

# ATTENDANCE POLICY & GUIDELINES



Approved by the Local Governing Body on \*\*/\*\*/\*\*\*\*

St. Gregory's  
Catholic  
Primary  
School



'Loving and  
Learning'

To love all those  
with whom we  
come into contact  
as taught to us by  
Jesus through the  
Gospels.

To learn to the best  
of our ability using  
our God given  
talents.



# Attendance Policy and Guidelines for St. Gregory's Catholic Primary School

This policy is underpinned by the school's mission statement: **'Loving and Learning'**

## Rationale

St Gregory's Catholic Primary School seeks to ensure that all its pupils receive a full-time education which therefore maximises opportunities for every student to realise their true potential. We strive to provide a welcoming, caring environment, whereby each member of the school community feels valued and secure. All staff will work with pupils and their families to ensure that every they attend school regularly and punctually.

## At St Gregory's Catholic Primary School

- We believe in working in partnership with parents and carers/pupils/governors.
- We have high expectations of all and that includes good attendance at school.
- We believe that good attendance levels maximise opportunities for each pupil to realise their full potential.
- We believe good and regular attendance is when a pupil reaches at least 96% attendance.
- We believe that good attendance raises levels of achievement.
- Attendance of below 90% is classed as persistent absenteeism and is a cause for concern.

## Aims

- To improve the overall percentage of pupil attendance at school, striving to meet the school attendance target of 97%.
- To make attendance and punctuality a priority for all stakeholders.
- To provide guidance and support for parents and families.
- To operate an effective system of attendance and lateness analysis.
- To continue with the framework that defines agreed roles and responsibilities regarding attendance monitoring.
- To further develop positive and consistent communication between home and school.
- To implement an effective system of rewards and sanctions.
- To recognise the needs of the individual pupil when planning reintegration following a significant period of absence.



### Why Regular Attendance is important:

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 a pupil's regular attendance at school is the legal responsibility of all parents / carers, and permitting absence from school without a good reason creates an offence in law and may result in prosecution.

At St Gregory's Catholic Primary School, we expect all our pupils to attend school every day that they possibly can. Research findings show there is a strong correlation between good attendance and high achievement.

If a pupil has 90% attendance through their primary and secondary education; it means that they have missed the equivalent of a whole year off school.

100%	Excellent attendance	Full attendance and no days missed from school – the best chance of success
96%	Good attendance	8 days missed from school
95%	Below the expected level of attendance	9 days missed – less chance of success and makes it harder for your child to make progress
91%	Below the expected level of attendance and needs to improve	18 days missed
90%	Worrying and attendance needs to improve	18 days missed (persistent absence threshold). Your child will find it very hard to make progress
85%	Poor attendance and must improve	28 days missed
80%	Poor attendance and must improve	38 days missed

### Promoting Regular Attendance:

Helping to create a pattern of regular attendance is the responsibility of all stakeholders. To support this focus, school will:

- Follow a fast-track approach to managing pupil absence through quick and early intervention. We aim to work with families to tackle problems as soon as they become apparent. This may include telephone calls, letters home, invitations to



attend school meetings, announced and unannounced home visits, group work and individual student mentoring.

- Provide details of class and year group attendances/punctuality in school's regular newsletters and on the school website.
- Provide parents with data relating to their child's attendance/punctuality at Parents' Evenings.
- Celebrate good attendance/punctuality at our weekly Congratulations Assemblies.
- Celebrate efforts relating to individual and class attendance/punctuality at the end of each term.

#### **Parents will:**

- Ensure that their child attends school regularly and punctually. This means being on time every day and reaching and aiming to maintain attendance of 96%, at any given point throughout the school year.
- Support school in their attempts to promote good attendance and punctuality.
- Inform school immediately if there are any barriers to their child attending school.
- Notify the school immediately on the occasions when their child is too ill to attend school.

#### **Understanding types of absence:**

Every half-day absence from school has to be classified by the school (not by the parents), as either AUTHORISED or UNAUTHORISED. This is why information about the cause of any absence is always required, preferably in writing.

