) parents are asked to:

Give the school comprehensive information about their plans including any date of a move and your new address and telephone numbers, your child's new school and the start date when known. This should be submitted to our school in writing.

When pupils leave and we do not have information about where they have gone, then your child is considered to be a 'Child Missing Education'. This means that the Local Authority has a legal duty to carry out investigations, which will include liaising with Children's Services (formerly Social Services), the Police and other agencies, to try and locate your child. By giving us the above information, these investigations can be avoided.

## **Legal Note**

Parent/carers have a legal duty to ensure the regular and full time attendance at school of registered pupils (Education Act 1996). This policy is based on the law and on Best Practice guidance produced by the DCSF and the Local Authority. The School Attendance Service aims to work with schools and families to promote good attendance and avoid legal action. However, in some cases, parent/carers are prosecuted (taken to court) or have to pay a Fixed Penalty (fine) if these absences continue.

We value your support in helping us to maintain the high standards to which we always aspire.

Reviewed - May 2015  
Next Review Date – May 2017