



Attendance Policy

Signed by:

Headteacher

Date:

Chair of governors

Date:

Policy Review Date: July 2024

Statement of Intent

At St. Patrick's RC Primary School, we believe that attendance and punctuality at school is not only a legal requirement, but is fundamental to the child's development and attainment. Local Authorities, schools, parents and the wider community all have a role to play in improving attendance. At St. Patrick's RC Primary School, we have implemented procedures designed to ensure that all our pupils attend regularly.

St. Patrick's RC Primary School believes that the regular education of all children, irrespective of age, gender, race or ability is crucial to each and every pupil because our school exists to serve the community of St Patrick's Parish, working together for the development of our children with the love of God as our central focus.

All members of our community, children, staff, parents, governors and friends work in partnership towards love, tolerance and justice. With this common bond, we recognise the uniqueness of each child as part of God's creation. Therefore, we aim to develop their particular talents and needs, thus allowing them to achieve their full potential. The regular attendance of children at St Patrick's RC Primary School is a key responsibility of all parents/guardians, in conjunction with the school and EWO Service who work together with parents. Without regular attendance, our pupils cannot make the progress we want for them. The accurate keeping of registers and persistence in chasing up reasons for absence are crucial if we are to maintain a course of improvement.

Many of our pupils come from homes where the adults are not in employment and where attending the school and being punctual are not family priorities. We must be sensitive to this but at the same time encourage the children to adopt good attendance and punctuality habits. It is better that a child attends school late rather than not attend at all. This requires knowledge of the pupil's circumstances and sensitivity.

From the age of 5 children are required by law to attend school for 190 days of the year, unless the child is ill or because of other extenuating circumstances. It is the parent's duty to see the child is sent to school, arrives on time, in correct clothing, and in a condition to learn e.g. not too tired

Coronavirus (COVID-19 update: Please note, annex A has been created in line with the current government guidance. Schools need to ensure that this template reflects any local guidance and the specific needs of their school. We understand that reopening schools to more pupils will be very challenging, and we will update any guidance in line with government advice.

Introduction

Children of school-age who are registered at a school must attend school every day. For your children to gain the greatest benefit from their education it is vital that they attend regularly. Regular attendance is important, not just because the law requires it but because it is the best way of ensuring that your child makes the most of the educational opportunities in order to achieve well. However, we accept that there may be occasions when a child has to miss school, e.g. because of illness.

It is very important, therefore, that you make sure that your child attends regularly and this Policy sets out how together we can achieve this.

Why Regular Attendance is Important

Any absence affects the pattern of a child's education and regular absence will seriously affect their learning. Any pupil's absence disrupts teaching routines so may affect the learning of others in the same class.

During the course of a year, attendance percentages equate as follows:-

10 days absent - 95%
19 days absent - 90%
29 days absent - 85%

38 days absent - 80%
47 days absent - 75%

Ensuring your child's regular attendance at school is your legal responsibility and permitting absence from school without a good reason creates an offence in law and may result in prosecution.

Understanding Types of Absence

Understanding Types of Absence; Every half-day absence from school has to be classified by the school (not by the parents), as either AUTHORISED or UNAUTHORISED. This is why information about the cause of any absence is always required.

Authorised Absence – An absence is classified as authorised when a child is away from school for a legitimate reason, e.g. if a child has been unwell and the parent notifies school to explain the absence. Only the Headteacher can authorise an absence.

The Head teacher may authorise absence if: -

- A child is ill
- The child is attending a doctor or dentist's surgery or a hospital
- Religious observance
- A death in the family

The head teacher may request evidence to support absence from school for any of the above.

Unauthorised Absence – Unauthorised absences are those which the school does not consider reasonable and for which no authorisation has been given.

This includes –

- Parents/carers keeping children off school unnecessarily;
- Absences that have never been properly explained;
- Shopping, looking after other children or birthday trips;
- Holidays in term time not agreed.
- Children who arrive at school after registers have closed;
- Persistent lateness;

This type of absence can lead to the Local Education Authority using sanctions and/or legal proceedings, e.g. Penalty Notices.

Criteria for a holiday in term time penalty notice is a minimum of 10 sessions / 5 school days unauthorised absence

Criteria for poor School attendance penalty notice is a minimum of 20 sessions / 10 school days unauthorised absence in a 12 week period.

