



School Attendance Policy

St Edward's Catholic First School recognises that good attendance and pupils' enjoyment of school are central to raising standards and pupil attainment. We know that parents value their child's education and have high aspirations for them; hence we are keen to work with you to ensure that your child has good attendance in order for them to do well at school.

This policy is written with our Mission Statement in mind and this policy underpins our school ethos to:

- ensure that pupils reach their full potential whilst at school;
- promote children's welfare and safeguarding;
- ensure every pupil has access to the full time education to which they are entitled and;
- ensure that pupils have access to the widest possible range of opportunities when they leave school.

For our children to gain the greatest benefit from their education, it is vital that they attend regularly and be at school, on time, every day the school is open, unless the reason for the absence is unavoidable.

Any absence affects the pattern of a child's schooling and regular absence will seriously affect their learning. Any pupil's absence or late arrival disrupts teaching routines and so may affect the learning of others in the same class. Ensuring a child's regular attendance at school is a parental responsibility and permitting absence from school without a good reason creates an offence in law and may result in prosecution.

Attendance - How can parents help?

Parents are the key to ensuring that a child attends school.

You can help your child by following these suggestions: -

- Never let your child stay at home unless you are certain that they have a genuine reason for doing so.
- Join with school in stressing to your child the importance of good attendance and punctuality at the start of the day.
- Always let the school know why your child is away, on the first day of absence. Please telephone between **8.00am and 9.00am**. If you are bringing other children to school, please tell the member of staff on the gate or come into the school office and inform the office staff of your child's absence. If the school office hasn't heard from a parent about their child's absence they will contact you before 10.30am.
- Avoid making dental or doctor's appointments during school time unless it is absolutely necessary. Under government guidelines pupils away for such treatment are considered absent.
- If your child does have to have an appointment during school time, do not keep them away for the whole day – only for the time necessary for the appointment. Remember, there are separate attendance marks for morning and afternoon sessions.
- **Leave of absence in term time will rarely be authorised, and in exceptional circumstances only**, as they cause serious disruption to learning and make it very difficult for a child to catch up. When unauthorised leave of absence is taken, each parent could be liable to a fixed penalty notice which may result in a £60 fine per parent.
- From Spring half term (February) to the end of May, it is particularly important that children in Years 2 & 1 have full attendance, as this is when Statutory Assessment tasks / tests and Phonic Screening Tests take place. No absence, except illness, will be authorised for children during this period.

- Talk to your child about their school work, to make sure they do not have worries which may stop them wanting to come to school. All staff at School are always willing to discuss any concerns you may have about your child. Please do not hesitate to make an appointment if you have any concerns.
- Make sure your child arrives at school on time every day. The school day begins at **8.50am** and lessons begin promptly thereafter. Under Government guidelines, children who arrive after that time will be marked late and any who arrive after **9.10am**, the final deadline set for registration, will be deemed absent for that session. The Education Welfare Officer (EWO) will be informed of children who are regularly late to school. Children are supervised by a member of staff in the playground from 8.30am each morning, when the school gate will be unlocked.
- If you need to drop your child off before 8.30am you will need to make use of the breakfast club. Our school day ends at 3.00pm, if you are unable to collect your child promptly at this time you can make use of the afterschool club. Please contact the school office for information regarding before and afterschool clubs.
- Make a careful note of term dates and day closures from the weekly newsletter or the website.
- Contact your child's teacher or the Headteacher without delay if you have any concerns about your child's attitude to school.

Following up on absences

The school has a duty to monitor children's absence. On the first day of absence a parent/carer should inform the school by 9.30am. There is also a Health and Safety aspect to First Day Calling – a child who is missing from school may well be injured or worse. If we are unable to confirm the child's absence and whereabouts we will contact parents/carers. If this is unsuccessful contact will be made with all other emergency contacts on the child's records. If this continues to be unsuccessful a home visit may be undertaken. Attendance is regularly monitored; if a child's attendance falls below what is expected, parents will be informed of the school's concerns and will receive a letter from the Headteacher. If the child's attendance does not improve, parents will be asked to attend a meeting to talk about ways to support and improve the child's attendance.

Requesting leave

Under the regulations, approval for a child to be taken out of school during term time can only be granted by the Head Teacher. Government guidance states that "*Head Teachers may **not** grant any leave of absence during term time unless there are **exceptional** circumstances. In addition Head Teachers should determine the number of school days a child can be away from school if the leave is granted.*" 2013 Amendments to the 2006 Attendance guidance. Any requests for leave during term time must be made at least 10 working days in advance of the requested absence, in writing, to the Head Teacher by the parent with whom the pupil normally resides. The request must include an explanation as to why the absence must be taken in term time. The Head Teacher can only approve the request if there are exceptional circumstances relating to the application. As well as considering the circumstances surrounding the request, the Head Teacher is also likely to take into account the age of the pupil, the time of the year proposed for the absence, **the overall attendance pattern of the pupil** and the pupil's stage of education and progress. Children whose attendance is below 95% will not have absences authorised unless there are exceptional circumstances.

What does the law say?

Parents are legally obliged to ensure that their child attends school. The minimum acceptable level of attendance for each child is 97% (the School's attendance target) and should be higher. Any child below the school's attendance target will be monitored and any child whose attendance is lower than 90% will be considered an active cause for concern by school and the Education Social Work Service. (90% attendance means a child is missing ½ day from school each week)

There are two types of absence – AUTHORISED and UNAUTHORISED. Please note that it is the school and not the parent who authorises the absence. Absence can be authorised when there is considered to be an exceptional reason for the pupil to be away. Absence will not be authorised when no reason has been given or if the reason supplied is considered not to be exceptional.

UNAUTHORISED absences

The law does not allow the following as acceptable reasons for absence: -

- Truancy.
- Shopping trips during school hours (even if it is for the child).
- Personal appointments such as visiting the hairdresser.
- Birthdays or similar family celebrations.
- Visits. (Day trips/ theatre visits)
- Parents / guardians are not well.

Penalty Notices

The Local Authority (LA) has now introduced Penalty Notices (Section 23 of the Anti-Social Behaviour Act) as an alternative to prosecution under Section 444 of the Education Act 1996. It is hoped that Penalty Notices will prove to be a suitable intervention in circumstances of parentally condoned truancy. Penalty Notices are issued by the Educational Social Work Service and payments collected by County Treasurers.

A full copy of the Government Guidance on school attendance can be obtained from the following link:

https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/518586/Advice_on_school_attendance.pdf

The Education Social Work Service will always support a Headteacher's decision to refuse a request for leave of absence during term time.

Please remember 'School Attendance Matters'!

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Signed by Chair of Governors		
Signed by Head Teacher		
Policy originated from RBWM policy and adapted by Head Teacher to be school specific		