



## St. Paul's Catholic School

### Attendance Policy

#### Philosophy

Each pupil in our care has God given talents by having high attendance levels pupils are able to utilise their talents to the fullest.

*"No one lights a lamp and covers it with a bowl or puts it under a bed instead, he puts it on the lamp stand so that people will see the light as they come in"*

*Luke 8:16*

This is a successful school and your child plays their part in making it so. We aim to create an environment which enables and encourages all members of the community to do the best that is possible. 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.

It is very important therefore that you make sure that your child attends regularly and this Policy sets out how together we will achieve this.

#### Regular attendance is important

There are strong links between achievement and enjoyment of school with a high level of attendance. To make the most of the opportunities that St Paul's can provide it is essential that you attend school on a regular basis. Any absence affects the pattern of a child's schooling and regular absence will seriously affect their learning. Any pupil's absence disrupts teaching routines so may affect the learning of others in the same class.

Ensuring your child's regular attendance at school is your legal responsibility and permitting absence from school without a good reason creates an offence in law and may result in prosecution.

#### AIMS:

It is recognised that

- All pupils of statutory school age have an equal right to access an education in accordance with the National Curriculum regulations.
- No pupil should be deprived of their opportunity to receive an education that meets their needs and personal development.
- In the first instance, it is the responsibility of pupils and their parents to ensure attendance at school as required by law.

- Situations beyond the control of pupils and/or parents may impact on attendance. We will, with the agreement and support of parents, work in partnership with external agencies to resolve these.
- The vast majority of pupils want to attend school to learn, to socialise with their peer group and to prepare themselves fully to take their place in society as well-rounded and responsible citizens with the skills, knowledge and understanding necessary to contribute to the life and culture of their communities.

#### **EXPECTATIONS:**

In cases where a problem may appear to be emerging, a member of the pastoral team will either telephone the families concerned or invite parents to meetings about attendance discreetly, to discuss the situation with them. Advice will be sought from the Education Welfare Service if necessary. If there are Child Protection concerns then the Milton Keynes Council Child Protection Procedures should be followed immediately.

#### **We expect the following from all our pupils:**

- That they attend school regularly.
- That they will arrive on time and be appropriately prepared for the day.
- That they will tell a member of staff about any problem or reason that may prevent them from attending school.

#### **We expect the following from parents:**

- To ensure their children attend school regularly and punctually.
- To ensure that they contact the school as soon as is reasonably practical whenever their child is unable to attend.
- To ensure that their children arrive in school well prepared for the school day and to check that they have done their homework.
- To contact the school in confidence whenever any problem occurs that may affect their child's performance in school.

#### **Parents and pupils can expect the following from school:**

- Regular, efficient and accurate recording of attendance.
- Early contact with parents when a pupil fails to attend school without providing good reason.
- Immediate and confidential action on any problem notified to us. (Confidential means that the member of staff notified will not disclose that information to anybody without the consent of the student or their parent, unless in the case of child protection issues).

### **ENCOURAGING ATTENDANCE THROUGH GOOD PRACTICE AND REWARDS**

#### **Attendance can be encouraged in the following ways:**

- Accurate completion of the registers at the beginning of each session.
- Attendance checks at appropriate times.
- Celebrating good attendance and improvements in attendance and punctuality.
- Identifying and supporting pupils who have attendance problems.
- Establishing a mechanism for working with those parents who are concerned that their children may be experiencing difficulty in attending school.
- The efficient use of computerised registration systems provides valuable, year group, class and individual attendance data which enables speedy analysis and timely responses by the school.

