



"Education for life in the love of God and Neighbour"

Policy for

Attendance

St Gregory's Catholic Primary School

Updated Jan 2015

Attendance Policy

It is fundamental that regular and punctual school attendance is essential if children at St Gregory's Catholic Primary School are to maximise the educational opportunities available to them. Irregular attendance/punctuality disrupts continuity of learning, undermines educational progress and leads to underachievement and low attainment.

St Gregory's Catholic Primary School seeks to ensure that all its pupils receive full-time Education which maximises opportunities for each pupil to realise his/her true potential.

The school will strive to provide a welcoming, caring environment whereby each member of the school community feels wanted and secure.

All school staff will work with pupils and their families to ensure each pupil attends school regularly and punctually.

The school will establish an effective system of incentives and rewards that acknowledges the efforts of pupils to improve their attendance and timekeeping and will challenge the behaviour of pupils and parents who give a low priority to attendance and punctuality.

To meet those objectives, St Gregory's Catholic Primary School will establish an effective and efficient system of communication with pupils, parents and appropriate agencies to provide mutual information, advice and support.

Aims:

- To share the responsibility for promoting school attendance amongst everyone in the school and the broader school community;
- To show all parents the unjustified and unauthorised absence will be noticed and challenged and why it is important to minimise both for the child's education and protection;
- To develop and implement an effective attendance policy that touches all aspects of the school's life, and relates directly to the school's values, ethos and curriculum. To these ends staff particularly strive:
 - i. to encourage all pupils to reach their true potential and eventually become independent learner who value learning with and from others, i.e. have a positive attitude to life-long learning;
 - ii. to value application, perseverance, initiative and independence of thought and action, as well as co-operative endeavours.

This attendance policy and its implementation should encourage some pupils to attend school more regularly by the implementation of specific measures, e.g.

- i. registering pupils accurately and efficiently;

- ii. contacting parents the same day when reasons for absence are unknown or unauthorised;
 - iii. regularly monitoring pupil attendance and punctuality;
 - iv. reporting school attendance statistics to parents, LEA and DCSF as appropriate.
- to reinforce good attendance and to encourage improved attendance by using such measure as:
 - i. informal comments from staff;
 - ii. By the more formal issue of attendance certificates; and annual rewards
 - To monitor and evaluate this policy and its implementation by, amongst other means; rigorously collecting and analysing data about attendance to check our progress against measurable outcomes.

SECTION 1

ROLES & RESPONSIBILITIES:

PARENTS:

All children of compulsory age (5-16) should receive suitable education, either by regular attendance at school or otherwise. If a child is registered at St.Gregory's, parents have the primary statutory responsibility for ensuring that their child attends regularly.

To help fulfil their important role in their child's education, and to be as informed as possible in any communications or discussions with teachers, parents are requested and encouraged, to the extent feasible:

- To ensure their child attends school regularly and punctually;
- To notify the school if their child cannot attend for any reason - this is for the child's security as well as administrative reasons;
- To work with the school and other related agencies to resolve/alleviate any attendance problems or protracted absence;
- To ensure they obtain 'exceptional leave of absence' for their child if required during term time.

To discharge their agreed responsibilities parents should always:

- Encourage good attendance making sure that their child goes to school regularly, arrives on time and keeps to the school's rules
 - Support the school in its efforts to control bad behaviour;
 - Inform the school on the first day of non-attendance;
 - Co-operate with the school staff and the external attendance consultants to make sure their child overcomes his or her attendance problems and gets a proper education;
 - Discuss planned 'exceptional leave' with the school and apply for permission well in advance for leave from school in term time for exceptional circumstances, etc.
- Parents should not normally:

- i. Take leave from school in term time
- ii. Take leave from school during test times (SAT's);
- iii. Any requested leave in term time will only be authorised in exceptional circumstances. Any parents taking pupils out of school for unauthorised leave in term time may be subject to a fine from the Local Authority.
- iv. Permission must be sought from the Headteacher prior to booking any leave in term time.

PUPILS:

- i. Pupils are actively encouraged to attend school regularly and to arrive punctually at school
- ii. Pupils should inform staff if there is a problem that may lead to their absence, e.g. bullying, racism, etc.
- iii. Pupils should use their best endeavours to pass on absence notes from parents to their class teacher and to pass school correspondence to their parents.

