

# St Michael & All Angels Catholic Primary School



## Attendance Policy 2020 – 2021

Signed: \_\_\_S Ralph\_\_\_\_\_ (Headteacher) Date: July 2020

Signed: \_\_\_Rev. P Regan\_\_\_\_\_ (Chair of Governors) Date: July 2020

# St Michael and All Angels Catholic Primary School

## Attendance Policy

### Introduction

This is a successful and happy school and every child plays their part in making it so. However, for our children to gain the greatest benefit from their education it is vital that they attend regularly and all children should be at school, on time, every day the school is open unless the reason for the absence is unavoidable.

It is very important therefore that we make sure that every child attends regularly and this policy sets out how together we will achieve this.

### **Regular attendance at St Michael and All Angels Primary School is considered to be 96%**

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 so may affect the learning of others in the same class. Poor attendance can seriously affect a child's attainment at school, relationships with other children and their ability to form lasting friendships. It can also affect a child's confidence to attempt new work and learn alongside others.

### What is expected of the Parents/Carers

Children at St Michael and All Angels Primary are dependent on their parents/carers, who are responsible for their level of attendance and punctuality. It is vital that children enjoy coming to school, and whilst being encouraged to attend well and on time, will not carry blame and be made to feel unhappy if their parents/carers are not supportive or effective in these areas.

Parents/Carers have a legal responsibility to ensure that their child attends school regularly, and is in school for every lesson after they have registered. Ensuring your child's regular attendance at school is your legal responsibility and permitting absence from school without a good reason creates an offence in law and may result in prosecution.

### Parents/Carers are expected:

- To ensure children attend school every day unless they are too unwell;
- To trust that school staff will contact parents/carers during the school day if a child is too unwell to be in school;
- To inform school, by phone or note, if a child is unable to attend on the first day of absence;
- To make all medical appointments outside school hours whenever possible;
- To ensure that their child arrives at school on time (between 8.45am – 9.00am). A reason should be offered for any lateness;
- To ensure that their child is collected on time at the end of the school day;
- To work closely with the school and LA Attendance Officers to resolve any problems that may impede a child's attendance;
- To take family holidays during school holiday periods and be aware that requests for holidays during term time will be refused except in exceptional circumstances;
- To be aware of curriculum requirements and be especially vigilant with regards to attendance during

important academic times such as SATS.

- To provide evidence, if requested, if there are repeat absences for medical reasons.

### **Absence Procedures:**

A child not attending school is considered a **safeguarding** matter. This is why information about the cause of any absence is always required.

If a child is absent parents/carers must:

- Contact us as soon as possible on the first day of absence, by telephoning the school office (0151 677 4088);

If your child's attendance falls below 95%, you will receive letters from school informing you that your child's attendance falls below the school target.

If your child's attendance falls below 93%, you may be asked to meet with the Headteacher or an Attendance Panel to resolve the problem, but you can approach us at any time if you are having problems getting your child to school.

### **What to do if your child is reluctant to attend school:**

Children are sometimes reluctant to attend school. Any problems with regular attendance are best sorted out between the school, the parents/carers and the child. If a child is reluctant to attend, it is never better to cover up their absence or to give in to pressure to excuse them from attending. This gives the impression that attendance does not matter and may make things worse.

Contact your child's class teacher immediately and openly discuss your worries. Your child could be avoiding school for a number of reasons – difficulties with school work or homework, bullying, friendship problems or family difficulties. It is important that we identify the reason for your child's reluctance to attend school and work together to tackle the problem. In some case you may find it helpful to discuss the circumstances of your child's difficulties with another professional.

Make sure that your child gets plenty of sleep and gets up in plenty of time each morning. Ensure that your child leaves home in the correct clothes and properly equipped. Show your child, by your interest, that you value their education.

Be interested in what your child is doing in school, chat to them about the things they have learnt, what friends they have made and even what they had for lunch.

### **Medical Evidence:**

We may need to ask you for medical evidence, if there are repeat absences for medical reasons.

We will accept the following as medical evidence:

- Doctor's certificate
- Appointment card- Date stamped
- Medication in the name of the child
- Prescription
- Text message from doctors or NHS confirming an appointment
- Care of the chemist – date stamped slip to show medical advice has been sought
- Appointment letters from hospital, doctor or dentist

This is not an exhaustive list.

