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Attendance Policy

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ATTENDANCE POLICY

AIMS

St Mary's Catholic Primary School aims to maximise pupil attendance in order to ensure that all pupils are able to take full advantage of the learning experiences available to them.

We expect all pupils on roll to attend on time and every day when the school is in session, as long as they are fit and healthy enough to do so. We do all we can to encourage the children to attend and believe that an important factor in promoting good attendance is the development of positive attitudes towards school. To this end we strive to make school a happy and rewarding experience for all pupils. We will reward those children whose attendance is very good. We will also make the best provision we can for those children who are prevented from coming to school for reasons supported by a medical professional.

Under the Education (Pupil Registration) Regulations 1995 the governing body is responsible for making sure the school keeps an attendance register that records which pupils are present at the start of both the morning and afternoon sessions of the school day. This register will be coded in line with DfE guidelines (Appendix A attached).

AUTHORISED ABSENCES

- An absence is classified as authorised when a child has been away from school for a reason that the school deems as acceptable and the school has received notification from the parent/carer. Notification should be letter or telephone message from a parent but it does not, in itself, authorise an absence. Only if the school is satisfied as to the validity of the explanation offered by the letter/message will the absence be authorised.
- Only the school can authorise an absence. Parents/carers do not have this authority. Consequently not all absences supported by parents will necessarily be classified as authorised by the school. For example, if a parent takes a child out of school to go shopping during school hours; this will not be an authorised absence.

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UNAUTHORISED ABSENCE

- An absence is classified as unauthorised when a child is away from school without the permission of the school. An absence is unauthorised if a child is away from school without good reason, even with the support of the parent.
- The school will contact the parent/carer of any child who has an unauthorised absence. If a child has a repeated number of unauthorised absences, the parents or carers will be asked to meet with the Headteacher to discuss the problem. If the situation does not improve, the school will then contact the Education Welfare Officer, who will make contact with the parent/carers to ensure that they understand the seriousness of the situation and their statutory duty to ensure their children attend school. Strategies will be implemented to support regular attendance.
- The governors support the Local Authority's right to consider taking legal action against parents or carers who repeatedly fail to accept their responsibility for sending their child/ren to school on a regular basis. Repeated unauthorised absences can result in parents being issued with a fixed penalty notice, or even prosecution, further details of which can be requested from the Local Authority.

REGISTRATION/LATENESS

Foundation Stage, Key Stage 1 and Key Stage 2 pupils are expected to arrive in good time in the morning, ready for the bell at 8:55 am. When in the classroom, the morning session register will be called promptly at 9:00 am and will close at 9:20am. The afternoon session register will be called at 1:20 pm for the whole school and will close at 1:30pm.

Parents/Carers should ensure that the children arrive at school in good time for the start of the session. A pupil arriving late can disrupt not only his/her continuity of learning but also that of other pupils. Pupils arriving late, whilst the register remains open, will be given an **authorised late** mark. Late arrivals after the register has closed will result in an **unauthorised late** mark.

A Late Arrival Log will be held in the school office for parents/carers to sign upon arrival.

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The register will be marked in accordance with the DfE attendance codes.

If a pupil frequently arrives late, the school will contact the parent/carer.

The Education Welfare Officer regularly monitors the Late Arrival Log.

When a child is absent, the parents/carers should ring or e-mail the school, by 9:30am with an explanation. If the school does not receive any notification the school will endeavour, on the first day of absence, to contact the parent/carer for an explanation. When the child returns to school the parent/carer should explain the reason for the absence in writing or by e-mail.

Parents/carers should ensure that they collect their child promptly at the end of the school day. For children in the afternoon session in the Nursery this is 3.15 pm, and at 3.20 pm for Reception, KS1 and KS2. The school duty of care ends at 3:30pm. Children not collected by 3.30 pm will be taken to After School Club and may be charged for their attendance at the Club.

REQUESTS FOR LEAVE OF ABSENCE

- We believe that children need to be in school for all sessions, so that they can make the most progress possible, and the school strongly discourages parents from taking children out of school during term time. Parents/Carers do not have the right to take their children out of school during term. The Education (Pupil Registration) Regulations 2006 has been amended and came into force on 1st September 2013. Headteachers can now only authorise leave of absence in exceptional circumstances and holidays are not normally considered an 'exceptional circumstance'. Any requests for leave of absence should be made to the Head teacher in advance, by the parent/carer with whom the child normally resides. If a request is not made in advance, the absence cannot be authorised.

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- The DfE expects schools to actively discourage all leave during term time. Any request will be considered very carefully and the following factors will be taken into account:
 - ❖ Child's previous attendance history
 - ❖ Child's stage of education and ability to catch up on missed schooling
 - ❖ The time of year (SATS and assessments)
 - ❖ The nature of the request (e.g. exceptional circumstances)
- Requests for absence during term time should be made to the Headteacher on an application form (Appendix B attached), available from the school office. This should be not less than four weeks before the absence is due to start.
- If the request is refused and the child is still taken on holiday, this will be recorded as an unauthorised absence and may be referred to the Local Authority for consideration of a Penalty Notice or other action.

ILLNESS DURING TERM TIME

- If a child is unable to attend school because of illness, the parent/carer should inform the school either by telephone, in writing or verbally by 9:30am on the day of absence.
- When a child has an illness that means they will be away from school for over five days, the parent/carer will be expected to provide medical evidence. The school will do all it can to send material home so that the child can keep up with their school work.
- If the absence is likely to continue for an extended period, or be repetitive absence, the parent/carer will be expected to provide medical evidence and the school will work with the support services to make suitable arrangements.

STRATEGIES FOR PROMOTING GOOD ATTENDANCE

- St Mary's Catholic Primary School will offer an environment in which pupils feel valued and welcomed.
- Attendance data will be collected and analysed in order to help identify patterns, set targets, correlate attendance with achievement and support and inform policy/practice.

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- Parents/carers are regularly reminded (via newsletters, the School Prospectus, the Home School Agreement and Parents' Evenings etc) of the importance of good attendance.
- The Headteacher will liaise with other agencies as appropriate – the Education Welfare Service, Traveller Education Service, Social Services.
- The Headteacher meets regularly with the Education Welfare Officer to monitor attendance and discuss any concerns.
- All of the children who have 100% attendance in a term will receive an attendance certificate. An additional attendance certificate is awarded for children who have 100% attendance for the whole year.
- Other incentives and rewards are used to encourage attendance eg Attendance Week, Displays.

MONITORING AND REVIEW

- It is the responsibility of the Governors to monitor overall attendance and they will request an annual report from the Headteacher. The Governing Body also has responsibility for this policy and seeing that it is carried out. The Governors will therefore examine closely the information provided and seek to ensure that the school attendance figures are as high as they should be.
- The school will keep accurate attendance records on file for a minimum period of three years.
- The rates of attendance will be reported in the School Prospectus.
- The following documents are used to support the implementation of this policy:
 - DfE Register Attendance Codes
 - Central Bedfordshire Council – Guidelines for Improving Attendance
 - Central Bedfordshire Council – Circular H/07/02 Attendance Coding Matters and Consultation on Penalty Notices for Term-time holidays.
- The policy will be reviewed by the Governing Body every two years or earlier if considered necessary.