

ST. JOHN'S CATHEDRAL CATHOLIC PRIMARY SCHOOL

SCHOOL ATTENDANCE POLICY

At St. John's Cathedral Catholic Primary School our mission is to educate the whole child through the Gospel values of Christ.

Rationale

We believe that pupils need to attend school regularly if they are to take full advantage of the educational opportunities available to them by law.

Under Section 444 of the 1996 Education Act, parents of children of compulsory school age are required to ensure that their children receive efficient full time education.

Aims

We recognise that individual pupils and families have problems but we aim to actively pursue the goal of regular attendance by

- discouraging lateness
- expecting an explanation from parents for absence
- being alert to emerging patterns of absence
- promoting regular attendance
- working closely with Education Welfare Service to promote attendance

PRACTICE AND PROCEDURES

Registration

- Registers are raised weekly using the SIMS Attendance Package
- Pupils are marked present or absent on the attendance register at the beginning of each session, morning and afternoon.
- Registers must be kept in pencil. A horizontal line through P denotes present and a horizontal line through A denotes absent.
- Registers must be returned to the collection point immediately after completion.
- Authorised absences are recorded by C and unauthorised absences by O.
- When parents phone school to inform of absence the absence sheet in the front of the register will be filled in by administration staff.
- All letters from parents must be kept by the teacher in a pocket in the register and transferred by the Administrative Assistant to a central file.
- If a pupil returns to school with no explanation of his/her absence a letter requesting reason for absence should be sent immediately by the Administrative Assistant, and followed up until a reply is received. Prompt action by vigilant class teachers and Administrative Assistants often prevents children from drifting into frequent and/or prolonged absence.
- Registers will be retained for a period of **5 YEARS** (by the Administration Officer)
- Address and phone numbers should be checked regularly and recorded on the contact pages in the key stage files located in the office.

N.B. Registers are LEGAL DOCUMENTS and may be used in evidence in cases where parents are being prosecuted for attendance offences.

Every term the LA requires unauthorised absence figures from each school. The Administration Officer will access this information using the SIMS programme data.

Categorising Absence

Absence is **authorised** when:

- the pupil is absent with leave (defined as leave granted by the governing body (responsibility delegated to the Headteacher) i.e. HOLIDAY FORM and limited to 10 working days per year).
- the pupil is ill or prevented from attending by any unavoidable cause.
- absence is exclusively for religious observation.
- school is not within walking distance and no suitable transport arrangements have been made.

The Holiday Form

- Prior to a holiday form being issued or a holiday booked parents must meet with the Headteacher to discuss the reason for a school time holiday.
- The 'holiday form' may be collected by child or parents from the School office.
- The completed form should be returned to the School Office by teacher, parent or child.
- The Office will assess the form. If there is a problem the Office will inform the Head and contact the parents.
- The form will be passed to the Headteacher for signed approval (as delegated by the Governing Body).
- The form will then be put into the class register for teacher acknowledgement. The form is then kept in a designated file.

Extended Family Holidays and Trips Overseas in Term Time

Only in exceptional circumstances can leave extend beyond two weeks in one year. Teachers should inform the Headteacher who will make further enquiries by contacting the family.

Illness

Notes from parents

Only the school, not the parents, can approve absence. Where there is reason to doubt the validity of the explanation offered, the Head must be informed so that follow up procedures can be initiated. A school record absence sheet should be initiated by the Administrative Officer. The Headteacher will invite the parents into school by letter to discuss circumstances and future expectations. E.W.O. will be informed if action taken. The Head may request future absence notes to be accompanied by a doctor's note.

E.W.O. can refer the matter to a doctor working in the School Health Service to arrange a special medical. Should these procedures fail to stem the absenteeism then the Headteacher will refer the case to E.W.O. Providing the School can show that it has taken steps to stem the absence E.W.S. will accept the case.

Medical and Dental Appointments

Absence is authorised where confirmation has been received from the parent (in writing, phone call or verbal message) or on production of an appointment card.

When a pupil is present for registration but then has to attend an appointment:

- The parent calls at the School Office and records that he/she is taking the child off site (Administration Staff will collect child from the classroom **NOT** the parent or the Class Teacher will ensure that the child will arrive at the office at the appointed time. The parents sign the book to record the child has been taken out of school.
- When the child returns to School he/she must check in at the office and a further note will be added to the record book.
- We discourage parents from arranging appointments during the school day. We do however acknowledge that this may not always be possible and do expect children to attend school as soon as possible following appointments.

Lateness

- The school actively discourages lateness.
- An explanation and apology from the child is expected but we are careful not to victimise the child for the short comings of parents.
- Lateness is recorded in a daily book and on the weekly SIMS printout.
- It will be recorded as unauthorised if a child arrives half an hour late or more.
- If a child is regularly late for school the School Office will inform the Headteacher who will make further enquiries.

Criteria for Absence

The school follows Portsmouth City Education Authority guidelines for absence.

Authorised

Illness

Unavoidable family crises (e.g. a death in the family).

Holiday (parental - at discretion of Headteacher after completing a holiday form).

Child in contact with infectious illness (e.g. meningitis).

Urgent dental, medical appointments.

Religious observance.

School exclusion.

Unauthorised

Illness of parent of other member of family.

Inadequate clothing.

Absence with collusion of parent (e.g. child-minding, birthday treats, Christmas treats).
School refusal (phobia).
Truancy.
Caring for others.
Problems with transport (e.g. no money for bus fare, car not starting).
Non urgent medical or dental treatment.
Child used as an interpreter.

The School Role in Pupils' Absence

The initial follow up on punctuality and absenteeism rests with the class teacher. It is the teacher who calls the registers twice daily, learns the friendship patterns within the class, is most aware of family dynamics and potential problems. Reasons for absence must be questioned, with swift follow up. Early intervention conveys care and concern for pupils.

In cases where intermittent or persistent absence continues, perhaps condoned by parents, the Head will be informed so that further action can be taken. This may include a phone call or visit from the Headteacher.

Referral to the E.W.O. involves discussion of concerns and completion of the referral form and attendance sheet either by the class teacher and/or Headteacher. The E.W.O. will decide the nature of further action.

The E.W.O, in conjunction with the Headteacher may decide to issue a penalty warning notice.

E.W.O.'s Role in Pupils' Absence and Attendance

As well as following up individual cases of absenteeism, the E.W.O. will undertake a wide range of other attendance related work e.g. support for reluctant attendees through individual consultation and counselling.

Reviewed January 2008