

# Holy Family Catholic Primary School, New Springs

## Mission Statement

**We are a caring family, we pray, learn and grow together**

## Attendance Policy

### Rationale

- ✓ The Governors and Staff want all pupils to receive a full time education, allowing each pupil to reach his/her potential.
- ✓ Our school provides a welcoming, caring environment, where all our pupils feel cared for and secure.
- ✓ We work with pupils and their families to ensure that pupils attend school regularly and punctually. We do this by:
  - a).Reminding parents regularly that they are responsible for getting their child/children to school regularly and on time
  - b) Making parents aware that pupils with poor attendance are less likely to do well in school. (Pupils missing 9.5 days or more do less well than others)
- ✓ Governors are legally bound to set an attendance rate target each year. Holy Family works hard to reach that target so that all our pupils have the best chance possible to fulfil their potential.

### 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 school's 'open door' policy encourages parents to discuss any difficulties with attendance with class teachers and the Head Teacher.
- ✓ Parents must make sure that children arrive at school by 8.55am appropriately dressed in school uniform and ready to learn.
- ✓ Parents must work with school to help educate their children. This means encouraging a respect for the school and the staff.

### Communicating with Parents

There are several different ways in which information about Attendance is passed to parents:

- ✓ 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.
- ✓ The school profile, accessible on line, contains attendance data for the relevant period.
- ✓ Newsletters & Information Sheets: these are 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.

- ✓ Whilst the issue of leave in term time is unlikely to be entirely resolved, there is strong evidence that systematic and consistent approaches result in the frequency and duration of such absences being reduced.

### **School Registration**

- ✓ Attendance is recorded on paper and electronically using the SIMS system. The register closes at 9.10am. Any child arriving after 9.10am will be recorded as late. School sees punctuality as the responsibility of the parent.
- ✓ Punctuality is essential to ensure that the start of the teaching day is uninterrupted and that there is optimum teaching and learning time for all pupils.
- ✓ Electronic registration facilitates the easy analysis of attendance data, highlighting patterns of lateness or absence which would be reported to parents if necessary.
- ✓ Where a pupil has not arrived in school at the close of register, and parents have not contacted school as to the reason for this absence, then school will telephone parent/carer to ascertain the reason for non attendance as soon as is practicably possible.
- ✓ When a pupil is signing into school after registration that pupil must report to the school office for their mark.
- ✓ When a pupil is signing out of school before the end of the school day that pupil must be registered out with the school office.

**THE IMPORTANCE OF PARENTS CONTACTING SCHOOL WITH REASON FOR ABSENCE BEFORE 9.10AM ON THE FIRST DAY OF ABSENCE CANNOT BE EMPHASISED ENOUGH. WE NEED TO ASCERTAIN THAT NOTHING HAS HAPPENED TO THE CHILD ON HIS/HER WAY TO SCHOOL.**

### **Holidays In Term-Time**

- ✓ Holidays in term time, or Leave of Absence, can affect a school's otherwise good attendance record by on average 2 percentage points in any one year. In our school, requests for leave of this kind are a significant issue in that it constitutes a high proportion of overall absences.
- ✓ There is a common misconception amongst many parents that pupils are allowed to take ten days leave in any one academic year which equates to an absence of 2.5%. Legislation says that parents are entitled to request leave but that it is the school that approves that request. At the heart of a common protocol adopted by Wigan schools is the presumption of not authorising requests in term time except in 'special circumstances' and only in 'exceptional circumstances' for extended leave (over ten days)
- ✓ At our school, term time holidays and extended leave are not allowed as a rule and parents/carers are discouraged from arranging any holidays or absence during term time as they are not in the best interests of pupils.
- ✓ Information for parents/carers clarifying their legal responsibilities regarding attendance and highlighting the impact of avoidable absences during term time will be made available via parents' evenings and induction meetings.
- ✓ Parents/carers must apply to the Head Teacher in good time (Local Authority defines this as 6 weeks in advance) for permission to take their children out of school during term time. Where unforeseen circumstances occur (e.g. bereavement) parents/carers are still required to contact the school to request leave of absence. In addition the number and frequency of absences taken for this purpose will be recorded throughout a pupil's school career.
- ✓ As part of the application process parents/carers will be expected to demonstrate a willingness to make arrangements that cause least disruption to their child's learning. This might involve:
  - a) Wrapping days of absence around existing school holiday periods to minimise time out of school

