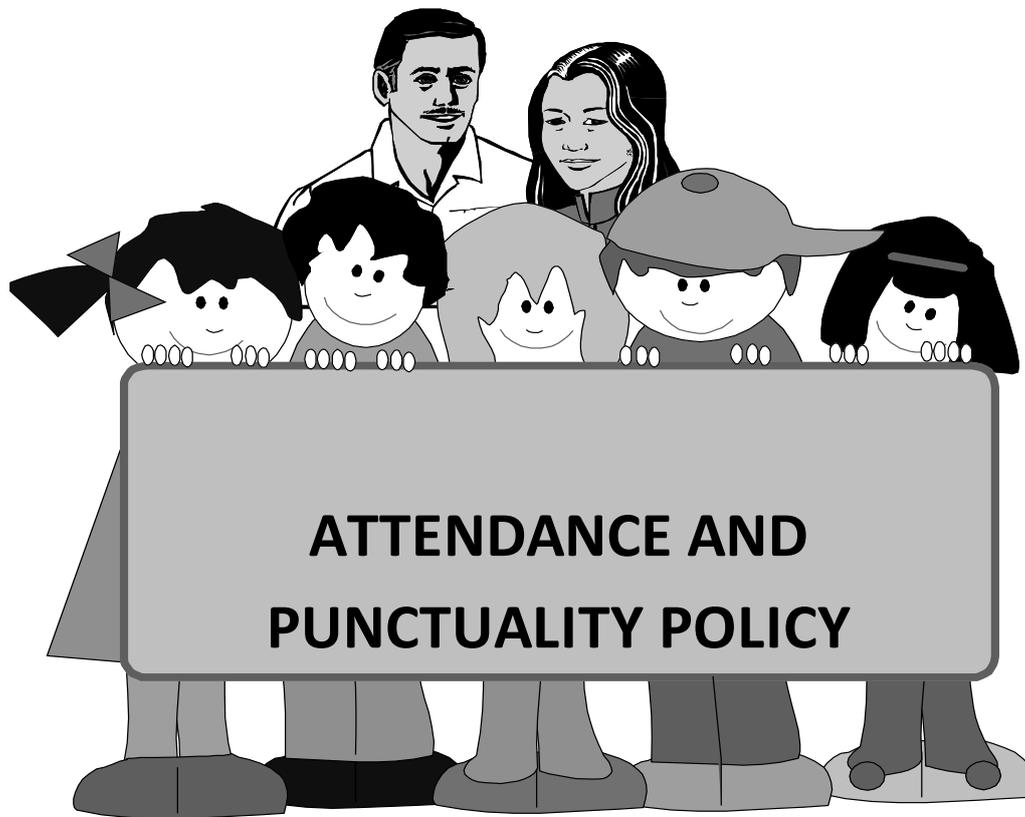


St Luke's Catholic Primary School



This policy will be reviewed regularly and re-presented to The Governing Body as appropriate if significant changes are made.

Policy presented to Governors on: October 17th 2017

Reviewed by:

Date:

Signature:

Date:

Chair/Vice of Governors Signature:

Date:

Introduction:

This is a successful and happy school and every child plays their part in making it so.

We aim for an ethos and culture that enables and encourages all members of our school community to reach out for excellence, as '*we follow in the footsteps of Jesus as we love, live and learn together.*'

For our children to gain the greatest benefit from their education and reach their full potential, it is vital that they have a high level of attendance and that they arrive at school, on time, ready to learn, every day that the school is open; unless the reason for their absence is unavoidable.

It is very important therefore that everyone strives for all children to, at the very least meet our school target of **96%** for attendance. This Policy sets out how together we will achieve this.

Why Regular Attendance is so important:

Any absence affects the pattern of a child's schooling and regular absence will seriously affect their learning. Any pupil's absence disrupts teaching routines, thus affecting the learning of others in the same class.

Ensuring a child's regular attendance at school is a **parents/ carers legal responsibility** and permitting absence from school without a good reason creates an offence in law and may result in prosecution.

Promoting Excellent Attendance:

Helping to create a pattern of regular attendance is everybody's responsibility: parents/carers, pupils and all members of school staff.

