

BEDFORD **CATHOLIC** SCHOOLS  
A TRULY UNIQUE JOURNEY



**St John Rigby Catholic  
Primary School**

*'God's will be done through work and play, as we follow Jesus day by day'*

# **ATTENDANCE POLICY**

**April 2019  
Review: April 2020**

# Attendance Policy

## Introduction

Regular attendance at school is essential to ensure uninterrupted progress and to enable children to extend their potential. The attendance pattern for all children is monitored weekly with the school seeking to work actively with parents to ensure a regular pattern is maintained. We expect all children on roll to attend 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 to put in place appropriate procedures to support this. We believe that the most important factor in promoting good attendance is development of positive attitudes towards school and learning.

Poor attendance can seriously affect each child's:-

- ❖ Attainment in school
- ❖ Relationships with other children and their ability to form lasting friendships
- ❖ Confidence to attempt new work and work alongside others

Each child's attendance can be summarised as:

96%+	<b>Excellent:</b> Well Done! This will help all aspects of their progress and life in school. This will give them a good start in life and supports a positive work ethic
94-95%	<b>Average:</b> Well done, strive to build on this
90 - 93%	<b>Poor:</b> Absence is now affecting attainment and progress at school. Please work with the school urgently to improve the situation
Below 90%	<b>Persistent Absence:</b> Absence is causing serious concern. It is affecting attainment and progress and is disrupting your child's learning. We will work with you and the Education Welfare Officer [EWO] to improve your child's attendance. Permitting absence from school without a good reason is an offence by the parent. Only the school can 'authorise' absence. <b>The school will not assess all reasons as 'valid'</b>

Non-attendance is an important issue that is treated seriously. However, each case is different and the school acknowledges that no one standard response will be appropriate in every case. Consideration is given to all factors affecting attendance before deciding what intervention strategies to apply.

- a) In every case, early intervention is essential to prevent the problem from worsening. It is essential that parents keep the school fully informed of any matters that may affect their child's attendance; they are reminded of this duty in the school prospectus.
- b) Prior to the engagement of the EWO, the school may issue letters to parents clearly defining the concerns within the school regarding a pupil's absence. It is hoped that a quick response and change in levels of absence will prevent the need for EWO involvement.

Further details regarding roles and responsibilities is identified in the appendix to this policy.

## Principles

### **Arrival and Registration**

All children should be in the school ready to register at 8.55am each day although children are entitled to enter the classroom from 8.40am and children in Year 4, 5 and 6 can access the playground from 8.30am (supervised by a member of staff on duty) The register is taken twice a day. A day counts as 2 attendances. Morning registration ends at 9.00am. If a child arrives after the gate closes the parent/carer must report to the school office and sign their child in. Arrival after the register has closed is recorded as an unauthorised late mark.

## **Parental Responsibility**

Throughout this policy the term 'parent' represents one parent, both parents, or carer with whom the child resides.

Parents are informed of their responsibility to ensure their children attend regularly, in the school prospectus. Punctuality is also stressed as lateness impacts on learning not only for the individual, but the class as a whole.

Attendance is discussed with each parent at consultation evenings, with the current percentage attendance being reported. Parents have a legal obligation to ensure their children receive a full -time education. This is achieved by regular attendance at school.

## **Illness and Medical Appointments**

When a child is unwell, parents should contact the school before 9.00am on the first day of absence informing the school of the reason for absence. When a child is absent, the school office will record the absence in the register. As part of our Safeguarding Procedures, the school office will send a text to the parent or carer if no message has been received regarding the reason for the absence to check on the safety of the child.

- a) Every effort should be made to arrange medical appointments outside school hours
- b) If it is necessary for a child to be out of school for this reason, the child should be returned to school directly after the appointment
- c) If your child is absent due to vomiting or diarrhoea then they should not return to school for **the next 24/48 hours** after the last bout. This is to reduce the risk of infection to other children and adults in the school
- d) For more than three days of absence the school requires a written explanation of why the child was absent. The school office will request this if it is not produced
- e) Medical certificates are required for absence greater than five days

## **School Responsibility - THE LAW and School Attendance**

### **Term-time holiday**

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. All parents are invited into school to discuss a proposed leave of absence with the Headteacher.

The Senior Leadership Team and all staff work to ensure a high level of enjoyment and commitment to learning as a means of ensuring regular attendance.

Specific responsibilities for attendance matters are identified in the appendix. The Headteacher holds responsibility for attendance matters, supported by the Attendance Administration staff and the Family worker.

