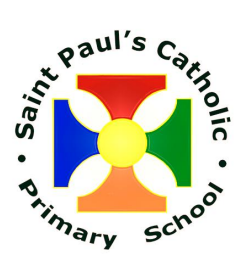




# St Paul's Catholic Primary School

## **ATTENDANCE POLICY**

# St Paul's Catholic Primary School Attendance Policy



## Mission Statement

St. Paul's Catholic Primary School provides an education that realises the full potential and talents of each individual in accordance with Gospel values and the teaching of our faith, thereby...

"Raising God's children to distinction"

## Rationale

St Paul's Catholic Primary School Staff and Governors believe that children's regular and punctual attendance is vital. Without good attendance and punctuality the best efforts of staff, children and parents will come to nothing. This policy is designed to promote all children's attendance and to ensure the school fulfils its mission statement of:

**"Raising God's children to distinction"**

We believe that strong links exist between attendance and achievement and that if key learning is missed during a period of absence then a child may experience difficulty in catching up on missed work. Non-attendance can also have a negative effect on social relationships with others in school. The school works alongside parents and the Local Education Authority in promoting regular attendance.

Promoting, recording and monitoring attendance at St Paul's is a priority because:

- It records the safe arrival of pupils in school, and allows the safety of pupils to be checked in the event of an incident or fire;
- It prevents truanting;
- It promotes high achievement;
- It ensures maximum social experience and promotes social inclusion.

To support the achievement of regular attendance, St Paul's School will set annual targets and track attendance, in consultation with the Education Welfare Service. These targets will be set for the whole school and each class and 100% attendance celebrated.

## **Covid 19 Pandemic Statement**

**Please read this paragraph in conjunction with the Frequently Asked Questions issued by the school and all Government Guidance relating to schools and Covid 19.**

Due to the Covid 19 Pandemic of 2020, pupil attendance at school between March and August 2020 has not been mandatory. Where possible St Paul's Catholic Primary school has been open for children of critical key workers during March to July 2020 and also for children in years six, one and Reception during June and July. However attendance of pupils during this time has not been mandatory and at the discretion of parents/carers.

The Government expects all school aged children to return to school in September 2020 and attendance once again will be mandatory.

St Paul's School recognises that parents/carers may have many concerns regarding the safety of their children attending school during a pandemic. We will do all we can, by carrying out rigorous Risk Assessments and following all Government and Local Authority guidance, to ensure St Paul's School is as Covid secure as possible. We will keep all parents and carers fully updated as to our work in establishing St Paul's as a Covid secure school and work with parents and carers to ensure all pupils return to school successfully.

We understand that some parents/carers may have extra concerns regarding their children and we will work closely with them to enable the children to return.

It must be noted however that attendance will be mandatory from September 2020 and this policy will be applied and implemented as per Government Guidance.

In the event of any pupil or member of staff testing positive for Covid 19 the school will follow the instructions from South Gloucestershire Public Health and it is possible that classes or the school may be required to close for a limited time. If this happens St Paul's will provide home learning for pupils and it is expected that all pupils will engage with this (except if they are physically unwell).

At all times we will seek to work with parents and carers and to keep them as informed as possible.

#### Home and School Partnership

*Parents are responsible for ensuring that children of compulsory school age receive efficient full-time education suitable to their age, ability and aptitude or any special educational needs by regular attendance at school or otherwise (Section 7, 1996 Education Act).*

#### Parents:

- are responsible for making sure that their child attends punctually and regularly;
- need to ensure that their children are properly dressed, equipped and fit to learn;
- must inform school on the first day of absence;
- must complete a 'Notification of absence' (Appendix 1) to request an authorised absence for planned medical appointments, religious observance or compassionate time off e.g. funerals;
- expect the school to keep them fully informed of their child's attendance;
- expect the school to support and encourage them in continually seeking ways to improve attendance at school

#### School

At St Paul's Catholic Primary School, the staff and governors endeavour to support parents in their responsibility by:

- providing a comprehensive induction programme for new entrants and parents to help children come to school willingly and with a positive attitude
- encouraging parents to discuss any attendance related problems with the class teacher/head teacher
- ensuring all areas of the school are clean, bright, warm and welcoming
- teachers and teaching assistants being available in cloakrooms and/or classrooms from 08:40am to greet and help settle the children
- informing parents of any changes in the school routine by newsletter e.g. school trips, church services
- ensuring accurate and daily registers are maintained on pupils in the school;