To help us all to focus on this we will:

- ☒ Talk about attendance in every school assembly.
- ☒ Give parents/carers details and information on attendance on our school web site;
- ☒ Tell parents/carers regularly how their child is performing in school, what their attendance and punctuality rate is and how this relates to their attainments;
- ☒ Celebrate good attendance by displaying class achievements and % of attendance;
- ☒ Reward good attendance through our attendance initiatives and other prizes.
- ☒ Award tickets for our prize draw for those children with a full week in school
- ☒ Reward classes that have achieved 100% attendance with an own clothes day .
- ☒ Reward classes that have achieved above National attendance with an extra playtime .

Understanding types of absence:

Every half-day absence from school must to be classified by the school (not by the parents), as either AUTHORISED or UNAUTHORISED. This is the reason why information about the cause of any absence is always required, preferably in writing.

Authorised absences are mornings or afternoons away from school for reasons such as illness, medical/dental appointments (which unavoidably fall in school time), emergencies or other unavoidable cause. However, it is preferable that parents/carers try to make dental and non emergency medical

appointments outside of school time. If this isn't possible, they are required to show appointment cards at the school office, so that we are able to authorise this absence.

Unauthorised absences are those which the school does not consider reasonable or for which no reason for absence has been given. It is this type of absence which can lead to the Authority using sanctions and/or legal proceedings such as fixed penalty fines, prosecution and parenting contracts; these include:

- ☒ Parents/carers keeping children off school unnecessarily
- ☒ Truancy
- ☒ Absences which have never been properly explained
- ☒ Children who arrive at school too late to get a mark
- ☒ Shopping, looking after other children, birthdays and other celebrations
- ☒ Day trips and holidays in term time.

Whilst any child may be off school because they are ill, sometimes they can be reluctant to attend school. Any problems with regular attendance are best sorted out between the school, the parents and the child. If a child is reluctant to attend school then contact should be made with Miss Riley our Learning Mentor. It is never better to cover up an absence or to give in to pressure to excuse a child from attending, as this gives the impression that attendance does not matter and usually make things worse. **We will always inform parents/cares in writing if a child's attendance is causing concern and will closely monitor this until it improves and reaches the accepted target.**

Persistent Absenteeism (PA)

In our school, a pupil is regarded as on track as a persistent absentee (PA) when they miss 10% or more of their schooling across the school year, **for whatever reason**. Absence at this level will be causing considerable damage to a child's education and welfare and we therefore need the parents'/carers' full support to address this. Any case that is seen to have reached the PA mark, or is at risk of moving towards that mark is given priority and parents/carers will be informed of this immediately, so that together we can put a plan in place to get the child back into school and attending school regularly. All PA cases (at 90% attendance and below) are also automatically made known to School Attendance Support Officer.

A Fixed Penalty Notice will be issued if at least ten sessions (five school days) of unauthorised absence are missed over a 10 week period. This will include children who arrive to school late after the register is closed.

The thresholds for triggering Persistent Absence are:

Half term 1 7 sessions (3.5 days)

Half term 2 14 sessions (7 days)

Half term 3 20 sessions (10 days)

Half term 4 25 sessions (12.5 days)

Half term 5 31 sessions (15.5 days)

Half term 6 38 sessions (19 days)

Absence Procedures:

If a child is absent, parents/carers must contact school as soon as possible (by 9:15) on the first day of absence by telephone or speaking with any member of staff at the school office. In addition to this, they must send a note in on the first day that their child returns to school, with an explanation of the absence. This will be recorded by a member of our admin staff, teachers or our Learning Mentor .

If a child is absent we will:

1st day- Contact parents/carers by telephone on the first day of absence if we have not heard from them by 9:15.

2nd day -Contact parents/carers again by text or letter if we have still not heard from them;

Telephone numbers:

There are many occasions when we need to contact parents/carers, for various reasons, including absence. Therefore, we need to have the correct contact numbers at all times. Parents must ensure that school always has the correct contact details and must inform school of any changes. School regularly sends a contact details form home for parents/carers to update.

