



# Attendance Policy

Written: March 2016

Approved by Governors on: 12<sup>th</sup> May 2016

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## Attendance Policy

### **Rationale**

Education is a vital part of a child's development and as such the child's right to education should be protected. St .Mary's CE Primary School takes a strong line in this respect and relies on the support of parents to ensure that our attendance statistics are as high as possible. All pupils have a right to education. A child is of statutory school age between 5 and 16. Parents/carers have a legal responsibility to ensure their child attends regularly and punctually. If a child does not, parents/carers may be breaking the law. If the school has concerns about a pupil being absent or do not accept the explanation for an absence as genuine, the Headteacher or School Office Staff will raise the matter with the Education Attendance Service.

### **Purpose**

To ensure that all children at St. Mary's CE Primary School have access to the full provision of education without unnecessary or avoidable disruption through poor attendance.

### **Expectations**

#### *A. From pupils:*

- They will attend school regularly
- They will arrive on time, appropriately dressed and prepared for the day

#### *B. From parents:*

- Ensure regular attendance of their child at school
- They contact the office between 8.00 & 9.30 whenever their child is unable to attend to explain the reason for their absence.
- They ensure their child is appropriately dressed, taking account of school uniform policy.
- They ensure their child arrives in school well prepared for the school day with homework completed and the correct equipment for the day.
- Attending any meetings about their child's attendance, that may be necessary.

#### *C. Pupils and parents can expect the following from the school:*

- Regular, efficient and accurate recording of attendance and time keeping.
- Contact from the school when a pupils fails to attend and no contact is made by the parent/carer.
- Early contact with parents when a pupil fails to attend without good reason and there is a pattern of absences or an excessive number of absences or lateness.
- Immediate action on any problem notified to us, in confidence if necessary.
- Positive measures to encourage good attendance.
- A high quality education.

## **Positive Measures to Encourage Good Attendance**

- Registers are completed accurately at the start of each session.
- Daily monitoring by class teachers - contact made with the school administrator to raise concerns where appropriate.
- Regular monitoring by the Headteacher and Office Administrator on attendance and punctuality.
- Class of the week award recognised the best attendance record each half term.
- Badges for 100% attendance and excellent effort each half term and celebrated in the school newsletter.
- Certificates to pupils with 100% termly attendance records.
- Meetings involving Headteacher and LA Attendance Officer.
- Reviews and meetings with parents as required.

## **Types of Absence**

Children are expected to attend school for the full 190 days of the academic year, unless there is a good reason for absence. There are two types of absence:

- **Authorised:** The school approves pupil absence
- **Unauthorised:** The school will *not* approve pupil absence

The school is responsible for children's attendance and only the Headteacher can authorise absences.

## **Absence Procedures**

If a child is absent, parents/carers should call the school on each day of the absence before 9.30a.m. stating a reason. A note should be sent to school on the day the child returns explaining the absence. The school will then decide whether to authorise the absence.

If contact explaining the child's absence fails to be made by parents/carers and no satisfactory reason for absence can be obtained, then the absence will be recorded as unauthorised.

Parents of children with attendance less than 90% are requested to provide medical evidence to support subsequent absences. Failure to do so results in the absence being recorded as unauthorised. School makes use of the Local Authority Attendance Support Team and the Fixed Penalty Notices for unauthorised absences. (See Appendices 1)

## **Family Holidays During Term Time**

A pupil's absence during term time can seriously disrupt their continuity of learning. Not only do they miss the teaching provided on the days they are away, they are also less prepared for subsequent lessons on their return. There is a consequent risk of underachievement.

Parents / carers do not have a right to take their child out of school for a holiday during term time. As a result family holidays should be planned during the school holidays. As of September 2013 the School Governors agreed that, in line with new law, no holidays taken in term time would be authorised. In accordance with the Local

Authority Attendance Policy, school will refer for a Fixed Penalty Notice fine for unauthorised holidays in excess of 5 days.

### **Lateness**

School begins at 8.55 a.m. and all pupils are expected to be in school for registration at this time. Any child arriving later than 9.00 a.m. should enter school via the main entrance reporting to the School Office. The parent / carer should give a reason for the lateness and sign the register. The School Office Staff will then send the child to their classroom or accompany them to their classroom if they are in Key Stage 1. Pupils who are consistently late are disrupting not only their own education but also that of others. Where persistent lateness gives cause for concern the following escalation of action will be taken:

1. Letter home with details of lates recorded.
2. Referral to the Education Attendance Service.

### **Monitoring of Pupil Attendance**

Attendance statistics are monitored and parents will be notified by letter if their child's attendance is causing concern. Attendance statistics which are consistently below 90% will result in parents being requested to provide further explanations about their child's attendance. Where children continue to have attendance of less than 90%, then authorisation for sickness will require a medical certificate.

In cases where the Headteacher has concerns about a pupil's absence the Attendance Officer will be notified of that child's name and attendance.