Authorised absences are mornings or afternoons away from school for a good reason like illness, medical/dental appointments which unavoidably fall in school time, emergencies or other unavoidable cause.

Unauthorised absences are those which the school does not consider reasonable and for which no agreement has been given. (This type of absence can lead to the Local Authority using sanctions and/or legal proceedings.) Unauthorised absences include:

- Parents/carers keeping children off school unnecessarily.
- Truancy before or during the school day.
- Absences which have never been properly explained or when school do not receive a message for the absence.
- Children who arrive at school too late to get a mark (after the close of register).
- Shopping, looking after other children or birthdays.
- Leave of absence that has not been agreed by the school (including term time holidays).
- Absences for which medical evidence has not been provided but has been requested by the school.



This list is not exhaustive, and the authorisation of absence is judged on circumstances at the time.

Whilst any child may be off school because they are ill, sometimes they can be reluctant to attend school. Any problems with regular attendance are best resolved between the school, the parents and the child. If your child is reluctant to attend, it is never a good idea to cover up their absence or to give in to pressure to excuse them from attending. This gives the impression that attendance does not matter and usually make things worse. Help and support is always available at school should parents require this. If support is required, please contact the school reception and one of the Attendance Team will be happy to help.

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

A pupil becomes a 'persistent absentee' (PA) when they miss 10% or more of their schooling (i.e. has attendance below 90%) at any given time during 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. All schools are obliged to report pupils who meet persistent absence thresholds every half term to the DfE. PA pupils are tracked and monitored carefully through our pastoral system and we also combine this with academic mentoring where necessary.

We monitor all absence thoroughly and closely track any student with attendance of 95% or below. Any case that is seen to have reached the PA mark (90%), or is at risk of moving towards that mark (below 95%), is given priority and parents will be informed of this.

All pupils with 95% attendance or below are monitored weekly and contact is made with parents. All cases below 90% are automatically made known to the school's Education Welfare Officer, who works to support these students and their families to improve attendance. Pupils who have attendance of less than 95% are reviewed in a weekly meeting, which is chaired by the Principal. At this meeting, actions are agreed for each pupil.

### **Children Missing from Education**

A child missing from education, particularly repeatedly, may be a vital sign of a range of safeguarding possibilities. In line with KCSIE, September 2021 and St Gregory's Catholic Primary School Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy 2021/22, we will work with parents and our local MASH team, as required. Early intervention is necessary to identify the existence of any underlying safeguarding risk and to help prevent the risks of a child going missing in education in the future.



## Procedures

### Registration

- Registration opens from 8.45am. Children will be collected from the playground in their class lines by class staff when the bell rings at 8.45am.
- The children will have until 8.55am to continue to come into class using the designated entrances. At 8.55am the register closes, as will the doors to get into the building.
- Should children arrive after this time, they will need to be taken by an adult to the school office to get their registration mark before they go to class.
- The school gates will close at 9.00am.
- We keep our register electronically using the MIS system 'Arbor'.
- The data is captured by calling out names from class the register. The information is then entered onto the system as the class teacher or their cover calls out names. The office staff will enter a pupil onto the system, using the appropriate code, should they arrive late to school after the register has closed.

### Lateness

If a child is late to school (after 8.55am) they will get an 'L' mark on the register. This will not impact on attendance; however, it is imperative to keep to time so that the school day starts positively for the children. If arrival to school is after 9.15am, a 'U' mark will be given on the register, which signals an unauthorised absence mark; this will impact on attendance and have a long-term impact on the progress a child will make.

Poor punctuality is seriously detrimental to a child's learning and positive start to the school day. If your child arrives after 8.55am, they miss a short period where useful information is given relating to the rest of the day and the vital introduction to an English or Maths lesson that starts promptly at 9.00am. Late arriving pupils also disrupt lessons for teachers and other pupils; can be embarrassing for the child; and can also encourage absence.

