

St Thomas' Catholic Primary School

ATTENDANCE POLICY

Introduction

The aim of St Thomas' Catholic Primary School is to provide an environment which encourages all our pupils to attend school regularly and punctually. It is widely recognised that poor attendance is closely linked with a child's achievement and therefore the school makes every effort to encourage 100% attendance of its children. We believe that a key factor in promoting good attendance is the development of positive attitudes towards school. To this end we strive to make our school a happy and rewarding experience for all children. We will reward those children whose attendance is very good. We will also make the best provision we can for those children who, for whatever reason, are prevented from coming to school.

Under the *Guidance on applying the Education Pupil Registration Regulations September 2006*) the governing body are 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.

Statutory Framework

Every child is required by law to attend school regularly at the school where he/she is registered. The school is obliged by law to differentiate between authorised and unauthorised absence. A letter or message from a parent does not in itself authorise an absence. Only if the school is satisfied with the validity of the explanation offered by the letter/message will the absence be authorised.

Authorised absence - An absence is classified as authorised when a child has been away from school for a legitimate reason and the school has received notification from a parent or guardian. For example, if a child has been unwell and the parent writes a note or telephones the school to explain the absence.

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. Therefore the absence is unauthorised if a child is away from school without good reason, even with the support of a parent.

Child's Absence

Class teachers take the register every morning and afternoon. The school uses the SIMS Attendance module to monitor attendance.

- Parents are asked to inform school, by note or telephone before 9.15, if a child is unable to attend.
- If the absence is longer than 3 days then a note must be sent on return to school. Parents should inform the school, in advance of Doctor's, dentist's or other appointments (by letter)
- When a child is absent unexpectedly, the class teacher will record the absence in the register. If the school has not been informed why the child is absent by 9.15, a

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member of the office staff will endeavour to contact a parent or guardian in order to check on the safety of the child and the reason for the absence.

Requests for leave of absence

Recent amendments made to the 2006 regulations, of the The Education (Pupil Registration)(England) Regulations 2013 state that headteachers may not grant any leave of absence during term time unless there are exceptional circumstances. Furthermore, headteachers should determine the number of school days a child can be away from school if the leave is granted.

Circumstances under which leave may be granted:

- For service personnel and other employees who are prevented from taking holidays outside of term-time if the holiday will have minimal disruption to the pupil's education.
- When a family needs to spend time together to support each other during or after a family crisis e.g. bereavement

If the school does not agree absence and the pupil goes on holiday, absence is unauthorized (code **G**).

Other requests for leave of absence are treated on a case-by-case basis. The issues that the school takes into account when considering a request absence include:

- The age of the pupil
- The pupil's general absence/attendance record
- Proximity of SATS and QCA exams
- Length of proposed leave
- Pupil's educational needs
- Purpose of leave
- General welfare of the pupil

The school will give reasons for the decision made.

Requests for exceptional leave should be made in writing to the Chair of Governors, detailing in full the reason why your child should be granted leave.

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.

If the absence is likely to continue for an extended period, or be a repetitive absence, the school will contact the support services, so that arrangements can be made for the child to be given some tuition outside school.

Repeated unauthorised absences

The school will contact the parent or guardian of any child who has an unauthorised absence. If a child has a repeated number of unauthorised absences, the parents or guardians will be asked to visit the school and discuss the problem. The school receives regular visits from the local Authority Education Welfare Officer (EWO) who monitors attendance that falls below the acceptable level. The parent, or guardian, whose child(ren) present with persistent absence may be required to attend a meeting with the EWO.

The governors, supported by the LEA, reserve the right to consider taking legal action against any parents or guardians who repeatedly fail to accept their responsibility for sending their children to school on a regular basis.

Rewards for good attendance

All the children who have 100 per cent attendance in any one term (previously known as half term) will receive a special sticker, awarded at the last assembly of the term. There are special certificates for all children who have 100 per cent attendance for a whole year. Classes' attendance will be monitored and the class with best % attendance will receive a mascot for the term.

Attendance targets

The school sets attendance targets each year and these are agreed by the senior staff and reported to Governors. The targets are challenging yet realistic, and based on attendance figures achieved in previous years. The school considers carefully the attendance figures for other similar schools when setting its own targets.

Monitoring and review

A member of the leadership will monitor attendance termly, looking for patterns of absence or high levels of absence for particular children. It is the responsibility of the governors to monitor overall attendance, and the Headteacher reports to the governors on attendance regularly. 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 them, and seek to ensure that our attendance figures are as high as they should be.

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

Signed: Germaine Campbell (Chair of Governors)

Date: October 2013

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