

Together as one family, together in friendship, together in learning, together in Christ.

St. Winefride's Catholic Voluntary Academy



ATTENDANCE POLICY

Date: November 2023

To be reviewed: November 2024

Approved: *R Patman*

Date: November 2023

Rationale

- We recognise that good School attendance is important for the wellbeing of pupils in both their personal and academic development.
- We are committed to co-operation between the School, parents and pupils to achieve the best possible attendance. Less than full attendance undermines the educational process and leads to educational disadvantages. Accordingly, the School will actively pursue the aim of high attendance and punctuality for all pupils. The importance of high attendance is promoted through the School Newsletter.

Responsibilities of Parents

- Parents are required to ensure that their child receives a full-time education suitable to their needs, as stipulated in Section 7 of the 1996 Education Act.
- Parents are expected to ensure that their child arrives punctually to School each day.
- DFE guidance states:
 - Under section 444 (1) of the Education Act 1996, if a child of compulsory school age, who is a registered pupil at school, fails to attend regularly at the school, his parent is guilty of an offence.

Attendance Welfare

- The School offers support for families who may have concerns that attendance is an issue.
- Our EWO is readily available either by telephone or in person to talk with the parent and or pupil.
- The EWO will liaise with Headteacher to put appropriate support in place in order to resolve concerns.

Punctuality

Late arrival to school is always followed up and persistent lateness will result in the matter being referred to the EWO (Education Welfare Officer) who will arrange a meeting in School.

First Day of Absence

- On the morning of the first day of absence parents must inform the School. A dedicated voicemail is available 24 hours per day on the main school number – **01509 553353**. If absence is to continue beyond the first day, parents are asked to keep the School informed.
- If the School has not been notified of the absence of a pupil, once the morning register has closed, the Office Staff will make a first day of absence telephone call to parents/guardians. Priority is given to pupils who walk to school or who have a poor attendance record or for whom there are current on-going concerns. If the office staff have not been able to make contact with a parent by 11:30 then a welfare home visit may take place.
- Parents/carers are advised that it is the School who makes the decision whether or not to authorise a child's absence.

Medical Appointments

- Medical appointments during the School day (8.50am – 3.20pm) should be avoided.
- Should it be absolutely necessary to attend a medical or dental appointment, we ask parents to inform the School and provide a copy of the appointment letter/card/email in order for the School to authorise the absence.
- Pupils must be returned to School as soon as possible and follow the correct signing in procedure.

Children who become unwell during the School day

- If a child is referred to the first aid staff because they feel unwell, they are assessed by a First Aider. If it is deemed the child is not well enough to remain at School, the parent/carer will be contacted to collect their child from school.
- Should we be unable to contact the parent/carer, the child will be asked to wait in the School until such time as contact is made.
- All children leaving School due to illness will be signed out by the office staff and the absence coded as authorised.

Persistent Absence

- The DFE considers a pupil to be a '**Persistent Absentee**' when their attendance falls below 90% in any fully complete term.
- Where there are concerns about attendance and the prospect of a pupil becoming a Persistent Absentee, the parents are contacted, and the matter brought to the attention of the EWO.

- The EWO will set targets with the parent with a view to improving School attendance. Should attendance not improve, a request for legal action will be made to Leicestershire County Council.

Holidays and leave of absence during Term Time

- New government guidelines, which came into effect on 1st September 2013, prevent Head Teachers from granting any leave of absence during term time, unless there are exceptional circumstances. The Governing Body supports and adheres to this.
- Applications for a holiday/leave of absence during term time on the grounds of exceptional circumstances should be addressed in writing or by completing the schools leave of absence form, to the Head Teacher by the parents/carers.
- Where leave is not granted and parents/carers disregard the Head Teachers decision and cause their child to be absent from school, the absence will be recorded as unauthorised which could lead to a Fixed Penalty Notice being issued or Court action being taken.

Penalty Notices

- Fixed Penalty Notices are issued by the Local Authority to each parent/carer where there is unauthorised absence or unauthorised holiday during term time.
- A Fixed Penalty Notice stands at £60 per parent/carer per child if paid within 21 days, doubling to £120 per parent/carer per child if paid after 21 days but no later than 28 days.

Court Action

- The Local Authority may take parents to Court under section 444 (1a) of the Education Act 1996 (an aggravated offence), if the parent has been issued with a Penalty Notice on two previous separate occasions. This means that the parent may be subject to a much more severe penalty of a maximum fine up to £2,500 and or 3 months in custody or, a community order, which may involve doing a number of hours of unpaid work.

Absences which may be authorised

The Head Teacher, in consultation with the Education Welfare Officer, has discretion to authorise short term absences. Parents/carers may be required to provide evidence to support their request for absence.

Below are a sample of reasons given for absence which the Head Teacher may authorise:

- a. Exceptional family circumstances such as the sudden family bereavement or serious terminal illness of a close relative.
 - b. Absence due to illness or medical treatment
 - c. The pupil is taking part in a Church sacramental or liturgical activity, e.g. Confirmation.
 - d. The pupil is performing in a Performing Arts activity (not attending as an audience member).
 - e. The pupil is playing in a county, regional or national sports team.
- If the case of a-b above, parents are asked to contact the school office by telephone.
 - In case of c-f, a letter seeking permission should be sent to the Head Teacher at least three weeks in advance of the proposed activities.
 - In the case of c and d, absences are unlikely to be authorised where the proposed activity is taking place at the weekend or in the evening and the request for absence is for school day(s).
 - All requests are carefully considered, and the outcome will be communicated by letter within 10 days.

Absences which will be unauthorised

Below are a sample of reasons given for absence which the Head Teacher will not authorise:

- Where a parent fails to return their child to school on the agreed date after a leave of absence.
- Where a parent takes a child out of School for a holiday.
- Time off for birthdays or to care for younger siblings and family members.

Transition from Primary School

- The School will make every effort to identify pupils with attendance concerns prior to the point of entry to Secondary School.
- We will work with the selected school to ensure the proper support is in place.

School Annual Targets

The School issues annual targets for overall attendance. These are regularly reviewed by the Governing Body.

Review

The impact of School's Attendance Policy is reviewed by Governors annually.