

# The Saints' Federation

- St Augustine's First School, Draycott in the Clay
  - All Saints' First School, Denstone
  - St Peter's First School, Alton



## Attendance Policy

Chair of Governors: \_\_\_\_\_

Executive Headteacher: \_\_\_\_\_

Review by committee: Annually - July

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# The Saints' Federation

## Attendance Policy

June 2017

### **Principles**

All schools and parents have statutory duties with respect to attendance. A targeted approach needs to be balanced ensuring that these duties are carried out effectively with respect to all pupils of compulsory school age. The school works in conjunction with the Uttoxeter Pyramid of Schools and the aim is to reach an overall attendance of 95% in order to give every child the very best chance of achieving their full potential and to be in line with the national attendance expectation.

The Federation will promote positive behaviour and good attendance through its use of curriculum and learning materials. Good attendance and behaviour by pupils will be recognised appropriately. All pupils should be on time, every day the school is open, unless the reason for the absence is unavoidable.

Any problems that arise with attendance are best resolved between the individual school, parents/carers and the pupil. Where a pupil is reluctant to attend, it is not a solution either to support absences or to give in to pressure to excuse them from attending. This gives the impression that attendance does not matter and may make things worse. Permitting absence from the school without a good reason is an offence by the parent/carer. Where necessary, schools have access to Education Welfare and / or Family Support Workers.

The Attendance Policy and Behaviour Policy includes procedural referral agreements that are designed to promote and safeguard the welfare of pupils. We have a duty in law to refer any absence of 10 days or more where the school is unable to make contact with the parent/carer/pupil or have general concerns about the absence to the Education Welfare Service.

All schools are required to take an attendance register twice a day and this shows whether the pupil is present, engaged in an approved educational activity off-site or absent. If a pupil of compulsory school age is absent; every half-day absence from the school has to be classified by the school as either authorised or unauthorised. Only the head teacher can authorise absences, not parents/carers. Authorised absences are mornings or afternoons away from the school for a good reason such as illness or other unavoidable causes. Unauthorised absences are those which the school does not consider reasonable and for which no "leave" has been given, this is why information about the cause of each absence is always required, preferably in writing. This includes:

- parents/carers keeping children away from the school unnecessarily
- truancy before or during the school day
- absences which have never been properly explained
- pupils who arrive at the school too late to get a mark
- holidays taken without prior agreement from the school

The Head teacher is responsible for the operational management of the policy and can delegate lead to a member of the Leadership Team. Office managers should follow up individual pupils and analyse attendance data to identify trends for individual pupils, classes and year groups enabling the school to target efforts. Wherever possible, action will be taken by the school to improve a pupil's attendance and investigate and address any underlying cause of problems before considering whether to make a referral to the Local Authority.

It is not appropriate for the school to authorise absences for shopping, looking after other children/siblings, haircuts etc. Leave may be granted in an emergency (e.g. bereavement) or for medical appointments (copies of appointment cards/letters must be provided) which must be in school time.

## **Procedures for Recording and Monitoring Attendance**

### **Recording**

Pupils should arrive at school before 8:55am. The pupils should make their way to their first lesson where the class teacher will take a register recording who is present and absent from school. **Any late pupils should enter the school through the main entrance.** If any pupil arrives late they should report to reception where reception staff will ask the pupil for a reason explaining their lateness. All staff need to be aware that any pupil arriving late **MUST** register at reception for the purposes of fire regulations. **The register must be taken by 9am.** Persistent lateness will be challenged. It is worth noting that if a pupil is 15 minutes late everyday this is equivalent to missing 10 days of school over the year.

The registers **officially** closed at **9.15am** and any pupil arriving after this time will be marked absent for the session. A reason for the lateness will need to be provided and a decision made by the school to mark it as an authorised or unauthorised absence. If unauthorised the 'U' code will be used and parents should be aware that if a pupil reaches 20 'U' absences, there is the risk of a Penalty Notice being issued against them for poor attendance, just the same as if the pupil were absent.

The Federation operates a first day contact policy whereby if the school has not been notified of an absence, parents/carers will be contacted to obtain an explanation. High concern children are monitored as a special concern and are contacted immediately if they are absent, these include child protection and on-going concern children identified by the Safeguarding Officer.

Parents whose children are experiencing difficulties should contact the school at an early stage and work together with staff in resolving any problems. This is nearly always successful. If difficulties cannot be sorted out in this way, the school or the parent/carer may refer the child to the Education Welfare Worker (EWW) from the County Council's Local Support Team. He/she will also try to resolve the situation with voluntary support if other ways of trying to improve the pupil's attendance have failed.