In some cases, we may need to ask parents/carers about getting the School Nurse involved and/or a Doctor if there are particular concerns about health-related absences.

### **Lateness:**

Poor punctuality is not acceptable. If your child misses the start of the day they can miss work and do not spend time with their class teacher getting vital information and news for the day. Late arriving pupils are disrupting not only their own education but also that of the other pupils. Lateness can also encourage absence as some pupils would rather not attend school at all, rather than have to arrive late.

How we manage lateness:

- The school day starts at 9.00am although children are able to arrive at school from 8:45am and will be greeted by their teachers in the classroom. We expect your child to be in at that time.
- Registers are marked by 9.00am and your 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 your 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.
- Any late pupils should enter school through the main entrance. The administration staff will ask the parent/carer to sign their child in using the electronic system.
- If a child arrives unaccompanied by a parent/carer the staff will ask the pupil to offer a reason for lateness and this will be followed up by a phone call.
- If lateness becomes a regular occurrence parents/carers will receive a phone call to enquire about reasons and offer support as necessary.
- If lateness persists, parents/carers will be invited to attend a meeting in school to agree an action plan. If support is declined or the plan is not followed, and a child has 10 or more sessions of unauthorised absence due to lateness, a Penalty Notice may be issued.

### **What is expected of the pupils**

Pupils have a responsibility to themselves and others to play a positive role in the life of the school and to make the most of the educational opportunities available.

#### **Pupils are expected:**

- To do all they can to attend school regularly and punctually;
- To promptly arrive in class for both morning and afternoon register;
- To inform a trusted adult if there is a reason they are not happy to attend school;
- Older children to be aware of their attendance targets and work towards meeting them.

### **What is expected of the School**

School attendance will be positively supported wherever possible and the promotion of good communication and co-operation between all parties involved will be paramount.

#### **School is expected:**

- To create a school ethos that pupils want to be part of;
- To meet the legal requirements set out by Government;
- To give a high priority to punctuality and attendance;

- To develop procedures that enable the school to identify, follow up and record unauthorised absence and patterns of absence;
- To consistently record authorised and unauthorised absences on the register using the correct attendance code;
- To develop a range of effective strategies to follow up intermittent and long term absenteeism and promote good attendance;
- To encourage open communication channels between home and school;
- To develop procedures for the reintegration of long term absentees;
- To adequately provide for pupils with difficulties, within the bounds of resources available.
- To give parents/carers data on attendance in our regular newsletter;
- To regularly update governors about school attendance and attendance concerns;
- To report each term on how your child is performing in school, what their attendance and punctuality rate is and how this relates to their attainment;
- To celebrate good attendance by displaying individual and class achievements;
- To reward good or improving attendance or punctuality.

**If a child is absent:**

- We will telephone parents/carers to advise that their child is not in school and we have not been given a reason why;
- We will telephone any other persons on the pupil’s contact list if we are unable to make contact;
- Parents may receive a home welfare visit from either school staff, the LA Attendance Officer or Merseyside Police in order to ensure the safety of you and your child;

**Those people responsible for attendance matters in this school are:**

- Mrs Ralph, our headteacher, who decides on the classification of absences and puts cases forward for prosecution or Penalty Notices.
- The school governors, with Mrs K Walker as attendance link governor, are responsible for overseeing school attendance and checking policies and procedures. Mrs K Walker may also attend Attendance Panel meetings.
- All Class teachers, who monitor their pupil’s attendance and set the weekly attendance targets for their classes.
- Mrs Hughes, our Pastoral Care Worker, works closely with Mrs Williams our Admin Assistant, to monitor school attendance, makes first day absence telephone calls and support families to improve attendance and punctuality.

**Stepped Interventions**

96%-95%	Early Warning	Phone calls home, monitored by class teachers
95%-93%	School Monitoring	Letters to targeted families, home visits
93% to 90%	School Intervention (Stage 1)	Attendance Report Card & 1:1 meetings School warning letters, school support
90% and below	LA Attendance Officer and School Intervention (Stage 2)	Attendance Panels, Parenting Contract, Attendance Report Card, Fixed Penalty Warning Letters or Notice which could lead to prosecution

If attendance falls below 75%, this is a very serious concern and school would seek advice from social care regarding neglect.

