

**We follow in the footsteps of Jesus as we live, love and learn together.**



## Attendance Policy

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

**Policy reviewed: March 2024**

**To be reviewed: Annually**

Reviewed by: S.Dobson Date: 26.02.2024

Signature: S. Dobson Date: 26.02.2024

Chair/Vice of Governors Signature: A McCaul Date: 07.03.2024

## *St Luke's Catholic Primary School* **Attendance Policy**

### **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.

### **Statement of Intent**

St Luke's Catholic Primary School believes that in order to facilitate teaching and learning, good attendance is essential. Pupils cannot achieve their full potential if they do not regularly attend school.



(Government National Campaign for promoting good attendance January 2024)

We understand that barriers to attendance are complex, and that some pupils find it harder than others to attend school; therefore, we will continue to prioritise cultivating a safe and supportive environment at school, as well as strong and trusting relationships with pupils and parents.

We take a whole-school approach to securing good attendance, and recognise the impact that our efforts in other areas – such as the curriculum, behaviour standards, bullying, SEND support, pastoral support, and the effective use of resources such as pupil premium – can have on improving pupil attendance.

We are committed to:

- Promoting and modelling high attendance and its benefits.
- Ensuring equality and fairness for all.
- Ensuring this attendance policy is clear and easily understood by staff, pupils and parents.
- Intervening early and working with other agencies to ensure the health and safety of our pupils.
- Building strong relationships with families to overcome barriers to attendance.
- Working collaboratively with other schools in the area, as well as other agencies.

- Ensuring parents follow the framework set in section 7 of the Education Act 1996, which states that the parent of every child of compulsory school age shall cause them to receive efficient full-time education suitable to their age, ability and aptitude, and to any SEND they may have, either by regular attendance at school or otherwise.
- Ensuring our attendance policy is clear and easily understood by all staff, parents and pupils.
- Regularly monitoring and analysing attendance and absence data to identify pupils or cohorts that require more support.

The school's attendance officer is Mrs Dobson. Staff, parents and pupils will be expected to contact the attendance officer for queries or concerns about attendance.

## 1. Legal framework

This policy has due regard to all relevant legislation and statutory guidance including, but not limited to, the following:

- Education Act 1996
- Equality Act 2010
- The Education (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2006 (As amended)
- The Children (Performances and Activities) (England) Regulations 2014
- Children and Young Persons Act 1963
- DfE (2022) 'Working together to improve school attendance'
- [Updated] DfE (2023) 'Keeping children safe in education (KCSIE) 2023'
- DfE (2016) 'Children missing education'
- DfE (2023) 'Providing remote education'

This policy operates in conjunction with the following school policies:

- Child Protection and Safeguarding Policy
- Complaints Procedures Policy
- Behaviour and Relationships Policy
- SEND Policy

## 2. Roles and responsibilities

**The governing board has overall responsibility for:**

- Monitoring the implementation of this policy and all relevant procedures across the school.
- Promoting the importance of good attendance through the school's ethos and policies.
- Arranging attendance training for all relevant staff that is appropriate to their role.
- Working with the SLT to set goals for attendance and providing support and challenge around delivery against those goals.
- Regularly reviewing attendance data.
- Ensuring that this policy, as written, does not discriminate on any grounds, including, but not limited to, ethnicity/national origin, culture, religion, gender, disability or sexual orientation.
- Handling complaints regarding this policy as outlined in the school's Complaints Procedures Policy.
- Having regard to KCSIE when making arrangements to safeguard and promote the welfare of children.
- Ensuring there is a Children Missing Education Policy in place and that this is regularly reviewed and updated.

**The headteacher is responsible for:**

- The day-to-day implementation and management of this policy and all relevant procedures across the school.
- Appointing a member of the SLT to the attendance officer role.
- Ensuring all parents are aware of the school's attendance expectations and procedures.
- Ensuring that every pupil has access to full-time education and will act as early as possible to address patterns of absence.

**Staff are responsible for:**

- Following this policy and ensuring pupils do so too.
- Ensuring this policy is implemented fairly and consistently.

- Modelling good attendance behaviour.
- Using their professional judgement and knowledge of individual pupils to inform decisions as to whether any welfare concerns should be escalated.
- Where designated, taking the attendance register at the relevant times during the school day.

**The attendance officer is responsible for:**

- The overall strategic approach to attendance in school.
- Developing a clear vision for improving attendance.
- Monitoring attendance and the impact of interventions.
- Analysing attendance data and identifying areas of intervention and improvement.
- Communicating with pupils and parents with regard to attendance.
- Following up on incidents of persistent poor attendance.
- Informing the LA of any pupil being deleted from the admission and attendance registers.

**Pupils are responsible for:**

- Attending their lessons and any agreed activities when at school.
- Arriving punctually to lessons when at school.

**Parents are responsible for:**

- Providing accurate and up-to-date contact details.
- Providing the school with more than one emergency contact number.
- Updating the school if their details change.
- The attendance of their children at school.
- Promoting good attendance with their children.

