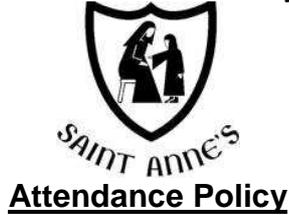


St. Anne's Catholic Primary School



This Policy should be read in conjunction with Staffordshire Attendance Policy and Related Guidance

Principles

Promoting positive behaviour and excellent attendance is the responsibility of the whole school community.

The school will promote positive behaviour and good attendance through its use of curriculum and learning materials. Good attendance and behaviour by pupils will be recognised appropriately. All children should be at school, on time, every day the school is open, unless the reason for the absence is unavoidable.

All children are sometimes reluctant to attend school. Any problems that arise with attendance are best resolved 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. Permitting absence from school without a good reason is an offence by the parent.

Schools have a duty in law to refer any absence of 10 days or more where they have been unable to make contact with the parent/child or have general concerns about the absence to the Education Welfare Service.

Schools are required to take an attendance register twice a day, and this shows whether the pupil is present, engaged in an approved educational activity off-site, or absent. If a pupil of compulsory school age is absent every half-day absence from school has to be classified by the school, as either **AUTHORISED** or **UNAUTHORISED**. Only school can authorise the absence, not parents. 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 good reason like illness or other 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 never been properly explained**
- **children who arrive at school too late to get a mark**

Parents whose children are experiencing difficulties should contact the school at an

early stage and work together with the staff in resolving any problems. This is nearly always successful. If difficulties cannot be sorted out in this way, the school or the parent may refer the child to the Education Welfare Officer from the County Council. He/she will also try to resolve the situation with voluntary support, if other ways of trying to improve the child's attendance have failed, these Officers can issue Penalty Notices or 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.

Alternatively, parents or children may wish to contact the EWO themselves to ask for help or information. They are independent of the school and will give impartial advice. Their telephone number is available from the school office or by contacting the Local Education Authority.

New rules for holiday leave

On 1st September 2013 a significant alteration in the law came into effect which changed the grounds on which a Headteacher could allow a pupil to go on holiday during term time. Prior to the change the law stated that 'a pupil may be granted leave of absence from the school to go away on holiday' where the Headteacher considered that there were 'special circumstances relating to that application'. This section has been deleted and there is now no rule which allows for authorisation to be given specifically for holidays.

The replacement section states that 'leave of absence shall not be granted' unless the Headteacher considers that there are 'exceptional circumstances relating to that application'.

Leave of absence due to urgent and unavoidable circumstances (such as a family bereavement) would clearly be considered exceptional. Other than this however it will be appropriate for Headteachers to deal with applications on a case-by-case basis.

Procedures

The school applies the following procedures in deciding how to deal with individual absences:

Parents should ensure that their children arrive at school in time, properly attired and in a condition to learn. Furthermore, they need to see themselves as partners with schools in the education of their children. This means instilling in their children a respect for education - and for those who deliver it - and ensuring that pupils complete homework on time. Parents should also impress upon their children the need to observe schools' codes of conduct and reinforce this through discipline in the home. It is up to us, the staff, to insist that children present themselves in the correct uniform and bring appropriate kit as required. Staff should be aware of any infringement of the school codes in dress, demeanour or presentation and take immediate steps to point these out when and where they arise.

REPORTING ABSENCES

It is parents' responsibility to inform the school of the reason for a child's absence as soon as possible - parental contact on the first day of absence should be the normal expectation - and to provide such further information as may be required. The school

operates a '1st point of contact' system, whereby the secretary rings the home before 9.30.a.m if the absence has not been reported. When a child is ill, the school should be notified of the nature of the illness as soon as possible and, when this can be predicted, the date the child is expected to be able to return.

THE IMPORTANCE OF REGISTRATION

Both staff and pupils should see the careful taking of registers as an integral and key part of the school day, as indeed was intended in law. Particular attention should be paid to accurate registration and to the preservation and security of registers. These documents may be used as evidence in cases where parents are being prosecuted for school attendance offences. Inappropriate authorisation of absences may compromise subsequent court proceedings.

All teachers to operate the same rules and codes.

When classes are shared or exchanged, staff must be made aware of any absences.

Staff must deal with all absences and lateness in accordance with agreed procedures.

The secretary and Headteacher are responsible for monitoring attendance on a regular basis.

The Secretary and Headteacher are responsible for liaison with EWO.

The Headteacher will consider pupils' attendance difficulties on an individual basis.

The Headteacher is responsible for monitoring and updating the attendance policy.

The Head monitors, analyses and reports on attendance and provide whole school data for external and internal use.

The Head informs parents about attendance and absence policy and the methods and criteria of recording absences and lateness in the prospectus and in a letter each year.

The Head ensures parents are informed of: session times, procedures for absences, term dates, Inset days etc., when pupils are not expected to attend school.

The Head can authorise absences due to ill health but is not obliged to do so and shouldn't do so if in any doubt.

