



St Anthony's Catholic Primary School



Policy: Attendance and Punctuality

INTRODUCTION

St Anthony's Catholic Primary School provides a caring Catholic ethos where each individual is celebrated and valued.

Attendance levels are generally excellent. This is due to the commitment of our very supportive parents and carers, the stimulating curriculum and our caring ethos. We also work hard to maintain outstanding levels of punctuality because we recognise the disruption that lateness causes both for the pupil who is late and for their classmates.

Regular and punctual attendance is a vital element of ensuring every pupil can flourish and reach their true potential and become emotionally resilient and confident. Where any issues arise we seek to move forward by engaging parents with positive support.

Attendance is a matter for the whole school community and poor attendance can be indicative of a number of underlying problems.

LEGAL FRAMEWORK

Section 7 of the 1996 Education Act states that parents must ensure that children of compulsory school age receive efficient full-time education suitable to their age, ability and aptitude to any special education need they may have, either by regular attendance at school or otherwise.

A child is of compulsory school age at the beginning of the term following their fifth birthday. A child ceases to be of compulsory school age on the last Friday in June of the school year in which they reach the age of 16.

The Education (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2013 require schools to take an attendance register twice a day, once at the start of the morning session and then again during the afternoon session.

The register must record whether the pupil was:

- Present
- Absent
- Present at approved educational activity
- Unable to attend due to exceptional circumstances

Section 444 of the Education Act 1996, states that if a child of compulsory school age, who is a registered pupil at a school, fails to attend regularly at the school, his parent is guilty of an offence.

CATEGORISING ABSENCE – AUTHORISED AND UNAUTHORISED

Absence can only be authorised by Mrs C Fox, Headteacher of St Anthony's Catholic Primary School and cannot be authorised by parents and carers. All absences will be treated as unauthorised unless a satisfactory explanation for the pupil's absence has been received.

Parents and carers should advise the school by telephone or in person by 8.45 am on the first day of absence and on any subsequent days of absence and provide an expected date of return. This should be followed up in the form of a written note from the parent or carer on the

child's return. You must do this even after you have telephoned us. Alternative arrangements will be agreed with non-English speaking parents and carer by request.

ILLNESS

Absence due to illness may be authorised by the Headteacher if parents and carers follow the correct protocol for reporting absence as detailed. Parents and carers may be asked to provide medical evidence where there are repeated absences due to reported illness. They will be informed of this by letter. Failure to provide medical evidence when requested will result in unauthorised absence.

MEDICAL AND DENTAL APPOINTMENTS

Absence for medical and dental appointments may be authorised by the Headteacher on occasion but parents and carers are advised, where possible, to make medical and dental appointments outside of the school day or during holiday periods. Where this is not possible, pupils should attend for part of the day. Parents and carers should show an appointment card to school to confirm the appointment. Failure to do so may result in absences being marked as unauthorised.

OTHER AUTHORISED CIRCUMSTANCES

This relates to occasions where there is cause for absence due to exceptional circumstances, for example family bereavement. In order for such absence to be authorised the parent and carer must liaise with the Headteacher.

EXCLUDED

Exclusion from attending school is counted as an authorised absence.

LEAVE OF ABSENCE: HOLIDAYS IN TERM TIME

Leave of absence is not a parental right and every effort should be made to avoid holidays during term time. All absence results in lost learning and directly affects a child's education. As such, **applications for leave of absence in term time will only be authorised in exceptional circumstances.** The law stipulates that the cost of a holiday is not reasonable grounds for claiming exceptional circumstance. However, consideration will be given to cultural needs and family circumstances.

Applications should be made in writing with a minimum notice of 4 weeks and only where a pupil's attendance for the previous academic year reached the school target. Retrospective requests will not be considered and therefore will result in the absence being categorised as unauthorised. A letter confirming if the request has been granted or not will be sent by school to parents. This letter will confirm the expected date of return, reminder that the child's place may be withdrawn if the family do not return on the expected date and that parents should contact school in the event of any delays.

It is noted that a pupil who takes 10 days holiday will only be able to achieve a maximum of 94.7% attendance for the full academic year.

In cases of unauthorised leave of absence, the school may request that a Penalty Notice be issued.

A Penalty Notice fine is £120 per each responsible adult, per child payable within 28 days, however this is reduced to £60 if paid within 21 days. Non-payment of a Penalty Notice may lead to a prosecution under the provision of Section 444 of the 1996 Education Act.

