

# ST VINCENT DE PAUL CATHOLIC PRIMARY SCHOOL

*“We are called to be the hands and face of Jesus as we learn  
love and grow together”*



## ATTENDANCE POLICY

**Based on**  
Department for Education guidance  
(November 2016)

Reviewed: Summer 2017  
Next review: Summer 2018

Signature:

Chair of Governors

Ratified at Full Governing Body meeting

Date ratified: 16<sup>th</sup> May 2017

## **ATTENDANCE POLICY**

### **Policy Aims**

St Vincent de Paul School aims to maximise attendance rates in order to ensure that all students are able to take the fullest advantage of the learning experiences available to them.

### **Statutory Framework**

Under Section 199 of the 1993 Education Act, a pupil is required to attend regularly at the school where he/she is a registered pupil.

The school is obliged by law to differentiate between authorised and unauthorised absence. A letter or telephone message from a parent does not in itself authorise an absence. Only if the school is satisfied as to the validity of the explanation offered by the letter/message will the absence be authorised (see below).

### **Parents**

Parents are responsible for ensuring that their child attends school regularly, punctually, properly dressed and equipped and in a fit condition to learn. If a child is prevented for any reason from attending, or is late, parents are requested to notify the school by 9.30am. A pupil's absence from school must be considered as unauthorised until a satisfactory explanation is forthcoming from the parent.

Staff will endeavour to encourage good attendance and punctuality through personal example. Attendance is the responsibility of all school staff. The school will employ a range of strategies (see below) to encourage good attendance and punctuality and will promptly investigate all absenteeism, liaising closely with parents. Staff will respond to all absenteeism firmly and consistently. Parents will be informed by the school in the first instance if children are late.

### **Registration**

Registers will be called promptly at 9:00 am and at 1:15 pm and will be marked in accordance with the list of symbols as set out in the register form sheet. Class teachers will take registers in each of their classes.

Registers will close at 9:10 am and at 1:20 pm. If a pupil fails to arrive before the registers close, he/she will be marked as 'absent'. Pupils who arrive after the registers have closed should report to the general office and sign the School Late Book. (The secretary will subsequently amend the register entry to read 'late'). If a pupil is persistently late, the Headteacher will contact the parents.

Parents are reminded that if a child arrives in school after the registers have closed and an acceptable explanation is not forthcoming, the pupil has to be recorded as 'unauthorised absent' for that session.

The Headteacher in consultation with the Attendance Improvement Officer will inspect all registers each half-term in order to ensure that correct procedures are being followed. The new attendance software enables the secretary to maintain very up-to-date records. The secretary reports half termly to the Headteacher on attendance.

### **Authorised/Unauthorised Absence**

The school will rightly prioritise attendance. Absences will not be granted during term-time and will only be authorised in exceptional circumstances.

The decision to authorise the pupil's absence is wholly at the Headteacher's discretion based on their assessment and merits of each request.

If an event can be reasonably scheduled outside of term-time then it would not be normal to authorise absence for such an event- holidays are therefore not considered 'exceptional circumstances'.

Absence can be **authorised** if:

- The pupil was absent with leave (defined as 'leave granted by any person authorised to do so by the governing body or proprietor of the school').
- The pupil was ill or prevented from attending by any unavoidable cause.
- Absences to visit seriously-ill relatives or for a bereavement of a close family member are usually considered to amount to 'exceptional circumstances', but for the funeral service only, not for extended leave '
- Absences for important religious observations are often taken into account but only for the ceremony and travelling time, again, not for extended leave. This is intended for one-off situations rather than regular or recurring events.
- Absence for the families of service personnel will be taken into account if they are returning from long operational tours that prevent contact during scheduled holiday time.
- The pupil is visiting another school for a legitimate reason.
- The pupil is attending an approved off-site activity or is receiving special off-site tuition.
- The pupil is attending a Pupil Referral Unit.
- The pupil is participating in a school approved public performance.
- The pupil is involved in an **exceptional** special occasion (e.g. if a pupil is attending the graduation of an older sibling).
- There is a life threatening or critical illness of a parent or sibling of the pupil.

Absence should be **unauthorised** if:

- No explanation is forthcoming.
- The school is dissatisfied with the explanation.
- The pupil stays at home to mind the house or to look after siblings (the guidance suggests that absence in such cases should only be granted in exceptional circumstances).
- The pupil is absent for **unexceptional** special occasions (e.g. a birthday).
- The pupil is away from school on a family holiday.

The Head Teacher will the decision on whether authorised and will do so only if there is a genuine, exceptional and urgent reason for a child to be absent during term time. If a child is taken out of school without the Head Teachers authorisation, it will be recorded as unauthorised absence.

### **Holidays**

The school believes that holidays during term time have a negative effect on progress and learning. Therefore parents are strongly urged to avoid taking family holidays during term time.

Department for Education guidance states that holidays which are taken for the following reasons should **not** be authorised:

- availability of cheap holidays;
- availability of the desired accommodation;
- poor weather experienced in school holiday periods;
- overlap with beginning or end of term
- holidays won in competitions;
- visiting relatives living in different parts of the country or abroad; and
- family weddings requiring longer than one day.