Where school attendance problems occur, the school will endeavour to work with parents in the interest of the child to achieve a resolution.

Attendance is recorded and data is stored and analysed using the BROMCOM Attendance module. It is a statutory duty for class teachers to call and maintain accurate registers; these are legal documents, and may be called for evidence by the court. Class teachers are legally responsible for marking their class attendance register twice per day at the start of each session.

The Headteacher, not parents, authorises absence, St John Rigby Catholic Primary School adheres to the DfE guidelines in authorising absence. Absence during term time is strongly discouraged.

Absence known to be for the following reasons would be authorised:

- ❖ Illness
- ❖ Religious Observance
- ❖ Attendance for medical appointments which can not be made outside school hours

When it becomes necessary to make a referral to the Education Welfare Office [EWO], all further absences will be unauthorised pending investigation. The EWO liaises with the school regarding absences following contact with the parents.

### **Family Holidays/ Absence during Term Time**

The Directors recognise that pupil absence during term time can seriously disrupt a pupil's continuity of learning. **Parents are therefore strongly urged to avoid booking a family holiday in term time.** Parents do not have an automatic right to withdraw pupils from school for a holiday and in law, have to apply for permission in advance. It is the policy of the school to not authorise holidays during term time.

When application is made for authorised absence during term time due to exceptional circumstances, the Headteacher gives consideration to:

- ❖ The age of the child
- ❖ The nature of the proposed absence
- ❖ The timing of the proposed absence
- ❖ The attendance pattern in the present and previous academic years. Absence will not be authorised where attendance is lower than 95% or where the absence would take attendance below 95%
- ❖ The child's progress

### **Examples of what may constitute exceptional circumstances:**

- ❖ If a parent/carer due to the nature of their work, is unable to take time off during the regular school holidays, then this might constitute an exceptional circumstance. This would need to be evidenced with a letter from the employer. Factors mentioned above would still need to be taken into account
- ❖ If a parent/carer in a member of the forces
- ❖ Bereavement

When an absence is authorised, parents will be provided with written evidence which can be presented in the event of being stopped as part of a truancy sweep.

### **Definitions**

Every half-day has to be classified by the school (not by the parent/carer) as either **AUTHORISED** or **UNAUTHORISED**. This is why information about the cause of each absence is always required preferably in writing or by telephone.

#### **Authorised Absence**

An absence is classified as authorised when a child has been away from school for a legitimate reason and the school has received notification from a parent or carer. For example, if a child has been unwell and the parent writes a note or telephones the school to explain the absence. Only the school can make an absence authorised.

#### **Unauthorised Absence**

An absence is classified as unauthorised when a child is away from school without the permission of the Headteacher.

Unauthorised absences are those, which the school does not consider reasonable and for which no authorisation has been given. This includes:

- ❖ Parents keeping children off school unnecessarily
- ❖ Truancy before or during the school day
- ❖ Absences that have never been properly explained
- ❖ Holiday during school term time

**Penalty notices** for absence from school can be issued by the Attendance and Behaviour Service based on requests from schools and police.

The following circumstances are considered as appropriate reasons for the issuing of Penalty Notices:

- ❖ Truancy, including truancy sweeps
- ❖ Parentally-condoned absences
- ❖ Holidays in term time
- ❖ Excessive delayed return from extended holidays
- ❖ Persistent lateness after the register has closed

A pupil has to be absent from school in one of these circumstances for at least 10 sessions in any term before the issuing of a Penalty Notice can be considered.

Following a request by the school for the issuing of a Penalty Notice a check is made by the Attendance and Behaviour Service that the request meets the conditions of the Code of Conduct. A warning letter will then be sent to parents explaining that unless their child attends full time and on time for the next 15 days a Penalty Notice will be issued. Where a Penalty Notice is issued, each parent is required to pay a fine to the Local Authority.

### **Rewards**

The prime benefit derived from regular attendance is that continuity and progression in learning are ensured.

Attendance is celebrated in Friday assemblies.

- ❖ Classes that come in the top 3 are given a class marble
- ❖ Classes with 100% attendance in any week receive a gift
- ❖ Children with 100% attendance each month are given a sticker in class
- ❖ Children with 100% attendance per term are given a certificate
- ❖ Children with 100% attendance for the academic year are rewarded in a whole school assembly with a certificate and a gift

### **Individual incentives**

Where positive impact is required, all staff in contact with the child must take extra care to welcome the child each morning, praise punctual attendance and acknowledge the effort the child has made. It is also appropriate to recognise the effort the parent has made to secure the child's attendance.