- recognising and celebrating good attendance by the children;
- monitoring data to identify patterns of attendance and resource accordingly;
- authorising absences, where appropriate;
- publishing expected school times and holidays (including inset days) to parents;
- keeping parents informed of attendance levels at parents' evenings and through the schools newsletters;
- reintegrating positively any pupils that have been absent for a significant period of time;
- working closely with the Education Welfare Service

Children will:

- be listened to and respected;
- have individual records of attendance and punctuality

**AUTHORISED AND UNAUTHORISED ABSENCE**

- It is the Headteacher's responsibility to determine whether an absence is authorised or unauthorised (*Section 199, Education Act 1993*). A letter or telephone call from parents/carers does not in itself authorise an absence. Only the school's acceptance of the explanation will do this.
- Parents do not have the right to take a child out of school during term time to share a family holiday.
- Acceptable reasons for an authorised absence include:
  - Unavoidable medical/dental appointments
  - Sickness
  - Days of religious observations such as Eid or Diwali. This must be agreed with the Headteacher beforehand (by completing an absence form – appendix 1).
  - Exceptional family circumstances such as a bereavement.

**Family Holidays**

School procedure for considering requests for absence during term time

**The Head Teacher will not consider authorising any holidays in term time unless the request fulfils the following criteria:**

- The request is submitted prior to any bookings being made (no matter how long in advance).
- The request for holiday absence is put in writing to the headteacher
- Fulfils the 'exceptional circumstances' criteria, as defined in the government guidance and outlined below:

**Exceptional Circumstances**

Are defined as:

- Forces Personnel on leave from a foreign posting
- Exceptional significant family events or circumstances – these will be considered on an individual basis
- Parents who work for the emergency services and are only granted leave at certain times.

The Head Teacher will consider every above request individually but the following **will not meet the criteria:**

- Relatives coming to visit
- Cheaper holidays in England and abroad
- Family day trips

- Visiting family/friends that have different half term holidays and may include refusal to attend family weddings and visits to see family abroad.

All the above information and relevant links to government guidance can be found on our website here: <http://www.southglos.gov.uk/Pages/Article%20Pages/Children%20Young%20People/Schools/Authorised-and-unauthorised-absence-from-school-1046.aspx>

Further information and guidance can be found on the DfE website.

### **PENALTY NOTICES**

Penalty notices were introduced in the Anti-Social Behaviour Act 2003 to address the problem of poor school attendance. The school will follow the local authority guidelines. In the event of a holiday being taken, the Head Teacher and **Attendance Governor** may decide to refer the family for a Penalty Notice. This will lead to a fine. (See Appendix 2 – ‘Penalty Notices – information for parents and carers’)

### **UNPLANNED ABSENCE –**

#### **Reporting an unplanned absence**

- If a child will not be attending school due to illness or an emergency:
  - Parents/carers must telephone the school by 9:00am on the first day of absence, giving the reason for absence and an expected return date.
  - Parents can leave a message on the school answer-phone at any time, but this must be done by 9:00 am on the first day of absence.
  - If the school has not received any reason, we will always contact parents by 10am on the first day of absence to ascertain the child’s safety and the reason for the child’s absence.
  - If an absence is prolonged, parents/carers must provide interim information so the school can help with homework or other arrangements

### **Other Points**

Please note:

- If children are suffering from sickness or diarrhoea they should not attend school for **48 hours** after their **last bout** of vomiting or diarrhoea.
- In other cases children may have a clear ongoing medical condition which the school knows may result in non-attendance. In these cases it is crucial that home and school have an ongoing dialogue so that the negative impact on learning can be minimised.
- If it can be clearly demonstrated that the pupil’s sickness absence can be shown to follow a pattern, then the school reserves the right to investigate the reasons in more detail on a case by case basis. When looking at patterns, the school will always bear in mind that there may be underlying reasons. The school will endeavour to explore any causes and offer support where appropriate.
- If a child is frequently absent from schools for medical reasons, the school will seek support from the School Nurse or other appropriate medical/welfare sources.
- The trigger for such support can either be through a request from parents/carers (through the school) or by the school raising concerns with parents usually as a result of monitoring patterns of broken weeks (a week where a pupil has been absent for one or more days).
- Whilst we appreciate that these type of medical/dental appointments have to be taken when they are on offer, parents/carers are encouraged to arrange them during out of school hours or school holidays where possible.
- If this is not possible, please ensure that children return to school after their appointment, providing they are fit to do so.

