



# St Edmund's Catholic School

## Attendance Policy



### **Introduction**

St Edmund's prides itself with its Mission Statement – "I can do all things through God who strengthens me".

For this motto to be embedded in the community it is vital for pupils to be committed to their learning. Good attendance and punctuality plays a crucial part in pupil progress. It is important that all pupils take full advantage of the opportunities available to them.

We recognise that for the vast majority of our students, good attendance is a well-established habit which brings success.

It is the legal responsibility of parents to make sure that attendance to school is regular and this policy sets out how together we will achieve this. However permitting absence from school without good reason creates an offence in law and may result in prosecution.

### **The importance of regular attendance**

Any absence undermines the education process and regular absence will have a negative impact on learning. There may be a risk of harm if attendance is irregular. Safeguarding the interests of each child is everyone's responsibility and within the context of this school, promoting the welfare and life opportunities for pupils encompasses:

1. Attendance.
2. Behaviour Management.
3. Health and Safety.
4. Access to the curriculum.
5. Freedom from bullying.
6. Good Achievement and Progress.

### **Our expectation of Parents**

It is important that all parents clearly understand that attendance is a safeguarding matter. Therefore we expect the following;

- Regular school attendance.

- Arrival at school on time at 08:25am for registration at 08:30am properly attired and in a condition to learn.
- Reasons for absence communicated to the school on **every day** of absence by telephone or in writing by 09:00am.
- The school will then decide whether an absence is to be authorised or unauthorised.
- Holidays are not to be taken in term time.
- A leave of absence form is required for all absence requests no later than 3 days prior to the absence.
- No absence will be granted for a single day in Year 11, unless on exceptional circumstances e.g. funeral. Parents should check when their child's last examination is prior to booking an early holiday.

### **Understanding types of absence**

Every half day of absence 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 in writing.

Authorised absences are mornings or afternoons away from school for good reason which unavoidably fall in school time.

Absence may only be authorised in the following circumstances:

- Religious observance.
- Unavoidable difficulties with transport.
- Approved work experience.
- Participation in an approved public/school performance or activity.
- Approved study leave.
- Bereavement.
- Illness.
- Medical/Dental.

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 school using sanctions and or legal proceedings. This includes parents/carers keeping children off school unnecessarily, truancy during the school day, absences which have never been properly explained, persistent lateness, shopping, looking after other children, birthdays, day trips and holidays in term time which have not been agreed.

**For exceptional circumstances, a holiday may be authorised (V) at the discretion of the Headteacher if evidence can be provided that the holiday will be educationally advantageous.**

As of September 2013, the school can no longer authorise absence unless there are exceptional circumstances. All requests for absence for holiday will be marked as unauthorised and a fixed penalty sought.

### **Persistent Absenteeism (PA)**

A pupil becomes a 'persistent absentee' when they miss 15% 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 parent's fullest support and co-operation to tackle this. 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. PA pupils are tracked and monitored carefully through our pastoral system and we also combine this with academic mentoring where absence affects progress and attainment.

All our PA pupils are subject to an action plan which may include regular 1-1 with a member of staff/school nurse/connexions worker or reward for improved attendance.

### **Absence procedures**

If a child is absent parents must:

- Contact the school as soon as possible on each day of absence.
- Send a note in on the first day that the child returns with an explanation of the absence Parents must do this even if a call to the school has been made.

In the case of absence the school will:

- Telephone or text parents on the first day of absence if we have not had any communication.
- Invite parents in to discuss the situation with the Pastoral Staff or appropriate SMT line manager if the situation persists.
- Refer the matter to the School Attendance Team for consideration at a panel meeting.

The onus to communicate lies with the parent.

### **Telephone Numbers**

There are times when we need to contact parents, including absence, so we need to have contact numbers at all times. Please inform the school of any changes to these details.

## **Lateness**

Poor punctuality is not acceptable as it impacts on pupil progress and organisational skills for later on in life. Late arrival can disrupt learning and encourage absence.

The school day starts at 08:30am and we expect pupils to be in the tutor base at that time. Registers are marked by 08:45am and after this time pupils will receive a late mark. If a pupil arrives in school after 09:30am, the mark recorded shows them as on site but also as an unauthorised absence. This means that both parents could face the possibility of a Fixed Penalty Notice if the problem persists.

Taking leave of absence in term time will affect schooling as much as any other absence. The deliberate taking of a holiday in term time will result in a Penalty Notice being issued without a warning.

Parents must complete a leave of absence form when requesting time off for their child in term time. The decision to agree/refuse permission is made by the Headteacher, who will confirm in writing.

## **Irregular Attendance**

Following 10 sessions of unauthorised absence in a term the school can request that a Penalty Notice be served. This may be deemed appropriate in the following circumstances:

- Late arrival at school after the register has closed.
- Truancy.
- Parentally condoned absences.
- Failure of parents to engage, communicate or co-operate with the school.
- Holidays during term time.

Each parent of a pupil with irregular attendance will receive a formal warning of the possibility of a Fixed Penalty Notice being issued and will be given a period of 30 days to improve.

Each case will be considered separately.

## **Safeguarding Matters linked to Attendance: Indicators of concern exempt from Keeping Kids Safe in Education (KCSIE) 2019.**

St Edmund's staff are aware that children going missing, particularly repeatedly, can act as a vital warning sign of a range of safeguarding possibilities. This may include abuse and neglect, which may include sexual abuse or exploitation and child criminal exploitation. It may indicate mental health problems, risk of substance abuse, risk of travelling to conflict zones, risk of female genital mutilation or risk of forced marriage. We appreciate that early intervention is necessary to identify the existence of any underlying safeguarding risk and to help prevent the risks of a child going missing in future.

In this respect St Edmund's aims to minimise the risk of exploitation by:

- Maintaining daily communication with parents, guardians and family members.
- Remove barriers to attending school.
- Undertake home visits.
- Share information with the MASH team as appropriate.

## **School targets projects and rewards linked to good attendance.**

St Edmund's has targets to improve attendance and pupils have an important part to play in meeting these targets. The minimum level attendance for St Edmund's is 95% attendance and we will keep parents updated regularly about progress and comparisons.

Our target is to achieve better than this however because we know that good attendance is the key to good progress the following rewards are issued throughout the year to pupils who have good attendance and those who make an effort to improve:

- Certificate.
- Special trips.
- Badges.
- Pens.
- Film afternoons.
- Break time snacks.

Those people responsible for attendance matters in St Edmund's are:

- SMT Member, Mrs M Howorth.
- Attendance Officer, Mrs R George.
- Heads of Learning Years 7- 11.
- Support agencies.

### **Sanctions linked to Attendance**

Should strategies to improve attendance via support and rewards have no impact then a range of sanctions and further interventions will be utilised.

This will include use of:

- After school detentions.
- Inclusions.
- Use of outside agencies/where available.
- Fixed penalty notices.
- Year group roll back – remaining in current year or moving down a year.

Where sanctions are applied the school will seek to involve and engage parents at all levels. All sanctions applied and interventions will be routed in clear evidence.

### **Summary**

The school has a legal duty to publish its attendance figure to parents and to promote attendance. Equally parents have a duty to make sure that their children attend. All school staff are committed to working with parents and pupils in the best way to ensure as high a level of attendance as possible and that every child's welfare and life opportunities are promoted.

### **Review**

This policy was last reviewed in October 2019.