

# ST. GABRIEL'S CATHOLIC PRIMARY SCHOOL

## ATTENDANCE POLICY

Reviewed December 2017

Renewal Date September 2018

### MISSION STATEMENT

*St. Gabriel's is a welcoming school where:*

- ❖ *We pray together, care for each other and learn together*
  - ❖ *We feel safe and respected*
  - ❖ *We try to do our best*
  - ❖ *Everyone is treated fairly*
  - ❖ *We have fun with our friends*

*With Jesus Christ at the heart of our loving Catholic Community*

In order to support children's learning, we believe that regular attendance at school is vital. Parents must take responsibility for their children's attendance and support school in this. If the good habit of regular attendance is established in Primary School, it will help to ensure this throughout a child's school life and beyond.

### SCHOOL RESPONSIBILITIES

As a school we will work with parents to resolve problems or remove barriers which may affect a child's attendance. Where appropriate we will involve representatives of other agencies that work with us such as the School Nurse, Local Support Team or Education Welfare Workers in order to ensure all children can benefit from consistently good attendance. We will use the Early Help Assessment process to support this where necessary.

### PARENTS OR CARERS RESPONSIBILITIES

- Parents have a legal duty to ensure that their children of compulsory school age attend school regularly and on time
- Inform school straight away if your child cannot attend and give the reason
- Try to make medical, dental or other appointments outside the school day
- Ensure school is aware of any circumstances at home that may be likely to affect their attendance
- Encourage good routines at home which promote a healthy lifestyle including enough sleep
- Talk to your child about school and let school know if they are worried about any issues such as a difficulty with homework or friendship problems
- Do not book holidays in term time - this will only be authorised in exceptional circumstances

- Seek advice from your GP if you are not sure how long to keep your child off school with an illness
- Ensure school has all your up to date contact details
- Encourage your child to enjoy school and made the most of all the opportunities available to them

## **GOOD TIMEKEEPING**

Coupled with good attendance is good timekeeping. Again, parents as well as teachers of primary school children must take responsibility for this. Children should come to school every day on time. A late book will be kept by school and this will be reviewed regularly. Parents who arrive late regularly will be invited into school to explore the reasons for this with a view to putting into place any support that is required to improve things. From 1<sup>st</sup> January 2018, 'persistent' late arrival at school may be eligible to a Penalty Notice. 'Persistent' means at least 10 sessions of unauthorised late arrival over a period of 12 school weeks.

## **DEFINITION OF PERSISTENTLY ABSENT**

Absence is considered persistent when children are missing 10% of possible sessions in school i.e. their attendance falls to 90% or less. This is seen as an important indicator because young people who are persistently absent are classed as vulnerable in a number of ways in addition to the impact this has on their academic achievements and emotional wellbeing.

An attendance review is carried out after every half-term by the school Attendance & Welfare Officer. This review highlights any child with an attendance level of 95% or less, letters are sent to parents outlining concerns and explaining that their child's attendance will be closely monitored and a further review will take place at the end of the next half-term or end of term, whichever comes first. We are obliged to report on 'persistent' absenteeism to the local authority Educational Welfare Service.

Should your child's attendance fall beneath 85% we may consider requesting medical evidence before absences for illness are authorised. You will be advised if this is the case.

Teachers will be provided with a copy of their class' attendance regularly during the school assessment for learning cycle. This will be used as a tool for analysis of learning alongside attainment.

The Inclusion Co-ordinator will be provided with attendance figures to be used in conjunction with support plan reviews for children with special education needs.

## **REGISTERS**

Registers are computerised and;

- Are marked at the beginning of the morning and afternoon session of learning
- Any child not in school when the register is marked must be recorded as absent. If they arrive before 9.30 am they will be marked 'L - present, but late'

- All children who arrive in school after the gates have been closed must report to the school office where they will need to be signed in and the reason for lateness recorded

## **ABSENCES**

- All absences must be explained and reasons coded appropriately on the attendance register. If a reason isn't provided the absence will be recorded as unauthorised
- Parents should either phone, e-mail or advise the office in person the reason for their child's absence
- Any notes received from parents with regard to attendance should be dated and kept for the current academic year and then archived
- First Day contact will be made if no phone call or other contact from a parent is received regarding absence
- A diary is kept to record all absence and reasons for absence along with the need for First Day Contact

Please note that the power to authorise a child's absence rests entirely with the Headteacher of the school. Parent/carers cannot authorise absence.

Parents will be reminded of these issues and their roles and responsibilities with regard to attendance via the Headteacher's newsletter.