## **RESPONDING TO NON-ATTENDANCE:**

### **When a pupil does not attend, the school needs to respond effectively.**

- If a note or telephone call is not received from parents, the parents will be contacted on the first day of absence by telephone or by letter if parents are not on the telephone.
- Where there is no response, a second letter will be sent after three days of unexplained absence, or there may be a visit from a member of the school staff or the Education Welfare Officer (EWO) where the Service is already involved.
- Where non-attendance continues, the case will be discussed with the Education Welfare Officer for the school and further action planned. This may in appropriate cases, result in a referral to the EWS.
- After 10 days, unless other action is planned, the parents will be invited to attend a meeting in school. This meeting will include the appropriate staff, EWO, parent and pupil and will aim to identify and solve the problems that are preventing the pupil from attending school.
- If there is no improvement, then the case will be discussed again with the Education Welfare Officer with a view to a formal referral being made to the Education Welfare Service, if one has not already been made at an earlier stage. If a referral had already been made then the case will be reviewed and further action planned.

### **Pupil Absence**

Parents are asked to inform school on each day of absence before 9.15am if their child is either ill or if they know that their son or daughter will be arriving late. Once registration has closed (9.15 am Monday and Friday, 9.05 am Tuesday, Wednesday and Thursday) staff have been instructed to contact the parent of any child for whom we have not received a reason for them being absent from school. When a pupil is late into school then it is important they sign in on arrival. If pupils do not follow this procedure then they will not receive an attendance mark for the session and will be recorded as being absent. It is essential that our contact details are kept up to date and ask that if parents either change address or phone numbers then these details are given in at the General Office so our records can be amended. Where we are unable to speak to parents on their home telephone line then we will attempt to contact them on the day contact telephone number they have provided. In most cases this will be their place of work.

### **Absence Notes**

We also request that a note be sent into school with the pupil on the first day of their return to school. This should state clearly the dates the pupil was out of school and the reason for the absence itself. This note may appear a duplication of information but it helps to prevent pupils excusing their own absence over the phone and taking advantage of the system. These letters should either be posted or given in at Student Reception. Where we have been unable to contact parents by phone then a letter will be generated where there are absences for which no reason has been received. Parents will be informed at this point that if we do not hear from them within seven days then we have no other alternative but to unauthorise the absence on our records.

### **Authorising Absence**

It is the school that authorises absence. Parents provide a reason for children being absent from school. It is at the discretion of the school as to whether this reason is acceptable or not. Authorised absence is where the school has either given approval in advance for a pupil to be away or has accepted an explanation offered afterwards as a satisfactory reason for absence. An absence can only be authorised for the following reasons;

- Illness of the student concerned. (Not of the parent or another family member)
- A medical or dental appointment.
- For the Purpose of religious observation.
- It is an educational event / trip
- Family bereavements

- Family holiday (up to two weeks) but see notes below.
- Medical and dental appointments where proof is available.
- Fixed term exclusion
- Permanent exclusion until removed from roll or re-instated.

It is important that you understand the circumstances when leave in term time will **not** be agreed by the school – such as:

- When a pupil is just starting the school. This is very important as your child needs to settle into their new environment as quickly as possible.
- Immediately before and during assessment periods
- When a pupil's attendance record already includes any level of unauthorised absence.

Absences should **not** be authorised under the following circumstances.

- Shopping trips
- Holidays in term time where the permission of the school has not been given
- Minding the house or looking after siblings.
- Lateness if registration is missed without explanation.
- Medical appointments that cannot be verified.
- No reason given.
- School staff have cause to believe that the note is not genuine or not valid.
- Looking after or moving house.
- Birthdays.
- Day trips.
- Holidays where no notification has been received prior to the event.
- Getting up late or being too tired.
- Family problems. (more information would be required)

Parents may be asked to provide a doctor's note if their child is regularly absent from school due to illness.

### **Holidays**

We advise parents strongly that holidays should not be taken in term time, it will affect your child's schooling. There is no automatic entitlement in law to time off in school time to go on holiday.

Any period of leave taken without the agreement of the school, or in excess of that agreed, will be classed as unauthorised and may attract sanctions such as a Penalty Notice.