## **Procedures**

The Saints' Federation applies the following procedures in deciding how to deal with individual absences:

- Parents/carers are advised that pupils are expected to be in the school every day. The importance of good attendance is stressed through written and oral communications with pupils and parents.
- Pupils who arrive late are expected to be signed in at the school reception giving reasons for their lateness.
- Parents/carers are discouraged from making non urgent medical and dental appointments during the school day, but must inform the school if there is no alternative.
- All requests for known absences from the school must be made in writing or verbally.
- Holidays during term time are discouraged and will only be authorised in exceptional circumstances.
- All absences through illness must be backed up with an explanation of the nature of the illness by a telephone call to the Office Manager.
- Attendance is regularly monitored by the Office Manager and Head teacher.
- For any absence, if not already authorised verbally, a letter is sent out asking parents/carers to explain the reasons for their child's absence. If there is no response from parents/carers within a week the absence is marked as unauthorised.
- Where concerns about individual pupils occur, these are addressed with parents/carers through the Head teacher. If concerns about attendance persist then the school will involve the Education Welfare service. Throughout this process, staff will be looking to identify and address reasons for attendance issues so that the pupil can return to the school (with support if necessary) as quickly as possible.

## **Point to be considered**

Schools have the responsibility to decide whether an absence can be authorised on medical grounds. Parents may be asked to provide evidence where pupil attendance falls below 90% that their child is too unwell to attend school by providing a note from a medical professional.

## Attendance Codes

A set of standard codes are used consistently within the register. These codes are input in the electronic register as required and are used to give depth of meaning to the register and provide statistical meaning to the absences.

| Code | School Meaning  |
|------|---|
| /    | Present (AM) Present - In for whole session   |
| \    | Present (PM) Present - In for whole session   |
| B    | Educated off site (Not dual registration) - Approved Educational Activity - Out for whole session |
| C    | Other authorised circumstances - Authorised Absence - Out for whole session                       |
| D    | Dual registration – Present - Out for whole session   |
| E    | Excluded Authorised Absence -Out for whole session  |
| F    | Extended family holiday (agreed) - Authorised absence - Out for whole session                     |
| G    | Family holiday (not agreed) - Unauthorised Absence - Out for whole session                        |
| H    | Family holiday (agreed) - Authorised Absence - Out for whole session                              |
| I    | Illness (not med/dental etc., appoints) - Authorised Absence - Out for whole session              |
| J    | Interview - Approved Educational Activity - Out for whole session                                 |
| L    | Late (before reg closed) - Present - Late for session   |
| M    | Medical/Dental appointments - Authorised Absence - Out for whole session                          |
| N    | No reason yet provided for absence - Unauthorised Absence - Out for whole session                 |
| O    | Unauthorised absence - Unauthorised Absence - Out for whole session                               |
| P    | Approved sporting activity - Present - Out for whole session                                      |
| R    | Religious observance - Authorised Absence - Out for whole session                                 |
| S    | Study leave - Approved Educational Activity - Out for whole session                               |
| T    | Traveller absence -Authorised Absence - Out for whole session                                     |
| U    | Late (after registers closed) - Unauthorised absence - Late for session                           |
| V    | Educational visit or trip - Approved Educational Activity - Out for whole session                 |
| W    | Work experience - Approved Educational Activity - Out for whole session                           |
| X    | DfES # : School closed to pupils - Attendance not required - Out for whole session                |
| Y    | Enforced closure - Attendance not required - Out for whole session                                |

- ! DfES X : Non-compulsory school age absence - Attendance not required - Out for whole session
- # School closed to pupils and staff - Attendance not required - Out for whole session

### **Practicalities of Managing Medical Absence**

- If concerns are highlighted regarding the level of medical absence that a pupil has incurred contact will be made with the parents/carers to discuss it further and look at ways to support a pupil with medical conditions in school through the use of a Care Plan.
- If still concerned the Office Manager/Head teacher will suggest that the pupil visit their GP or other health professional, if this has not already been done.
- Pupils and Parents will be invited to Attendance Clinics with the Head teacher once their attendance becomes a concern.
- Any pupil whose attendance, at the end of each half term is below 85% may be asked to attend an interview with the Head teacher/EWW.
- If parents do not attend the EWW may make a home visit.
- If attendance does not improve the Head teacher/Office Manager may request parents seek a note of explanation from the relevant health professional or may involve the school nurse.
- If despite the request for the note of explanation, no note is forthcoming, the school may not be able to authorise absences unless satisfactory medical evidence is provided to support the pupil's inability to attend the school.

When an individual pupil's attendance level falls below 85% in any term without good reason, a referral to the EWS will be made by the school. Following investigation, any unresolved issues could result in the parent/carer receiving a Penalty Notice or ultimately a prosecution under the Education Act 1996 s444.

### **Persistent Absence (PA)**

The Saints' Federation is committed to reducing persistent absence (less than 85% attendance) and has specific procedures for dealing with this. There are strong and proven links between pupil attendance and educational achievement. Attendance of less than 95% (equivalent to 9.5 days or more absence in an academic year) has been shown to compromise pupil attainment. An attendance of 90% is equivalent to missing 19 days or nearly 4 weeks from school in a year. Only 10% of pupils who are persistently absent from school achieve 5 A\*-C grades at GCSE. If a school could improve its overall attendance by 1% it would see an improvement in attainment of around 5%.

A letter will be sent to the parents of any pupil identified as having attendance problems. The letter will inform the parents of the schools concerns and offer support to resolve any problems that may be impeding a pupil from attending. Pupils falling to below 95% attendance will be monitored as to whether their attendance improves or deteriorates. The aim is to avoid a pupil falling into the Persistent Absence category (less than 85% attendance).