### **What Can Parents Do to Help?**

- Let the school know as soon as possible why your child is absent.
- Send a note when your child returns to school.
- Try to make appointments outside school time.
- Do not allow your child to have time off school unless it is really necessary.

If you are worried about your child's attendance at school you should...

- Talk to your child; it may be something simple.
- Talk to the Headteacher and staff at the school.

If it continues...

- The school may refer to the Education Attendance Service.
- You may contact the Attendance Officer, who will work with you and the school to resolve the situation. (Telephone number available from the School Office).

### **Responsibility**

In order for this policy to be successful every member of the school community must make attendance a high priority.

## **Conclusion**

A child's education can be adversely affected by poor attendance. At St. Mary's CE Primary School we place great emphasis on good attendance as a positive step in helping children to:

- have full access to the curriculum
- achieve their potential.

# Penalty Notices for unauthorised absence from school

## Information for Parents/Carers

Each parent/carer issued with a Penalty Notice has to pay a Penalty Fine.

### What is a Penalty Notice?

Under existing legislation, parents/carers commit an offence if a child fails to attend regularly and the absences are categorised as unauthorised (the school viewing reasons provided as unacceptable or no explanations received or 'truancy'). Depending on circumstances such cases may result in prosecution under Section 444 of the Education Act 1996.

A Penalty Notice is seen as a simpler sanction to focus parents on their responsibilities and does not require an appearance in Court. Payment of a Penalty Notice enables parents to discharge potential liability for conviction for the period identified.

### How are they issued and who are they issued to?

They are issued by post to your home. No more than one can be issued for each child in any academic year to each parent/carer who holds responsibility. Each parent/carer issued with a Penalty Notice has to pay a Penalty Fine.

### When are they used?

Oldham considers that regular attendance at school is of such importance that Penalty Notices may be used in a range of situations where unauthorised absence occurs:

- overt truancy;
- pupils identified as truanting during a truancy patrol;
- parentally-condoned absences;
- unauthorised holidays and unauthorised extended absences during term-time;
- persistent late arrival at school after the register has closed (which is categorised as an unauthorised absence);
- an emerging pattern of unauthorised absences; and
- pupils on the 'fast-track to attendance' project who have failed to achieve the required improvement in attendance.

### Is a warning given?

A written warning, other than in specific circumstances\*\*, will be sent from the School Attendance Improvement Service when a pupil has, or is likely to have (in the case of an unauthorised holiday or unauthorised extended absence) a minimum of 5 school days lost to unauthorised absence (in the previous 12 weeks) or they have been identified during a Truancy Patrol. The written warning will indicate the extent of your child's absences and give you 15 school days in which to effect an improvement.

A Penalty Notice can then be issued if there has been little improvement or if your child has been identified truanting during a Truancy Patrol.

\*\* The deliberate taking of a holiday in term-time without/against school permission (where it can be clearly demonstrated that the parent/carer understood that permission had not/would not be given) and where this has created a period of unauthorised absence.

## Is there an appeal process?

There is no statutory right of appeal once a Notice has been issued, but you can make representation to the address overleaf if you believe the Notice contains factually inaccurate information and been wrongly issued.

## What are the costs & how do I pay?

Payment within 28 days of receiving a Notice is £60 and £120 if paid after this within 42 days. Details of payment arrangements will be included on the Penalty Notice. You need to be aware that payment in part or by instalment is not an option with Penalty Notices.

## What happens if I don't pay?

You have up to 42 days from receipt to pay the Penalty Notice in full, after which the Authority is required under the Act to commence proceedings in the Magistrates' court for the original offence of poor attendance by your child. If the case is proven at court, this can attract a range of fines up to £2,500 and/or a Custodial Sentence, Parenting Order or Community Sentence depending upon circumstances.

## Can I be prosecuted if I pay the Penalty Notice but my child is still missing school?

Not for the period included in the Penalty Notice – payment discharges your liability in this respect. However it may be the case that a prosecution might be considered for further periods of poor attendance not covered by the Notice, depending on the circumstances. If this is an issue, it is vital that you work closely with your child's school and support agencies such as the School Attendance Improvement Service.

## Can I get help if my child is not attending regularly?

Yes, the Local Authority and your child's school will give you advice and support if you need help to secure an improvement in your child's attendance. It is very important that you speak with the school or with the School Attendance Improvement Service at the earliest opportunity if you have any worries at all about securing your child's attendance.

## Contact

You can access fact sheets in a number of ways:

**Download:** <http://www.oldham.gov.uk/learning/school-attendance.htm>

**Tel:** 0161 770 6620/1

**Fax:** 0161 770 3844

**Email:** [sais@oldham.gov.uk](mailto:sais@oldham.gov.uk)

**Write to:** Education Attendance Service, Room 4, Rock Street Centre, Rock Street, Oldham, OL1 3UJ

**Call in:** to any council office and request them