



ST. JOHN'S CATHOLIC PRIMARY SCHOOL

The Diocese of Westminster Academy Trust

Providence Way

Baldock

Hertfordshire

SG7 6TT

Head Teacher: Ms A. Hanou

www.stjohns4.herts.sch.uk

Tel: 01462 892478 Fax: 01462 892683 E-mail: admin@stjohns4.herts.sch.uk

Pupil Attendance Policy

Ownership: Full Governing Body

Document Date: January, 2017

Review Date: Spring Term, 2019

Policy Review

This is policy and will be reviewed in full by the Governing Body on a two yearly basis.

Signature:
Head Teacher

Date:.....

Signature:.....
Chair of Governors.

Date:

St Johns recognises that all children have a right to an education that should develop each child's personality, talents and abilities to the fullest.

St John's Catholic Primary school (St John's) aims to maximize attendance rates in order to ensure that all pupils are able to take the fullest advantage of the learning experiences available to them.

St John's has a Government imposed attendance target of 96.7%.

Holiday must not be taken during term time.

'Missing out on lessons leaves children vulnerable to falling behind. Children with poor attendance tend to achieve less in both Primary and Secondary school.' DfE School Attendance, Nov'16.

Statutory Framework:

The 1993 Education Act, states that a pupil is required to attend regularly at the school where s/he is a registered pupil.

St Johns follows DfE regulations and the guidance set out in the DfE document School Attendance – Guidance for maintained schools, academies, independent schools and local authorities. November 2016

St John's is required to maintain attendance registers and is obliged by law to differentiate between authorised and unauthorised absence. A letter or telephone message from a parent does not authorise an absence. Only if the school is satisfied as to the validity of the explanation offered by the parent will the absence be authorised. (See below.)

Parents:

Parents are responsible for ensuring that their child attends school regularly, punctually, properly dressed and equipped and in a fit condition to learn. If a child is prevented for any reason from attending, or is late, parents are requested to notify the school by 9:30 a.m. A pupil's absence will be considered unauthorised until a satisfactory explanation is forthcoming from the parent. If the school deems the explanation to be unacceptable, this absence must be recorded as unauthorised.

Staff will endeavour to encourage good attendance and punctuality through personal example. Excellent attendance is encouraged by the school staff through a range of strategies and will promptly investigate all absenteeism, liaising closely with parents. Staff will respond to all absenteeism firmly and consistently.

When a child arrives late to school, parents must accompany their children to the main entrance and sign them in – this information is then transferred to the register by the office staff. If a child arrives late unaccompanied, the parent will be contacted to confirm the reason for the lateness.

Registers are taken promptly at 8:55 a.m. and again at the beginning of the afternoon session –

1:00 p.m. for KS1 and 1:15 p.m. for KS2.

Registers will close at 9:30 a.m. every morning, and then at 1:30 p.m. every afternoon. If a pupil fails to arrive before the registers close s/he will be marked as 'absent'. Pupils who arrive after these times must still come to the main office and be 'signed in' – office staff will subsequently amend the registers to record late arrival.

If a pupil is consistently late, the Headteacher will contact the parents.

Registers are legal records that are maintained electronically, they can be scrutinised by the Headteacher or the authorities at any time. If a class teacher notices a child is persistently late, or absent, this concern will be brought to the attention of the Headteacher.

Authorised and Unauthorised Absence:

It is vital that the same criterion is adhered to when deciding whether or not to authorise an absence.