<b>Minutes late per day</b>	<b>Learning time lost in a year</b>
5 minutes	3½ days
10 minutes	7 days
15 minutes	10 ½ days
20 minutes	14 days
30 minutes	21 days



### **How we manage lateness:**

Persistent lateness and unauthorised absence may mean that you could face the possibility of a legal action if the problem persists.

You are encouraged at any time to approach school if you are having problems getting your child to school on time. We will do whatever we can to support you and help overcome the barriers. However, if lateness persists you will be asked to meet with the School's Education Welfare Officer to discuss and resolve the problem.

### **Absence Procedures:**

If your child is absent you must:

- Contact us as soon as possible on the first day of absence. This may be done via a telephone call to our number 0121 429 4609 or come into school and report to reception giving information regarding your child's absence personally.
- Please note we monitor whole school attendance below 95% on a weekly basis, with a particular focus on pupils with below 90% attendance (persistent absentees).

If your child is absent we will:

- Record your child's absence on their class register.
- Telephone you on the first day of absence if we have not heard from you. This should not be necessary as it is the parent's responsibility to inform school regarding a pupil absence. If no contact has been made by the second day of absence, school will conduct a safe and well check, visiting the family home.
- If a child is absent for 3 consecutive days and all attempts of making contact have failed, the school may contact the Police to discuss the matter, and request that a 'safe and well' visit be carried out. This action will be taken sooner if the school considers the child to be vulnerable and/or is regularly monitored for attendance, punctuality or safeguarding concerns.
- Invite you in to discuss the situation with our Education Welfare Officer if absences persist.
- Parents must be aware that if the school is not informed of where a child is in school time, the child may be referred to relevant agencies for safeguarding purposes. If a child is absent for 20 school days or more and cannot be located after diligent enquiries have been made, they will be removed from the school's roll and recorded as a 'missing child.' The child will then lose their school place at St Gregory's Catholic Primary School.



## **Roles and Responsibilities**

### **Pupils:**

- To attend school regularly and punctually.
- To arrive in school by 8.55am.
- To attend registration promptly.
- To sign out at the office when leaving the site for approved appointments.
- To arrive to school, ready to engage in positive learning.

### **Parent/carer:**

- To ensure their child attends school regularly, punctually, properly equipped and in a fit condition to learn.
- To notify the school on the first day of absence before 9.15am.
- To contact school again if the child is still absent on the second day.
- To provide a note to explain any absences on the first day the pupil returns to school. This is a reverse burden of proof. It is the parent's job to give school actual evidence.
- To take their family holidays in the school holiday period.
- To provide the school with a telephone number on which they can be contacted in case of emergency. (NB: if a parent does not supply this information and the school has concerns they may contact Children's Social Care or the Police).

### **Class teacher:**

- To keep an accurate attendance register.
- To praise pupils for good attendance and punctuality.
- To monitor pupil absence / lateness.
- To inform SLT when absence is impacting on achievement.

### **School Leadership:**

- To have a named Governor for attendance.
- To appoint an Attendance Leader who is a senior member of staff with responsibility for the strategic management of the attendance agenda and for reporting absence to the DfE (currently Principal).
- Intervene early when individual pupil absence gives cause for concern.
- Develop a multi-agency response to the attendance agenda.





## **EWO/Other Agencies**

The school's EWO needs to work closely with the school in monitoring attendance and lateness.

It is important to fill in the EWO forms where support is requested stating:-

- a. Why the school requires the support of an EWO
- b. What action the school has already taken.

This allows any follow up needing to take place by the EWO to be more structured. In the event of prosecution, the school's registers and documentation would be used.

The school will refer children to the school nurse, children's services, or any other agency, where it is deemed appropriate, to offer support and guidance regarding attendance issues. This is done in collaboration with the EPO service.

The school and the EWO will always seek to resolve attendance difficulties by agreement but, if other ways of trying to improve a child's attendance have failed, these officers can use penalty notices or court proceedings to prosecute parents or to seek an education supervision order on the child.

