



St. George's Catholic Primary School and Nursery

Attendance Policy

St. George's Catholic Primary School believes that all pupils benefit from the education we provide, and therefore from regular school attendance. In order to achieve this we will take appropriate action to ensure that all pupils achieve the maximum possible attendance and that any problems, which may affect full attendance, are acted on as quickly as possible.

St. George's Catholic Primary School aims to work with parents to ensure that all pupils attend school regularly and on time. Helping to promote a pattern of regular attendance is everybody's responsibility: parents, pupils and all members of school staff.

The school will:-

- Record and monitor attendance in accordance with statutory requirements.
- Mark the register at the beginning of each morning at 8.50 am and each afternoon at 1.00pm (Key Stage Two) or 1.20 pm (Reception & Key Stage One).
- St. George's Catholic Primary School's registers open at 8.50 am, children are deemed late after 9.00am and deemed absent after register closes at 9.20 am.
- Check the registers weekly to monitor lateness and absence.
- School will phone home on **first day of absence** if school has not heard from parents/carers.
- Monitor the 'Exceptional Leave' of absence for exceptional circumstances
- Set targets for reducing absence.
- Celebrate pupils' attendance at assembly.
- Celebrate pupils' attendance at each end of term and end of year.
- Give parents/carers feedback on attendance in newsletters, Headteacher reports and on our website.
- Refer children to the Attendance and Welfare Service who have unauthorised absence for penalty Notice Proceedings.
- Refer pupils who have 10% or more unauthorised absence to the Attendance and Welfare Service.

Parents/carers have a legal duty to ensure that children of compulsory school age attend on a regular and full-time basis.

Parents/carers will:

- Ensure their child is within the school ground before 8.55 am each morning so they can enter school by 9.00 am.
- Ensure that their child is collected or goes home alone promptly at the end of school.
- Contact school on the first morning by 8.30 am of absence by phone, app, email/letter or in person. (A sibling is not permitted to verbally deliver the message).
- Arrange dental, doctor or hospital appointments outside the school day except in an emergency.
- Only ask for leave of absence for their child in 'exceptional circumstances'.
- All leave will be requested in writing at least 5 days before absence is due to start.

- Not take their children out of school during term time, and realise that if they do they are at risk of damaging their child's education, and risking the possibility of being given a penalty notice by Sefton Council.

If parents/carers do not ensure that their child attends school regularly and on time the school will:

- Contact parents/carers to discuss the reasons and plan for improvement.
- Monitor the attendance plan and celebrate the improvements.
- If parents/carers persist in not ensuring their child attends school regularly and on time the school will unauthorise the absence.
- Refer their child if they have 10% or more unauthorised absence to the Attendance and Welfare Service & Education Welfare Office. The Education Welfare Officer [EWO] will contact parents to find reasons and plan for improvement.
- Refer to CAF to set up support for the child and family.
- Refer to the Attendance and Welfare Service to set up penalty notice proceedings.

The Role of the Governing Body

- The Governing Body must ensure that school registers are kept; one for admissions and one for attendance.
- The Governing Body is required to agree the annual attendance target for the school.

Understanding types of absence:

Every half day absence has to be classified by the school as either authorised or unauthorised. This is why the cause of absence is always required.

Authorised absences are mornings or afternoons away from school for a good reason like illness, medical/dental appointments which are **unavoidable**, school sporting events or music exams and these are coded accordingly.

Unauthorised absences are those which the school does not consider reasonable and for which no "leave" has been given. This type of absence can lead to the Local Authority using sanctions and/or legal proceedings.

This includes: -

- Parents/carers keeping children off school unnecessarily,
- Truancy,
- Absences which have never been properly explained,
- Children who arrive at school too late to get a mark,
- Shopping, looking after other children or birthdays,
- Leave of absence which has not been agreed.

Any child who is reluctant to attend school is supported by the school and parents/carers to address the reasons and to aid a swift return to school.

Persistent Absentees (PA): a child goes onto this list if they have missed **10% or more** schooling across the year for whatever reason. Absence at this level is doing harm to your child's educational prospects and therefore support from parents is needed to tackle this. All children on the PA list are contacted and a meeting is set up with the Headteacher to discuss the attendance plan and create a successful strategy.

All PA pupils are tracked and monitored carefully through our pastoral system.

School Targets:

- The school has targets to improve attendance, parents/carers and your child have an important part to play in meeting these targets
- The minimum level of attendance for this school is 96.0% and we will keep you updated regularly about progress to this level and how your child's attendance compares.
- Our target is to achieve better than this however because we know that good attendance is the key to successful schooling.

Appendix 1

The Legal Foundation of this policy is found in Education Act 1996

The legal framework governing attendance is set by the Education Acts and their associated regulations. Section 7 of the Education Act 1996 states that: The parent of every child of compulsory school age shall cause him/her to receive efficient, full time education suitable to his/her age, aptitude and ability and to any special educational needs he/she may have either by regular attendance at school or otherwise. Section 444 further states that:

The parent of a child of compulsory school age registered at school and failing to attend regularly is guilty of an offence punishable by law. An offence is not committed if it can be demonstrated that:

- the pupil was absent with leave agreed by school staff; (authorised absence)
- the pupil was ill or prevented from attending by any unavoidable cause;
- the absence was on a day exclusively set aside for religious observance by the religious body to which the parent belongs;
- the school is not within walking distance of the child's home and the LA has made no suitable arrangements for the child's transport to and from school; ("walking distance" is defined in section 444(5) of the Education Act 1996).