This is a general list and not exhaustive.

All parents requesting absence from school will be required to complete an absence form and may have to meet with the Headteacher **prior** to any absence. Applications should be made before leave is arranged as absences will not be granted retrospectively.

### **Procedures for Following up Absence**

If a child is absent from school and the school has not received a phone call or other message from the parent/carer, a first day absence call will be made. The Attendance Officer follows this system: Phone parents' contact number(s). Repeat this during the first morning of absence if no response. Phone emergency contact number(s) to get an up-to-date contact number for the parent/carer and update the school system accordingly. Speak to the parents face-to-face or by phone the next day and establish reasons for absence and update contact numbers. The parent/carer is asked to provide a reason as to why the child is not in school. The absence reason is recorded next to the child's name on the first day absence sheet and this is filed in the absence folder. The Attendance Officer must establish a reason for every absence. No absence should be left on the system as an 'N' (no reason given) code. If the Attendance Officer has not been able to contact parents after 2 days then the absence is recorded as unauthorised and other agencies informed as appropriate.

- If a pupil is persistently (or intermittently) absent, the Headteacher will write to the parents and invite them to attend a meeting at school.
- If a pupil is persistently absent (or late) and the school's efforts to effect an improvement have been unsuccessful, the situation will be referred to the Attendance and Pupil Support Service during his/her consultation visit. This could result in a fixed penalty notice (Subsection (1) of Section 23 of the Anti Social Behaviour Act) or legal action (Education Act 1996).
- Notes from parents will be kept in the office. All messages regarding absence/lateness are to be recorded in the absence book.

### **Strategies for Promoting Attendance**

- St Vincent de Paul School will offer an environment in which pupils feel valued and welcomed. The school's ethos must demonstrate that pupils feel that their presence in school is important, that they will be missed when they are absent/late and that follow up action will be taken.
- A broad and balanced curriculum will be offered to all pupils. Every effort will be made to ensure that learning objectives are matched to pupils' needs.
- Best weekly attendance (class) will be rewarded.
- Attendance data will be regularly collected and analysed in order to help identify patterns, set targets, correlate attendance with achievement, and support and inform policy/practice.
- Class attendance will be published regularly in the school newsletter.

- Good attendance awards will be presented at the end of each term and school year.
- Pupils whose attendance is a cause of concern will be set targets for improvement. The class teacher will monitor and review these targets.
- Parents will be regularly reminded (via newsletters, the school prospectus, parents' evenings, etc) of the importance of good attendance.
- Pupils who are absent through sickness for any extended period of time will (when appropriate) have work sent home to them.
- The Headteacher will make an annual report to the school's governing body on attendance matters and will include attendance data on the termly reports to governors.
- Review progress towards attendance target annually.
- Report data termly.
- The Headteacher will, when appropriate, liaise with other agencies - Educational Psychology Service, Social Services, Child and Family Guidance, etc - when this may serve to support and assist pupils who are experiencing attendance difficulties.
- The Headteacher will have regular meetings with the school's Attendance Improvement Officer in order to identify and support those pupils who are experiencing attendance difficulties.

### **Children Missing Education**

**The school will follow Department for Education guidance on children missing from education.**

The Department for Education has **updated guidance** for local authorities and schools to help children who are missing education get back into it. The updates reflect recent changes to the Education (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2006 and follow the **consultation on children missing education** in January 2016.

The main changes from September 2016 are:

- All schools (including academies and independent schools) must notify their local authority when they are about to remove a pupil's name from the school admission register under any of the **fifteen grounds listed in the regulations**. This duty does not apply when a pupil's name is removed from the admission register at standard transition points – when the pupil has completed the final year of education normally provided by that school – unless the local authority requests that such returns are to be made.
- When removing a pupil's name, the notification to the local authority must include:
  - the full name of the pupil,
  - the full name and address of any parent with whom the pupil normally resides,
  - at least one telephone number of the parent,
  - the pupil's future address and destination school, if applicable, and
  - the ground in regulation 8 under which the pupil's name is to be removed from the admission register

- Schools must make reasonable enquiries to establish the whereabouts of the child jointly with the local authority, before deleting the pupil's name from the register, if the deletion is for one of the following reasons:
  - A pupil has been granted leave of absence exceeding ten school days for the purpose of a holiday in accordance with regulation and has failed to attend schools within the ten school days immediately following the expiry period for the leave (and this is not for reasons of sickness or unavoidable absence).
  - The pupil has been continuously absent from the school for a period of not less than twenty school days and the absence has not been authorised at any point during that time and is not due to sickness or unavoidable absence.
- All schools must also notify the local authority within five days of adding a pupil's name to the admission register at a non-standard transition point. The notification must include all the details contained in the admission register for the new pupil. This duty does not apply when a pupil's name is entered in the admission register at a standard transition point – at the start of the first year of education normally provided by that school – unless the local authority requests that such returns are to be made.
- When adding a pupil's name, the notification to the local authority must include all the details contained in the admission register for the new pupil.