## **Leave of Absence and Holidays in Term Time**

All requests for leave of absence and holidays in term time should be requested by completing the school's leave of absence form, which is available from the school office. Any requests for leave should be made in writing to the Principal 4 weeks before the leave is required. Leave of absence needs to be requested and agreed before any tickets/flights/firm bookings are made, this will allow time for the request to be considered and discussion to be held as required. Supporting information should also be provided with the request, to explain the circumstances and the need for leave to be taken in term time. Requests for leave of absence in term time for holidays, visiting relatives and weddings are not normally agreed by the Principal.

If the reason for leave is due to an emergency, parents should contact the school office to arrange to discuss this with a member of the Senior Leadership Team.

Please be aware, leave can only be authorised on the content of the request. A request for leave of absence form must be completed fully, and must include details of all people who have care of the child. Incomplete requests will be declined and will not be considered, which will result in the absence being recorded as unauthorised. Parents will normally be informed of the decision in writing. All letters will be kept on file. If the child takes time off when leave has not been granted, this will be recorded as an unauthorised absence.



## **Term time holidays**

Taking holidays in term time will affect your child's academic progress as much as any other absence, and we expect parents to help us by not taking pupils away in school time.

We do not permit holidays in term time and will not authorise requests for leave of absence for this reason. Remember that any savings you think you may make by taking a holiday in school time, are offset by the cost to your child's education. There is no automatic entitlement in law to time off in school time to go on holiday.

Holidays should be taken in school holiday time of which we have plenty of weeks available. Holidays taken in term time may be referred to Sandwell's' Attendance and Prosecution Service, who may then contact parents regarding the leave taken. Parents taking unauthorised leave in term time may be subject to a penalty notice fine being issued by the Local Authority. This is a £60 fine (per child, per parent), if paid within 21 days but rises to £120 (per child, per parent) if not paid within 21 days but paid within 28 days. If fines are not paid, the Attendance and Prosecution Service can refer the matter to Magistrates Court.

## **School targets, projects and special initiatives:**

The school has targets to improve attendance and your child has an important part to play in meeting these targets. Targets for the school and for classes are displayed in the school and you should take time to study them.

The target level of attendance for this school is 97% attendance and we will keep you updated regularly about progress and how your child's attendance compares. Our aim is to achieve better than this, because we know that good attendance is the key to your child reaching their full academic potential.

We monitor whole school attendance and punctuality on a regular basis, to show us where improvements need to be made. Information on any projects or initiatives the school undertakes will be provided in our newsletters and on the parent noticeboard.

## **Incentives for attendance**

Weekly class rewards – treat for any class with 100% attendance. The class with the highest weekly average attendance is rewarded with an extra PE/Outdoor Session with one of our peripatetic sports coaches.

Half termly reward – a variety of treats will be awarded to the 'most improved' class for the half term.

Recognition for 100% attendance will also be given out to pupils at the end of the academic year.



### **Conclusion and Summary**

- The school has a legal duty to publish its absence figures to parents and to promote attendance.
- Parents have a duty to make sure that their children attend and arrive punctually.
- All school staff are committed to working with parents and pupils in order to ensure as high a level of attendance as possible

Parents should feel supported and not threatened by the school's attendance policy. Parents should be aware of the attendance monitoring procedures in place and of actions that will be taken to address poor attendance/punctuality. Parents are welcome to discuss attendance concerns with the class teacher, DSL, Principal or the EWO (contact details from the school office) whenever they feel it is appropriate. The school's policy should be conveyed to the parents by the school prospectus, website, information/newsletters and by talking to them as and when appropriate.

### **Monitoring and Review**

The Principal, Vice Principal and Senior Leadership team will monitor the effectiveness of this policy throughout the academic year. The Principal and assigned Link Governor will report to the governing body on the effectiveness of the policy annually and, if necessary, makes recommendations for further improvements.

**Policy updated and reviewed: March 2022**