

# Attendance Policy



## ST JOHN PAYNE CATHOLIC SCHOOL

| Date Of Issue | Review Date | Nominated Lead Member of Staff | Nominated Committee | Nominated Governor |
|---------------|-------------|--------------------------------|---------------------|--------------------|
| March 2017    | March 2018  |                                |                     |                    |

## **Aims & Expectations**

### **The school**

1. St John Payne Catholic School aims for every student to attend to the best of their ability so that we can work together with their families to support and challenge them to fulfil their potential.
2. We expect to achieve no less than 95.5% for the academic year, with the intention to increase this figure over time.
3. We expect students to attend school regularly, on time and properly equipped and ready to learn.
4. We strongly believe that there is a direct correlation between attendance and attainment and we expect all students, supported by their parents/carers, to take responsibility for their attendance and understand the adverse effects of prolonged or regular absence on their progress.
5. We will communicate to parents/carers if there is a problem regarding attendance or punctuality. The school will include student attendance in reports to parents on achievement at least annually.
6. Our staff will set a good example in matters of attendance and punctuality and will promptly investigate all absenteeism and lateness.
7. We aim to assist all students and parents/carers in improving attendance by using a variety of methods and providing pastoral help when required. This may include investigation to identify the causes of prolonged or repeated absence.
8. We work in partnership with parents/carers, students & The Missing in Education and Child Employment Service (MECES) to resolve issues affecting attendance as quickly as possible.

### **Students**

1. Students will ensure that they attend school regularly and on time.
2. Students will attend all lessons punctually.
3. Students can expect to receive assistance following periods of absence in order to catch up.
4. Students will have individual records of attendance / punctuality acknowledged by the school.

### **Parents**

1. Parents are responsible for ensuring their children regularly and punctually attend school properly dressed, equipped and ready to learn. Parents are reminded that they are legally required to ensure that their child attends school regularly and punctually, up to and including the end of the academic year in which their child turns sixteen.
2. Parents are responsible for immediately informing the school of the reason for any absence by telephone call on the first morning of any absence.
3. Parents are expected to support and work actively with school staff, and MECES, to solve any attendance issues.
4. If a parents child is experiencing difficulties at school which may lead to absence they are responsible for contacting the school to discuss concerns and find a resolution which prevents absences.

## **APPENDIX 1**

### **School Attendance and the Law**

Under the 1996 Education Act, parents and carers are responsible for ensuring their children attend school regularly and punctually. Failure to do so could result in legal action being taken against them by the Local Authority.

The school attendance register is a legal document and schools must, under the Education (Pupil Registration) Regulations 2006 take a register at the start of the morning session, and again during the afternoon session. Since September 2006, schools have been required to use statutory registration codes which identify why the pupil was absent from school.

Under the Education (Pupil Registration) Regulations 2006, only the school (and not parents/carers) can authorise an absence. Where the reason for a pupil's absence cannot be established at the time the register is taken, that absence shall be recorded as unauthorised. If a reason for absence is provided by the parent/carer, the school may decide whether or not the absence is justified and, if so, should ensure that the most appropriate authorised absence code is entered into the attendance register.

In compliance with section 436A of the Education Act 1996, the school will, after making appropriate checks, report any pupil who is believed to be 'missing from education' to the Local Authority (LA). Such referrals should be made to the Missing Education and Child Employment Service by no later than the tenth day of absence. The LA has a duty to investigate the whereabouts of such children and negotiate their prompt return to suitable education.

### **Attendance Intervention**

If a student's attendance becomes a cause for concern the school will intervene using the following methods:

- Issuing sanctions such as lunchtime and after/school detentions.
- Offering pastoral support such as counselling or referrals to a variety of services.
- Notifying Parents/Carers when attendance falls below the following thresholds:
  - 95%
  - 90%
  - 85%
- Expecting that students attend Student Based Meetings.
- Inviting Parents/Carers, students & relevant organisations to Attendance Meetings.
- Referral to MECES. This could result in Penalty Notices or Prosecution.

**The vast majority of students maintain excellent attendance. We are committed to supporting those whose attendance has the potential to undermine their achievement.**

## **APPENDIX 2**

### **Lateness Procedure**

1. The school day starts at 8:40 a.m. Any student arriving after this time is late.
2. Any student arriving after 8:40 a.m. must sign in at the Attendance Office.
3. Failure to sign in at the Attendance Office means that the student will be recorded as absent. This means that their parent/carer will be contacted.
4. Students arriving after 8:40 a.m. will receive a stamp in their planner to inform parent/carers and school teachers that they have signed in late. This is regardless of the reason for their lateness.
5. Students are expected to sign in at the Attendance Office exhibiting good behaviour. Poor conduct will be addressed in line with the school's behaviour policy.

### **Lateness to school**

1. Text messages will be sent to parents/carers of students who have arrived at school after 8:40 a.m. The text message will inform the parent/carer how many minutes late the student has accrued that day. Sanctions will be issued for persistent lateness.
2. Any student arriving after 9:30 a.m, when registers close, will be recorded as having an unauthorised absence. Registers re-open at 1:45 p.m for afternoon registration and close again at 2:20 p.m, if a student arrives after this time they will also be recorded as having an unauthorised absence. If a student has a certain amount of unauthorised absences a referral could be made to Missing in Education and Child Employment Service (MECES). This could result in issue of a penalty notice or prosecution.
3. A certified extract of the register can be used to make a referral to MECES or as evidence in legal proceedings against parents/carers for failing to ensure the child's regular attendance.

### **Lateness to Lessons**

1. At the end of every week text messages will be sent to parents/carers of students who have been late to lessons, indicating the total number of minutes late accrued during that week.
2. Sanctions will be issued for persistent lateness to lessons.