The electronic registration system provides many reports and information that assist the school to monitor attendance. These reports will be accessed when relevant and provide information to assist the school to strategically manage attendance issues.

### **Strategies used to promote good attendance and punctuality**

- Class teacher will ensure that the curriculum is delivered within a culture of inclusion and in such a way that pupils feel that they have and can succeed.
- Individual pupils whose attendance has been a cause for concern will be encouraged to set and achieve personal attendance goals.
- Pupil attendance figures will be published with the annual academic reports, and at the Parent Evening Appointments in October and February.
- Positive verbal reinforcement is given to pupils who have been absent from school for a period of time and attendance actions are developed to help them catch up with any missed curriculum and promote future attendance.
- A weekly attendance league will promote and celebrate class attendance and our 'St Michael Bear' will be awarded to the class with the best attendance each week.
- 100% attenders in the winning class will enter a family prize raffle (termly).
- Parents will be informed of the school's policy on attendance when their child first starts at the school.
- Attendance expectations will be included on the home/school agreement.
- Parents will be regularly informed of the whole school attendance target and the current position in meeting that target.
- Termly punctuality weeks will promote and celebrate the importance of arriving in school on time. Follow up letters will be sent to parents/ carers of pupils where punctuality is a cause for concern.
- Attendance Panels, along with our attendance governor, will be offered as a means to support parents/carers of pupils whose attendance is a cause for concern.
- Fixed Penalty Notices will be issued where parents/carers do not engage with the school to support an improvement in attendance for their child when attendance is of concern.
- 96%+ attendance will be celebrated at the end of each term and 100% certificates are awarded each term.
- 100% attendance will be rewarded at the end of the year.
- Attendance displays in public areas will promote and celebrate good attendance and punctuality.

### **What is expected of the Local Authority**

The Local Authority has a responsibility to provide education and promote regular attendance of all statutory school age children.

#### **The LA is expected:**

- To support schools and parents/carers to fulfil their legal duty in relation to school attendance.
- LA Attendance Officers, provide guidance and support.
- To use sanctions such as Penalty Notices or prosecutions in the Magistrates Court if the Parenting Contract is unsuccessful.

## Types of absence

Every half-day absence from school has to be classified by the school, as either AUTHORISED or UNAUTHORISED. This is why information about the cause of each 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.

Acceptable reasons for an authorised absence:

- The child is ill or is prevented from attending by unavoidable cause;
- The child lives over a certain distance from the school and either the LA has failed to make suitable arrangements to register the child at a nearer school or the LA has failed to make suitable transport arrangements;
- The child is absent on days exclusively set apart for religious observance in their particular faith;
- The child is absent 'with leave'. This refers to leave being granted by the school if authorised for exceptional circumstances.

*Unauthorised absences* are those which the school does not consider reasonable and for which no "leave" has been given. It is this type of absence which can lead to the Authority using sanctions and/or legal proceedings and includes:

- Parents/carers keeping children off school unnecessarily
- Truancy during the school day
- Absences which have never been properly explained
- Children who arrive at school too late to get a mark
- Shopping, looking after other children or birthdays
- Parents/carers own health issues
- Day trips and holidays in term time which have not been agreed.

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 your child is reluctant to attend, it is never better to cover up their absence or to give in to pressure to excuse them from attending. This gives the impression that attendance does not matter and usually make things worse.

In the case of unauthorised absences, a fixed penalty may be issued. Head Teachers may submit a written request to the LA using the appropriate proforma asking for a Fixed Penalty Notice or a Warning Letter to be issued to parents/carers.

*Persistent Absenteeism (PA)* is when a pupil misses 10% or more (19 days) of their schooling across the full school year for whatever reason. Absence at this level is doing great harm by creating gaps in a child's learning. Research shows that these gaps affect attainment when attendance falls below 95%. Therefore, we need parent's/carer's and pupil's complete support to address this.

We will give priority to any pupil either at the PA level or at danger of reaching it and parents/carers will be informed of this immediately so that together we can put a plan in place to get that child back into school.

