

# Sacred Heart Catholic Primary School



## WHOLE SCHOOL ATTENDANCE POLICY

Originally written:	3 <sup>rd</sup> November 2015
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Agreed by:	Teaching and Learning Committee
Signature of Chair of Governors Committee:	K. Gaskell J. Moffat
Headteacher	C. Mason
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Date of next review:	November 2016

## Our School Mission Statement

*To live as a Christian family inspired by the values of Jesus.*

*To celebrate and develop every child's full potential through a rich and enjoyable learning environment.*

*To promote and encourage an effective partnership between home, school, parish and community.*

### **RATIONALE**

The Governors and Staff at our school seek to ensure that all our pupils receive a full time education which maximises opportunities for each pupil to realise his/her potential and embraces the concept of equal opportunities for all.

Our school will strive to provide a welcoming, caring environment, where all our pupils feel wanted and secure.

We will work with pupils and their families to ensure that each pupil attends school regularly and punctually by:

- reminding parents regularly of their responsibility in ensuring that their child attends school regularly and punctually
- making parents aware of the impact of poor attendance on academic progress.

Attendance of less than 96% (i.e. 9.5 days lost from a 190 school day academic year) is known to compromise pupil attainment.

For a child to reach their full educational achievement, a high level of school attendance is essential. We will consistently work towards a goal of 100% attendance for all children. Every opportunity will be used to convey to pupils and their parents or carers the importance of regular and punctual attendance.

School attendance is subject to various Education laws and this school attendance policy is written to reflect these laws and the guidance produced by the Department for Education (DfE). These requirements are contained within:

- The Education Act 1996
- The Education (Pupil Registration) Regulations 2006 and subsequent amendments in 2010, 2011 and 2013.

Governors are legally bound to set an attendance rate target each year and the school will work hard to achieve that challenging result so that our pupils have the maximum opportunity to fulfill their potential. These will reflect both national and Wigan attendance targets.

This policy will contain within it the procedures that the school will use to meet its attendance targets.

The school will review its systems for improving attendance at regular intervals to ensure that it is achieving its set goals.

## THE PARTNERSHIP BETWEEN PARENTS AND SCHOOL

Parents of children of compulsory school age are legally required to ensure that they receive full time education. Parents are primarily responsible for ensuring their children attend and stay at school.

It is the school's responsibility to support good attendance and to offer support where problems may lead to non-attendance.

Our Home-School Agreement reflects our belief that pupils must attend regularly and punctually so that they can do their best. The Home-School Agreement will be reviewed during the Autumn Term 2015.

The school's 'open door' policy encourages parents to discuss any difficulties with attendance with class teachers, the Children and Families Support Worker and the Headteacher.

Parents must make sure that children arrive at classroom by 8.55am at the latest, appropriately dressed in school uniform and ready to learn. The doors are opened to receive pupils from 8.45am each day.

Parents must work with school to help educate their children. This includes encouraging a respect for the school and the staff.

## SCHOOL PROCEDURES

Any child who is absent from school at the morning or afternoon registration period must have their absence recorded as being authorised, unauthorised or as an approved educational activity [attendance out of school]. Only the Headteacher or a member of staff acting on their behalf can authorise absence. If there is no known reason for the absence at registration, then the absence must be recorded in the first instance as unauthorised.

## LATENESS

Morning registration will take place at the start of school at **8.55am**. The registers will remain open for 35 minutes. Any pupil arriving after this time will be marked as having an unauthorised absence unless there is an acceptable explanation. In cases for example, where the absence at registration was for attending an early morning medical appointment, the appropriate authorised absence code will be entered.

Pupils who are consistently late are disrupting not only their own education, but also that of others. Where persistent lateness gives cause for concern, a meeting with the Headteacher will be arranged to discuss what support can be offered.

The afternoon registration will be at **1.05pm** for Early Years and KS1 and **1.20pm** for KS2. The registers will close after 5 minutes.

Pupils arriving after the start of school but before the end of the registration period will be treated for statistical purposes, as present, but will be coded as late before registers close.

## FIRST DAY ABSENCE

If a child is absent, parents/carers should call the school on the first day stating the reason for the absence. A note should then be sent into school on the day the child returns explaining the absence.