If parents chose to take their children out of school for a holiday they should seek approval for this absence before booking the holiday itself. Holiday forms can be obtained from the General Office. They should be completed and returned directly to the General Office (not via Form Tutors/ registers) not less than four weeks prior to the period of absence requested for approval.

A letter from the Pastoral Manager will be sent out by post informing parents of the schools decision as to whether the absence is to be approved or not.

- The school will be unable to approve absence if:
- Students have not attained 94% attendance. (Where applications are made between June and December the school will refer to attendance figures from the previous full academic year)
- Intended holiday dates coincide with internal or external examinations. (Please note that no authorisation of absence will be ade for holidays of students in years 11,12 and 13 during the spring and summer terms due to this time being set aside for vital examination preparation in school. This is also when it is most likely when examination sessions will take place some of which will need to be arranged at short notice)
- Intended holiday dates coincide with the beginning of courses e.g. GCSE study, etc

- School is informed less than four weeks prior to the beginning of the holiday or after the holiday has taken place.

The attendance mark used to decide if a holiday should be authorised should be taken directly one year prior to the date of the request. (For example Holiday requested for May 2010 in November 2009. Percentage attendance data used should be from November 2008 to November 2009.)

### **Punctuality**

- The school day begins at 8.50 am and it is made clear to students that they must be present outside their form rooms and be ready to be registered at that time.
- The register for the morning session will close at 9.00am. Students arriving after this time but before the bell for the first lesson will be marked late on the register by their tutor.
- Any student arriving after 11.00am will be counted as absent for the morning session and will be expected to provide a note from their parent to confirm the reason for their absence.
- School will notify parents of pupils who are persistently late. (Persistent lateness will be regarded as truancy)

Any Student arriving after the bell has gone for the first lesson must go to the Student Reception to sign in to indicate that they are present on school site.

### **Persistent Absenteeism (PA)**

- A pupil becomes a 'persistent absentee' when they miss 20% or more schooling across the school year for whatever reason. Absence at this level is doing considerable damage to any child's educational prospects and we need parents fullest support and co-operation to tackle this.
- We monitor all absence thoroughly. Any case that is seen to have reached the PA mark or is at risk of moving towards that mark is given priority and you will be informed of this immediately.
- PA pupils are tracked and monitored carefully through our pastoral system.
- All our PA pupils and their parents are subject to an Action Plan and the plan may include: allocation of additional support, use of circle time, individual incentive programmes and participation in group activities around raising attendance. All PA cases are also automatically made known to the Education Welfare Officer.

### **Reintegration:**

- The return to school for a pupil after long-term absence requires special planning. It may be appropriate to establish a Pastoral Support Programme as detailed in the DfES Social Inclusion: Pupil Support Guidance (Circular 10/99)
- Designated staff should be responsible for deciding on the programme for return and for the management of that programme.
- All staff need to be aware that this is a difficult process that will require careful handling and that any problems should be notified to the responsible staff member as soon as possible.
- Programmes may need to be tailored to meet individual need and may involve phased, part-time re-entry with support in class as appropriate. Support from the SEN Co-ordinator may be required

The success of the Pastoral Support Programme will require the involvement of appropriate school staff, other agencies, the young person and parents. Programmes should be reviewed after 1 month and then again after 3 months to evaluate appropriateness. Staff will be notified of the return of the long-term absentees via the staff notices/daily briefings.

## **SCHOOL ORGANISATION:**

In order for the attendance policy to be successful, every member of the staff must make attendance a high priority and should convey to pupils the importance and value of education. In addition there may be specific responsibilities allocated to individual staff such as the following:

### **Head Teacher:**

- To oversee and demonstrate ownership of the whole policy.
- To regularly report progress on attendance to governors, pupils and parents.
- To set challenging but achievable targets to reduce levels of absence

### **Designated Attendance Officer**

- To oversee the efficient operation of the attendance system and the collation and analysis of attendance data.
- To oversee the work of administrative staff.
- To produce the attendance profile for the whole school on a half term basis.
- To report to the Head Teacher on attendance issues.
- To liaise with EWO.
- To regularly report progress on attendance to governors, pupils and parents.

