

# St Alban's Catholic Primary School



# ATTENDANCE POLICY

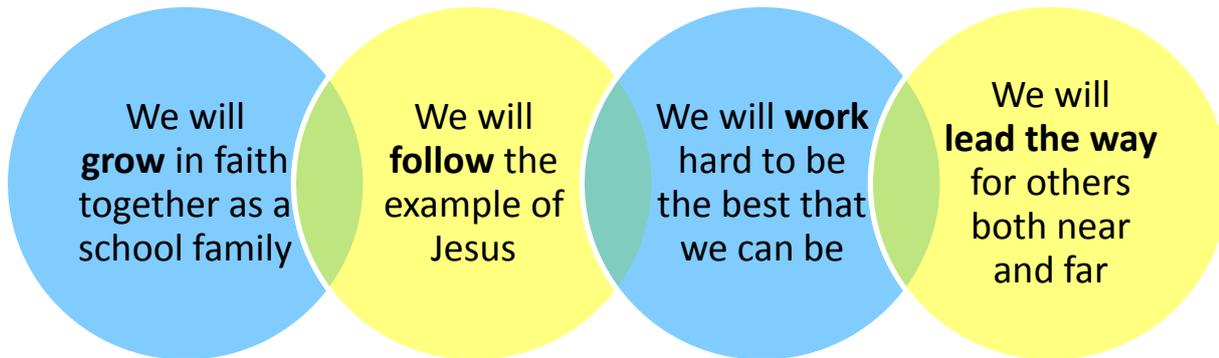
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## 1. MISSION STATEMENT

The St. Alban's Catholic Primary School's Mission Statement is as follows:



We in St. Alban's Catholic Primary have a primary responsibility for the care, welfare and safety of the pupils in our charge. We aim to provide a caring, supportive and safe environment, valuing individuals for their unique talents and abilities, with the aim that all young people can learn and develop to their full potential.

All our staff and volunteers have been subject to appropriate background checks. All visitors to the school must report to reception before entering the school. All staff must be alert to the possibility that pupils may have problems or be subject to abuse. Mrs Bishop is the school's Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL), and other members of staff that have had DSL training include Mr Brannigan (HT) and Mrs Holliday (SEN Manager). They also all act as PREVENT Officers for the school.

## 2. POLICY STATEMENT

St. Alban's has implemented an Attendance Policy, to support improvement in attendance, in partnership with parents/carers, pupils and governors, with relevant departments within Surrey County Council (SCC) and Elmbridge Borough Council, and with other organisations who have an interest or are affected by school attendance.

Schools are required to report all absence figures to the Local Authority and the Department of Education (DfE) in addition to ensure that they are recorded on the children's annual report. Rates of absence are also taken into account by OFSTED as part of a school's inspection on the Safeguarding of Children.

The Local Authority becomes very concerned if a pupil's attendance goes below 85% and penalty notices (see Section 6) may be issued.

**All holidays during term time will be considered 'unauthorised leave of absence' and no permission will be given.** If exceptional circumstances arise and a family needs to request 'leave of absence' in term time then an 'Application for Leave of Absence in Exceptional Circumstances' must be completed (at least 2 weeks' notice should be given). This form can be obtained from the school website or the school office.

From 1<sup>st</sup> September 2013, leave of absence shall not be granted unless (i) an application had been made in advance to the Headteacher by a parent with whom the pupil normally resides, and (ii) the Headteacher considers that leave of absence should be granted due to the "**exceptional circumstances**" relating to that application. If the leave of absence is taken without prior authorisation from the school, it will be recorded as an **unauthorised absence**. The Education Welfare Service may be informed and they may issue a penalty notice or take the matter further (see Section 6 for more details).

The Governors believe these changes to the policy are essential. Regular and punctual attendance is important, without it the efforts of the best teachers and schools come to nothing. We wish to work closely with parents whose responsibility it is to ensure that their children receive full time education. Parents are primarily responsible for ensuring that their children attend school. It is our responsibility to support attendance and take seriously problems which may lead to non-attendance.

### **3. PARENTAL RESPONSIBILITY AND THE LAW**

#### **3.1 Parental Responsibility**

- Parents/carers whose children are of compulsory school age and are registered at the school, are responsible for ensuring that their children attend school regularly. If they do not do so they may be committing an offence under the Education Act 1996 and could be liable to prosecution or to be served a Penalty Notice (see Section 6).

