

## ATTENDANCE POLICY

### Mission Statement

*'To provide quality education for our children in a happy, secure Christian environment, encouraging pupils to achieve their potential academically, spiritually and socially.'*

### General principles.

The aim of this policy is to promote regular school attendance of All Saints' pupils, enabling them to take full advantage of the educational opportunities available to them.

Regular school attendance is the key to enabling children to maximise the educational opportunities available to them and become emotionally resilient, confident and competent adults who are able to realise their full potential and make a positive contribution to their community. At All Saints' Primary School we aim to develop an ethos which demonstrates to children, parents/carers and the wider community how much we value good attendance and punctuality. All staff will encourage good attendance as it is seen as an achievement in its own right and recognised as such by the school. Our attendance policy is based on the premise of equal opportunities for all.

### Link to Attainment:

The Department of Education has published research into the effect that missing time from school can have on chances of succeeding in tests and exams. (February 2015). The research is based on data from all schools in England going back several years. The results are very clear –missing even small amounts of time from school can have a significant effect on achievement.

For example, at the end of the 2012/13 Academic year 94% of pupils who were present all the time achieved 5+ GCSE A\* - C or equivalent. Where attendance dropped to between 85 and 90% only 75% of pupils achieved these results. This equates to an absence of around 1 week per year during Years 10 and 11 and clearly illustrates the impact of attendance on attainment. The same pattern is also seen at primary school level, where pupils missing up to just 14 days of school in key stage 2, are a quarter less likely to achieve in line with age-related expectations or above in reading, writing or maths tests than those with no absence. Absence from school is a legal matter. By law, all children of compulsory school age who are registered pupils at a school must attend full-time and be punctual. Only schools (not parents) can authorise pupil absence from school, if they are satisfied with the reason provided by the parent. The role of Staffordshire County Council is to encourage and enforce the law on school attendance. Ultimately, the local authority can instigate legal action. It is therefore essential that good habits regarding attendance start early.

### Procedures in the Case of Absence

#### Parents / Carers:

All parents/carers are expected to provide an explanation if their son or daughter is absent on the first day the absence occurs. This can be by email, telephone or personally at the office before 08:50am. Subsequently if the absence is likely to be more than 3 days, parents/carers must inform school of the reason and the probable length of the absence. Unreported absences will be marked as unauthorised and if they build up, may lead to fines.

- Following an absence of more than one day, an explanatory note is required by school.
- Doctor/dentist appointment cards/hospital letters etc will be asked for.

Children are sometimes reluctant to attend school and this can lead to persistent absence. Any problems with regular attendance are best sorted out between school, parents/carers and the child. If a child is reluctant to attend, it is never helpful 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 will probably make things worse. Where there is persistent absence,

contact will be made with parents inviting them to come into school to discuss the issue with a view to solving the problem. Outside agencies may be called upon for assistance. If this is the case, parents/carers will be informed. Parents are expected to contact school at an early stage and to work with the staff in resolving any problems together. This is nearly always successful. If difficulties cannot be sorted out in this way, the school may refer the child to the (Education Welfare Worker/Education Social Worker) from the Local Education Authority. He/she will also try to resolve the situation by agreement but, if other ways of trying to improve the child's attendance have failed, these officers can use court proceedings to prosecute parents or to seek an Education Supervision Order on the child. The maximum penalty on conviction is a fine of £2500 and/or 3 months imprisonment.

Alternatively, parents or children may wish to contact the (EWO) 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 office or by contacting the Local Education Authority.

### **Procedures for Lateness**

- All parents/carers of children who arrive in school after 8.55am must use the main entrance and report to the school office with the reason for the lateness, which will be recorded. Pupils who are not present at the start of the school day will be marked absent initially. If they arrive before 9.30am (when registers close), this will be changed to 'present but late'. Lateness for any pupil arriving after 9.30am requires either a letter or a verbal explanation to a member of the office team. All reasons for lateness will be recorded. Although the headteacher will use her discretion, lateness after 9.30am may be marked as unauthorised absence.
- If children are persistently late parents will receive a letter requesting that they comply with school regulations and protocol relating to attendance and punctuality. They will be given the opportunity to come into school to discuss the problem.