### **Chaplaincy / Pastoral Assistants**

- To challenge suspicious or inappropriate reasons for absence.
- To follow-up immediately any unexplained absence by contacting parents – First day absence call.
- To liaise regularly with the Designated Attendance Officer
- To liaise regularly with the EWO
- To use the half term analysis to inform future attendance target groups
- To carry out regular spot-checks for specific lesson truancy and for pupils leaving school before the end of the day.
- To work to achieve challenging targets set by Head teacher and reduce the levels of absence.
- To create partnership with parents and carers of all pupils but in particular poor attendance below 85%.
- To reward and celebrate achievements of good and improved attendance through certificates at award assemblies, ensuring form trophies are allocated to the right form at the beginning of each half term.
- To work with office staff to send out absence letters.
- To work in liaison with class teacher to issue consequence for lateness.
- To welcome back absentees and truants quietly upon their return to school and efforts made to reintegrate them socially and academically

### **Class Teacher**

- To complete registers accurately and on time.
- To inform Chaplaincy / Pastoral assistant, Year Leader of concerns in a timely manner.
- To inform IT manager and designated attendance officer if there are problems with the electronic attendance system.
- To ensure letters of absence are produced on pupils return to school.
- To work in liaison with Chaplaincy / Pastoral assistant issue consequences for lateness.
- To welcome back absentees and truants quietly upon their return to school and efforts made to reintegrate them socially and academically.

**Office Staff:**

School administrative staff play a vital role in supporting the school's attendance and absence management strategies. They should:

- Produce absence letters in liaison with Pastoral/ Chaplaincy assistants.
- Produce reply letters to request for leave of absence.
- Ensure messages regarding attendance and absence are passed on to the form tutor and Pastoral / Chaplaincy assistant.
- To identify and inform any member of staff via e-mail whose marks are missing prior to 10.00am- Designated Attendance officer and Chaplaincy / Pastoral assistant should be cc in the e-mail.

**Governors:**

- Governor(s) may be given a specific role/interest in monitoring attendance and/or policies.
- Governors can play a valuable role through representation at school attendance panels, parents evenings etc.
- Request regular attendance progress reports for Governors' Meetings.

**Parents:**

- Contact with school on first day of absence or as soon as possible.
- Provide signed and dated absence notes for all absences.
- Support their child and the school in achieving maximum attendance.

**LIAISING WITH EXTERNAL AGENCIES**

Research has shown that schools in partnership with the full range of support services have a greater impact on school attendance than when they act alone or when the support services are uncoordinated or disjointed.

Poor school attendance may be a symptom of a wide range of institutional, community, family or individual circumstances. Many of these circumstances will demand expert support beyond the remit of the school or the Education Welfare Service. It is therefore vital that strong partnerships are established with all agencies that work with children and young people. The EWS may be able to help schools establish multi-agency meetings or may be able to advise on how schools can become involved in existing local arrangements.

**Other Agencies** to be used where appropriate in individual cases.

- Educational Behavioural and Support Services.
- Educational Psychologists.
- Special Educational Needs Service.
- Social Care.
- Local police

**Education Welfare Service:**

The Education Welfare Service has been described as the "attendance enforcement arm" of most local authorities (DES 1991) which complements the role of the school. MKC Education Welfare Service will strive to provide a service that recognises the uniqueness of the school and the community it serves.

In accordance with the EWS Service Remit and Procedures we can support schools in a variety of ways:

- We will liaise with identified school staff.
- Where a referral is accepted, we will undertake home visits, either pre-arranged or without notice as considered necessary.
- Through group work with identified groups of pupils.

