



SAINT JOHN HOUGHTON CATHOLIC VOLUNTARY ACADEMY ATTENDANCE POLICY

Date Approved: Dec 2021

Reviewed: Dec 2021

Date for Next Review: Dec 2023

Rationale

Regular attendance at school is essential to ensure uninterrupted progress and to enable children to extend their potential. The attendance pattern for all children is monitored weekly, with the schools seeking to work actively with parents to ensure a regular pattern is maintained. We expect all children on roll to attend every day, when the schools are in session, as long as they are fit and healthy enough to do so. We do all we can to encourage the children to attend, and to put in place appropriate procedures to support this. We believe that the most important factor in promoting good attendance is development of positive attitudes towards school and learning.

Introduction

Poor attendance can seriously affect each child's:-

- Attainment in school
- Relationships with other children and their ability to form lasting friendships
- Confidence to attempt new work and work alongside others.

Each child's attendance can be summarised as:

97% +	Excellent – Well done! This will help all aspects of their progress and life in school. This will give them a good start in life and supports a positive work ethic.
94-96%	Average – Well done, strive to build on this.
85-93%	Poor – Absence is now affecting attainment and progress at school. Please work urgently to improve the situation. A fast track contract will be discussed in a parent meeting.
Below 85%	Unacceptable – Absence is causing SERIOUS CONCERN. It is affecting attainment and progress and is disrupting your child's learning. Our Attendance Officer will work with you to improve your child's attendance if there is no immediate improvement this term. Permitting absence from school without a good reason is an offence by the parent. Only the school can 'authorise' absence. The school will not assess all reasons as 'valid'.

Non-attendance is an important issue that is treated seriously. However each case is different and the Trust acknowledges that no one standard response will be appropriate in every case. Consideration is given to all factors affecting attendance before deciding what intervention strategies to apply.

a) In every case, early intervention is essential to prevent the problem from worsening. It is essential that parents keep the school fully informed of any matters that may affect their child's attendance.

b) The school may make a visit to the child's home or issue letters to parents clearly defining the concerns within school regarding a student's absence. It is hoped that a quick response and change in levels of absence will prevent the need for further intervention.

c) Where a child is failing to attend school, a plan will be drawn up in consultation with the family and, possible, external agencies, including Education and Social Welfare workers

Principles

Arrival and Registration

All children should be in the school ready to register by 8.40am. The register is taken twice a day. A day counts as 2 attendances. If a child arrives after the registration period, he/she must report to the school office and will be marked in as 'Late', this may affect their attendance percentage.

Parent/Carer Responsibility

It is parents/carers responsibility to ensure their children attend regularly. Punctuality is also stressed as lateness impacts on learning not only for the individual, but the class as a whole.

Parents have a legal obligation to ensure their children receive a full-time education; this is achieved by regular attendance at school.

Illness and Medical Appointments

When a child is unwell, parents should contact the school before 8.15am on the first day of absence informing the school of the reason for absence. This must be done by leaving a message on the school's answer-phone service or speaking to Reception.

When a child is absent, the class teacher will record the absence in the register. As part of our Safeguarding Procedures, the Attendance Officer will endeavour to contact the parent or carer or other emergency contacts if no message has been received regarding the reason for the absence to check on the safety of the child.

Where a medical appointment is necessary, or your child is ill, please ensure that:

- Every effort has been made to arrange medical appointments outside school hours.
- An appointment card or verification by the doctors/dentist/hospital has been obtained.
- If it is necessary for a child to be out of school for this reason, the child is returned to school directly after the appointment.
- If your child is absent due to vomiting then they should not return to school for **the next 48 hours** after the last time that the child is sick. This is to reduce the risk of infection to other children and adults at the school.
- For more than three days of absence the school requires a written explanation of why the child was absent. The Attendance Officer will request this if it is not produced. A letter or email is acceptable.
- Medical certificates may be requested for absence greater than five days.

If a pupil requires time away from school to attend an appointment then parents must bring a copy of the hospital letter or appointment card to school for the absence to be authorised.

School Responsibility

The Senior Leadership Team and all staff throughout the school work to ensure a high level of enjoyment and commitment to learning as a means of ensuring regular attendance.

Where school attendance problems occur, the schools will endeavour to work with parents in the interests of the child to achieve a positive resolution.

Attendance is recorded and data stored and analysed.

The Headteacher, not parents, authorises absence; Saint John Houghton CVA adheres to the DfE guidelines in authorising absence. Absence for any reason during term time is discouraged.

Absence during Term Time

Parents do not have an automatic right to withdraw pupils from school for a holiday and in law, have to apply for permission in advance. Such permission can only be granted where the Headteacher agrees that there are “special circumstances” to be taken into account.

When application is made for authorised absence during term time and it is agreed that there are “special circumstances”, the Headteacher then also gives consideration to:

- The nature of the proposed absence and the “special circumstances” that are presented

When an absence is authorised, parents will be provided with written evidence in the form of a proforma signed by the Headteacher.

Definitions

Every half-day absence has to be classified by the school (not by the parents) as either **AUTHORISED** or **UNAUTHORISED**. This is why information about the cause of each absence is always required; preferably in writing (letter or email) or by telephone.

Authorised Absence

An absence is classified as authorised when a child has been away from school for a legitimate reason and the school has received notification from a parent or guardian. For example, if a child has been unwell and the parent writes a note or telephones the school to explain the absence. Only the school can make an absence authorised.

Unauthorised Absence

An absence is classified as unauthorised when a child is away from school without the permission of the Headteacher.

Unauthorised absences are those, which the school does not consider reasonable and for which no authorisation has been given. This includes:

- Parents keeping children off school unnecessarily
- Truancy before or during the school day
- Absences that have never been properly explained
- Holidays/Family events that have not been agreed to having any exceptional circumstances.

Penalty Notices: Penalty Notices for Absence from school may be issued by the Local Education authority based on requests from schools and the police.

The following circumstances are considered as appropriate reasons for the issuing of Penalty Notices:

- Truancy, including truancy sweeps
- Parentally-condoned absences
- Holidays/Family events in term time where no exceptional circumstances were agreed
- Excessive delayed return from Holidays/Family events whether or not exceptional circumstances were agreed beforehand by the Headteacher
- Persistent lateness after the register has closed
- Allowing a child to be in a public place within the specified timescale when excluded from school

The absence of a pupil from school in any of these circumstances will result in a Penalty Notice being considered.

Review

This policy will be reviewed every three years according to the schedule for policy review.