- It is for the Head Teacher, to determine whether an absence is exceptional and should be authorised. Generally only truly exceptional occasions will be authorised.
- The death of a family member is a particularly traumatic event in any child's life. Schools have discretion to authorise absence to attend funerals or associated events and any request will be dealt with sympathetically
- Absence of a pupil for participation in a day set aside for religious observation by the religious body to which the parents belong will be classified as an authorised absence. Parents should inform the school via completing the appropriate Absence Request form at least two weeks before the event.

### Lateness

- School policy is to encourage punctuality and to actively discourage lateness as it seriously disrupts all children's learning. If a child is late (after the 8:50 am bell) and misses registration a late mark will be recorded. The parent or child must enter school via the office reception and log their name, class and reason for lateness. If a pattern of lateness emerges, parents will be invited to discuss the matter with the class teacher and if no improvement is made the Head Teacher. The aim of these discussions will be to support parents and child in improving their punctuality.

### Traveller children/Dual Registration

All children are expected to attend school regularly and punctually, however for children who come from Traveller Communities (as defined in HMR/12/96/NS), the following will apply:

- Children registered at St Paul's whose families embark upon travelling are authorised for up to one hundred days a year as recognised by Section 199(6) of the 1993 Education Act. Traveller Parents should demonstrate that they are engaged in a trade or business of such nature that requires them to travel from place to place.
- St Paul's school will work proactively with all Traveller families to encourage and support their children's regular, punctual and consistent attendance.
- We recognise that family events and support feature prominently in all cultures and especially in Traveller Communities and the Head Teacher will give applications for absence careful consideration.
- If the school is informed that the family is travelling away from the area for work or cultural purposes and the children are attending another school, the absence is recorded as authorised, known as Dual Registration.
- Attendance is checked on a regular basis with the other school. It is essential that the school is informed before the period of absence occurs and of the child's return to their home school. This meeting is to enable the successful return of the children and parents should contact the school to arrange the meeting before the planned return to St Paul's.
- Children's attendance at national cultural events such as the Great Horse Fairs will be authorised, providing a request is made by the parents/carers.
- Children registered at St Paul's but who are deemed to be "living on the road" may also be authorised when absent if their parents are unable to find suitable site accommodation.

### Applications for a Leave of Absence

All applications will be considered using the following criteria:

- The child's attendance for the preceding twelve month period will be noted by the school on the Absence Request Form.
- If the child's attendance has been 95% or more the Head Teacher will **consider** whether to authorise the exceptional circumstances requested absence.

- If the child's attendance in the previous twelve months has been less than 95%, no authorisation will be given, even under an exceptional circumstances request.
- Parents/Carers will be notified in writing of the Head Teacher's decision
- Authorisations will be made on the proviso that an acceptable percentage of attendance is maintained (95% or above) between the request and the leave of absence being taken.

### **Monitoring of Attendance**

This attendance policy has been established with the intention of working with parents and children to maintain the educational benefits and well-being of all pupils. When the school identifies a pattern of low, irregular attendance or lateness and in order to provide consistent information for individual parents about attendance and punctuality that needs improvement the following steps will be taken to improve attendance:

We will:

- Identify the patterns of irregular attendance and lateness
- Inform parents by letter on a monthly basis of attendance under 95%
- Inform parents by letter on a monthly basis of consistent lateness
- Inform parents by letter on a monthly basis of broken weeks that are causing concern

Parents will be encouraged to attend a meeting to discuss issues, identify causes of poor attendance or lateness and identify any support that we can offer.

- If these measures do not result in improved attendance, parents will be requested to attend a formal meeting involving the headteacher and governor responsible for attendance, minutes from which will be formally recorded and retained on the child's record.
- If the above measures do not result in improvement we may share information about the child with the Education Welfare Office and request their intervention

**If these steps prove unsuccessful, the child's education will be compromised and the school governors will seek the support of other outside agencies and consider issuing penalty notices.**

St Paul's School will work continually with parents to provide the best possible education for their children.

### **Review**

This policy will be reviewed every three years by the head and governors. It may be reviewed earlier if there are any statutory changes or guidance.

**Approved by EEE Committee on: 28<sup>th</sup> September 2020**

**Signed:**

**Head Teacher**

**Chair of Ethos, Enrichment and Environment**

**Date:**

**To be reviewed every three years, next review:**

**September 2023**



## St. Paul's Catholic Primary School Notification of Absence Form

**PLEASE NOTE, HOLIDAYS WILL NOT BE AUTHORISED DURING TERM TIME.**

This form **MUST** be completed to advise of medical appointments, eye tests, family funeral, or exceptional circumstances and any arranged events.

