



**'Together we will do our best for Jesus'**

### **Introduction**

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. We believe that the most important factor in promoting good attendance is development of positive attitudes towards school. To this end we strive to make our school a happy and rewarding experience for all children.

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 the afternoon sessions of the school day. This register will also indicate whether an absence was authorised or unauthorised.

Amendments to the 2006 Regulations from 1<sup>st</sup> September 2013 remove reference to family holiday and extended leave as well as the statutory threshold of ten school days. The amendments make clear that head teachers may not grant any leave of absence during term time unless there are **exceptional** circumstances.

### **Aims**

This policy will aim to raise and maintain levels of attendance by:

- promoting a positive and welcoming atmosphere in which pupils feel safe, secure and valued;
- raising awareness of the importance of good attendance;
- ensuring that attendance is monitored effectively and reasons for absences are recorded promptly and consistently.

### **Definitions**

**Authorised absence.** An absence is classified as authorised when a child has been away from school for a legitimate reason. Only the school can make an absence authorised. Parent/Carers do not have this authority. Consequently not all absences reported by parent/carers will be classified as authorised. The school classifies authorised absence as when:

- the child is ill or is prevented from attending by unavoidable cause;
- the child is absent on days exclusively set apart for religious observance in their particular faith; (school should be advised before event)
- The child has a medical appointment; (school should be advised before event)
- The child is granted leave of absence due to exceptional circumstances (school should be advised before event). Absence due to holiday is not considered exceptional circumstances.

**Unauthorised absence.** An absence is classified as unauthorised when a child is away from school without the permission of both the school and a parent/carer, or when the school believes a child is away from school with the support of a parent/carer but without good reason. For example, if a parent/carer takes a child out of school to go shopping during school hours.

### **Roles and Responsibilities**

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### **Parent/carers will:**

- Ensure that their child arrives at school on time, properly dressed, with the right equipment and in a condition to learn. A reason should be offered for any lateness;
- Ensure any child arriving after 8.50am accesses the school via the main entrance and report to the school office;
- Contact the school on the first day of any absence before 9.30 am, offering a reason (reasons will only be accepted from parent / carers);
- Contact the school in advance if their child will be absent for any reason (e.g. medical appointment);
- Only take family holidays during school holiday periods and be aware that requests for holidays during term time will be refused;
- Work closely with the school and Local Authority Educational Welfare Officer to resolve any problems that may impede a child's attendance.

### **Teachers will:**

We will positively support school attendance wherever possible and the promotion of good communication and co-operation between all parties involved will be paramount.

- Take registration at 8.50am each morning and at 1.15pm each afternoon;
- Return registers to the school office by 9.15 am / 1.30pm each day. (Registers close each morning at 9.20am each day);
- Pass on any reasons for absence to office staff;
- Keep all written correspondences from parent/carers regarding reasons for absence for 1 year;
- Consistently record authorised and unauthorised absences within the guidance of the 1995 education act;
- Present attendance records to parent/carers at the spring parent/carer consultation meeting.

### **School Administrator will:**

- Upload registers daily to school data base
- Contact parent / carers on the first day of any absence if no reason is given by 9.30 am
- Record reasons for absence in 'absence book' kept in office;
- Record pre-notified reasons for absence in register;
- Record lateness (arriving after 9.00am) in 'late book';
- Record all messages regarding future absence in registers;
- Record lateness with 'u' or 'l' coding as appropriate;
- Ensure all children leaving or arriving during the school day are signed in or out in the school's 'signing in book'.

### **The Attendance Lead in school will:**

- Review all attendance levels termly with the Educational Welfare Officer and contact parent / carer if attendance falls below 90% over a term period;
- Where attendance remains below 90% for successive terms invite the parent/carer to an 'Attendance Surgery' at school led by educational Welfare Officer;
- Liaise with teacher staff if there are any concerns with attendance or punctuality each term prior to a review with the school's Educational Welfare Officer;
- Monitor punctuality over each half term and contact parent/carer if a child is persistently late (punctuality below 85%).

### **Long-term Absence**

When children have an illness that means they will be away from school for over five days, the school will do all it can to send material home, so that they can keep up with their school work.

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### **Leave of Absence**

If pupils are to reach their potential they need to take full advantage of the educational opportunities available to them. Regular, uninterrupted school attendance is a key factor in helping pupils reach their potential. Every effort should always be made to avoid disruption to a pupil's education.

Following amendments to the Education (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2006 which came into effect 1st September 2013, Head Teachers are only allowed to grant leave of absence from school in exceptional circumstances. The decision as to whether any request is considered as 'exceptional circumstances' rests solely with the Head Teacher.

The fundamental principles for defining 'exceptional' are rare, significant, unavoidable and short; 'unavoidable' should be taken to mean an event that could not reasonably be scheduled at another time.