## **Holidays in Term Time**

In line with Local Authority and Government guidance, leave of absence in term time will only be considered in the most exceptional of circumstances. The principles for defining exceptional are: rare, significant, unavoidable and short, with unavoidable meaning an event that could not reasonably be scheduled at another time.

Taking holidays in term time will affect your child's education as much as any other absence and we expect parents to help us by not taking children away in school time.

**Remember that any savings you think you may make by taking a holiday in school time are offset by the cost to your child's education.**

There is no automatic entitlement in law to a leave of absence in school time to go on holiday.

All applications for leave of absence must be made in advance on the leave of absence request form which can be obtained from the school office.

Any period of leave taken without the agreement of the school, or in excess of that agreed, will be classed as unauthorised and may attract sanctions such as a Penalty Notice. If we contact a parent/carer who has not put in a request for leave of absence and the dialling tone would indicate that they are abroad, school will request a Penalty Notice as this meets the criteria below (C).

## **Education Penalty Notices**

Penalty notices can be issued to each parent/carer for the following reasons:

- (A) The child has had 10 or more sessions of absence in a period of no more than one term or two half terms and meets the terms of prosecution under Section 444 (1) of the Education Act 1996 and the Local Authority has previously issued a warning letter giving the opportunity to improve attendance over a 15 day period.
- (B) The child has 10 sessions of unauthorised leave of absence in term time and the school has advised the parent in writing that the leave of absence does not constitute the school's view of an exceptional circumstance.
- (C) The child has taken leave of absence in term time without parents requesting authorisation from the school.
- (D) The child arrives late after the registers are closed (using code U) on 10 or more separate occasions in any one term
- (E) An exclusion has taken place and the parent has allowed the child to be present in a public place during school hours, without reasonable justification, during the first five days of a fixed or permanent exclusion.
- In b), c) and d) subsequent unauthorised absence may not be subject to a penalty notice as the parent will be made aware that to repeat this would be committing an offence and the Local Authority may prosecute for a repeat offence.

Education Penalty Notices will be issued by post. Payment of a Fixed Penalty Notice is £60 if paid within 21 days and £120 if paid after this time but within 28 days. Penalty Notices will be issued to each parent for each child. The exception to this would be where a parent has taken a child on unauthorised leave of absence without the consent of the other parent.



The Local Authority retains any revenue from the Fixed Penalty Notices to cover enforcement costs. Non-payment of a Fixed Penalty Notice will result in the withdrawal of the notice and may trigger a prosecution of parents/carers by the Education Social Welfare Service under Section 444 Education Act 1996. There is no right of appeal by parents/carers against a penalty notice.

## **Leavers**

If your child is leaving our school (other than when transferring to secondary school) parents/carers are asked to provide written confirmation to the school office, the following information:

- New address and telephone numbers (if moving house);
- Date of the move (if moving house);
- Name, address and telephone number of the child's new school;
- Start date at the new school.

If pupils leave and we do not have the above information, then your child is considered to be a 'Child Missing Education'. This requires schools and Local Authorities to then carry out investigations to try to locate your child, which includes liaising with Children's Services, the Police and other safeguarding agencies. By giving us the above information, these investigations can be avoided.

## **Summary**

The school has a legal duty to publish its absence figures to parents and to promote attendance. Equally, parents have a duty to make sure that their children attend. School staff are committed to working with parents as the best way to ensure as high a level of attendance as possible.

## **Monitoring and review**

This policy is monitored termly by the head teacher, who reports to governors regularly about the effectiveness of the policy and school's current attendance data. The attendance policy is the governors' responsibility, and they review its effectiveness annually.

## **Appendix 1 – Attendance during Covid-19 pandemic**

**The following guidance is taken from the Department for Education ‘Guidance for full opening: Schools’.**

### **Attendance expectations**

In March when the coronavirus (COVID-19) outbreak was increasing, it was made clear no parent would be penalised or sanctioned for their child’s non-attendance at school.

Now the circumstances have changed and it is vital for all children to return to school to minimise as far as possible the longer-term impact of the pandemic on children’s education, wellbeing and wider development.