- Where necessary we will instigate legal proceedings on behalf of the LEA including parental prosecutions in the Magistrates' Court and applying for Education Supervision Orders through the Family Court.
- We will accept referrals that meet the EWS referral criteria, initiate contact with parents or carers and undertake assessments.
- We will plan and review casework.
- We will provide feedback to schools.
- We can offer strategic/policy advice and support in relation to matters of attendance, the employment of young people and young people involved in performing.
- We will support schools in the establishment and management of school attendance panels.
- We will support schools in the use of penalty notices and parenting contracts within the provisions of the Anti-social Behaviour Act 2003

### **Data Protection Act**

The Data Protection Act places obligations on all agencies that process, store and share information on any individual. It is important to have full regard for the requirements of the Act. Each school has a Data Protection Notification which details the circumstances under which data is managed. Nothing in the legislation prevents a school sharing information with the police or social services where it is believed that a child or young person under the age of 18 is at risk of harm or is in need of safeguarding.

### **Designated person in charge of attendance: Greg Maw**

Each Year Leader and Pastoral / Chaplaincy assistant will lead on attendance in each Year group.

Each year the school will examine its attendance figures and set attendance/absence targets. These will reflect both national and local attendance targets.

St Pauls Catholic School Targets 2009/2010  
 St Pauls Catholic School Targets 2010/2011  
 Milton Keynes Local authority targets 2009/2010  
 Milton Keynes Local authority targets 2010/2011

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

Date: January 2010  
 Review date: January 2011

## **APPENDIX 1**

Under Section 7 of the Education Act 1996, it is the legal responsibility of parents to see that their child/children receive(s) regular education suitable to their age, aptitude and abilities....

### **The Importance of Registration:**

- An attendance register, electronic or manual, must be kept at the beginning of each session, pupils are marked present or absent. Registers should be completed using the Vericool system.
- If corrections must be made please contact the administrator for your department to make the changes required.
- Accurate marking of registers, and appropriate maintenance of electronic and computerised systems can have a significant impact on overall school attendance and absence figures.
- Attendance registers, and bound copies of electronic registration print outs must be kept for a minimum of 3 years from the date that the last entries were made.

### **Categorising Absence:**

#### **Symbols to be used in Registers (Categories)**

From 1 September 2006 all schools are required to use a common set of codes to record pupil attendance and absence.

The Department for Education and Skills (DfES) believes that these codes are best used within electronic systems for recording attendance and absence of pupils. Such electronic systems are capable of producing the data necessary for absence returns to DfES without time consuming counting up of possible attendances and actual absences.

The use of fixed codes will also assist both LAs and DfES in monitoring not only whether pupils are absent with or without the permission of the school, but why pupils are absent from school.

- **Only the school**, in the context of the law **can authorise absence**, a note or explanation from parents does not guarantee authorisation. If a class teacher does not accept the explanation offered for absence as a valid reason then the matter must be referred to the Head Teacher.
- Emerging patterns of authorised absence should be reported to the Head Teacher.
- Reasons for absence should be entered in the register by the appropriate code symbol.
- Chaplaincy / Pastoral assistants who experience difficulty in receiving a parental note should inform the Designated officer.

### **Authorised or Unauthorised Absence:**

**Authorised absence** is where the school has either given approval in advance for a pupil to be away or has accepted an explanation offered afterwards as a satisfactory reason for absence. All other absence must be regarded as **unauthorised**.

The following may be reasons for authorising absences.

- Illness
- Family bereavements
- Family holiday (up to two weeks) but see notes below.
- Medical and dental appointments where proof is available.
- Days of religious observance.
- Fixed term exclusion
- Permanent exclusion until removed from roll or re-instated.

**Family Holidays:**

Parents should not normally take pupils on holiday during the school term though schools are able to exercise their discretion when granting parental requests. However, each request should be considered individually taking into account the age of the child, previous attendance patterns, parental views and the educational progress of the child. If a request is not granted and the parent takes the child on holiday, the absence should not be authorised. If a request is granted the absence should not normally be for more than two weeks in any school year. If the holiday goes on for longer than agreed, the extra days absence should be unauthorised.