Marking

The system used in this school is SIMS Attendance, accessed via the computer. Each class teacher uses the computer print out to enter attendance data about every child in their class.

There are a variety of codes, which are appropriate to the reasons for absence. Children who are present are marked with /. If a child is absent and no message has been received, "U" is selected as the code, this can then be changed if a message is received.

Children arriving after the register has been called must report to Mrs. Conlin for

inclusion in the register.

ILLNESS, MEDICAL AND DENTAL APPOINTMENTS

If the Head teacher is satisfied that a pupil is absent as a result of illness the absence must be treated as authorised.

Leave for medical or dental appointments may be given (i.e. the absence may be authorised) where confirmation has been received from the parent (either in person, in writing or by a telephone call), or on production of an appointment card. Where a pupil is present for registration but then has to attend an appointment, we need take no action beyond recording the fact that (for purposes of emergency evacuation) the pupil, although registered, is not physically present. Similarly, the school must note the presence of a pupil (again for purposes of emergency evacuation) who was not there when the register was being taken but returns later from an appointment.

LATENESS

We actively discourage late arrivals. A pupil arriving late may seriously disrupt not only his or her continuity of learning but also that of others. Registers should be marked as soon as children gather in the classroom. Children not present should be marked absent. Late arrivals will be altered in the register by the secretary. Staff should take note of regular incidence of lateness and advise the SLT.

For registration to mean anything at all, a firm line must be taken on late arrivals. Where pupils miss registration altogether and fail to provide an adequate explanation, they should be marked as unauthorised absences for that session, even though they may arrive later. Where a pupil does arrive late and misses registration, his or her presence on site will still need to be noted for purposes of emergency evacuation. In the case of persistently late pupils, the time of arrival might also be recorded to provide evidence for further action, if necessary.

FAMILY BEREAVEMENT

The death of a family member can be a particularly traumatic event in any young person's life. We will respond sensitively to requests for leave of absence to attend funerals or associated events.

FAMILY HOLIDAYS AND EXTENDED TRIPS OVERSEAS DURING TERM TIME

See Appendix

DAYS OF RELIGIOUS OBSERVANCE

Section 199 of the Education Act 1993 provides that an offence is not committed where the absence of a pupil of compulsory school age results from participation in a day set aside exclusively for religious observance by the religious body to which the parents belong. Such absences are classified as authorised absence. It is obviously helpful if parents or pupils can give the school advance written notice of any such religious observance days.

Persistent Absence

When an individual pupil's attendance level falls below 85% a discussion with the EWO takes place and parents are informed in a letter. If the school continues to have

concerns about attendance the EWO will carry out an investigation. Following investigation any unresolved issues could result in the parent receiving a Penalty Notice or ultimately a prosecution under the Education Act 1996 s.444.

It is not appropriate for the school to authorise absences for shopping, looking after other children, haircuts etc. Leave may be granted in an emergency (e.g. bereavement) or for medical appointments which must be in school time.

Information about individual school targets, projects and special initiatives

The school has adopted the following attendance targets and special projects:

Attendance certificates are awarded to children each term for very good and 100%.

Prizes are awarded at the end of the school year for 100% attendance.

Summary

The school has a legal duty to publish its absence figures to parents and to promote attendance. Equally, parents have a duty to make sure that their children attend. School staff are committed to working with parents as the best way to ensure as high a level of attendance as possible.

This Policy was adopted by the Governing body in May 2009 and is reviewed annually.

It was last reviewed in the AUTUMN term 2015.

APPENDIX

Changes to Penalty Notices for Absences from School

The opportunity for your child to have access to a good education in a Staffordshire school is very important to us all. Encouraging good attendance gives each pupil the best chance to learn and achieve to their full potential.

The vast majority of our pupils achieve very good attendance, and the number of unauthorised absences (without permission agreed by the school) is lower in Staffordshire than compared to the national average. We also have an improving picture on the number of persistent absences (children who repeatedly miss sessions) as this has reduced each year since 2010. Therefore, good attendance is not a problem in most cases.

Head teachers continue to hold the responsibility for deciding if a request made by a parent or carer for leave of absence should be granted, to give permission for “authorised” absence in exceptional circumstances.

Last year the Department for Education (DfE) introduced changes to the law regarding parents taking their children out of school during term time. These changes meant that parents risk receiving a penalty notice (fine) issued by the Local Authority for taking their child out of school in term time without permission from the head teacher.

One year on from these changes, the Local Authority has consulted with schools and reviewed the county’s criteria for issuing these penalty notices, for those pupils who miss out on school without permission, and where the Local Authority is, therefore, required by law to take appropriate action.

This has resulted in some changes which are outlined below and which came into effect from 23rd February 2015.

