



St. Wulstan's Catholic Primary School

Attendance Policy

Mission Statement

We learn and grow with Jesus to love, inspire and serve others

Principles

Education is important. Missing school means missing out. Children should be at school, on time and ready to learn, every day the school is open, unless the reason for the absence is unavoidable. Permitting any absence from school without a good reason is a potential offence by the parent that can result in legal action by the Local Authority.

Every half-day absence from school has to be recorded by staff at the school as either AUTHORISED or UNAUTHORISED. This is why information about the cause of each absence is always required, preferably in writing.

Authorised absences are mornings or afternoons away from school for a good reason like illness, religious observance or other unavoidable causes.

Unauthorised absences are those which the staff at school do not consider reasonable and for which no "leave" has been given. These are an offence by the parent and include:

- ***parents keeping children off school without a good reason***
- ***truancy before or during the school day***
- ***absences which have never been properly explained***
- ***children who arrive at school too late to get a mark***

Parents are expected to contact school staff and to work with them in resolving any problems together. This is nearly always successful. If difficulties cannot be sorted out in this way, the school may offer parents a formal Parenting Contract or refer the child to the Education Welfare Officer (EWO)

He/she will also try to resolve the situation by agreement wherever possible, including referral to other agencies and services. If other ways of trying to improve the child's attendance have failed, these Officers can use legal proceedings if required, including Penalty Notices (fines) or prosecution. Alternatively, parents or pupils may wish to contact the EWO themselves to ask for help or information. They are independent of the school and will give impartial advice. Their telephone number is available from the school office or by contacting the Local Authority.

Procedures

The school has a special responsibility to reduce the number of children whose attendance is below 80% over the school year. These are called “persistent absentees” by the Government, whatever the reason for their absence. Special procedures may be applied to children at risk of falling into this category.

The school applies the following procedures in deciding how to deal with individual absences:

- parents are asked to inform the school by phone if their child is absent
- if a phone call (or email) has not been received before 9.30am the school will contact the parents
- persistent late arrivals are reported to the Principal who will meet with parents
- family holidays cannot be authorised following government guidance
- for persistent absences parents are contacted by phone on the first day, then by letter and then the matter is referred to an EWO

Parents are asked to make routine medical and dental appointments outside school time wherever possible. Where such appointments in school time are unavoidable, staff should be informed (in advance if at all possible). A “present” mark can still be awarded if the child attends for as much of the session as they can. It is always better to attend for some of the time, rather than missing the whole day.

The people responsible for attendance matters in this school are:

- Teachers – will report to the Principal if they notice patterns of absence, or lateness of a child in their class
- Office Manager – will report on a weekly basis to the Principal

Target for attendance 2020 – 2021

- 96% attendance, 4% authorised absence minimum

Lateness

- Children should not be left unaccompanied on school premises before 8:50 am
- Children may enter school from 8:50 to 9:00 am when the main doors are opened
- Children should be in the school building by 9.00am
- The register is taken in school by 9:05am. Any child arriving at school after this time is recorded as having arrived ‘late’. This is recorded on the child’s annual report.
- Children arriving late to school (after 9:00am) must enter through the main entrance and sign the ‘**late book**’ giving a reason for the lateness
- An adult must accompany a child who is late into the main entrance and sign the late book

Where children are consistently late after the register has closed the school must refuse to accept the reason for lateness and the child is recorded as an **unauthorised absence** and is recorded as such on the child’s annual report. This applies to any child arriving after 9.40am. This is a national policy to which the school must subscribe.

Family Holidays in Term Time

Children of school age who are registered at a school must, by law attend that school regularly. Pupils are required to attend school on 190 days each year. Satisfactory attendance is when pupils attend school for at least 95% of the possible sessions. Schools are required by law to take steps to maintain good levels of attendance, and OFSTED will make a judgement about attendance which can affect the overall judgement about the school.

10 days absence over a school year, whatever the reason, will take attendance to below 95%.

Each year at St Wulstan's a number of children are absent from school because their parents take them away on holiday during term time. A pupil's absence can seriously disrupt the continuity of their learning and statutory testing may be missed. Not only do they miss the teaching provided on the days they are away; they are also less prepared for lessons upon their return. Consequently there is a risk of underachievement, which we must seek to avoid. Additionally they may also have problems with friendships.

Authorisation for leave during term time will only be given in exceptional circumstances for example serious illness, significant family trauma or difficult circumstances within the family. It is the decision of the Principal as to what might constitute exceptional circumstances and each request for term time leave will be considered on an individual basis.

From September 2013 we have not authorised leave of absence in any of the following circumstances:

- Where the proposed absence would make the child's attendance fall below 95%
- Where the child has a history of poor attendance in previous years
- Birthdays
- Surprise holidays
- Treats to reward good behaviour or achievement
- Visits to relatives or friends except in exceptional circumstances (see above)
- Because it is cheaper in term time
- To enable travel to and from holidays outside of the school holidays

If you need to request leave of absence for your child during term time please contact the school office to make an appointment to meet with the Principal. This meeting should take place at least six weeks before the requested leave and before the holiday is booked.

Summary

The school has a legal duty to promote good attendance and reduce persistent absence. Equally, parents have a duty to make sure that their children attend regularly. School staff are committed to working closely with parents as the best way to ensure as high a level of attendance as possible.

COVID 19 restrictions have resulted in some timing variations. Refer to COVID updates on school website for temporary timings. March 2021

Signed: _____ Principal

Signed: _____ Chair of Governors

Date: _____