- b) Considering whether it is wholly appropriate for a child to accompany adults in some circumstances
  - c) Weighing the benefits to the family against detriment to educational process
  - d) Avoiding entirely periods of public examinations and National Curriculum Assessments
- ✓ Circumstances when an application for a term time holiday will not be granted:
    - a) Within transition periods e.g. entry in Reception Class, transition from Primary to Secondary
    - b) Immediately before and during National Curriculum Assessments
    - c) When the pupil's attendance record is already at or below 94% or will fall to below that level if the leave is granted.
    - d) If the pupil already has unauthorised absences in the current academic year.
- ✓ The Head Teacher may, on occasion, make a judgement that there are genuine and acceptable circumstances pertaining to a particular application to take a pupil out of school in term time. The following general issues will be considered at such times:
    - Age of the pupil
    - Time of the school year
    - Motive and purpose of the request and potential benefits to the pupil
    - Duration and impact on continuity of learning
    - Circumstances of family requesting time out of school
    - Rarity or otherwise of this event in the pupils' career to date
    - Overall attendance pattern
    - Proof from parent/carer of unavoidable circumstances e.g. parent/carer's leave is during a fixed workplace closedown or an inflexible leave allocation in the parent/carer's profession.

### **Extended Leave**

- ✓ In exceptional circumstances where a parent/carer requests extended leave totalling more than 10 days per school year each case must be carefully assessed on its merits. Whilst the presumption is to discourage any leave in term time, there are circumstances in which a Head Teacher might consider such applications sympathetically:
  - Return to a country of origin for family, religious or cultural reasons
  - Parent/carer recuperation or convalescence from serious illness or surgery
  - Death of a parent or sibling
  - Life threatening or critical illness of a parent or sibling
- ✓ Wherever possible, return to country of origin visits should be discouraged in term time, but if unavoidable should be agreed only with firm return dates in place and a clear programme from the parents demonstrating that maximum educational benefits can be derived from the experience.
- ✓ Family emergencies also need careful consideration. School and peer friendships can provide children with stability and the reassurance of familiar routines during difficult times and upheaval at home.

### **Managing Failure to Return by an Agreed Date**

- ✓ Failure to return to school by the agreed date, without acceptable cause, will jeopardise the pupil's place at the school. A Home-School Agreement/Contract stating the agreed date of the pupil's return to school must be agreed and signed by the Head Teacher and parent/carer.
- ✓ Where a pupil has been granted 10 or more day's leave and fails to return by the agreed date a further period of 10 days is allowed for the school and Local Authority to

investigate the circumstances before de-registration is considered. This 10 day period of investigation is recorded as unauthorised absence.

- ✓ If a pupil is unavoidably detained from returning to school by the agreed date the parent/carer must endeavour to contact school and request an additional period of leave. Such cases will be considered on an individual basis.

#### **Pupils Taking Holiday / Extended Leave Without Permission**

- ✓ Where a parents/carer takes a pupil out of school in term time without asking for or not receiving permission, a period of unauthorised absence is immediately created.
- ✓ The Head Teacher will write to the family advising them that the absence is unauthorised and that there is a risk of the child losing his/her place at the school. The school may also notify the Educational Welfare Service and may consider a Penalty Notice being issued under the provisions of the Anti Social Behaviour Act 2003.
- ✓ Failure to return to school within 20 school days places the pupil at risk of losing his/her place at the school.

#### **Taking Pupils Off the School Roll**

- ✓ Where a pupil fails to return by the agreed date (or where permission was not given) from a holiday in term time/extended leave, the school and Local Authority will make every effort to contact the family and establish the circumstances.
- ✓ The school will always inform the Local Authority in advance of a possible case of deregistration as it must be agreed that every effort to locate the pupil has failed.
- ✓ Where there is no acceptable cause, and the school has followed procedures by informing the family in writing of the possible consequences of non-return, then that pupil will be taken off the school roll after the 10 day investigation period.
- ✓ The school will inform the Local Authority of this and will trigger enquiries about the pupil's future schooling arrangements.

#### **The Startwell Link Officer**

The school works closely with the Local Authority's Startwell Link Officer who visits the school on a half-termly basis to carry out register checks and to support the school through a range of strategies to improve attendance. Parents will be invited to meet with the Startwell Link Officer if a pupil's absence rate becomes a cause for concern.

Parents need to be aware that they are at risk of a penalty notice that could result in a fine if absence issues are not resolved.

March 2018