



## IMPLEMENTATION OF PENALTY NOTICES TO TACKLE NON-SCHOOL ATTENDANCE

Reducing absence from school is a key priority both nationally and locally. At St Louis Catholic Academy, we appreciate that the majority of parents ensure that their children attend school regularly.

St Louis Catholic Academy is committed to providing all children with the best start in life and works hard to improve the attendance of a small but significant minority.

This letter is to inform you that from 1<sup>st</sup> September 2007, the Education Attendance Service on behalf of Suffolk County Council has been issuing fixed penalty notices in the following situations where unauthorised absence occurs:

- Where a pupil has been absent during term-time for 4 or more days and the absence is not authorised by the school.
- Where a pupil is stopped with parents/carers during a truancy sweep and the absence is not authorised by the school.
- Where a pupil has missed at least 8 sessions (4 school days) of unauthorised absence during the school year before a Penalty Notice is considered.

In every case a pupil will have lost a minimum of 8 sessions (4 school days) of unauthorised absence during the school year before a Penalty Notice is considered.

It is important that you ensure that your child(ren) attend school regularly and if your child is absent from school you must make the school fully aware of the circumstances. Please remember that schools are limited in the reasons they can accept for absences and they are required to notify the Local Authority if a pupil is regularly missing school for unacceptable reasons.

If you are concerned about your child's school attendance it is important that you contact your child's school as soon as possible to discuss the problem.

Thank you for your support in this matter.

### REQUEST FOR SPECIAL LEAVE OF ABSENCE OF SCHOOL PUPIL ON ANNUAL HOLIDAY

From September 2013, legislation concerning term-time holidays has changed. Previously, schools were allowed to grant leave for family holidays of up to 10 days per year, and over 10 days in 'exceptional circumstances,' at the head teacher's discretion. Now, however, head teachers and attendance officers cannot grant any authorised absence during term-time, unless in exceptional circumstances. Those circumstances are up to the head, but essentially, term-time holidays will no longer be authorised.

Schools and local authorities can ask for evidence of exceptional circumstances such as weddings or funerals, and for evidence of illness if children are off sick. The statutory ten-day threshold for term-time absence has also been removed; now, if a head teacher grants authorised leave, he or she will determine for how long.

**Authorised absences** are those where the school gives permission for a child to be away in advance, or accepts the explanation offered afterwards. These include being absent due to illness, a funeral, a medical appointment or a religious observance.

**Unauthorised absences** are not approved by the school, and typically include holidays and outings, or absences with no explanation.

## **OUR POLICY FOR ABSENCES IN TERM TIME**

- Time off will not be authorised for outings, day trips, long weekends, birthdays, visiting relatives, shopping or looking after relatives in England or abroad.
- The school will not authorise an absence if the timing of the absence coincides with SATs or individual school testing periods or induction periods e.g. first two weeks in September.
- **A valid reason for requesting a term time absence must be provided – an absence in term time should only be taken when an absence during a school closure period is unavoidable. You are asked to provide a clear reason for this request.**
- Requests will be considered in the light of a pupil's previous attendance record. Requests for pupils with attendance below 90% in the current or previous academic year will not be authorised.
- Provide written evidence where possible, e.g. Hospital/Doctor/Dentist appointment letter.

**A school with lots of unauthorised absence is likely to come under scrutiny from both Ofsted and the local authority. Parents also have a legal responsibility concerning their children's attendance, and local authorities can bring legal action against families where attendance levels cause concern.**