St Johns will decide upon how an absence is to be recorded according to the 'School Attendance: Policy and Practice on Categorisation of Absence' document (DfE 1994). This states that:

Absence can be authorised if:

- The pupil was absent with leave (defined as 'leave granted by any person authorised to do so by the Governing Body or the Headteacher).
- The pupil was ill or prevented from attending by an exceptional unavoidable cause (i.e. life or death situations – not the non starting of the car.)
- The absence occurred on a day exclusively set aside for religious observance by the religious body to which the pupil's parents belong.
- The pupil is the child of Traveller parents and the family is known to be travelling for occupational purposes and have agreed this with the school.
- There is a family bereavement.
- The pupil is visiting another school for a legitimate reason.
- The pupil is attending an approved off-site activity or is receiving special off-site tuition.
- The pupil is attending a Pupil Referral Unit.
- The pupil is participating in an approved public performance.
- The pupil is involved in an exceptional special occasion i.e. the wedding of an immediate family member.

Absence will be Unauthorised if:

- The pupil is away from school on a holiday – including day trips.
- No explanation is forthcoming.
- The school is dissatisfied with the explanation.
- The pupil stays at home to mind the house or to look after siblings.
- The pupil is shopping during school hours.
- The pupil is absent for unexceptional special occasions i.e. a birthday.

Absence during Term Time:

Parents have a legal responsibility to ensure that their child attends school. Changes in legislation in 2013 make it clear that Headteachers may not grant any leave of absence during term time unless there are exceptional circumstances which can be evidenced.

Exceptional circumstances might include:

- For service personnel and other public service employees who are prevented from taking holidays outside of term time, if the holiday will have minimal disruption of the pupil's education.
- When a family needs limited time to spend together to support each other during, or after, a crisis.
- Attendance at a funeral or wedding of a close relative, or attendance at the graduation award of a parent or sibling.

Exceptional circumstances, according to the DfE, do not include:

- Financial considerations such as the availability of cheap holidays.
- Poor weather experienced in school holiday periods.
- Overlap with beginning or end of term.
- Visiting family living overseas.

All families requesting leave of absence during term time will need to complete an application form, providing full details of why the leave is necessary in advance of the requested commencement date – leave will only be granted in exceptional circumstances.

Procedures for Following Up Absence:

- If a pupil is marked absent without an explanation being forthcoming, office staff will make every effort to contact the parents immediately. Repeated, unsuccessful attempts will be reported to the Headteacher.
- If a pupil is either intermittently or persistently absent, office staff will contact the parents and invite them to attend a meeting with the Headteacher at the school.
- If a pupil returns to school after a period of absence without a satisfactory explanation from the parent, such an explanation will be pursued by the school – if none is forthcoming the absence will be recorded as unauthorised.
- If a child is persistently late or absent and the school efforts to effect an improvement have been unsuccessful, the situation will be referred to the Attendance and Pupil Support Service. This could result in a Fixed Penalty Notice being served (Subsection (1) of Section 23 of the Anti-Social Behaviour Act); or Legal action (Education Act 1996).
- Notes from parents will be sent to the office to be noted then returned to the class to be filed in the child's record. Messages regarding absence / lateness are recorded directly onto the electronic registration system.

Strategies for Promoting Better Attendance:

- St Johns offers an environment in which pupils feel valued and welcomed. The school's ethos must demonstrate that pupils feel that their presence in school is important, that they will be missed if they are absent or late, and that follow-up action be taken.
- A broad and balanced curriculum will be offered to all pupils. Every effort will be made to ensure that learning objectives and aims are matched to pupils' needs.
- Attendance data will be regularly collected and analysed in order to help identify patterns, set targets, correlate attendance with achievement, and support and inform policy and procedure.
- Pupils whose attendance is a cause of concern will be set targets for improvement. The class teacher will monitor and review these targets.
- Parents will be regularly reminded of the importance of good attendance.
- Pupils who are absent through sickness for any extended period of time will have learning activities prepared for them when appropriate.

The Headteacher will:

- Include attendance data in termly reports to the Governing Body.
- Review actual attendance against the 96.7% target annually with the HIP.
- Liaise with other agencies as appropriate when this may serve to support and assist pupils who are experiencing attendance difficulties.
- Meet with a School's Attendance Officer when needed to identify and support those pupils who are experiencing attendance difficulties – this may include letters to / meetings with parents.