In considering whether or not to authorise a request for exceptional leave of absence in term time the Head Teacher will look at each individual case and only grant authorisation if the circumstances are truly exceptional. Additionally, any request should be made prior to the leave of absence and should be submitted to the school using the Request for Leave of Absence form. Parents/Carers may be asked to provide additional information/evidence or meet with the school to discuss the circumstances.

Parents/Carers will be notified of the Head Teacher's decision at the earliest opportunity. If the circumstances are not considered to be exceptional then parents/carers will be informed of this and made aware that the Local Authority may be asked to issue a Fixed Penalty Notice if a child fails to attend school and if attendance for the previous 12 month period (to include the leave of absence) is not considered to be regular.

*The amendments (2013) to The Education Regulations (2006) make clear that Headteachers may not grant leave of absence during term time unless in 'exceptional circumstances'. Family holidays are not considered 'exceptional circumstances'.*

*Applications for leave of absence must be made in advance using the 'Leave Request' form stating reasons for application. Any parent/carer requesting leave of absence of more than 5 days will be asked to make an appointment to see the Headteacher to explain the circumstances.*

*Any period of leave taken without the agreement of the school will be classed as unauthorised. Unauthorised absences of 5 days or more within a school term will be referred to the Local Authority who will issue a Fixed Penalty Notice per child on behalf of the school.*

### **Examples of 'exceptional circumstances'**

The Governing Body has issued the following guidance about 'exceptional circumstances' at our school. Exceptional circumstances may include the following, although each case will be looked at individually and the child's attendance level will be considered. Please do not be offended if written evidence is required to support the request.

- Any day of officially recognised religious observation / celebration of the child's religion
- Wedding of family member (normally one day unless further 'exceptional circumstances' mean that that this has to be for longer due to the location of the wedding)
- Where absence is recommended by a health official
- To spend time with a terminally ill relative
- To attend a funeral
- Where a parent/carer is classified as Service Personal and is either going to serve abroad or is returning from serving abroad and will not be granted leave during the forth-coming school holidays (written evidence will be required)

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All requests must be made in advance.

The school recommends that the parent / carers apply for absence before making any bookings as the school will not be liable for any financial loss.

### **Children missing in Education (Sept 2016)**

*As a school we follow the school's responsibilities in "Children Missing in Education" (2016) which are as follows:*

- *Schools must enter pupils on the admission register at the beginning of the first day on which the school has agreed, or been notified, that the pupil will attend the school. If a pupil fails to attend on the agreed or notified date, the school should undertake reasonable enquiries to establish the child's whereabouts and consider notifying the local authority at the earliest opportunity.*
- *Schools must monitor pupil's attendance through their daily register. Schools should agree with their local authority the intervals at which they will inform local authorities of the details of pupils who fail to attend regularly, or have missed ten school days or more without permission. In our case this is through termly meetings with the LA attendance officer or when the absence reaches the threshold for intervention. Schools should monitor attendance closely and address poor or irregular attendance. It is important that pupils' poor attendance is referred to the local authority.*
- *Where a pupil has not returned to school for ten days after an authorised absence or is absent from school without authorisation for twenty consecutive school days, the pupil can be removed from the admission register when the school and local authority have failed, after jointly making reasonable enquiries, to establish the whereabouts of the child. This only applies if the school does not have reasonable grounds to believe that the pupil is unable to attend because of sickness or unavoidable cause.*
- *Schools must also arrange full-time education for the excluded pupils from the sixth school day of a fixed period exclusion.*
- *Maintained schools have a safeguarding duty in respect of their pupils, and as part of this should investigate any unexplained absences. Academies and independent schools have a similar safeguarding duty for their pupils. Further information about schools' safeguarding responsibilities can be found in the Keeping children safe in education statutory guidance.*

### **Monitoring and review**

It is the responsibility of the governors to monitor overall attendance. The headteacher will provide a termly report to Governors. The governing body also has the responsibility for this policy, and for seeing that it is carried out. The governors will therefore examine closely the information provided for them, and seek to ensure that our 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.

This policy will be reviewed by the governing body every three years, or earlier if considered necessary.

**FIRST DAY ABSENCE PROCEDURE**

1. Parents should telephone or send a message to the school promptly by 9.30am if their child will not be attending school. A message can be left on the school answering machine.
2. If a pupil is absent without explanation by the time the registers are closed, the teacher must inform the office and record the child as an 'unauthorised absence'.
3. The office will then telephone the parents to ascertain the reason for absence and ask them to put this in writing when their child returns to school.
4. If the parents cannot be contacted, then the emergency contact numbers will be rung and that person will be asked to contact the parents as quickly as possible, with the request that the parents/emergency contact person telephone the school within an hour.