If no contact is made by parents/carers explaining the absence on the first day **by 10.00am** the school will send a text message to remind the parent/carer to contact school with an explanation for absence. This will help to avoid children going missing without parents' and school's knowledge.

Where the parent/carer does not contact the school the Children and Families Support Worker will try to contact the parents/carers to try to establish the reason for absence. The Children and Families Support Worker will continue to try to make contact until the date of return. If after two days, no contact has been made with the family to establish the reason for absence, then a letter will be sent from school.

Depending upon school's knowledge of the family and their circumstances, the Children and Families Support worker may carry out a home visit to try and establish the reason for absence. In some circumstances, e.g. a child on a Child Protection Plan, the Children and Families Support Worker may also contact the allocated social worker and carry out a joint visit.

If, after the child returns to school no explanation of absence is given by the parents/carers, the school will write again. The absence will be recorded as unauthorised after 2 weeks if no explanation can be obtained.

## **MONITORING OF ATTENDANCE**

Regular register checks are carried out by the Children and Families Support Worker.

Parents and Carers will be kept informed of their child's attendance record on a termly basis or more often if there is a problem. Parents and carers will receive a letter informing them of their child's attendance as follows:

<b>Letter</b>	<b>Attendance Level</b>	<b>Comments</b>
Green letter	Attendance is above 96%	Well done
Amber letter	Attendance falls between 95.9% and 90%	Attendance levels are being to cause concern Our Children and Families Support Worker may contact you to discuss any support which may be required
Red letter	Attendance has fallen below 89.9%	Attendance has fallen into the persistent absence category. The Children and Families Support Worker will liaise with the Gateway Service who may contact the parents and carers by letter, do a home visit or invite parents/carers to a formal meeting.

## **PERSISTENT ABSENCE (DEFINED IN LEGISLATION AS 10% OR MORE ABSENCES)**

A child who is persistently absent is at risk of failing to achieve their full potential. In order to address and reduce the percentage of pupils who are classed as persistent absentees, the DFE has increased the persistent absent indicator to 10%. This means that from September 2015 any pupil with less than 90% attendance will be deemed to be persistently absence. It is the schools responsibility to work with parents and carers to reduce incidents of persistent absence. It is parent's responsibility to ensure that their child attends school every day, unless they are ill.

The impact of poor attendance on achievement is well documented. Over a five year period, a child with 90% attendance has missed the equivalent of half a year of education. The following table shows how a child could be a persistent absentee:

<b>Over the school year</b>	<b>10% of school missed</b>
Half Term Sept – Oct	7 half day sessions
Full term up to Dec	14 half day sessions
Up to Feb half term	20 half-day sessions
Up to the end of the Spring Term	25 half day sessions
Up to May half term	31 half day sessions
Full year	38 half day sessions

## **FREQUENT ABSENCE**

It is the responsibility of Headteacher, Children and Families Support Worker and the admin officer with responsibility for attendance, to be aware of and bring attention to, any emerging attendance concerns.

In cases where a pupil begins to develop a pattern of absences, the school will try to resolve the problem with the parent/s or carer. If this is unsuccessful the school may refer to the School Health Adviser / School Nurse etc, if the problem appears to be a medical one. The school may request written evidence from a medical practitioner before illnesses are authorised where a pupil's absence record is causing concern. In other cases the school will seek advice from the school's link Gateway Worker.

In cases where attendance falls below 90% a letter will be sent to the parent/s or carer to explain that a referral may be made to the Gateway Service if there is no improvement in attendance.

In cases where any pupil is absent without an explanation for more than 5 days the family/carers will be contacted by the Children and Families Support Worker. The schools link Gateway Worker visits the school on a regular basis and any concerns regarding attendance issues will be discussed. The school will include details of the action that they have taken.

Our school will work closely with the Gateway Service in order to promote and improve punctuality and attendance.

## **A WELCOME BACK**

It is important that on return from an absence that all pupils are made to feel welcome. This should include ensuring that the pupil is helped to catch up on missed work and brought up to date on any information that has been passed to the other pupils.

## **ABSENCE NOTES**

Notes received from parents explaining absence should be kept for the remainder of the academic year. If there are attendance concerns about the pupil, that may require further investigation, then the notes may need to be retained for a longer period.