Persistent Absenteeism (PA)

A pupil becomes a 'persistent absentee (PA)' when they miss 10% or more schooling across the school year for whatever reason. Absence at this level is doing considerable damage to any child's educational prospects and we need parents' fullest support and co-operation to tackle this.

In every case, early intervention is essential to prevent the problem worsening.

Prior to engagement of the Education Welfare Officer, the school may issue letters to parents clearly defining the concerns within school regarding a pupil's absence. It is hoped that a quick response and improvement in levels of attendance will prevent the need for EWO involvement.

We monitor all absence thoroughly. Any case that is seen to have reached the PA mark or is at risk of moving towards that mark is given priority and you will be informed of this immediately.

All PA cases are automatically made known to the Education Welfare Officer.

Absence Procedures

If your child is absent you must:

- Contact us as soon as possible on the first day of the absence either by phone or by calling to the Reception at school;
- Give a valid reason for the absence, stating the nature of the illness if the absence is health related;
- Provide evidence of absence
- If your child is absent for more than 3 consecutive days, you may be asked to provide a Doctor's note stating the nature of the illness and the amount of days your child will be absent from school

If your child is absent we will:

- Telephone or text you on the first day of absence if we have not heard from you;
- You may be invited in to discuss the situation with our Attendance Officer
- Conduct a home visit

- You may be referred to the Education Welfare Officer if attendance moves below 90%.

Parents are encouraged to work with staff in resolving any problems together. This is nearly always successful. If difficulties cannot be sorted out in this way, the school may refer the child to the Education Welfare Officer from the Local Authority. They will also try to resolve the situation by agreement but, if other ways of trying to improve the child's attendance have failed and unauthorised absences persist, these Officers can use sanctions such as Penalty Notices or prosecutions in the Magistrates Court.

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.

Medical Appointments

Should a child have a medical appointment, it is expected that they return to school to complete the school day. Appointment cards with times and dates should be shown to school when taking your child out. We ask parents, where possible, to arrange medical appointments out of school hours.

Religious Absence

The school will authorise one day of absence per religious festival, e.g. Eid, (i.e. the day set aside by the religious body of which the parent is a member) and this will be marked as 'R' in the register.

Parents must request any additional leave in advance and this can only be authorised if it is felt that exceptional circumstances apply (this would be marked in the register as 'C').

Alternative provision and use of directions

There are a range of reasons why pupils might be required to access educational provision at a venue other than their main school. The main reasons are listed below:

- Pupils who have been excluded, either for a fixed period or permanently, for more than 5 days;
- When a pupil is unable to access provision at their main school for medical reasons;
- When a pupil is required to attend another venue for the purpose of improving behaviour; either on a temporary basis or with a view to making a permanent move to the alternative provision (managed move).

When a pupil is required to attend alternative provision, the governors of the main school must issue a written 'direction' informing all parents of the alternative provision which their child is required to attend.

Punctuality

Poor punctuality is not acceptable. If your child misses the start of the day they can miss work and do not spend time with their class teacher getting important information and news for the day. Reading and writing starts at 9.00am PROMPT. It is vital that your child is in class for the start of the lesson. They also miss social time with their friends before lessons start. Late

arriving pupils also disrupt lessons. It can be embarrassing for the child and can also encourage absence.

How we manage lateness

The school gates open at 8.40am and the doors to classes open at that time. We expect your child to be in class by 8:45am.

Registers are marked by 8.55am. Lessons start at 9.00am PROMPT. Your child will receive a late mark if they are not in by that time.

At 9.15am the registers will be closed. In accordance with the regulations, if your child arrives after that time they will receive a mark that shows them to be on site, but this will not count as a present mark and it will mean they have an unauthorised absence. This may mean that you could face the possibility of a Penalty Notice if the problem persists.

If your child has a persistent late record you will be asked to meet with the Attendance Officer and Family Support Worker to resolve the problem, but you can approach us at any time if you are having problems getting your child to school on time.

Holidays in Term Time

Taking holidays in term time will affect your child's education as much as any other absence and we expect parents to help us by not taking children away in school time. Remember that any savings you think you may make by taking a holiday in school time are offset by the cost to your child's education.

There is no automatic entitlement in law to time off in school time to go on holiday. The Governors have advised the Head teacher not to authorise holidays for any pupils in any circumstances.

Therefore, any application for leave must only be in exceptional circumstances and the Headteacher must be satisfied that the circumstances are exceptional and warrant the granting of leave. All requests for a holiday/absence in term time should be made in writing by completing an Absence Notification Form which is available from the school office.