The School Attendance Support Officer :

Parents/carers are expected to contact school at an early stage, to work with the staff in resolving any problems together and this is almost always successful. If difficulties cannot be sorted out in this way, we may need to refer a child to the School Attendance Support Team from the Local Authority. He/she will also try to resolve the situation by agreement but, if other ways of trying to improve the child's attendance have failed and unauthorised absences persist, these Officers can use sanctions such as Fixed Penalty Notices or prosecutions, in the Magistrates Court. Full details of the options open to enforce attendance at school are available from school or the Local Authority.

Lateness:

Poor punctuality is unacceptable as this impacts on the school day for the child who is late, as well as others. If a child misses the start of the day, they can miss vital input from their teacher, as well as missing any important news for the day. Late arrival of pupils disrupts lessons and can be embarrassing for the child. Lateness can also encourage absence.

We will inform parents/cares if a child is late for the 2nd time in a week. We will also inform parents /cares in writing if a child is persistently late or appears to have a regular pattern of lateness.

How we manage lateness:

The school day starts at **8.50 am** for Junior Classes and **8.55am** for Infant classes we expect every child to be in line on the playground by **8.50am**.

Registers are marked by **9 am** and a child will receive a late mark if they are not in by that time.

At **9.30 am** the registers will be closed – in accordance with the Regulations. If a child arrives after that time, they will receive a mark that shows them to be present on site, **but this will not count as a present mark** in law and it will mean they have an unauthorised absence. This means that parents/carers may face the possibility of a **Fixed Penalty Notice**, if the problem persists.

If a child does have a persistent late record then parents/carers will be asked to meet with the Learning Mentors and/or Mr Crist as well as the School Attendance Support Officer, to resolve the problem. They can approach us at any time if they are having problems getting their child to school on time.

Holidays During Term Time:

Taking holidays during term time will affect a child's schooling as much as any other absence and we expect parents/carers not to take children away during school time. Any savings that parents/carers may make by taking a holiday during school time are offset by the cost to a child's education. **It is important**

that parents/carers understand that leave during term time will NEVER be agreed by us unless clear evidence is provided that triggers one of the 'Exceptional Circumstances'.

The law gives no entitlement to parents/carers to take their children on holiday during term time.

Any period of leave taken without the agreement of the school will be classed as unauthorised, and may attract sanctions such as fixed penalty fines.

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Holidays in term time will always be classed as unauthorised absence. *Please see Appendix 1*

School targets,

The school has targets to improve attendance and everyone has an important part to play in meeting these targets.

% attendance of classes are displayed in the school and we always strive to better the government target of 96%.

Through the school year we monitor absences and punctuality to show us where improvements need to be made. Information on any projects or initiatives that will focus on these areas will be provided in our newsletter and on the school web site.

Attendance Safeguarding Statement:

A child missing from an education setting is a potential indicator of abuse or neglect. Local Authority guidance procedures will be followed for dealing with a child who is missing from education, particularly on repeated occasions. It is important that our school monitors the welfare of those children with attendance concerns, particularly those with chronic poor attendance or persistent absentees. Our school will also scrutinise the attendance of off site provision. Similarly the attendance of children who are vulnerable or with known welfare and safeguarding concerns will be monitored on a weekly basis. Social care will also be informed immediately when there are unexplained absences or attendance concerns.

Summary

The school has a duty to publish its absence figures to parents/carers and to promote attendance.

Equally, parents/carers have a duty to make sure that their children attend school. We are committed to working with parents/carers as the best way to ensure as high a level of attendance as possible.

Appendix 1

**ST LUKE'S CATHOLIC
PRIMARY SCHOOL**

Pupil Leave of Absence - Managing 'exceptional circumstances'

Options for schools: circulated to all Headteacher Associations.

The DfE cites three examples of 'exceptional circumstances':

☒ ***Where a parent is a member of the armed forces and has restricted leave***

☒ ***Where a parent is a member of the Fire Service and has restricted shift patterns/ leave.***

☒ ***When there has been a bereavement of a close family member.***

In reality there is of course an almost limitless array of scenarios in which parents will request leave of absence. The following examples cover many of the issues already raised by parents with schools both here and across Merseyside though it cannot be exhaustive.

In each case I have passed a broad opinion on the decision that might be taken but must stress that schools have the direct knowledge of the pupil and their family circumstances that help them judge applications most appropriately and any final decision will always rest with the Head Teacher.