On a termly basis this is simply explained as:

|   |                          |
|---|--------------------------|
| By the end of half-term 1 (Autumn Term) | 11+ sessions (5.5 days)  |
| By the end of half-term 2 (Autumn Term) | 22+ sessions (11 days)   |
| By the end of half-term 3 (Spring Term) | 30+ sessions (15 days)   |
| By the end of half-term 4 (Spring Term) | 39+ sessions (19.5 days) |
| By the end of half-term 5 (Summer Term) | 47+ sessions (23.5 days) |
| By the end of half-term 6 (Summer Term) | 57+ sessions (28.5 days) |

1. PA data is consistently monitored to track and review attendance of PA pupils so that concerns can be addressed.
2. The Office manager contacts parents/carers of pupils as soon as they are absent.
3. Parents/carers, the child, are all spoken to about concerns relating to PA.
4. Actions are taken by Head teacher in line with The Saints' Federation and Staffordshire County Council Policy. The Local Authority holds statutory powers under the Education Act 1996 to ensure children attend school. If they cannot successfully engage with the family to achieve this they may use the many statutory powers to enforce the parents/carers responsibility regarding their child's school attendance. The EWO can issue Penalty Notices or use court proceedings to prosecute parents/carers or to seek an Education Supervision Order on the child.

The Anti-Social Behaviour Act 2003, amended Section 444 of the Education Act 1996, allows parents to be issued with a penalty where they fail to ensure their child of compulsory school age (516) attends school.

### **Interim Criteria and Guidance**

Penalty notices for leave in term time may be considered appropriate if the following criteria is met:

- For unauthorised leave of absence, there must be a minimum of 20 sessions (10 school days) of unauthorised absence from school during the period of two consecutive half terms.
- This absence must include at least 10 sessions of unauthorised leave in the specified time period, however, the remaining 10 sessions may relate to other unauthorised absence. The absences do not have to be consecutive.

Should you choose to take unauthorised leave of absence then you may be issued with a fixed penalty notice from Staffordshire County Council.



The penalty notice fine could be:

£60 per parent, per child if paid within 21 days, rising to £120 per parent, per child if paid between 21-28 days.

If the fine is not paid within 28 days you may be prosecuted under S444.1 of the Education Act 1996.

We must advise that if the prosecution takes place, the maximum fine is £1000 per parent, per child. This reflects the seriousness of unauthorised absence from school.

The maximum penalty on conviction is a fine of £2500 and/or 3 months imprisonment.

Alternatively, parents/carers or children may wish to contact the EWW themselves to ask for help or information. They are independent of the school and will give impartial advice. Their telephone number is available from the school reception or by contacting the Local Support Team.

### **New Rules for Holiday Leave (Leave of Absence)**

On 1st September 2013, a significant alteration in the law came into effect which changed the grounds on which a head teacher could allow a pupil to go on holiday during term time. Prior to the change the law stated that 'a pupil may be granted leave of absence from the school to go away on holiday' where the Principal considered that there were 'special circumstances relating to that application'. This section has been deleted and there is now no rule which allows for authorisation to be given specifically for holidays. The replacement section states that 'leave of absence shall not be granted' unless the Head teacher considers that there are 'exceptional circumstances relating to that application'.

Leave of absence due to urgent and unavoidable circumstances (such as a family bereavement) would clearly be considered exceptional. Other than this, however, it will be appropriate for the Head teacher to deal with applications on a case-by-case basis.

### **Requests for Leave of Absence**

If a parent/carer wishes to request a period of leave they are required to complete a leave of absence request form. If the request is denied the school will inform the parent/carer of the reason by letter and the request will be noted in the electronic register. Leave of absence will be refused except under special/exceptional circumstances. Absence request forms are available from the school office. It is worth noting that a pupil who takes a **2 week** family holiday in term time (10 school days) will only be able to achieve an attendance of **94.7%**. This is assuming the pupil has no illness or medical appointments for the rest of the academic year. This automatically puts the pupil into the category of monitoring attendance.

- Clarifying that a parent can now receive more than one Penalty Notice per academic year.

- Confirming that 20 **sessions** of unauthorised absence do not have to be consecutive and only 2 sessions have to be for unauthorised leave of absence.
- Calculation for the 20 sessions will be monitored over a rolling 12 months period (not restricted to the Academic year within which the request is made or the leave is taken).

**Changes to Penalty Notices for Persistent Absence:**

- Penalty notices can be considered where there are at least 20 sessions (10 days) lost due to unauthorised absence during the current and previous terms. These absences do not need to be consecutive.
- Parents will now only receive 1 warning notice period (of 20 days for the purposes of issuing a Penalty Fine) in an academic year after which the Local Authority can automatically consider other statutory actions if unauthorised absence re-occurs in the remainder of the academic year.
- A Penalty Notice can also be issued for persistent late arrival to the Academy (after the registers close at 9.15 am), where there are at least 20 sessions recorded in the current and previous term.