## **CHILDREN MISSING EDUCATION**

If there is a concern regarding the immediate safety of a child First Response will be contacted.

When a child is expected to join school and does not arrive, school will initially try to contact the parents/carers by telephone or letter to find out why. If, after 1 week this has not been successful, the school will contact the Admissions Team to establish if the child has been registered elsewhere. If the child is not found to be on roll elsewhere, school will contact the Local Support Team to investigate. If after 4 school weeks (20 school days) the child has not been located, the school will complete and submit a Children Missing Education (CME) Referral Form. Once this is acknowledged by the CME Team the child can be removed from roll and their details uploaded to the Schools2Schools lost pupils database.

If a child is absent from school for a prolonged period, fails to return from an agreed holiday or they are believed to have moved away, school will try to contact parents/carers to find out why. If this is not successful, school will contact the Local Support Team for them to investigate further. When the Local Support Team has investigated, but not located the child and 4 school weeks (20 school days) have elapsed, school will complete the CME referral form and once it is acknowledged by the CME Team the child will be removed from roll and their details uploaded to the Schools2Schools lost pupils database.

## ELECTIVE HOME EDUCATION (EHE)

If a parent wishes to EHE their school educated child they should notify school in writing, once this is received school will de-register the child and remove them from roll. School will notify the EHE Team when a child has been de-registered to be home educated.

School will arrange for any child protection records to be passed to Staffordshire County Council EHE Team.

## MONITORING

Teachers have a responsibility to be aware of attendance irregularities or patterns in their class. They must report any concerns to the Attendance & Welfare Officer so that there can be enquiries/investigations and a follow up will be given. This is very important for the well-being of the children in our care.

## HOLIDAYS

The Department of Education makes it clear that Headteachers may not grant any leave of absence during term time unless there are exceptional circumstances. Headteachers also determine the number of school days a child can be away from school if the leave is granted. There is no automatic right to any leave in term time.

Should you wish to request a leave of absence for exceptional circumstances, please ask for a form at the school office or download one from our website. This form should be sent to school in time for the request to be considered - we request at least 3 weeks' notice. If a request is not received before the period of leave begins then it will not be authorised.

Any request for leave in exceptional circumstances will be considered and parents advised in writing whether or not the leave will be authorised. If it has not been authorised the letter will provide the reason why.

If you wish to advise school of a period of unauthorised leave (e.g. a holiday) please ask at the school office for a form. Please note that any unauthorised leave may be subject to a Penalty Notice.

## PENALTY NOTICES

In light of the recent Supreme Court ruling on school absences the local authority have made some changes to previous guidance issued to schools. The new guidance will come into force from 1<sup>st</sup> January 2018 and a penalty notice may be considered if one of the following criteria is met in line with this new guidance:-

- There is unauthorised persistent absence. 'Persistent' means at least 20 sessions (10 school days) of unauthorised absence over a period of 12 school weeks, excluding holidays. These absences do not need to be consecutive
- There is a period of absence not authorised by the Headteacher or in excess of the period authorised by the Headteacher (e.g. a family holiday)

- Persistent late arrival at school; i.e. after the register has closed. 'Persistent' means at least 10 sessions of unauthorised late arrival over a period of 12 school weeks excluding holidays. These late episodes do not need to be consecutive
- The presence of an excluded child in a public place at any time during school hours in that child's first five days of exclusion. An 'excluded child' is one who has been excluded from school for a given period under the Education and Inspections Act 2006
- A Penalty Notice will not be issued in respect of children in care of the Local Authority with whom other interventions will be used

There will be no limit on the times a Penalty Notice for unauthorised leave of absence can be used in an academic year.

In cases where there is more than one pupil in a family with unauthorised absences, Penalty Notices may be issued for more than one child

Use of a Penalty Notice or formal warning of a Penalty Notice for unauthorised persistent absence/lateness will be restricted to one notice/warning per parent of a pupil per academic year.

### **AUTHORISED AND UNAUTHORISED ABSENCES**

Authorised absences are absences through:

1. Sickness (if attendance is below 85% medical evidence may be requested before authorising)
2. Urgent medical or dental appointments or such like
3. Death of a close family member
4. Religious observance

These are authorised by the Headteacher.

### **EDUCATION WELFARE WORKER**

The EWW is there to support school and parents. Any concerns about attendance will be reported to the EWW by the Headteacher/Attendance & Welfare Officer. The EWW will contact parents when appropriate and take any necessary action to improve a child's attendance.

### **PARTNERSHIP**

Good sustained regular attendance is achieved by a partnership between parents, children and school with the support of the authority. Our aim should be 100% attendance for all children.