## PROMOTING ATTENDANCE

There are several different ways in which attendance is promoted and communicated to parents and carers. These include:

- School Prospectus: this has information regarding the importance of regular and punctual attendance.
- Home–School Agreement: this underlines the importance of regular attendance and makes it clear that this is the shared responsibility of school, home and (where appropriate) the child (to be updated during the Autumn Term 2015)
- The ‘Heart Beat’ information sheet is sent home on a regular basis to remind parents of their responsibilities and the impact of poor attendance.
- Parents are informed of the procedures followed by Wigan schools relating to requests for absence (other than sickness) in term time. Research suggests that children taken out of school may never catch up with the learning they have missed and this may affect test results and can be particularly harmful in the run up to end of year examinations. Children who struggle with Literacy and Numeracy may find it even harder to cope on their return. Younger children may find it more difficult to renew friendships with classmates.

## LEAVE IN TERM TIME

Term time holidays and extended leave are not allowed as a rule and parents/carers are discouraged from arranging holidays or extended leave of absence during term time.

The school will only grant leave of absence for family holidays in **exceptional circumstances**. Below is a quotation directly from the Department for Education Circular:

*'Amendments to the 2006 regulations **remove** references to family holiday and extended leave as well as the statutory threshold of ten school days. The amendments make clear that Headteachers **may not** grant **any** leave of absence during term time unless there are **exceptional** circumstances.'*

Clearly there are many situations which may constitute exceptional circumstances, but as a generality we interpret 'exceptional' in this context as being of unique and significant emotional, educational or spiritual value to the child, which outweighs the loss of teaching time. It will be important to look at the whole situation in making decisions about any individual request. The **normality** will be that requests for holidays in term time will be **refused**.

Taking a holiday during school term because it would be cheaper, better weather or tagging it on to the beginning or end of a school break is not in the DfE's (Department for Education) view considered to be a 'special circumstance.'

Parents/carers must complete the 'Request for Leave form' in good time (at least 6 weeks before) for permission to take their child out of school during term time. Parents are asked to make it very clear why the circumstances may be considered to be 'exceptional'.

If the request is denied school will inform the parent/carer of the reason by letter. If the parents/carers choose to continue with the planned leave it will be taken as an **unauthorised absence**.

Parents who request leave for pupils to take part in recognised and approved activities e.g. Instrumental or Dancing Examinations, may be granted leave if the child's attendance for the previous and present academic years is above 96%.

## PENALTY NOTICES

Section 23 of the Anti-Social Behaviour Act 2003 empowers designated LA officers, Head teachers and the Police to issue penalty notices in cases of unauthorised absences from school. The Education (Penalty Notices) (England) Regulations 2004 came in to force on 27<sup>th</sup> February 2004.

A Penalty Notice may be issued in the following circumstances:

If a minimum of 10 sessions or 5 school days of unauthorised absence are taken during the current term for:

- Overt truancy
- Parentally-condoned absences
- Holidays taken in term-time which the school has not authorised
- Excessive delayed return from extended holidays without prior school agreement
- Persistent late arrival at school (after the Register has closed at 9.30am)

## CHILDREN AT RISK OF MISSING EDUCATION

A pupil will be deleted from the Admission register where they:-

- Have been taken out of school and are being educated outside the school system
- Have ceased to attend school and no longer live within reasonable distance of the school at which they are registered
- Have a medical condition certified by the school medical officer that the pupil is unlikely to be in a fit state of health to attend school
- Are in custody for a period of more than four months due to a fixed court order and are believed not to be returning to school
- Have been permanently excluded

The LA must be informed in advance of the deletion.

## ATTENDANCE TARGETS

The school will set attendance targets each year. A system for analysing performance towards the targets will be established and a senior school manager will be responsible for overseeing this work.

Our school attendance is judged against other schools nationally and evaluated against National benchmarks. The following information relates to attendance data from the academic year 2013 – 2014 (most recent data available currently)

	All Primary Schools	All schools	Sacred Heart (2015)
Overall absence	3.8%	4.4%	4.75%
Authorised absence	3.1%	3.5%	3.8%
Unauthorised absence	0.7%	1.0%	0.9%

This data shows that Sacred Heart has much to achieve in ensuring that pupils attend school every day.