The law relating to 'walking distance' effectively is defined as two miles for pupils under age eight and three miles for all other pupils. Since March 2001 there has been a more serious offence where a parent who, knowing that his child is failing to attend regularly at school, fails without reasonable justification to cause him to attend (Education Act 1996 Section 444(1A) as amended by the Criminal Justice and Court Service Act 2000). This amendment was introduced to provide another, more serious offence which requires proof that the parent knew of their child's non- attendance and failed to act. Under the higher offence a warrant can be issued compelling a parent to attend court. Prosecution under section 444(1A) can lead to a custodial sentence.

Appendix 2

Parental responsibility

The term 'parent' refers to one parent, both parents or the child's carer.

Under Section 7 of the Education Act 1996, the parent is responsible for making sure that their child of compulsory school age receives efficient full-time education that is suitable to the child's age, ability and aptitude and to any special educational needs the child may have. This can be by regular attendance at school or by education otherwise (the parent can elect to educate their child at home).

The expression "parent", in relation to a child or young person, includes any person who is not a parent of the child but who has parental responsibility for him or her, or who has the day to day care of the child.

Compulsory school age is defined as beginning from age five when a child should attend school from the start of the term commencing on or after his fifth birthday. A child continues to be of compulsory school age until the last Friday of June in the school year that they reach sixteen.

Appendix 3

First Day Contact Guidelines

First day contact is a widely used practice in schools and has been shown to improve attendance rates. The correct procedure at St. George's Catholic Primary School is as follows:

- 1) As soon as the registers are recorded in SIMMs, staff check absentees against messages received.
- 2) For other pupils for whom no message has been received, office staff will attempt to make contact with the parent at the earliest opportunity.
- 3) When contact is made, the parent will be asked for the reason for absence. In the event that no proper reason is supplied, the parent will be informed that the absence will not be authorised.
- 4) In the case of minor ailments, the parent will be encouraged to send the child in with an assurance that school will keep a close eye on him/her. (NB – if there has been a spate of certain symptoms in the school or community, such minor illnesses may be treated as a valid reason for absence).
- 5) Where no contact is made, a message should be left asking the parent to contact the school. Where it is impossible to leave a message, a note should be sent.
- 6) Reasons for absence are then added to the register.

Appendix 4

The Government expects schools and local authorities to:

- Reduce absence including persistent absence
- Ensure every pupil has access to full-time education to which they are entitled; and
- Act early to address patterns of absence.
- Parents to perform their legal duty to by ensuring their children of compulsory school age who are registered at school attend early; and
- All pupils to be punctual to their lessons and attend school regularly.

Legal Enforcement by Sefton Council

As part of promoting good attendance and punctuality Sefton Council will use its legal powers to enforce school attendance where this becomes problematic, including powers to prosecute parents who fail to comply with a school attendance order (Section 443 of the Education Act 1996) or failure to ensure their child's regular attendance at school (Section 444 of the Education Act 1996).

Education Supervision Orders The local authority must consider applying for an Education Supervision Order (ESO) before prosecuting parents. A local authority may apply for an ESO instead of or as well as prosecuting parents. The order is placed on the child and the local authority is appointed by the court to supervise that child's education either at a school or at home for a specified period of time.

Section 444(A) of the Education Act 1996 empowers the local authority to issue Penalty Notices for failure to ensure regular school attendance. Parents or carers who take their children out of school without school's permission or are late returning from a leave of absence that has been granted during term time as there are exceptional circumstances, may receive a Penalty Notice fine of **£60 per parent per child**, which must be paid within 21 days . If payment is made after 21 days but within 28 days, the penalty is increased to £120. Where a fine remains unpaid after 28 days, the matter will be referred to the Attendance and Welfare Service, who will consider instigating criminal proceedings. ***Please note that Penalty Notices can be issued after 10 unauthorised absences in a term or 18 in two consecutive terms. Children who are late without good reason after registration closes also receive an unauthorised absence mark.***

In addition, a penalty notice and may also be issued where parents allow their children to be present in a public place during school hours without reasonable justification.

The Education (Penalty Notices) (England) (Amendment) Regulations 2013 sets out the details of how the penalty notice scheme must operate. Sefton Council Code of Conduct for issuing penalty notices will be made available for schools, parents/carers and other interested parties.

The Education (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2006 currently allow Headteachers to grant leave of absence for the purpose of a family holiday during term time in 'special circumstances' of up to ten school days leave per year. Headteachers can also grant extended leave for more than ten school days in exceptional circumstances.

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.

Sefton Council will also be conducting Pre Court Panel meetings in accordance with the Police and Criminal Evidence (PACE) Act 1984.