<b>NAME OF CHILD:</b>			
<b>YEAR GROUP:</b>			
<b>Your child's Attendance data:</b>			
<b>Year to date:</b>	%	<b>Attendance for previous year:</b>	%
<b>Dates required:</b>			
<b>From:</b>			
<b>To:</b>			
<b>Appointments:</b>			
<b>Date of Appointment:</b>			
<b>Time of Appointment:</b>			
<b><i>If absence is for an appointment please supply a copy of the appointment confirmation.</i></b>			
<b>School Arrival/Collection time:</b>		<b>School lunch required:</b>	
Y/N			
<b>Parent's signature:</b>		<b>Date:</b>	
<b>Headteacher's Absence Authorisation</b>			
<b>Authorised Absence:</b>		<b>Unauthorised Absence:</b>	
<b>Reason for decision:</b>			
<b>Headteacher's signature:</b>		<b>Date:</b>	
<b>Office Use:</b>			
Evidence of appointment received:	Date:	Staff initials:	
Headteacher's response letter sent:	Date:	Staff initials	



## What is a Penalty Notice?

Penalty Notices were introduced under Section 23 (1) of the Anti Social Behaviour Act 2003 to address unauthorised absence from school. It is a fine issued by South Gloucestershire Council to parents/carers of a child who has failed to attend school regularly and whose absence is unauthorised.

It does not require the parent to attend court but is an alternative to prosecution in the magistrate's court. Parents/carers who pay the fine in full within the time limits cannot later be prosecuted for the offence to which the Penalty Notice relates (Section 444 of the Education Act 1996).

## Why have Penalty Notices been introduced?

Reducing absence from school is a key priority of the government and local authority because missing school may limit a pupil's attainment, disrupt school routines and the learning of others, and can leave a pupil vulnerable to anti-social behaviour and youth crime.

## When might a Penalty Notice be issued?

A Penalty Notice may be issued to a parent in one or more of the following circumstances where more than 10 sessions of absence are recorded in 7 school weeks (ie 70 sessions). There are 2 sessions per day, one in the morning and one in the afternoon:

1. where unauthorised absences are recorded
2. where more than 10 sessions of unauthorised holiday are recorded and;
  - a) the parent has not informed the school; or
  - b) the leave was not authorised; or
  - c) the child did not return on the agreed date
3. where the child is persistently late arriving at school after registers have closed
4. where a combination of more than 10 sessions of a) to c) above have been recorded.

## How much is the fine?

The fine is £60 (per parent, per child) if paid within 21 days of receipt of the notice; rising to £120 if paid after 21 days but within 28 days.

For example a two - parent family taking 2 children out of school for an unauthorised holiday would be liable for a total of £240 if paid within 21 days or £480 between 21 and 28 days.

The payment must be made in full – part payments will not be accepted - details of how to pay are printed on the Penalty Notice.

## What can you do to avoid receiving a Penalty Notice?

- ensure your child attends school every day and on time
- make sure your child knows that they cannot have odd days off school - 'Every Lesson Counts'
- speak to the class teacher or tutor if your child is beginning to miss odd days
- don't take family holidays in term time.

## Is there an appeal process?

There is no right of appeal against the Penalty Notice but if you believe it to be incorrectly issued to you, you should contact the Senior Education Officer immediately (number below). If you believe you are not guilty of the offence and therefore decide not to pay the Notice, you have the right to represent your case at the Magistrates Court but you should seek legal advice before making this decision.

## What happens if I do not pay?

If you have not paid the Penalty Notice in full **before the 28 days** allowed, the authority is required to commence legal proceedings in the Magistrates Court for the original offence of failure to ensure regular attendance at school.

If proven, this could result in a fine of up to £1000 under Section 444 (1) or up to £2500 and/or three months imprisonment under Section 444 (1A), a Parenting Order or other sanctions at the Magistrates' disposal. You are strongly urged to seek legal advice if you are considering not paying the Penalty Notice.

## Further information and advice

Department for Education - School attendance: Statutory guidance and advice:

<http://www.education.gov.uk/aboutdfe/advice/f00221879/advice-on-school-attendance>

<a href="http://www.childrenslegalcentre.com">www.childrenslegalcentre.com</a>	0808 802 0008
<a href="http://www.adviceguide.org.uk">www.adviceguide.org.uk</a>	08444 111 444
<a href="http://www.ace-ed.org.uk">www.ace-ed.org.uk</a>	0300 0115 142

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