THE GOVERNING BODY:

The Governing Body is legally responsible for many aspects of school management including the attendance register and so it is registered with the Data Protection Registrar under the Data Protection Act 1998. However, the headteacher manages the day-to-day running of the school and in so doing takes responsibility for the day-to-day implementation of this policy.

THE HEADTEACHER:

Headteachers are required to tell the Local Authority (LA) if a pupil fails to attend regularly or has been absent for continuous period of ten days and the absence is treated as unauthorised (includes independent schools). Headteachers can, of course, notify the LA earlier if there are areas of concern. Normally the school itself will have made and recorded efforts to address the non-attendance through:

- Involvement of others within the school, e.g. School Office Manager, Headteacher or Deputy Head
- Contact with parents offering support

Referral to the School's Internal Support Systems:

- A pattern of irregular attendance or lateness is either continuing or worsening;
- Parents do not accept their responsibilities for ensuring the child attends school, and are refusing to discuss ways of improving attendance with the school;
- Condoned, unjustified absence is increasingly a problem;
- The parents ask for excessive authorised absence.
- The pupil attendance rate falls below a certain predetermined level, 85%

If this fails then referral to the Pupil Attendance Team will take place.

If the parent fails to engage with the school with regards to poor attendance then the school will consider asking the LA to issue a fixed penalty notice and or instigate legal proceedings.

Headteachers are required to maintain two registers;

- An admission register (known as the school roll) which contains a list of all pupils at the school;
- An attendance register for all pupils of compulsory school age on the admission register. This must be taken twice a day; once at the start of the morning session and once during the afternoon session.

CLASS TEACHER:

The class teacher is responsible for:

1. Completing the register and monitoring pupils' attendance in an attempt to identify irregular patterns of attendance, e.g.
 - Where a pupils attendance is falling to an unacceptable low level
 - Where a pupil attendance shows regular absences (i.e. absent every Wednesday)
 - Where a pupil is arriving late for registration on a regular basis
2. Discussing with pupils any unexplained incident of absence/lateness.
3. Informing the School Office Manager where a pattern of unexplained absence is identified so that they can contact parents.

THE SCHOOL OFFICE MANAGER:

Is responsible for:

1. Supporting class teachers, with the process of completing the register providing any necessary support.
2. Having general oversight of the attendance statistics and for monitoring these statistics on a regular basis (every 2 weeks) including comparing them to any national attendance targets.
3. Monitoring the smooth operation of the school's registration system and bringing about, in conjunction with the headteacher, any necessary changes to ensure its smooth and efficient operation.
4. Where a regular pattern of poor attendance has been identified
 - Monitoring, along with the class teachers, the pupil's attendance and contacting the pupil's parents
 - Discussing with pupils any increasing incidents of absence, truancy or regular lateness
 - Following up any reported truancy or pattern of regular lateness by contacting the pupil's parents
5. Where no improvement occurs in the identified attendance problem:
 - Expressing their concerns to the schools' headteacher and agreeing future action

SECTION 2

INITIATIVES TO IMPROVE ATTENDANCE RATES:

At St Gregory's we have excellent attendance but continue to work tirelessly to continue to improve this area of school life. The school has independently introduced a large variety of initiatives to address this issue.

We have a well developed transfer programme for Yr 6 pupils as they prepare and then undertake transfer to secondary schools.

1. Rewards:
 - Weekly class attendance awards
 - Termly individual attendance awards for 100% and very good (97.5%) attendance
 - Annual individual attendance awards for 100% and very good (97.5%) attendance
2. We have a first day response system fully in place
3. We have a full extended schools programme which offers, clubs, trips, sports coaching. etc.
4. Weekly and annual attendance data is put in the school newsletter
5. The headteacher has made a concerted effort to encourage a good working relationship with parents by regularly publicising the arrangements for notifying absence and the school's policy towards authorised absence via newsletters and specific letters on leave in term time.
6. A termly traffic light system of reporting each child's attendance to parents A green letter with attendance information is sent home if attendance is above 95%, amber for attendance between 90 - 95% and a red one if attendance is below 90%.

SECTION 3

Attendance registers

Registers should be treated as legal documents- indeed they may be used as evidence in court cases. The register also provides a daily record of attendance for all pupils, information which can act as an early warning related to a number of child protection issues and the information they contain can be used as part of pupils' end of term report or school leavers report. For these reasons they should be retained for a minimum of three years.