## ATTENDANCE AWARDS

The school will use the following system to reward pupils who have good or improving attendance.

- If everyone in a class achieves 100% in a week, the admin officer responsible for attendance will send that class a certificate congratulating them; class teachers can use this as an opportunity to praise the children for their good attendance

- The class with the best attendance each week will be awarded our attendance bear at Celebration Assembly
- Any children who achieve 100% attendance for a full term will receive a certificate at Celebration Assembly
- Any child who achieves 100% attendance for a full year will receive a certificate and prize at the end of the year.

## THE REGISTRATION SYSTEM

The School uses a computerised system for keeping the school attendance records. The following national codes will be used to record attendance information.

CODE	DESCRIPTION	MEANING
/	Present (AM)	Present
\	Present (PM)	Present
B	Educated off site (NOT Dual registration)	Approved Education Activity
C	Authorised Circumstances leave of absence in exceptional circumstances (not covered by another appropriate code/description)	Authorised absence
D	Dual registration (i.e. pupil attending other establishment)	e.g. where a pupil attends a Pupil Referral Unit, hospital school, special school on a temporary basis
E	Excluded (no alternative provision made)	Authorised absence
F	Extended family holiday (agreed)	Authorised absence
G	Family holiday (NOT agreed <u>or</u> days in excess of agreement)	Unauthorised absence
H	Family holiday (agreed in exceptional circumstances)	Authorised absence
I	Illness (NOT medical or dental etc. appointments)	Authorised absence
J	Interview	Approved Education Activity
L	Late (before registers closed)	Present
M	Medical/Dental appointments	Authorised absence
N	No reason yet provided for absence	Unauthorised absence
O	Unauthorised absence with no satisfactory reason given	Unauthorised absence
P	Approved sporting activity	Approved Education Activity
R	Religious observance	Authorised absence
S	Study leave (only for Y11 pupils during exams)	Authorised absence
T	Traveller absence	Authorised absence
U	Late (after registers closed)	Unauthorised absence
V	Educational visit or trip	Approved Education Activity
W	Work experience	Approved Education Activity
X	Un-timetabled sessions for non-compulsory school-age pupils	Not counted in possible attendances
Y	Enforced closure	Not counted in possible attendances
Z	Pupil not yet on roll	Not counted in possible attendances
#	School closed to pupils	Not counted in possible attendances

Registers by law must be kept for at least 3 years. Computer registers must be printed out at least once a month and bound into annual volumes.

## Register Security

The registers must be safely stored. Any paper registers are stored in class folders and returned to the office after each registration period.

## Contents of Attendance Register

Attendance registers are taken at the start of each session. On each occasion the register must record whether every pupil is present or absent using the codes / or O. This is the responsibility of the adult leading the session.

The Admin staff will then (in consultation with the Headteacher and Children and Families Support Worker) up-date the system with the appropriate code which will include a wide variety of codes. In all cases it is essential to determine the following:

- Present or
- Attending an approved educational activity or
- Absent or
- Unable to attend due to exceptional circumstances

Our school follows up any absences in order to:

- Ascertain the reason
- Ensure the proper safeguarding action is taken
- Identify whether or not the absence is approved
- Identify the correct code to use before entering it on the electronic register

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

1. Unauthorised Absence
2. Authorised Absence
3. Approved Educational Activity

This is defined as:

### 1. Unauthorised absence

This is for those pupils where no reason has been provided, or whose absence is deemed to be without valid reason.

### 2. Authorised absence

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

### 3. Approved Educational Activity

This covers types of supervised educational activity undertaken off site but with the approval of the school. (Note Pupils recorded in this category are deemed to be present for attendance returns purposes.)

This would include:

- Work experience placements
- Field trips and educational visits
- Sporting activities
- Link courses or approved education off site
- Most types of dual registration

## Conclusion

Pupils who attend school every day make maximum progress and achieve the best possible outcomes. It is essential that every pupil is given the best opportunities in life and that an effective relationship between home and school is promoted and achieved.

**Everyone is working together so that we can meet our attendance target of 96% for September 15 – July 16.**