#### **3.2 School Responsibility**

- Schools are required to report all absence figures to the Local Authority and the DfE, and to ensure they are recorded on the children's annual report. Rates of absence are also taken into account by OFSTED as part of a school's inspection.

### **4. EXPECTATIONS**

#### **4.1 The Governors' expectations of Parents/Carers**

The Governors expect that all parents/carers will:

- Encourage regular school attendance and be aware of their legal responsibilities.
- Ensure that their children arrive at school punctually.
- Ensure that they contact the school every day of the absence, for safeguarding reasons. Then send in a note of explanation when the child returns to school, failing to do this, results in your child being marked with an unexplained absence.
- Contact the school promptly whenever any problem occurs that may keep their child away.
- Notify the school immediately of any change to contact details.

#### **4.2 The Governors' expectations of the School**

The Governors expect that the school will:

- Provide a welcoming atmosphere and a safe learning environment for children.
- Keep regular and accurate records of AM and PM attendance and punctuality for all pupils.
- Follow up unexplained absences to obtain explanations from parents. Although parents may offer a reason, only the school can authorise the absence. In the case of long term or frequent absence due to medical conditions, verifications from a GP or other relevant body may be requested.
- Monitor every pupil's attendance and punctuality.
- Make initial enquiries to parents/carers of pupils who are attending irregularly, expressing the school's concerns and clarifying the school and Local Authority's expectations regarding school attendance.
- Liaise with the Education Welfare Officer (EWO) to refer cases where there are concerns around attendance. Failure by the family to comply with the planned support set by EWO may result in further actions (e.g. an application for an Education Supervision Order or court prosecution).

- Encourage good attendance and punctuality through a system of reward and recognition. Certificates will be awarded for attendance, 100% (gold) and 99% (silver) each term.

### **4.3 The Governors' expectations of the Attendance Officer**

The Governors expect that the Attendance Officer will:

- Oversee the registration process and ensure that registers are completed accurately and punctually.
- Consult and liaise with the EWO regularly.
- Share any concerns expressed about attendance with the Headteacher and the EWO.
- Initiate contact with parents/carers in cases of unexplained absence and lateness before referring to the EWO.

### **4.4 Keeping Records**

- Class Teachers will maintain the pupils' register according to the instructions printed in the register.
- In the morning, registers will be closed 30 minutes after the start of the school day.
- Registers are taken at 8.55am. Any child arriving between then and 9.25am will be marked as late (L). Registers close at 9.25am and any child arriving after this time will be marked as unauthorised absence (U) - late after close of register, which counts as a statistical absence, or coded accordingly dependent on the reason for the late arrival.
- In the afternoon, registers will be closed immediately after marking.
- Children arriving after the register has been closed (marked) will be marked late. If there is not a good reason, this may be marked as an unauthorised absence.

### **4.5 Categorisation of Absence**

Any pupil who is on the roll but not present in school must be recorded within one of these two categories:

#### **4.5.1 Authorised Absence**

The list of Authorised Absences includes:

- Genuine illness
- Genuine family crisis
- Unavoidable cause
- Other cause (as judged reasonable by the Headteacher)

This is for those students who are away from school for a reason that is deemed to be valid under the Education Act 1996.

#### **4.5.2 Unauthorised Absence**

The list of Unauthorised Absences may include:

- Holidays during term time
- Absences that have not been explained
- Pupils who arrive at school after registers are closed without a good reason
- Excessive illness without medical evidence
- Looking after other children or birthdays

## 5. REQUESTS FOR LEAVE OF ABSENCE DURING TERM TIME

### 5.1 Family Holidays

- We expect that parents/carers will book their family holidays within the school holiday dates.
- If a holiday is taken without prior authorisation of the school, it will be recorded as an unauthorised absence and the Education Welfare Service may be informed.

### 5.2 Dental and Medical Treatments

- Wherever possible, please book dental and medical appointments outside of the school day.
- When appointments during school hours are **unavoidable**, the school office should be notified in writing of the date and time of the appointment and when the child will be collected and/or returned to school and by whom.
- Evidence of the appointment may be requested.