The procedure for issuing Penalty Notices will be in accordance with the Local Authority's Penalty Notice Protocol.

Additionally, in accordance with the Education (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2006 and the Education (Pupil Registration) (England) (Amendment) 2013, pupils may be deleted from the register when one of the following circumstances applies:

- 20 days of continuous unauthorised absence have occurred, and both the local authority and the school have tried to locate the pupil or
- The pupil has failed to attend within the ten school days immediately following the expiry of the period for which leave was granted

The school will follow the Local Authority's Children Missing Education Protocol when a pupil's whereabouts is unknown.

RELIGIOUS OBSERVANCE

St Anthony's Catholic Primary School acknowledges the multi-faith nature of British society and recognises that on some occasions, religious festivals may fall outside holiday periods and weekends. This necessitates a consideration of authorised leave if requested in writing.

It is reasonable for St Anthony's Catholic Primary School to allow pupils an authorised absence on any day of religious observance if that day is recognised as such by the governing body of the religious organisation.

However, in the interests of fulfilling the academic requirements of the school and limiting the authorised absence rate of the school, it is identified as reasonable that no more than one day be designated for any individual occasion of religious observance/festival and no more than three days in total in any academic year. Any further absence may be categorised as unauthorised.

TRAVELLER ABSENCE

The aim for the attendance of Traveller children, in common with all other children, is to attend school regularly and as frequently as possible.

To protect Traveller parents from unreasonable prosecution for non-attendance, The Education Act 1944, section 86 states that a Traveller parent is safe from prosecution if their child accrues 200 attendances (i.e 200 half days) in a year. This is only when the family are engaged in a trade or business that requires them to travel and when the child is attending school as regularly as that trade permits.

It does not mean that part-time education for Traveller children is legally acceptable, nor does it relieve parents of their duties to ensure that their children are receiving suitable education when not in school.

When in or around Manchester, if a family can reasonably travel back to their Base School (see below) then the expectation is that their child will attend full -time.

St Anthony's Catholic Primary School will be regarded as the base school if it is the school where the child normally attends when they are not travelling. However, the pupil must have attended in the last 18 months. Traveller children can register at another school temporarily while away from their base school, in such cases, the pupil's school place at St Anthony's Catholic Primary School will be kept open for them whilst travelling. This is to protect them from unfairly losing their place at their school of usual attendance.

The school can only effectively operate as the child's base school if it is engaged in on-going dialogue with Traveller families. This means that parents and carers must:

- Advise of their forthcoming travelling patterns before they happen; and
- Inform the school regarding proposed return dates

St Anthony's Catholic Primary School will authorise absence of Traveller children if we are satisfied that a family is travelling and has given indication that they intend to return. Traveller children will be recorded as attending an approved educational activity when:

- The child is on roll and attending another visited school
- Undertaking supervised educational activity under the jurisdiction of another local authority's Traveller Education Service
- The child is undertaking computer based distance learning that is time evidenced

Where Traveller children are registered pupils at a school and are known to be present either at a site (official or otherwise) or in a house and are not attending school, the absence will be investigated in the same way as that for any pupil.

LATE ARRIVALS

Pupils are expected to be on site no later than 8.50 am for the start of the school day which is at 8.55 am. Pupils who arrive after 8.55 am must report to the school office where they will be marked as late in the register (code L). The daily attendance register closes at 9.30 am and arrival after this time will be recorded as an unauthorised absence (code U), unless parents and carers provide a valid reason, such as attending a medical appointment with evidence such as an appointment card.

The absence will be recorded as unauthorised if the pupil has arrived late without justifiable cause, for example, if they woke up late or were waiting for the uniform to dry.

UNAUTHORISED ABSENCE

Absence will not be authorised unless parents and carers have provided a satisfactory explanation that is accepted as such by the school. It is the parent and carers responsibility to report reasons for absence and any unexplained absence will automatically be recorded as unauthorised.