**The Use of Penalty Warnings and Penalty Notices for Unauthorised Holidays in Term Time**

As a general rule, the LA will not issue a penalty notice for unauthorised absence due solely to a holiday without permission. However, there may be circumstances where this sanction is appropriate. The EWS will work with head teachers to agree the most appropriate course of action for each individual case.

**Resolving Disagreements**

Where there is a lack of agreement between the school and the LA as to the appropriateness of issuing a penalty warning letter or a penalty notice, the matter will be referred to the County Legal Proceedings Panel whose decision shall be final.

**Approved Educational Activity**

Where pupils are away from school but are undertaking an approved educational activity, this should be marked in the usual way but are counted as present for calculating data for the DfES absence return. To avoid confusion in emergency situations pupils who are off site should not be marked as present. The following activities fall within this category.

- Field trips and educational visits both in this country and overseas.

Absences should **not** be authorised under the following circumstances.

- Shopping trips
- Holidays in term time where the permission of the school has not been given
- Minding the house or looking after siblings.
- Lateness if registration is missed without explanation.
- Medical appointments that cannot be verified.
- No reason given.
- School staff have cause to believe that the note is not genuine or not valid.

Unusual circumstances may arise that lead to a young person being absent from school. It is for the Head teacher to decide whether the explanation offered is reasonable. In such situations, the individual circumstances, previous attendance pattern and frequency of such incidents should be considered. Further advice is available in DfES Circular No. 10/99.

**Lateness:**

Schools should actively discourage late arrival by challenging young people who are persistently late or arrive late without reasonable explanation.

Registers will remain open from 8.50 till 9.00 In the event of bad weather this period can be extended.

Where a pupil arrives during the period when the register is open they may be marked present. Where a pupil arrives after register closure without good reason they should sign in at the front office using the electronic system.

### **Removal from the school roll**

There are strict guidelines on the circumstances under which a pupil may be removed from the school roll. These are detailed in Education (Pupil Registration) Regulations 1995 (as amended 1997) and the Schools Administration Handbook (section A2). **Removal from the school roll under circumstances other than those detailed below is illegal.**

- Where a school has been notified that the pupil has been registered as a pupil at another school.
- Where a pupil has ceased to attend the school and the parent(s) have satisfied the County Council that the pupil is receiving education otherwise than by attendance at school.
- Where the school has been notified by the School Medical Officer that the pupil is unlikely to be in a fit state to attend school before becoming legally exempt from the obligation to attend school.
- Where the pupil has been absent without reasonable cause for four academic weeks and the Head Teacher of the school has failed, after reasonable enquiry and consultation with the Education Welfare Service to obtain information on the cause of the absence.
- Where the Head Teacher has been notified that the pupil has died.
- Except in the case of a boarder, the pupil has ceased to attend the school and no longer ordinarily resides at a place which is a reasonable distance from the school.
- If a pupil has not returned to school within ten school days of the agreed return date after a family holiday in term time.
- Where a pupil will cease to be of compulsory schools age before the school next meets and has been notified an intention to discontinue in attendance.
- Where the pupil has been permanently excluded and this decision has been confirmed by the Pupil Discipline Committee.

### **Ensuring Pupil Information is up to date**

Schools should ensure, as far as possible, that the information they hold on pupils and parents is accurate and up to date. This will help to ensure that contact with families is productive and that referrals to other agencies are effective. Principle 4 of the Data Protection Act 1998 states 'Personal Data shall be accurate and, where necessary, kept up to date'.

### **Pupils who are missing**

Where it is believed that a pupil has left the area and enquiries have failed to establish the whereabouts of the pupil, the Common Transfer File should be completed and uploaded to the DfES National Missing Pupils Database.

## APPENDIX 2

### ***The registration system***

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

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