## Appendix 1

<b>Role</b>	<b>Responsibility</b>
Headteacher	<p>Operational management of the policy.</p> <p>Consider requests for authorised absence. Give approval in advance in appropriate circumstances, taking account of the child's attendance record.</p> <p>Authorise absence after it occurs when a satisfactory explanation is accepted.</p> <p>Ensure that anti-bullying policy and behaviour policies are followed and ensure action is taken in response to any difficulties reported and [e.g. bullying/behaviour] which impact on attendance.</p> <p>Consider the use of a Penalty Notice for unauthorised absence or lateness.</p> <p>Complete HT witness statements on pupil absence for court use.</p>
Attendance Secretary	<p>Print daily registers.</p> <p>Oversee day to day attendance where there is cause for concern, working closely with parents and children to improve poor attendance.</p> <p>Send a text out to parents if no contact has been made with regards to absence.</p> <p>Accurately record attendance data daily using agreed codes.</p> <p>Record late arrival and reasons.</p> <p>Ensure reasons for absences are accurately recorded.</p> <p>Prepare standard letters requesting reasons for absence when this is unexplained.</p> <p>Prepare letters to inform parents when a child's attendance is giving cause for concern and is this being monitored.</p> <p>Collect absence notes and record reasons for absence.</p> <p>Monitor pupil attendance half termly and report to Headteacher and take action according to this policy.</p> <p>Investigate reasons for absence exploring any underlying cause either at home or in school.</p> <p>Liaise with the Educational Welfare Officer and make referrals as necessary.</p> <p>Work with the EWO towards improved patterns of attendance for referred pupils identifying the course of action that should be taken.</p> <p>Compile and update standard letters re: %attendance, notification of reasons for absence and lateness and send to parents when necessary.</p> <p>Provide attendance reports when requested and ensure DfE attendance returns are accurate.</p>
Class Teachers	<p>Prepare and deliver stimulating and enjoyable learning for all children.</p> <p>Registration of children at the start of the morning and afternoon sessions.</p> <p>Alert the Attendance Secretary of any children who demonstrate an unsettled pattern of attendance or whose attendance pattern changes.</p> <p>Ensure that registers have been completed and saved on Bromcom.</p> <p>Notify parents of attendance percentage in their end of year Report.</p> <p>Ensure all absence notes are passed to the Attendance Secretary.</p> <p>Work with the HT to agree and implement strategies to re-engage pupils with emerging attendance problems.</p>
Parents	<p>Ensure their child attends daily and on time.</p> <p>Keep the school fully informed on all matters that might affect attendance and their child in school.</p> <p>Telephone school on the first day of any absence to inform school of the reason.</p> <p>If attendance becomes a problem – work with the school to improve matters.</p> <p>Give serious consideration to whether it is appropriate or necessary to request term time absence.</p> <p>Make application for any term time leave prior to proposed dates.</p>
Educational Welfare Officer	<p>Work closely with school and families to resolve attendance issues.</p> <p>Visit school for meetings at agreed times.</p> <p>Identify, with school, cases of unauthorised absence which necessitate action and advise on responses.</p> <p>Provide written reports to school in the form of consultation sheets.</p> <p>Complete regular register checks.</p> <p>On receipt of a written referral, take appropriate action, which may include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>❖ Advice on strategies to improve attendance</li> <li>❖ Assessment home visits</li> <li>❖ Action planning</li> </ul>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>❖ Agreed time-limited intervention</li> <li>❖ Attendance at school meetings</li> <li>❖ Written record of work undertaken</li> <li>❖ Verbal feedback where appropriate</li> <li>❖ Written response to referral within 10 days</li> <li>❖ Liaise with other agencies</li> <li>❖ Liaison with other Local Authority departments</li> <li>❖ Preparation of cases for prosecution including sending warning letters</li> <li>❖ Preparing Witness statements for Magistrates Court</li> </ul>
Directors	<p>It is the responsibility of the Directors to monitor overall attendance. The Directors also have the responsibility for Attendance Policy, and for seeing that it is carried out. The Directors will therefore examine closely the information provided to them, and seek to ensure that the school's attendance figures remain high. Attendance Policy will be reviewed by the board of directors every three years, or earlier if considered necessary.</p>