Examples of unsatisfactory explanations include:

- A pupil/family member's birthday
- Shopping for uniform or any type of shopping
- Having a hair cut
- Closure of a sibling's school for INSET or other purposes
- "Couldn't get up"
- Minor illness where the child is considered well enough to attend school
- Leave of absence taken without prior authorisation from the Headteacher

DELETION FROM THE REGISTER

In accordance with the Education (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2013, pupils will only be deleted from the register when one of the following circumstances applies:

- The school is replaced by another school on a School Attendance Order

- The School Attendance Order is revoked by the local authority
- Permanent exclusion has occurred and procedures have been completed
- The pupil is deceased
- Transfer between schools
- Pupil withdrawn to be educated outside the school system
- The pupil is in custody for more than four months
- Failure to return from an extended leave of absence after both the school and the local authority have tried to locate the pupil
- 20 days continuous unauthorised absence have occurred and both the local authority and school have tried to locate the pupil
- The pupil has left the school but it is not known where he/she has gone after both the school and the local authority have tried to locate the pupil

St Anthony's Catholic Primary School will follow Manchester City Council's Children Missing Education Protocol when a pupil's whereabouts is unknown.

ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

St Anthony's Catholic Primary School believes that excellent school attendance can only be achieved if it viewed as a shared responsibility of the school staff, governors, parents, pupils and the wider school community.

The Governing Body will:

- Ensure that the importance and value of good attendance is promoted to pupils and their parents
- Regularly review the school's attendance policy and ensure the required resources are available to fully implement the policy
- Identify a member to lead on attendance matters
- Ensure that attendance related legislation is complied with
- Agree school attendance targets and submit these to the local authority within the agreed timescale each year and where appropriate link these to the performance management of senior leadership within the school
- Monitor the school's attendance and related issues through termly reporting at Governing Body meetings
- Ensure that attendance data is reported to the local authority or Department for Education as required and on time
- Ensure that there is a named senior manager to lead on attendance
- Ensure that the school has clear systems to report, record and monitor the attendance of all pupils
- Ensure that there are procedures for collecting and analysing attendance data frequently to identify causes and patterns of absence
- Ensure that data is understood and used to devise solutions and to evaluate the effectiveness of interventions

The Leadership team will:

- Actively promote the importance and value of attendance and punctuality to pupils and their parents and carers

- Ensure that there is a whole school approach which reinforces excellent and punctual school attendance; with outstanding teaching and learning experiences that encourage all pupils to attend and to achieve
- Monitor the implementation of the attendance policy and ensure that the policy is reviewed annually
- Ensure that all staff are aware of the attendance policy and adequately trained to address attendance issues
- Ensure that the Registration Regulations, England, 2013 and other attendance related legislation is complied with
- Ensure that there is a named senior manager to lead on attendance and oversee that sufficient time and resources are allocated to front line staff
- Return school attendance data to the local authority and the Department for Education as required and on time
- Report the school's attendance and related issues through termly reporting to the Governing Body and on a half termly basis to the lead governor for attendance
- Ensure that systems to report record and monitor the attendance of all pupils are implemented
- Ensure that attendance data is collected and analysed frequently to identify causes and patterns of absence
- Interpret the data to devise solutions and to evaluate the effectiveness of interventions
- Develop a multi-agency response to improve attendance and support pupils and their families
- Ensure interventions are documented to a standard required by the local authority should legal proceedings be instigated

Teaching Staff will:

- Actively promote the importance and value of good attendance to pupils and their parents
- Form positive relationships with pupils and their parents and carers
- Contribute to a whole school approach which reinforces excellent and punctual school attendance; with outstanding teaching and learning experiences that encourage all pupils to attend and to achieve
- Comply with the Registration Regulations, England, 2013 and other attendance related legislation
- Implement systems to report, record and monitor the attendance of all pupils
- Contribute to the evaluation of school strategies and interventions
- Work with other agencies, where necessary, to improve attendance and support pupils and their families
- Document and record interventions used to a standard required by the local authority should legal proceedings be instigated

Parents and carers will be expected to:

- Contact the school, by phone or in person if their child is absent to advise why and the expected date of return. This should be followed up by a note on the child's return.
- Ask school for help if their child is experiencing difficulties, for example, struggling to keep up with work or experiencing bullying of any type
- Inform the school of any change in circumstances that may impact on their child's attendance and provide up to date contact details at all times

