



# Attendance Policy

Written: March 2016, Updated and reviewed 13.9.17

Approved by Governors on: 4<sup>th</sup> October 2017

Review Date: March 2020

Signed by Chair:

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'C.P. Benton'. The signature is written in a cursive style and is underlined with a single horizontal line.

## 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 home learning 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 pupil 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 for the best attendance record each half term.
- Badges for 100% attendance and excellent effort awarded each half term and celebrated in the school newsletter.
- Certificates to pupils with 100% attendance records at the end of the academic year.
- 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.

### Example absence (authorised/unauthorised)

Authorised absences:	Unauthorised absences:
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>❖ Genuine illness of the pupil</li><li>❖ Hospital/dental/doctor's appointment for the pupil</li><li>❖ Major religious observances</li><li>❖ Visits to prospective new schools</li><li>❖ External exams or educational assessments</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>❖ Holidays in term time</li><li>❖ Shopping/day trip/visit to a theme park/weddings</li><li>❖ A birthday treat</li><li>❖ Oversleeping due to a late night</li><li>❖ Looking after other children/other family member</li><li>❖ Appointments for other family members</li></ul>

### Absence Procedures and Unauthorised Absence

If a child is absent, Parents/Carers should call the school on each day of the absence before 9.30a.m. stating a reason. 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 (see above).

Parents of children with attendance of less than 90% will be required to provide medical evidence to support subsequent absences. Failure to do so will result 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. This means when a pupil has unauthorised absence of 10 sessions (5 days) or more in any term (where no acceptable reason has been given for their absence) their parents may receive a Penalty Notice of £60 per parent per pupil if paid within 21 days, rising to £120 if paid within 28 days. If the Penalty Notice is not paid in full within 28 days the Local Authority is then obliged to prosecute for failing to ensure regular school attendance. (See Appendices 1 for more details)

### **Leave of Absence / 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 legislation, no holidays taken in term time would be authorised, unless exceptional circumstances can be proved. In accordance with the Local Authority Attendance Policy, school will refer for a Fixed Penalty Notice for **unauthorised leave/holidays of 10 sessions (5 days) or more in any term**. The Penalty Notice is £60 per parent per pupil if paid within 21 days, rising to £120 if paid within 28 days. If the Penalty Notice is not paid in full within 28 days the Local Authority is then obliged to prosecute for failing to ensure regular school attendance. (See Appendices 1 for more details)

### **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 the office staff will record the pupil's arrival. The absence will only be authorised if a satisfactory explanation for the late arrival can be provided, for example attendance at a medical appointment. The absence will be recorded as unauthorised if the pupil has arrived late without justifiable cause for example, they woke up late.

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 which could result in a Fixed Penalty Notice being issued.

## **Monitoring of Pupil Attendance**

Attendance statistics are monitored and parents are 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 record.

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

- Let the school know as soon as possible why your child is absent.
- 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.



## Appendices 1

# Poor Attendance at School - Penalty Notices

## Miss School - Miss Out

Oldham Council believe that any absence from school, for whatever reason, is detrimental to a child's long term life opportunities, so should be avoided if at all possible. Reducing absence from school is a key priority, both nationally and locally, because missing school damages a pupil's attainment levels, disrupts school routines and can leave a pupil vulnerable to anti-social behaviour and youth crime.

For these reasons, the powers given under Section 23 of the Anti-Social Behaviour Act, 2003, have been adopted by Oldham. This gives an additional strategy to be used as a sanction when parents do not fulfil their responsibility to ensure their children attend school regularly.

Section 444(A) of the Education Act 1996 empowers the local authority to issue Penalty Notices in cases of unauthorised absence from school. This means that when a pupil has unauthorised absence of 10 sessions (5 days) or more, in any term (where no acceptable reason has been given for the absence) or if their child persistently arrives late for school after the close of registration, their parents or carers may receive a Penalty Notice of £60 per parent per pupil if paid within 21 days rising to £120 if paid within 28 days. The penalty notice will need to be paid in full before 28 days of the notice being served. Failure to pay a penalty notice may result in prosecution.

## Your Questions Answered

### What does the Anti-Social Behaviour Act 2003 do?

Section 23 of the Act gives powers to the Local Education Authority and other designated bodies to issue Penalty Notices where a parent/carer is considered capable but unwilling to secure an improvement in their child's attendance at school. These powers came into force on 27 February 2004

### What is a Penalty Notice?

Under existing legislation, parents/carers commit an offence if their child fails to attend school regularly, and the absences are classed as unauthorised. Such cases may result in a prosecution under Section 444 of the Education Act, 1996.

A Penalty Notice is an alternative to prosecution, which does not require an appearance in Court, whilst still securing an improvement in the pupil's attendance.

### What are the costs?

If payment is made within 21 days of receipt of a Notice the fine is £60 per parent per pupil, rising to £120 if paid after 21 days but before 28 days.

### How are they issued?

By post to your home.

## **Is a Warning given?**

You will receive a written warning of the possibility of a Notice being issued, which will tell you the extent of your child's absences and give you 15 school days to effect an improvement. There is no limit to the number of formal warnings which can be issued.

Parents may also receive a Penalty Notice without a warning letter for the offence of failing to secure regular school attendance under the following circumstances:

- Their child is stopped on a truancy sweep more than once
- They go on holiday in term time without school's permission
- The child fails to return to school following a fixed term exclusion

## **Is there an appeal process?**

There is no statutory right of appeal once a notice has been issued, but on receipt of a warning you can make representation should you wish to.

## **How do I pay?**

Details of payment arrangements will be included on the Penalty Notice. Payment in part, or in instalments is not an option.

## **What happens if I do not pay?**

You have up to 28 days from receipt of the Penalty Notice to pay in full. After this time, the Authority is required under the Act to commence proceedings in the Magistrates Court for the original offence, which is the poor attendance at school of your child. If proven, this can attract a fine of up to £2,500, or a range of disposals such as Parenting Orders or Community Sentences, depending on circumstances.

## **Can I be prosecuted if I pay the Penalty Notice but my child still does not attend school?**

At the present time, the payment of the Penalty Notice means this period cannot be used in a future prosecution. However, a prosecution could be considered for further periods of absence not covered by the Notice.

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

Yes. The School Attendance Team and your child's school will give you help and support if you are experiencing difficulty in ensuring your child attends school regularly.

## **Contact Information :**

Education Attendance Service  
Access & Inclusion, Oldham Council  
Civic Centre, West Street  
Oldham OL1 1LJ

Send us an email : [sais@oldham.gov.uk](mailto:sais@oldham.gov.uk)

Phone: 0161 770 6620/21