## 6. PENALTY NOTICES

### 6.1 Penalty Notices to Address Poor Attendance at School

A Penalty Notice may be issued as an alternative to the prosecution of a parent/carer for their child's unauthorised absence from school and will be used by Surrey County Council in the following circumstances:-

- 1) A Penalty Notice can be issued in cases of **unauthorised** absence resulting in poor attendance and consideration should be given as to whether issue is likely to secure an improvement in attendance.
- 2) Additionally, Penalty Notices will be issued for one off instances of absence taken in term time without school permission in accordance with The Education (Pupil Registration)(England)(Amendment) Regulations 2013, as shown in point 7) below.
- 3) Use of Penalty Notices will be restricted to **three per pupil per academic year**.
- 4) If two penalty notices have been issued and paid in relation to a particular child, or there has been previous prosecutions, and poor attendance is an ongoing problem, except in exceptional circumstances, information will then be gathered to support a prosecution under Section 444 of the Education Act 1996 rather than a further Penalty Notice being issued.
- 5) In cases where families contain more than one poor-attending pupil, Penalty Notices may be issued to each parent for more than one child. This may not necessarily be simultaneously but the procedural timescales may overlap. Careful consideration will always be given to multiple issues within the same family.
- 6) **The issuing of a Penalty Notice for poor attendance may be considered appropriate in the following circumstances:**
  - a) **Unauthorised absences or late arrival after the close of registration, on 7 occasions in any six week period (not including school closures).** The liable parent/carer will receive a written warning from the Education Welfare Service of the possibility of a Penalty Notice being issued and given a maximum of 15 school days to effect an improvement. During this period the pupil is not expected to incur any further unauthorised absence. Where a formal warning letter has been issued to parents, the Local Authority will monitor the attendance for a maximum of 15 school days and issue a Penalty Notice by first class post if the Local Authority determine that an acceptable level of attendance has not been achieved.

- b) **Pupils, identified by Police and Education Welfare Officers engaged on Truancy Patrols, who have incurred unauthorised absence.** The liable parent/carer will receive a written warning from the Education Welfare Service of the possibility of a Penalty Notice being issued and given a maximum of 15 school days to effect an improvement. During this period the pupil is not expected to incur any further unauthorised absence. Where a formal warning letter has been issued to parents, the Local Authority will monitor the attendance for a maximum of 15 school days and issue a Penalty Notice by first class post if the Local Authority determine that an acceptable level of attendance has not been achieved.
- c) **When an excluded pupil is found in a public place during school hours within the first 5 school days of an exclusion without justifiable reason.** No written warning will be given where it can be shown that the parent/carer had previously been warned of their liability to receive a Penalty Notice.
- 7) **The issuing of a Penalty Notice for unauthorised leave of absence may be considered appropriate in the following circumstances: Unauthorised leave of absence in term time (5 days/10 sessions or more within a three month period – this need not be consecutive) without the authorisation of the school.** In the case of separated parents, the Penalty Notice will be sent to the parent requesting leave of absence and/or taking the pupil out of school. No written warning will be given where it can be shown that the parent/carer had previously been warned of their liability to receive a Penalty Notice.
- 8) Where a Penalty Notice has not been paid, in accordance with The Education (Penalty Notices) (England) Regulations 2007 and Department for Education guidance, the Local Authority is required to investigate the reasons for the absence and decide whether a prosecution is appropriate or withdraw the original Penalty Notice.

If you believe at any stage that your child's absence from school may leave you liable to receive a Penalty Notice, it is extremely important that you take action without delay to secure their regular attendance. If you have any questions or require further support to achieve an improvement, please contact the school or the Education Welfare Officer.

## 6.2 Penalty Notice relating to Exclusions

If a child is excluded from school, Section 103 of the Education and Inspections Act 2006 places a duty on parents/carers to ensure that their child is not in a public place without justifiable cause during school hours. This duty applies to the first five days of each exclusion. Failure to do so will render the parent/carer liable to a Penalty Notice. (Alternative education provision will be made available from the sixth day of any exclusion.)

## 6.3 Payment of Penalty Notices

Arrangements for payment will be detailed on the Penalty Notice.

Payment of a Penalty Notice discharges the parent/carer liability for the period in question and they cannot subsequently be prosecuted under other enforcement powers for the period covered by the Penalty Notice.

**Payment of a Penalty Notice within 21 calendar days is £60 and payment after this time but within 28 calendar days is £120.**

The Local Authority retains any revenue from Penalty Notices to cover enforcement costs (collection or prosecuting in the event of non-payment).