**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.



**Aims**

- Our overall aim is to promote a whole community approach to improving attendance and punctuality.
- To improve the overall attendance percentage of children at school.
- To make attendance and punctuality a priority for the whole school community, including parents/carers, staff and children.
- To provide support advice and guidance to parents/carers and children.
- To develop a systematic approach to gathering and analysis of attendance data
- To develop and maintain positive communication between home and school.
- To establish a system of rewards and incentives.
- To work together with the School Attendance Service and other services or agencies

**Expectations of Pupils**

We expect all our pupils to attend school regularly unless absence is genuinely unavoidable. We also expect pupils to arrive on time and be appropriately prepared for the day.

**Expectations of Parents and Carers**

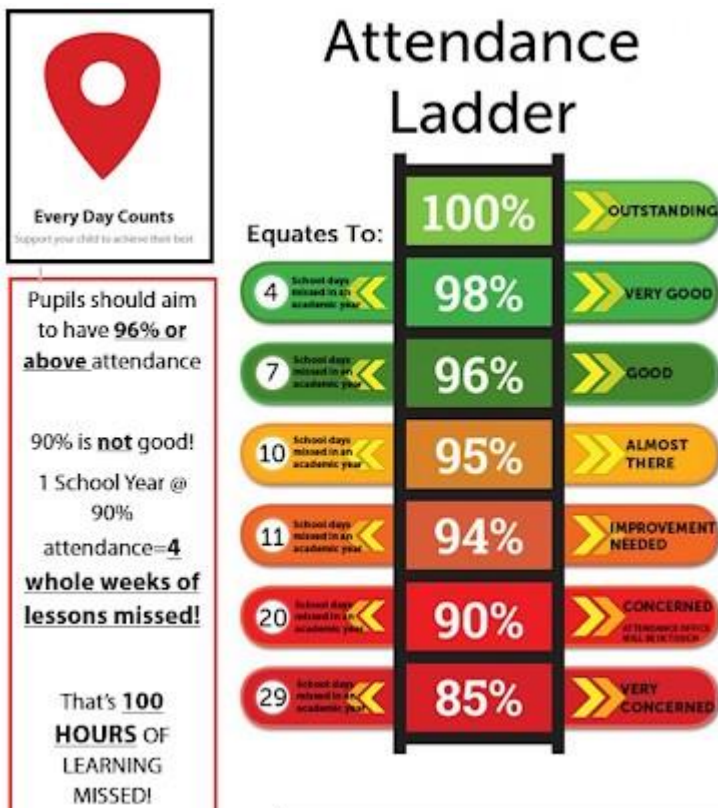
- Parents/ Carers have the main responsibility for ensuring their child attends school. We expect all parents and carers:
- To encourage their child/ children to attend regularly and on time.
- To inform a member of staff of any problem that may hinder their child/ children from attending school as soon as possible.

**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 every day in classes and display daily attendance on classroom door.
- Celebrate and talk about attendance in weekly assemblies.
- Give parents/carers details and information on attendance on our school web site;
- Tell parents/carers half termly 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;
- Acknowledge good attendance through our attendance initiatives.
- Acknowledge classes that have achieved 100% attendance with an own clothes day.
- Acknowledge classes that have achieved above National attendance with an extra playtime.
- Acknowledge the class who has received the most attendance certificates each half term.
- Acknowledge children with 100% attendance at the end of each term.
- Share 'Moments Matter, Attendance Counts' images and videos with parents on Class Dojo to promote good attendance.



**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. School may also ask for medical evidence if absences have hit triggers.

**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 Mrs Dobson or the school office. 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 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.

The thresholds for triggering Persistent Absence are approximately:

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)

### **Reluctant attenders/school refusal**

You should do everything possible to encourage your child to attend. However, if the reason for their reluctance appears to be school-based, such as difficulty with work, or bullying, please discuss this with the school at the earliest opportunity and the school will do everything possible to resolve.

### **Children Missing Education**

A child cannot be taken off our school roll until they start in the next school. Both the parent and the receiving school must inform us of the start date. Failure to receive confirmation of a forwarding school will result in a child being classed as a Child Missing Education and we have a duty to inform the Local Authority and Police of their missing status. The Local Authority has a legal duty to carry out investigations under Safeguarding Procedures. This will include: liaising with, School Attendance Service, Children's Social Care (formerly Social Services) the Police and other agencies, to track and locate your child.

By giving us the above information, unnecessary investigations can be avoided.

### **Leavers**

If a child is leaving to attend another school or due to relocation, full information about: date of move, new address, the new school and start date is required.

### **Exclusions**

If the school decides to send a pupil home due to their behaviour, this will be recorded as an Exclusion. The school will follow the current DfE's statutory guidance on exclusions.

Any exclusion must be agreed by the headteacher.

The school will notify the parent of the exclusion. If the pupil is a Looked After Child, the school will notify the pupil's carer, social worker and Virtual School. In other instances, where a pupil is open to Children's Social Care for any reason, the school will also inform their allocated social worker.

