

Attendance and Punctuality Policy



St Vincent's Catholic Primary School

The School Mission Statement

To love, serve and learn as Jesus shows us

DOCUMENT STATUS

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INTRODUCTION AND RATIONALE

At St Vincent's Catholic Primary School, 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 encourage regular attendance and good punctuality by:

- Providing a caring and welcoming learning environment and learning that is engaging and enjoyable so that children have a positive attitude, are happy, and want to attend school
- Responding promptly to a child's or parent's concerns about the school or other pupils;
- Celebrating good and improved attendance;
- Monitoring pupil attendance and punctuality each half term and responding to high and low levels of attendance;
- Making clear the school expectations of good attendance and punctuality through:
 - Information in the school prospectus for all new parents.
 - Regular reminders about the importance of good attendance.
 - Contacting or meeting with parents whose child's attendance is causing concern.

Under the Education (Pupil Registration) Regulations 1995, 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 the absence was authorised or unauthorised.

COMMUNICATION FROM PARENTS / CARERS

We expect that parents will always:

- Encourage regular school attendance and good punctuality and be aware of legal responsibilities;
- Contact the school whenever children are unwell and unable to attend school;
- Contact the school by 9.00am on the first day of absence and telephone every day thereafter unless there is a doctor's certificate;
- Contact school promptly whenever any problem occurs that may keep a child away from school / cause them to be late;
- Ensure that children arrive at school punctually and fully prepared for the school day;
 - Being late may cause a child upset or embarrassment.
 - Lateness also impacts significantly on learning – 5 minutes late every day adds up to 3 whole days of lost learning time.
- Drop children off in person at the school office when they are late and explain why.

ARRIVAL AND REGISTRATION

- All children should arrive at school between **8.35am and 8.45am**.
- The register is taken twice during a day so one day counts as 2 sessions attended
- Morning registration starts at 8.45am and ends at 8.50 am.
 - If a child arrives after the registration period they will be marked in as "late" (L).
 - If a child arrives in after 9.15am this will be recorded as "late after the close of registration" (U).
- The afternoon register is taken at 12.45pm for EYFS and Key Stage 1, and at 12.55pm for Key Stage 2.
- It is essential that children arriving and leaving school with a parent / carer / agreed adult outside the normal hours are signed in or out **from the office**. The signing in / out register in the office is used in the case of an emergency or a fire drill.
- The B code (off site educational activity) should only be used when pupils are present at an off-site educational activity that has been approved by the school. St Vincent's remains responsible for the safeguarding and welfare of pupils educated off site. Therefore by using the B code, we are certifying that the education is supervised and measures have been taken to safeguard pupils. This code should not be used for any unsupervised educational activity or where a pupil is at home doing

school work. Arrangements must be in place whereby the provider of the alternative activity notifies the school of any absences by individual pupils, so that this can be recorded on the school attendance register using the relevant absence codes below

RESPONDING TO ABSENCE

- When a child is absent, the class teacher will record the absence in the register.
- The school office will endeavour to contact the parent or guardian, if no message has been received regarding the reason for the absence.
- Parents are, however, expected to telephone school by 9.00am on the morning of each day of absence to inform the school that their child will be absent. They are asked to state a reason. If a doctor's certificate is shared with school, then no phone call is necessary thereafter. Parents are requested to send in a written note explaining the child's absence when the child returns to school.
- If there is any doubt about the whereabouts of a child, the class teacher should take immediate action by notifying the school office. The school will then be in contact straight away with the parent or guardian, in order to check on the safety of the child.
- Failure to comply with the expectations set out may result in the involvement of the Attendance Officer and further action may be taken in the form of penalty notices or legal action (as outlined below).

MEDICAL APPOINTMENTS

- Every effort should be made to arrange medical appointments outside school hours. If it is necessary for a child to be out of school for this reason, the child should be returned to school directly after the appointment.

TERM TIME HOLIDAYS

'Central to raising standards in education and ensuring all pupils can fulfill their potential is an assumption so widely understood that it is insufficiently stated – pupils need to attend school regularly to benefit from their education. Missing out on lessons leaves children vulnerable to falling behind. Children with poor attendance tend to achieve less in both primary and secondary school.'

School Attendance: Statutory guidance and departmental advice, DFE Aug 2013

- In line with Warrington Local Authority, and the 2013 Amendment to the Education (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations, **leave for pupils during term time is not authorised under any circumstances.**
- The school recognises that taking children out of school may constitute a safeguarding risk and will make necessary enquiries, in order to be satisfied that the child is not at risk. The school may contact outside agencies in order to ensure that a visit is legitimate and safe for the child/children.
- Head teachers may now only grant leave in term time where the circumstances are exceptional, for example:
 - Death of parent/carer or sibling of the pupil (additional to the day of the funeral)
 - Life threatening or critical illness of parent/carer or sibling of the pupil
 - Parent/carer recuperation and convalescence from critical illness or surgery (leave request to be made within 6 months and medical evidence required)

To have a holiday in term time, because the cost is cheaper, or due to work commitments, does not constitute an exceptional circumstance.

