

ST MICHAEL'S CATHOLIC PRIMARY SCHOOL ATTENDANCE POLICY

In formulating and applying this policy, the Governing Body and Staff of our Catholic school seek to promote and implement in relevant ways the aims and intentions of the Mission Statement, 'Praise the Lord in Work, Play and Prayer', that has been agreed by the whole school community.

At St Michael's Catholic Primary School the Governors and staff recognise the need for pupils to attend regularly and punctually in order to derive maximum benefit from the curriculum. Regular attendance is also essential to the academic and personal development of our children.

In aiming to promote good attendance and to avoid unauthorised absences by:

- Forming a close liaison with parents.
- Providing effective pastoral care
- Monitoring of attendance
- Working closely with the Education Social worker and relevant agencies.
- Praising good attendance and punctuality.

Statutory Obligations

The school is required by law to keep attendance registers at the beginning of each morning session and during the afternoon session. DfEE Circular 10/99 – Social Inclusion: Pupil Support - deals comprehensively with the marking of attendance registers and the monitoring and promotion of attendance. Registers must be kept accurately and neatly in order to calculate precise figures which must be published annually. Parents are required by law to send their children to school and the Governors and LEA have a duty to ensure that this responsibility is fulfilled. Parents who fail to ensure regular attendance of their children commit an offence and may be pursued by legal action in the courts.

Recording Attendance

The school register is used to record attendance.

The teacher marks the register using the following symbols.

- Authorised absence WITH a symbol in the circle as appropriate.
- Receiving part-time and/temporary education at an off-site unit or other than at the school where registered
- Other arrangements (to be specified)
- Excluded for a fixed or indefinite period.
- Annual family holiday (for which leave has been granted)
- Attending interview
- Medical/dental
- Approved sporting activity
- Day of religious observance in the religious body to which the parent belongs
- Study leave
- Educational visit

- O Work experience

UNAUTHORISED ABSENCE

- O Late (after registration closes)
- O Absent (not authorised as above)

The register will be closed at 9.10 am, 15 minutes after the start of the session. Any pupils arriving after this time must report to the main office for their presence to be recorded.

Authorising Absences

All parents are asked to contact school on the first day of absence explaining the reasons for their child's non-attendance. When children return to school parents are requested to send a written note stating the reason for absence. If a child returns to school with no written note or verbal explanation from the parent the secretaries will contact parents asking them to state the reasons for absence and to put these in writing. If no acceptable reason is given for the absence then it will be deemed as being an unauthorised absence.

Parents are encouraged to make children's medical appointments, for instance with the dentist, outside school hours.

It must be remembered that the school has the responsibility for authorising absences and the reason given for a child's absence may not always be acceptable.

Authorised Absences

- Medical appointments off site
- Sickness or unavoidable causes eg family bereavement
- Time for religious observance.

Leave of absence can be granted by the Headteacher and the Chair of Governors for

- Annual holiday not exceeding two weeks.
- Participation in approved public performances
- Exceptional circumstances eg serious illness of a family member.

Unauthorised absences

All absences that can not be identified in the above categories are considered as being unauthorised eg

“I am going to take him to town to buy some new shoes” is clearly not a reason for absences.

Procedures for lateness

When a child arrives late he/she should report to the main office. The time of arrival will be noted if children arrive after registers are closed. Late comers are normally noted by the school secretary who is on duty but the class teacher should make sure that the register is marked appropriately and that the child has reported to the office.

A child who arrives late should be welcomed by staff and not be admonished because it is the parents responsibility to ensure punctuality. If the same child is persistently late then the Head will either speak to the parents personally or a letter regarding children's lateness will be sent to the parents.

A child is deemed to be 'late' if she/he arrives after 9.00 am when the school gates/doors are locked.

The School's procedures for monitoring attendance

Parents are requested to inform school on the first day that their child is absent and to send a written note on their return to school.

All reasons for absence should be noted and the secretary is responsible for ensuring that registered are marked correctly and will liaise with the teacher/Headteacher with regard to unexplained absences.

The Headteacher monitors attendance with agreed personnel and meets with the ESW on a weekly basis at which time attendance data will be evaluated and any concerns will be discussed.

The school aims to liaise informally with parents concerning their child's attendance at school, however sometimes a more formal approach is required. A letter is sent to parents if the Head and ESW are concerned about irregular short term absences. A second letter is sent if there is no improvement and parents will be asked to meet with the Headteacher and/or ESW to discuss the problem. Referrals to the ESW are made when efforts have been made to secure regular attendance or when it is considered that there is some underlying problem which is affecting children's attendance.

If a class teacher has any concern about the late arrival or attendance of a pupil in his or her class the teacher should raise the concern with the Headteacher or the Deputy Headteacher in her absence.

The Educational Social Worker

As well as monitoring attendance generally and carrying out preventative, supportive work the ESW will use a range of strategies towards bringing about an improvement in attendance. It is the policy of Wolverhampton LEA to take legal action against parents who are perceived to encourage their children's absence from school or to request an Educational Supervision order for children who defy all attempts by their parents and the ESW to improve the child's attendance. The ESW will undertake the action that is appropriate in a given situation.

Pupils who are ill or in hospital

Pupils who are in hospital will be visited by the Headteacher. In accordance with DfEE circular 12/94 (The Education of Sick Children) individual circumstances, including the condition of the child will be taken into account with regard to making arrangements to provide work for a sick child

to do at home. In cases of prolonged illness, there will be appropriate liaison with the LEA regarding educational support.

Conclusion

It is recognised that marking registers, attending to late children, opening letters, asking parents for the reasons why their child was absent all pose difficulties for the teacher who has responsibility for a class of children at the same time. It is only with good will, commitment and effective organisation that all these tasks can be achieved and children encouraged to attend school regularly and have access to the education we provide.

The good will and close co-operation of all staff is appreciated by the Governing Body of our school.

Approved by the Governing Body _____(Date)

_____ (Signature of Chair)