The pupil must be collected from the school office by the parent or another authorised adult, and signed out in the 'signing out' book. No pupil will be allowed to leave the school site without parental confirmation.

### **When are Education Penalty Notices (EPN) used?**

A education penalty notice may be issued if:

- 10 sessions (5 days) in any 10 week period of consecutive unauthorised absence including an unauthorised leave of absence (e.g. holiday).
- 10 sessions (5 days) in any 10 week period of non-consecutive unauthorised absences.
- Unauthorised absence due to truancy – including pupils stopped on truancy operations.
- Persistent late arrival at school (after the register has closed).
- Being found in a public place during the first 5 days of exclusion.
  - An EPN letter will be sent to parents on the fifth day of an unauthorised absence.

### **Absence Procedures:**

If a child is absent, parents/carers must contact the school office as soon as possible (by 9:00am) on the first day of absence by telephone or speaking with any member of staff at the school office. The reason given will be recorded by a member of our admin staff.

#### **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 9:00am.
- 2nd day -Contact parents/carers again by text or letter if we have still not heard from them.

Parents can expect an update phone call on the 3<sup>rd</sup> day of absence to see how the child is feeling and to give an update as to when they will be returning to school.

School may also ask for medical evidence if absences have hit triggers (child has attendance under 90%)

### **Medical/ Dental Appointments**

Where possible appointments should be arranged for outside school hours. Where this is not possible, parents should inform school in advance, advising when the appointment is and providing evidence of the appointment.

If a child needs to leave school during the course of the school day e.g. medical or dental appointment, parents/ carers must attend the school office to sign the child out of school and on the return to sign the child back in again.

### **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.

**Punctuality:**

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.

The playground door will close with the last class that enters the school at the start of the school day. Children arriving after this will be **classified as late** and **will need to enter the school via the school hall doors (normally used for assemblies)**. This minimises the disruption to other children who have started their learning and morning classroom routines. **Children need to be in their line and ready to enter school for 8:50am.** We will inform parents/carers if a child is late for the 2nd time in a week. We will also inform parents /carers 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 **8.45 am**.

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

At **10:00am** the registers will be closed – in accordance with 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 Attendance Lead and/or Mr Crist to resolve the problem. They can approach us at any time if they are having problems getting their child to school on time.



***DID YOU KNOW?*** *If you are 15 minutes late each day you will have missed a full 2 weeks of school in one year?*

### **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***

### **SEND- and health-related absences**

The school recognises that pupils with SEND and/or health conditions, including mental health issues, may face greater barriers to attendance than their peers, and will incorporate robust procedures to support pupils who find attending school difficult.

In line with the SEND Policy and Supporting Pupils with Medical Conditions Policy, the school will ensure that reasonable adjustments are made for disabled pupils to reduce barriers to attendance, in line with any EHC plans or IHPs that have been implemented. The school will secure additional support from external partners to help bolster attendance where appropriate.

Where the school has concerns that a pupil's non-attendance may be related to mental health issues, parents will be contacted to discuss the issue and whether there are any contributory factors to their child's lack of attendance. Where staff have a mental health concern about a pupil that is also a safeguarding concern, they will inform the DSL and the Child Protection and Safeguarding Policy will be followed.

If a pupil is unable to attend school for long periods of time due to their health, the school will:

- Inform the LA if a pupil is likely to be away from the school for more than 15 school days.
- Provide the LA with information about the pupil's needs, capabilities and programme of work.
- Help the pupil reintegrate at school when they return.
- Make sure the pupil is kept informed about school events and clubs.
- Encourage the pupil to stay in contact with other pupils during their absence.

The school will incorporate an action plan to help any pupils with SEND and/or health issues cope with the stress and anxiety that attending school may cause them. Such plans will be regularly monitored and reviewed until the pupil is attending school as normal and there has been signs of significant improvement.

To support the attendance of pupils with SEND and/or health issues, the school will consider:

- Holding termly meetings to evaluate any implemented reasonable adjustments.
- Incorporating a pastoral support plan.

- Carrying out strengths and difficulties questionnaire.
- Identifying pupils' unmet needs through the Common Assessment Framework.
- Using an internal or external specialist.
- Enabling a pupil to have a reduced timetable.
- Ensuring a pupil can have somewhere quiet to spend lunch and breaktimes.
- Implementing a system whereby pupils can request to leave a classroom if they feel they need time out.
- Temporary late starts or early finishes.
- Phased returns to school where there has been a long absence.
- Small group work or on-to-one lessons.
- Tailored support to meet their individual needs.

### **School targets**

The school has targets to improve attendance and everyone has an important part to play in meeting these targets. Each class displays their attendance daily and weekly on their classroom door.

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 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 immediate family relative (grandparents, parents, siblings) abroad or to their country of origin:**

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 an immediate family relative's (grandparents, parents, siblings) funeral abroad or to their country of origin:**

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:**

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