Penalty Notice for leave of absence (holiday) in term time

- Previously our approach was to only issue a Penalty Notice if the pupil’s overall attendance was below 87%. This threshold has now been removed.
- Previously only one Penalty Notice per pupil was issued within an academic year. This limit has been removed so more than one Penalty Notice could be issued for repeated absence without permission during term time.
- Previously pupils missing 10 sessions or five days taken together risked a Penalty Notice. Now a combined total of ten sessions (not necessarily grouped as 5 consecutive days) could trigger a Penalty Notice.

Instead of monitoring and totalling holiday absences taken across each academic year, they will now be monitored across the previous three terms, regardless of academic year

Penalty Notice for persistent absence

- Parents whose child is repeatedly absent will now only receive one warning notice period to bring about improvement in attendance in a single academic year. If attendance deteriorates again then no further formal warning notice will be issued and the Local Authority can automatically consider other statutory actions if unauthorised absence re-occurs.

These changes have been agreed with head teachers and have been implemented to support good attendance. Further details and a copy of the revised Code of Conduct for issuing Penalty Notices can be obtained from the council's website <http://www.staffordshire.gov.uk/education/welfareservice/Attendance/home.aspx>

The Local Authority will continue to monitor all school attendance and take appropriate action for absences during term time, both to support head teachers in their role and in challenging the small minority of parents that choose to disregard the law.

LA Parents Leaflet – Penalty Notices

Education Penalty Notices Information for Parents

Parents have a legal duty to make sure that their children go to school regularly. The local authority can now issue Penalty Notices if a parent fails to make sure that their children receive the education they deserve. This leaflet tells you about these notices.

School Attendance and the Law

Any absence from school is a cause for concern. Only by attending every day will your child have the best chance to get the most from their education.

The headteacher at your child's school must decide whether to authorise an absence. That is to agree that there was a legitimate reason for your child not to be in school.

There are only four legitimate reasons for absence:

- Religious observance
- Illness of the child
- The death of a close family member
- An urgent medical or dental appointment

The Education Welfare Service (EWS) can take legal action against you if you fail to make sure that your children go to school regularly and there is no legitimate reason for the absence. This action might take one of two forms:

- The issuing of a Penalty Notice
- Prosecution in the local Magistrates Court

This information is about Penalty Notices and how the EWS will issue them.

What they are

Penalty Notices are fines, issued by Staffordshire EWS, for a child's unauthorised absence from school.

The service will always consider legal action when there is no legitimate reason for absence.

How they will be issued

Notices will be issued by post. They will not be issued during a Truancy Sweep or as part of a meeting with parents.



This graph shows the effect of missing time from school over a year. Every school session is important if your child is not going to fall behind.

The EWS will not take legal action if previously poor attendance is now improving.

Instead they'll monitor the case and support the pupil. If attendance doesn't improve, or if absences begin to increase the EWS will re-assess the case to see if legal action is needed.

Penalty Notices

What they mean

The penalty is £60 if paid within 21 days of receipt rising to £120 if paid after 21 days but within 28 days. The payment must be paid direct to the local authority. The parents can only be prosecuted if 28 days have expired and full payment has not been made.

There is no right of appeal by parents against a penalty notice. If the penalty is not paid in full by the end of the 28 day period, the local authority will prosecute for the original offence, unless there are grounds to withdraw the notice.

Further information

If you would like further information about Penalty Notices please contact your district Education Welfare Team:

If you have concerns about your child's education you should, initially, discuss these with school.

District	Telephone
Stafford and South Staffordshire	01785 356949
Lichfield and Cannock	01543 512050
East Staffordshire and Tamworth	01283 239755

Newcastle and Leek Moorlands

01782 297524

1. Parent / carer requests absence.
2. School ensures that the request is made in writing (SEE APPENDIX 1).
3. School(s) make decision regarding written application (school may wish to liaise if there are other children in the family in other schools).

• Leave is authorised because exceptional circumstances are accepted.
• Letter is issued by school to parent.
(SEE APPENDIX 2 – school letter leave authorised)

• Leave request denied – circumstances are deemed not to be exceptional.

Pupil returns to school on agreed date.

Attendance is monitored

Pupil does not return to school on agreed date.

• The head teacher (deputy or assistant head) should inform parent/carers in writing that the request has been denied giving the reason why, also that if the absence occurs it will be unauthorised and a Penalty Notice may be issued. (SEE APPENDIX 3 – school letter – leave not authorised).

School must be aware that they may be called as a witness in court.

• Where unauthorised leave of absence occurs, the school must determine whether or not the case meets the criteria for issuing a Penalty Notice (see page 2 of the Code of Conduct). The EWW may advise school if needed.

Unauthorised absence occurs

Does the student meet criteria for Penalty Notice?

NO

Record absence as unauthorised and monitor for any future unauthorised absences with a view to future action if appropriate

YES

School complete Penalty Notice request paperwork as detailed on page 3 of the Code of Conduct and sends to LST inbox with accompanying Request for Service Form.

Absence is recorded as unauthorised and reported to the LST via the Request for Service Form

• LST responds to school regarding the request within 10 school days and outlines to school the next steps.