Any period of leave taken without the agreement of the school, or in excess of that agreed, will be classed as unauthorised and may attract sanctions such as a Penalty Notice. Where an unauthorised holiday is taken, the school is required to notify the Local Authority on the first day of absence and a fixed penalty fine will be issued.

Unauthorised holidays taken will be followed by an application to the Local Education Authority for the implementation of a Fixed Penalty Fine. This constitutes a fine of £60 per child if paid within 21 days. The fine increases to £120 if paid after this but within 28 days. The fine will apply to each parent of each child who fails to attend school. Both Penalty Notices must be paid. If the fine is not paid, the parent/carer will be prosecuted for the non-attendance and will be summonsed to appear in Court.

By adhering to this course of action, the school is working in the best interest of the child in that absence from school has a negative impact on educational achievement. All schools have to report on absences and children with 10% or more absence from school are classified as persistent absentees by the Department for Education.

School Targets, Projects and Special Initiatives

The school has targets to improve attendance and your child has an important part to play in meeting these targets. Through the school year we monitor absences and punctuality to show us where improvements need to be made.

The minimum level of attendance for this school is 97%. Our target is to achieve better than this, however, because we know that good attendance is the key to successful education. Please do not let your child miss out. Please support our school in providing your child with the education they deserve.

The people responsible for attendance matters in this school are:-Mrs K

Bishop - Headteacher

Miss A Collins – Children's Welfare Officer

Annex A

Attendance Changes During the Coronavirus (COVID-19) Pandemic

Please note, this annex has been created in line with the current government guidance. Schools need to ensure that this template reflects any local guidance and the specific needs of their school. We understand that reopening schools to more pupils will be very challenging, and we will update any guidance in line with government advice.

1. Taking attendance during partial school closure

1.1 During the partial school closure period, the school will adhere to the current government guidance by implementing the following measures:

- Attendance is non-compulsory during partial school closure and parents will not be fined for not bringing their child to school in line with the Coronavirus Act 2020 Disapplication of section 444(1) and (1A) of the Education Act 1996 (England) Notice 2020.
- The school remains open for all vulnerable pupils and children of keyworkers who cannot receive sufficient care at home.
- The school's attendance register will not be taken during partial school closure and the attendance code '#' will be used to denote planned full or partial school closure.
- The school will complete the 'Educational setting status' form by midday each day of partial school closure to provide the DfE with accurate information on whether the school is open to eligible pupils and how many pupils it is caring for during this time.
- If a child that is expected to be in school does not attend, the school will contact the child's parents or primary carers to ensure the safety and security of the child.
- Under no circumstance will an individual enter the school grounds if they are displaying symptoms of coronavirus.
- Parents will inform the school if their child (who is expected to attend school) is ill, and/or displaying symptoms of coronavirus, and is unable to attend school as a result.
- If a pupil lives with an extremely clinically vulnerable person, they will only be able to attend school if they adhere to strict social distancing measures.

2. Taking attendance during phased reopening

2.1. When schools are advised to begin reopening to more pupils, the school will adhere to the current government guidance by implementing the following measures:

- Attendance is non-compulsory during phased reopening and parents will not be fined for not bringing their child to school in line with the Coronavirus Act 2020 Disapplication of section 444(1) and (1A) of the Education Act 1996 (England) Notice 2020.
- The school will resume its attendance register once phased reopening commences – the attendance register will be open for longer to account for staggered starts.
- In addition to the attendance register, the school will continue to submit the 'Educational setting status' form to the DfE.
- The school will devise a recovery plan which will enable it to reopen safely and adhere to strict social distancing and hygiene rules – this plan will be made in collaboration with parents, governors, staff and any other relevant party.
- The school respects the concerns of parents and will not pressure them into bringing their child to school if they feel the setting is unsafe, and will the school's plan to keep pupils safe in line with Public Health England's (PHE's) advice, offering reassurance where required.
- The school will work with the LA to ensure those who are expected to attend school are doing so, and any unexplained absences are dealt with using the correct channels.
- **Under no circumstance will an individual enter the school grounds if they are displaying symptoms of coronavirus.**
- Parents will inform the school if their child (who is expected to attend school) is ill, and/or displaying symptoms of coronavirus, and is unable to attend school as a result.
- If a pupil lives with an extremely clinically vulnerable person, they will only be able to attend school if they adhere to strict social distancing measures.