- Support the school by taking every opportunity to get involved in their child's education. Parents and carers should form a positive relationship with school and acknowledge the importance of children receiving consistent messages from school and home
- Encourage consistent routine at home regarding bed times, homework, preparing school bag and uniform the evening before and leaving home on time for school
- Avoid unnecessary absences by making appointments for the Doctors, Dentist etc outside of school hours and ensuring their child attends school before and/or after appointments if this is unavoidable
- Not keep their child off school to go shopping, to help at home or to look after other members of the family
- Avoid taking leave of absence during term-time and only apply for leave in exceptional circumstances

BANDING

- 100% - 97% - If a child's attendance is within this banding then their attendance is good and at an acceptable level
- 96.9 - 93% - If a child's attendance is within this banding then their attendance is acceptable but requires additional monitoring.
- Below 92.9% - If a child's attendance is at this level or below then it is unacceptable as they are considered to be on track to becoming persistently absent or already persistently absent from school. Will require intense monitoring and intervention.

SUPPORT SYSTEMS

St Anthony's Catholic Primary School recognises that poor attendance is often an indication of difficulties in a child's life. This may be related to problems at home and/or in school. Parents and carers should make school aware of any difficulties or changes in circumstances that may affect their child's attendance and or behaviour in school, for example, bereavement, divorce/separation, incidents of domestic abuse. This will help the school identify any additional support that may be required.

St Anthony's Catholic Primary School will investigate any issues within school which may be having a detrimental effect on a child's attendance. We also recognise that some pupils are more likely to require additional support to attain good attendance, for example, those pupils with special educational needs, those with physical or mental health needs, migrant and refugee pupils and looked after children.

The school will implement a range of strategies to support improved attendance. Strategies used will include:

- Discussions with parents and carers and pupils
- Attendance panels and parenting contracts
- Home visits
- Letters
- Attendance panels
- Use of parenting contracts
- Use of penalty notices and legal sanctions
- Referrals to support agencies and the use of Early Help strategy
- Reward Systems
- Breakfast club and wake up shake up in the mornings
- Additional learning support

- Behaviour support

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Support offered to families will be child centred and planned in discussion and agreement with parents and carers

Where parents and carers fail or refuse to engage with the support offered and further unauthorised absence occurs, we will consider the use of legal sanctions

LEGAL SANCTIONS

Prosecution:

Where early intervention measures fail to bring about an improvement in attendance, the local authority be notified and legal action in the Magistrates' Court may be taken. The school will provide the local authority with evidence required for a prosecution under Section 444 of the Education Act 1996 and will appear as a prosecution witness if required by the court. This is to ensure that parents and carers realise their own responsibilities in securing regular and punctual attendance and most importantly, returning children to education.

Section 444 of the Education Act 1996 states that if a parent/carer fails to ensure the regular school attendance of their child at a registered school and the child is of compulsory school age, then they are guilty of an offence.

A parent found guilty of this offence can be fined up to £2500 and/or be imprisoned for a period of three months.

Alternatives to Section 444 prosecution are parenting contracts, penalty notices or Education Supervision Orders

Parenting Contracts (Anti -Social Behaviour Act 2003)

A parenting contract is a voluntary agreement between school and the parent and carer. It can also be extended to include the child (if old enough) and any other agencies offering support to resolve any difficulties leading to improved attendance

The contract will outline attendance targets and will detail agreed actions that will help to achieve the target. The contract will be reviewed regularly.

The contract can be used as evidence in a prosecution should parents and carers fail to carry out agreed actions.

Parenting contracts will be used in accordance with Manchester City Council's protocols.

Penalty Notices (Anti-Social Behaviour Act 2003)

Penalty notices will be considered when:

- A pupil is absent from school for the purpose of leave of absence and this has not been authorised by the school
- A pupil has accumulated at least five sessions of unauthorised absence and further absence has occurred following written warning to improve

A penalty notice gives the parent and carer the opportunity to discharge themselves of their liability for that period of unauthorised absence if £120 is paid within 28 days or if £60 is paid within 21 days of the date of the notice being issued.

Failure to pay a penalty notice may result in a prosecution under Section 444 of the Education Act 1996

Penalty notices will be issued in accordance with Manchester City Council's protocols.

Education Supervision Order

The local authority must consider applying for an Education Supervision Order (ESO) before prosecuting parents. A local authority may apply for an ESO instead of or as well as prosecuting parents. The order is placed on the child and the local authority is appointed by the court to supervise that child's education, either at a school, or at home for a specified period of time.

Revised and adopted by the Governing Body in March 2017