### **Truancy**

Pupils will receive sanctions for truancy from lessons or during break or lunch times. Truancy will be coded as unauthorised absence and could be used to make a referral to MECES. This includes internal truancy. Parents will be made aware of their child truanting as soon as the school is made aware.

## **APPENDIX 3**

### **Application for Leave of Absence**

Children are expected to attend school every day however in exceptional circumstances leave of absence may be granted by the Headteacher. The Education (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2013 have removed all references to family holidays and leave of absence shall not be granted unless an application had been made in advance and the Headteacher considers that leave of absence should be granted due to exceptional circumstances. Headteachers no longer have the discretion to authorise up to ten days of absence. This discretion has been removed by the aforementioned Regulations (2013). Whilst the Headteacher will consider all requests on a case-by-case basis, parents must be aware that requests will normally be refused.

The DfE have not provided any guidelines as to what they would consider to be exceptional circumstances. This is solely at the discretion of the Headteacher.

If a pupil is absent without a leave request having been agreed, the absence will be recorded as unauthorised. This may result in the Local Authority issuing a Penalty Notice, in line with the Essex Code of Conduct (£120 per parent, per child / £60 if paid within 21 days). Parents/carers who choose not to pay the fine(s) within relevant timeframes could face legal in the Magistrates Court.

Parents can apply for leave of absence by completing a leave of absence request form which can be found on the school website or requested from the Attendance Officer. A letter addressed to the Headteacher must be attached explaining the reasons for absence.

*This is the latest guidance issued by MECES as of February 2017 and is currently under review.*

## **Appendix 4**

### **Reporting Absence Procedure (Parents/Carers' version)**

1. Student absence must be reported by 8:40 a.m. Absences can be reported by calling the office on **01245 256030** and choosing Option 1. Alternatively a text message can be sent. Absences must be reported by a student's legal guardian.
2. All messages must include the student's full legal name, Form group and reason for absence. Reasons such as 'not well' or 'under the weather' may result in a call to seek further information.
3. Unless there are exceptional circumstances, parents/carers should contact the school every day the student is absent.
4. Text messages will be sent to parents/carers of students who are absent from school without explanation in advance. This informs the parent/carer that the student is absent and requests that the parent/carer contacts the school immediately. Parents/carers that have not replied to the text message with a reason for absence will receive a call requesting the above.
5. Failure to sign in at the Attendance Office means the student will be recorded as absent. This means parents/carers will be contacted.
6. A certified extract of the register can be used as evidence in legal proceedings against parents/carers for failing to ensure the child's regular attendance or in seeking an Education Supervision Order in respect of a student.
7. All correspondence regarding absence is stored on students' files.
8. The register is a legal document and must be marked accurately, recording attendance or absence and in the latter case if authorised or unauthorised.
9. A student should only be absent from school for illness or exceptional circumstances. We accept reasons such as:
  - Exceptional family circumstances e.g. bereavement.
  - Consultations with specialists.
  - Religious holiday.

#### **We are unable to authorise absences for:**

- Helping to look after sibling or house.
  - Issues with uniform.
  - Transport issues.
10. Students illness may be challenged. Parents may be asked to provide medical evidence for illness absence if the school feels necessary, if medical evidence cannot be provided, the absence may be unauthorised.

### **Medical absence procedure**

1. If a student has a medical appointment before or during school, a parent/carer should write a note in their planner on the week commencing of the appointment. When leaving for an appointment, students should have their planner signed by their Head of Year or Form Tutor previous to signing out.
2. Students should present their signed planner at the Attendance Office. Where possible appointments should be made after school or in school holidays. If this is not possible, students are expected to attend school before/after their appointments.

## **Appendix 5 - Daily Attendance Procedure (student version)**

**The school day starts at 8:40 a.m. If you arrive after this time you are late.**

1. If you arrive after 8:40 a.m. you must sign in at the attendance office.
2. Failure to sign in at the Attendance Office means that you will be recorded as absent. This means your parents/carers will be contacted.
3. Sixth Form students are expected to sign out electronically when leaving the site before the end of the day, and sign in if returning.
4. If you arrive after 8:40 a.m. you will receive a stamp in your planner to inform your parents/carers and school teachers that you have signed in late. Your parents/carers will also receive a text. This is regardless of the reason for your lateness.
5. You are expected to sign in at the Attendance Office exhibiting good behaviour. Poor behaviour will be addressed in line with the school's behaviour policy.

### **Lateness to Lessons**

If you are late to your lessons a text message will be sent to your parents/carers at the end of the week informing them how many minutes late you have been to lessons during that week. Sanctions such as detentions will be issued for persistent lateness to lessons.

### **Medical absence procedure**

Medical appointments before or during school should be noted in your planner by a parent/carer. You should have your planner signed by your Form Tutor or Head of Year. You must then sign out at the Attendance Office where you will present your signed planner.

### **Truancy**

If you are found truanting from lessons or during break or lunch time, sanctions will be issued and parents/carers will be notified. Truancy will be coded as unauthorised absence and could be used to make a referral to MECES. This includes internal truancy.

### **Attendance Intervention**

If your attendance becomes a cause for concern the school can do the following:

- Issue sanctions such as lunchtime and after school detentions.
- Offer pastoral support such as counselling or referrals to a variety of services.
- Notify parents/carers when your attendance falls below the following thresholds:
  - 95%
  - 90%
  - 85%
- Expect that you attend Student Based Meetings.
- Invite parents/carers and relevant organisations to School Attendance Meetings.
- Refer to the Missing in Education and Child Employment Service (MECES). This could result in your parents/carers being issued with fines of £60.00 (£120.00 if not paid within 21 days) or prosecution. These penalties can apply to both parents so could be doubled.