Advice and support is available from an Education Welfare Officer by contacting your local Education Office as follows :-

North West - Tel: 01483 518130

South West - Tel: 01483 517179

North East - Tel: 01372 833588

South East - Tel: 01737 737777

## 6.4 Non-Payment of Penalty Notices

Unless withdrawn, non-payment of a Penalty Notice will trigger the prosecution process under the provisions of Section 444 Education Act 1996.

The parent is not prosecuted for the non-payment of the Penalty Notice but for the offence to which the Penalty Notice relates.

The period of the offence will be defined as:

- a) In the case of unauthorised leave of absence: (see section 6.1.7) **the time the pupil was absent from school without authorisation.**
- b) In the case of poor attendance: **up to 6 months prior to the issue of the summons.**
- c) In the case of a child being identified on a truancy patrol: **up to 6 months prior to the issue of the summons.**
- d) In the case of exclusion: **for any occasion when the child was seen in a public place without justification during school hours.**

## 7. CHANGING SCHOOLS

It is important that if families decide to send the child in their care to a different school that they inform the Headteacher as soon as possible. A pupil will not be removed from the school roll until the following information has been received:

- The dates the pupil will be leaving the school and starting the next
- The address of the new school
- The new home address, if it is known
- The Headteacher has been consulted and informed in writing

School staff will then confirm with the parents the leaving dates for their child. Following this date the pupil's school records will be sent on to the new school as soon as possible and within ten days of the child leaving. The Pupil Tracking Office at County Hall will also be sent appropriate information within 10 days of anyone leaving or joining the school. If no notification is received from a new school then the child's name will not be removed from the school roll until after an investigation by Education Welfare.

St. Alban's will not take a child off roll until the Headteacher is properly informed and the child has started at a new school.

## 8. MONITORING ABSENCE

- Parents are requested to inform the school by phone on every day of the absence, and then send in a note of explanation when the child returns to school.
- The Attendance Officer transfers information on a weekly basis, from the registers on to the attendance programme on the computer.
- The Attendance Officer will send a letter to the parents/carers requesting information regarding the absence, if no reason has been given to the school. A record of this is kept to ensure that all absences are accounted for.
- If a child is absent for 10 days with no explanation and no contact from parents, the school has a statutory duty to refer to the EWO (and/or relevant agencies) and that a period of unauthorised absence could lead to a child losing their place.

## 9. MONITORING LATENESS

- It is essential that pupils arrive to school on time. Pupil's achievement is directly influenced by attendance and punctuality and suffers when attendance and punctuality are unsatisfactory. St. Alban's aims to encourage all pupils to achieve their potential through regular attendance and punctuality.
- Parents are encouraged to get their children to school for 8.45am (children are lined up and ready for lessons at 8.55am).
- Registers are taken at 8.55am. Any child arriving between then and 9.25am will be marked as late (L). Registers close at 9.25am and any child arriving after this time will be marked as unauthorised absence (U) - late after close of register, which counts as a statistical absence, or coded accordingly dependent on the reason for the late arrival.
- Children and parents will not be permitted to enter the playground after 8.55am, after this time parents will need to drop their children off at the school office and record their child's name in the late book, in case of a fire drill.
- Poor attendance and punctuality is monitored and followed up swiftly.
- Teachers and office staff will inform the Headteacher of any concerns that they may have regarding children who are often late.
- If a pupil is late on 5 occasions in a half-term, then the parents may be invited to meet with the Headteacher or Deputy to discuss the issues surrounding their child's punctuality.
- If lateness persists then the Education Welfare Officer (EWO) may become involved.

## 10. Guide to Terms & Abbreviations

<b>Abbreviation</b>	<b>Explanation</b>
<b>DfE</b>	Department for Education
<b>DSL</b>	Designated Safeguarding Lead
<b>EWO</b>	Education Welfare Officer
<b>EWS</b>	Education Welfare Service
<b>GP</b>	General Practitioner (family doctor)
<b>HT</b>	Headteacher
<b>L</b>	Late
<b>LA</b>	Local Authority
<b>OFSTED</b>	The Office for Standards in Education
<b>PN</b>	Penalty Notice
<b>SCC</b>	Surrey County Council
<b>U</b>	Unauthorised absence