- Family emergencies need careful consideration. It is not always in the best interest of the child, nor appropriate for them to miss school for family emergencies that are being dealt with by adult family members. Being at school, friendships and support from staff can provide children with stability and care during difficult times. The routine of school can provide a safe and familiar background during times of uncertainty.

- If you have exceptional circumstances, which have led you to request leave in term time for your child/ren, please complete the required form, which you can obtain from the school office or school website. The Head Teacher will then make a decision on whether or not the leave can be lawfully authorised and will do so only if there is a genuine, exceptional and urgent reason for a child to be absent during term time.

DEFINITIONS

- **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 telephones the school to explain the absence. Only the school can make an absence authorised. Parents do not have this authority. Consequently, not all absences supported by parents will be classified as authorised. For example, if a parent takes a child out of school to go shopping during school hours, this will not mean it is an authorised absence.
- **Unauthorised Absence:** An absence is classified as unauthorised when a child is away from school without the permission of the Headteacher.

PENALTY NOTICES

If a child is taken out of school without the Head Teacher's authorisation, it will be recorded as unauthorised absence. This may lead to the issuing of a penalty notice and legal action being taken.

Section 23(1) Anti-Social Behaviour Act 2007:

Penalty notices may be issued to the parent of pupils who have unauthorised absence from school. The amount of the penalty is £60.

- If this is not paid within 21 days the amount rises to £120.
- If not paid within 28 days the Local Authority may prosecute under section 444(1) unless it comes to our attention that the penalty notice had been issued in error.

Section 444(1) Education Act 1996:

"If you are the parent of a child of compulsory school age who fails to attend school regularly, you are guilty of an offence." The court can fine each parent up to £1,000 per child, order payment of the prosecution costs and/or make a Parenting Order.

Please note that penalties and prosecutions are in respect of each parent for each child. 'Parent' includes any person who is not a parent of the child but who has parental responsibility for the child (and applies whether or not that person lives with the child) or who has care of him/her.

MONITORING ATTENDANCE AND PUNCTUALITY

- Attendance and punctuality are monitored daily by the School Business Manager and Admin Assistant. If a child has a repeated number of unauthorised absences, the Head teacher (attendance / CME lead) will be informed and parents/carers will be contacted to discuss concerns.
- At the end of each half term, attendance and punctuality rates are analysed by the Head Teacher:
 - Attendance below target will be monitored
 - Attendance below 90% (persistent absence) will be reported to the Attendance Officer who may:
 - Contact parents / carers by telephone call / letter to raise concerns and offer support
 - Contact parents / carers to arrange a home visit and seek to ensure that the parents or guardians understand the seriousness of the situation and potential further action

- Recommend that that Local Authority take legal action against parents / carers who repeatedly fail to accept their responsibility for ensuring good attendance and punctuality.
- Attendance below 50%, or which has lasted for 4 weeks, and where there is no clear plan in place will be referred to the LA CME Officer (David Sampson) for monitoring through the termly Pupils out of School Meeting.
- Regular lateness over a period of time which remains unexplained may also result in a letter of concern, a meeting with parents or a referral to the Attendance Officer

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 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.
- All medical absences must now be accompanied by medical evidence. This can be an appointment card or letter from a GP or hospital doctor.

CELEBRATION OF GOOD ATTENDANCE

- Weekly class attendance is shared in celebration assembly, is on display in school and is reported on the school newsletter.
- All the children who have achieved 100% attendance in any one term will receive an excellence certificate for attendance.
- If a child has a long-term medical condition and attendance is 100% other than medical appointments, they will also receive an excellence certificate for attendance.
- There are further certificates for any child who has 100% attendance for a whole year.

ATTENDANCE TARGETS

- The school is set a challenging attendance target each year.
- These targets are agreed by the Head Teacher and Governing Body.
- The Headteacher will report on attendance in the termly report to the Governing Body.
- The Headteacher will also report on any children who have left the school or been removed from roll, along with reasons why. This will enable the Governing Body to monitor that reasons for leaving the school are legitimate, that they do not indicate any underlying issues with specific groups of pupils and are not an indicator of off-rolling. *(There is no legal definition of “off rolling”. However, Ofsted define “off-rolling as the practice of removing a learner from the provider’s roll without a formal, permanent exclusion or by encouraging a parent to remove their child, when the removal is primarily in the interests of the school rather than the learner. Off-rolling in these circumstances is a form of “gaming”)*

POLICY MONITORING AND REVIEWING

- It is the responsibility of the governors to monitor overall attendance.
- 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 to them, and seek to ensure that the school’s attendance figures are as high as they should be.
- The school will keep accurate attendance records in line with the School’s Records Management Policy.
- Class teachers will be responsible for monitoring attendance in their class. If they become aware of an unexpected pupil absence during the course of the school day, they will contact the school office immediately. If there is a longer-term general worry about the attendance of a particular child, this will be reported to the Headteacher, who will contact the parents or guardians.