Keeping an attendance register

The school uses an OMR registration system for both morning and afternoon registration. For each pupil, the register must be marked either as present or absent.

Authorised Absence:

Authorised absence is absence with permission from the headteacher or other authorised representative of the school - this includes instances of absences for which satisfactory explanation has been provided, e.g. ill health. A written notification will normally be issued by the parents. **The fact that the parent has written a letter explaining the pupil's absence does not in itself authorise the absence- that decision rests with the school.**

N.B. Authorised absences are equivalent to 'present' for performance table purposes. Even when pupils are engaged in Approved Educational Activity off-site, they must not be marked as present in case of a fire drill or a real emergency.

Unauthorised Absence:

Unauthorised absence is absence without permission from a teacher or other authorised representative of the school - this includes all unexplained or unjustified absences, e.g. where the parent has not provided a reason or provided a reason that the school does not believe warranted an absence.

Lateness:

Frequent lateness of pupils can provide grounds for prosecution of parents. The school allows the register to be kept open until 9.30am although the register will be returned to the office at 9.10am. If your child arrives after the start time of 8.55am but before the register closes at 9.30am they will receive a late mark. However in the case of known delays such as bus breakdowns or severe weather the register may be kept open for longer.

Late after the register closes:

Should a pupil arrive after the register has been returned to the office but is before the register closes at 9.30am), he/she should report to the school office. The pupil will then receive a late mark but will be present for the full morning session. If a pupil arrives after 9.30am they will be marked as late after the registration closes and will miss a full morning session. For legal purposes this can be regarded as an unauthorised absence, unless the parents have provided an acceptable reason, e.g. dental appointment.

Temporary School Closures:

Where St Gregory's has to close due to severe weather conditions, fire or other structural damage or for in-service training, no attendance registers are needed.

Attendance Registers - Security:

The school keeps the attendance registers secure when they are not in use and they are retained for three years from the last date of entry.

SECTION 4

MONITORING, EVALUATION AND REVIEW

The school will review its policy annually and assess its implementation and effectiveness. Effective monitoring/evaluation of the policy and its implementation is dependent upon the maintenance of accurate and up to date records. The school attendance policy is promoted and implemented throughout the school and staff, pupils and parents are regularly reminded of its contents.

APPENDIX 1

CATEGORIES OF AUTHORISED ABSENCE:

For all absence known in advance, parents should be encouraged to give advanced notice and to supply written evidence, such as dental appointment cards or similar.

Illness, medical and dental appointment:

Parents should be encouraged to make appointments for their children out of school hours. If this is not possible, then the school encourages parents to minimise the risk by only taking the necessary time e.g. don't take a full day's absence for a medical appointment.

Dual Registration:

Where a pupil is dually registered at two institutions, e.g. a mainstream school and a Pupil Referral Unit (PRU) or special school, the pupil is registered as authorised absent while they are attending the other institution. A similar situation arises whilst traveller children are travelling - during this time they should enrol with another school. N.B. Distance learning packs for traveller children are not acceptable alternatives to attendance in school.

Special situations and occasions:

The school responds sensitively to special situations or requests to attend events such as weddings and funerals. Situations such as family bereavement, or the child caring short term for a sick or disabled family member should clearly be recorded as authorised absence. If such absences become long term or more frequent, the school may wish to suggest to the parents that alternative arrangements should be made, which are less detrimental to the child's education. In cases of this type the school's attendance officer may be able to help the parent to make alternative arrangements.

Public Performances:

The Local Authority must licence a pupil aged 5 - 16 to take part in a public performance. Licensed participation should therefore clearly be treated as authorised absence. School considers each case individually depending upon the attendance pattern and academic needs of each child.

Religious Observance

School currently allows up to 3 days per year of authorised absence for Religious Observance.

APPENDIX 2

PUPIL EXCLUSION

A pupil excluded for a fixed period remains on roll and the absence should be treated as authorised as it results from a decision taken by the school - this includes the period whilst any review or appeal is in progress and must continue until the pupil is removed from the school roll.

"Exclude" means exclude on disciplinary grounds without specifying any degree of seriousness. There are two categories of exclusion: fixed period (suspension) or permanent (expulsion). Pupils may also be excluded from the school premises for the duration of the lunchtime break between the morning and afternoon school sessions. N.B. When an exclusion is for a fixed period (suspension) appropriate work must be set as soon as is reasonable for the excluded pupil if the parents so wish.