### **School:**

- A member of the office staff will contact parents by telephone on the morning of the first day of absence if parents have failed to inform the school of the absence. If contact is not made with parents/carers, this may become a safeguarding/welfare or even police matter if we have any concerns about the whereabouts of a child. (This is a particular concern for our older children who walk to school).
- Class teachers take a register twice a day. In addition, the class teacher alerts office staff and headteacher regarding children causing concern re attendance. Each case will be considered on its own merits, and if school staff have concerns over a pupil's welfare and no absence explanation has been received, the case will be referred to the school's safeguarding lead and a referral may be made to Social Services.
- Children's attendance is recorded using the symbols advised by the DfE and Staffordshire County Council.
- The office staff, headteacher and Local Authority professionals, have regular meetings to review whole school attendance, individual's attendance, and specified groups' attendance.
- The headteacher meet with the Educational Welfare Officer to monitor attendance of individual children causing concern regarding attendance. Intervention strategies and their impact on attendance are implemented, monitored and reviewed for children whose attendance falls below 90% as this is when it is considered persistent. (Our whole school target is 97%) This is seen as an important indicator and children with attendance below this are classed as vulnerable children in a number of ways, in addition to the impact that this has on their academic achievements. If attendance falls below this percentage, letters are sent to parents outlining concerns and explaining that a further review will take place at the end of the next half-term or end of term whichever comes first. This review is carried out in conjunction with the Educational Welfare Service; if attendance hasn't improved from first concern another letter will be sent out.
- The office staff issue a half termly attendance report for teachers. This is reviewed and discussed and any appropriate action taken. Good (above 95%), and 100% attendance is acknowledged, praised and rewarded.
- Classes with the best attendance each week will be recognised and rewarded in the school's weekly Good Work assembly.

## Types of absence

Every half day absence from school has to be classified by the school, as either AUTHORISED or UNAUTHORISED. This is why information about the cause of each absence is always required, preferably in writing. Authorised absences are mornings or afternoons away from school for a good reason; illness or other unavoidable cause. Unauthorised absences are those which the school does not consider reasonable and for which no "leave" has been given. This includes:

- parents keeping children off school unnecessarily
- truancy before or during the day
- absences which have never been properly explained
- children who arrive at school too late to get a mark.

## Holidays in Term Time

The decision as to whether an absence is authorised or unauthorised is entirely at the discretion of the headteacher, as indicated by the Department for Education. Government regulations state that headteacher may **not** grant leave of absence during term time for family holidays unless there are **exceptional** circumstances. The headteacher will also determine how many days may be granted. Parents who take their child out of school without permission will have the absence recorded as 'unauthorised' and may be subject to a fine. Parents/carers may be fined after **ten days** of unauthorised absence at any time over the previous three terms, regardless of attendance record.

## Penalty Notices

Penalty Notices are fines, issued by Staffordshire EWS for a child unauthorised from school.

The service will always consider legal action when there is no legitimate reason for absence. They will be issued by post. Parents have three choices:

- Pay the fine within 21 days which is £60 per child per parent
- Pay after 21 days but within 28 days which is £120 per child per parent
- Don't pay the fine, which leads to magistrates Court proceedings, which in turn could lead to a £1000 fine for each child causing concern.
- NB - Maximum action is imprisonment.
- Revenue from Penalty Notices is retained by the County Council.
- The law gives powers to the Local Authority and other designated bodies to issue Penalty Notices where a parent/carer is considered able but unwilling to ensure their child's school attendance.
- Full payment of the Penalty Notice means that parents/carers can avoid being prosecuted and convicted. Penalty notices are issued per parent per child at £120. However, if paid within 21 days the cost is £60 per parent, per child. In every case a pupil must have had a minimum of 10 school days (20 sessions) lost to unauthorised absence during the current term or in 2 consecutive terms before a Penalty Notice is considered.
- Persistent late arrival at school, i.e. after the register has closed, in the current and previous term may also trigger the issuing of a Penalty Notice. "Persistent" means 10 times over a 12 week period. These late episodes do not need to be consecutive.
- Amendments to the 2006 regulations remove reference to family holidays and extended leave as well as the statutory threshold of ten school days. The amendments make clear that headteacher may not grant any leave of absence during term time unless there are exceptional circumstances. Should you wish to remove your child from school for a holiday or need to apply for a leave of absence for exceptional circumstances - please complete 'Request for Leave during Term Time'. This form is available from the school office. Upon return of the form to school any request for leave in exceptional circumstances will be considered and parents will receive a letter advising them whether or not the period of leave will be authorised. If it has not been authorised the letter will provide the reason why. In the case of a notification of intention to remove children for a holiday, parents will receive a letter to advise them that the period of absence will be unauthorised and that they may receive a Penalty Notice if they take their child out of school.
- Where parents take their child away without permission, or do not apply for permission in advance of the holiday and seek approval retrospectively, absences are considered unauthorised.

- If exceptional circumstances have been accepted and the leave of absence is authorised, if the period of absence goes beyond the date agreed for the child's return, this extra time may be treated as unauthorised absence.
- Where a pupil fails to return within ten school days of the agreed return date and no mitigating circumstances have been offered, schools have the power to remove the child from the school roll.

Policy reviewed December 2017

Next review December 2018