Missing out on more time in the classroom risks pupils falling further behind. Those with higher overall absence tend to achieve less well in both primary and secondary school. School attendance will therefore be mandatory again from the beginning of the autumn term. This means from that point, the usual rules on school attendance will apply, including:

- parents’ duty to secure that their child attends regularly at school where the child is a registered pupil at school and they are of compulsory school age;
- schools’ responsibilities to record attendance and follow up absence
- the availability to issue sanctions, including fixed penalty notices in line with local authorities’ codes of conduct

### **Pupils who are shielding or self-isolating**

We now know much more about coronavirus (COVID-19) and so in future there will be far fewer children and young people advised to shield whenever community transmission rates are high. Therefore, the majority of pupils will be able to return to school.

- A small number of pupils will still be unable to attend in line with public health advice because they are self-isolating and have had symptoms or a positive test result themselves; or because they are a close contact of someone who has coronavirus (COVID-19)
- shielding advice for all adults and children will pause on 1 August, subject to a continued decline in the rates of community transmission of coronavirus (COVID-19). This means that even the small number of pupils who will remain on the shielded patient list can also return to school, as can those who have family members who are shielding. Read the [current advice on shielding](#)
- if rates of the disease rise in local areas, children (or family members) from that area, and that area only, will be advised to shield during the period where rates remain high and therefore they may be temporarily absent (see below).
- some pupils no longer required to shield but who generally remain under the care of a specialist health professional may need to discuss their care with their health professional before returning to school (usually at their next planned clinical appointment). You can find more advice from the Royal College of Paediatrics and Child Health at [COVID-19 - ‘shielding’ guidance for children and young people](#).

Where a pupil is unable to attend school because they are complying with clinical and/or public health advice, we expect schools to be able to immediately offer them access to remote education. Schools should monitor engagement with this activity (as set out in the section below).

Where children are not able to attend school as parents are following clinical and/or public health advice, absence will not be penalised.

### **Pupils and families who are anxious about return to school**

All other pupils must attend school. Schools should bear in mind the potential concerns of pupils, parents and households who may be reluctant or anxious about returning and put the right support in place to address this. This may include pupils who have themselves been shielding previously but have been advised that this is no longer necessary, those living in households where someone is clinically vulnerable, or those concerned about the comparatively increased risk from coronavirus (COVID-19), including those from Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic (BAME) backgrounds or who have certain conditions such as obesity and diabetes.

If parents of pupils with significant risk factors are concerned, we recommend schools discuss their concerns and provide reassurance of the measures they are putting in place to reduce the risk in school. Schools should be clear with parents that pupils of compulsory school age must be in school unless a statutory reason applies (for example, the pupil has been granted a leave of absence, is unable to attend because of sickness, is absent for a necessary religious observance etc).

***As a school we will continue to follow DFE and Public Health guidance regarding the 'Prevention' which states that we should:***

### **Minimise contact with individuals who are unwell by ensuring that those who have coronavirus (COVID-19) symptoms, or who have someone in their household who does, do not attend school**

Ensuring that pupils, staff and other adults do not come into the school if they have [coronavirus \(COVID-19\) symptoms](#), or have tested positive in the last 7 days, and ensuring anyone developing those symptoms during the school day is sent home, are essential actions to reduce the risk in schools and further drive down transmission of coronavirus (COVID-19).

If anyone in the school becomes unwell with a new, continuous cough or a high temperature, or has a loss of, or change in, their normal sense of taste or smell (anosmia), they must be sent home and advised to follow '[stay at home: guidance for households with possible or confirmed coronavirus \(COVID-19\) infection](#)', which sets out that they must self-isolate for at least 7 days and should [arrange to have a test](#) to see if they have coronavirus (COVID-19). Other members of their household (including any siblings) should self-isolate for 14 days from when the symptomatic person first had symptoms.

PPE must be worn by staff caring for the child while they await collection if a distance of 2 metres cannot be maintained (such as for a very young child or a child with complex needs).

Any members of staff who have helped someone with symptoms and any pupils who have been in close contact with them do not need to go home to self-isolate unless they develop symptoms themselves (in which case, they should arrange a test) or if the symptomatic person subsequently tests positive (see below) or they have been requested to do so by NHS Test and Trace.