There are checks and balances that schools must also apply whenever any application for leave is received – these include :

- The age of the pupil
- The time of year / any assessment, exam or transition impact
- The nature and purpose of the trip
- The impact on the pupil's education
- The pupil's ability to catch up on work missed
- The pupil's educational needs
- The general welfare of the pupil
- The overall attendance pattern of the pupil
- History of previous trips taken in term time.

Set within this context examples of circumstances requiring decisions include –

☒ **Application to take pupil out of school for the purpose of a family holiday:**

Clearly this is not an exceptional circumstance and the application should be declined.

☒ **Application for leave of a pupil with parent (s) in the armed forces.**

This would be considered exceptional circumstances in line with the DfE example. Schools would still need to agree a timeframe and also have mind to the elements of the checklist above.

☒ Application for leave of a pupil with a parent in the Fire Service:

This may be considered as exceptional circumstances (in line with the DfE example) due to the Fire Service prescribing holidays annually to staff depending on their Watch. The school should however request evidence of shift / rota patterns that necessitate this specific period of leave.

☒ When there has been a close family bereavement:

This would be an exceptional circumstance in line with DfE guidance. The school would need to be sure of details and have a clear timeframe for the absence. In extreme examples, schools uncertain of a claimed bereavement have requested further proof.

☒ To allow a pupil to return to their country of origin for family reasons:

This could be exceptional circumstances. Pupils return periodically for many reasons both social and logistical, so the school would have to have sufficient evidence to support a request, be very clear on the timescales (and have set out possible consequences of failing to observe these) and previous leave patterns. Other related scenarios are cited below.

☒ To allow a pupil to return to their country of origin for religious or cultural reasons:

This could be considered as an exceptional circumstance. Schools should check for dates of religious and cultural events and evidence may be requested such as a booking form or trip itinerary to support the request. This should be equally applied to a range of faiths and events based in the UK as well as abroad. Absences of this nature can be marked as 'R' which denotes an authorised absence rather than an agreed leave of absence.

Time needed to travel to, attend and return from such an event should be carefully agreed.

☒ Application to take child out of school for the purpose of visiting a sick close relative abroad:

This might be considered as exceptional circumstances but this would very much depend on the school knowledge of the family, the urgency of the situation and whether parents could provide supporting evidence if required.

☒ Application to take child out of school for the purpose of a close relative's funeral abroad:

Provided there is sufficient evidence this could be considered exceptional. The school would need to be sure of the family connection and also be very clear on the time needed to travel to, participate and return.

☒ Unavoidable circumstances e.g. the parent/carer has inflexible leave allocation and this has been confirmed by the employer. This would be in addition to the Services/Fire Brigade options cited above.

This is problematic but would not count as 'exceptional' as it falls outside the DfE parameters. Schools would have to take the checklist into account and also be sure parents were not exploiting complicit employers to secure leave. This could generally develop into the thin edge of a substantial wedge.

☒ To take a pupil out of school for the purpose of a family holiday when family have undergone a difficult period/transition in recent months:

This could be considered exceptional circumstances if the school knowledge of the family clearly supports this. Care would however have to be taken that school was not left open to allegations of inconsistency.

☒ To take a pupil out of school in term time due to pupil's on-going health/medical needs or the need for specialist accommodation:

This could be exceptional circumstances provided the school has sufficient knowledge of the circumstances or can gather such evidence.

☒ Application by parent/carer to take a pupil looked after by a Local Authority out of school for the purpose of a family holiday:

This would not be exceptional and any such application would be referred immediately to the allocated social worker.

☒ Application to take a pupil out of school for the purpose of parent's wedding abroad

This would not be exceptional. This can be an emotive issue, but such weddings rarely take place without extensive pre-planning and there is therefore ample opportunity to avoid term times.

☒ To take a pupil out of school for the purpose of a close family member's wedding abroad

This would not be exceptional circumstances (as above).

☒ Application to take a pupil out of school for the purpose of visiting a parent in custody

This would constitute exceptional circumstances. The parent would need to provide the school with the usual evidence of a visiting schedule etc.

School Attendance Officer for St. Luke's School:

School Attendance Services

K.M.B.C. Education Offices

Huyton Hey Road

Knowsley L36 5YH

Telephone 0151 443 3219.