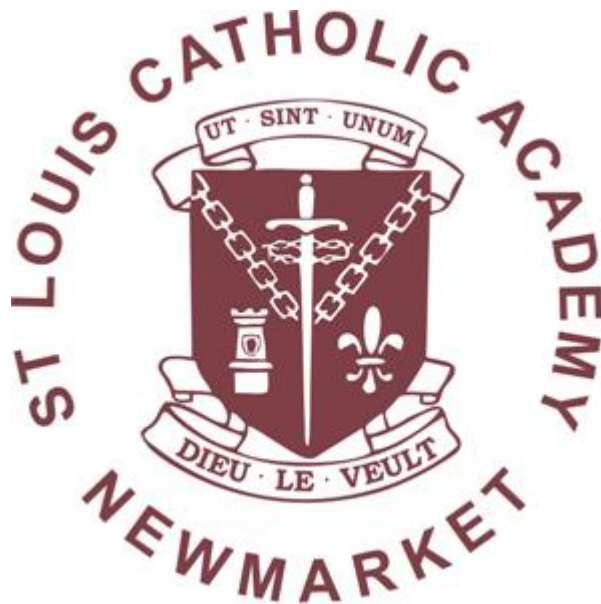


St Louis Catholic Academy

“Loving to Learn, Learning to Love”

Attendance Policy



Date approved	
Signed	(Chair of Governors)
Minuted	
Date of next review	February 2019

Purpose: To explain how the school monitors attendance, deals with non-attendance and absence requests and encourages good levels of attendance.

Introduction

For our children to gain the greatest benefit from their education at St Louis, good school attendance is essential and parents/carers, pupils and teachers all have their part to play in ensuring this happens. All children are expected to attend school on-time and for the full 190 days of the academic year, unless there is a good reason for absence. The Department for Education sets out the requirements placed on schools. These requirements are detailed in the following legislation:

- The Education Act 1996 - sections 434(1)(3)(4)&(6) and 458(4)&(5);
- The Education (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2006;
- The Education (Pupil Registration) (England) (Amendment) Regulations 2010;
- The Education (Pupil Registration) (England) (Amendment) Regulations 2011;
- The Education (Pupil Registration) (England) (Amendment) Regulations 2013; and
- The Education (Pupil Registration) (England) (Amendment) Regulations 2016.

It is very important that parents/carers ensure their children attends school on a regular basis. This policy sets out how we will achieve this together.

Why is regular attendance at school so important?

There is a strong link between a child's school attendance and their attainment. Research has found a strong statistical link between absenteeism and educational underachievement (e.g. Gottfried 2011, 2013a; Hancock et al., 2013). Early poor attendance habits follow through into secondary school and employments. Any child's absence disrupts their education and teaching routines, so may also affect the learning of others in the same class. Ensuring a child's regular attendance at school (above 96% attendance) is the legal responsibility of the parents/carers. Permitting a child's absence from school without good reason creates an offence in law and may result in prosecution.

How do we promote regular attendance?

Helping to create a habit of regular attendance is everybody's responsibility – parents/carers, children and school staff.

To help children create a habit of regular attendance, we will:

- celebrate good attendance on a weekly basis by awarding the Attendance Cup each week in Celebration Assembly to the class with the highest attendance in the previous week;

- inform parents/carers promptly in writing if their child's attendance falls below the acceptable level and work with them to raise attendance;
- share clear written information about attendance in school newsletters, leaflets, website, etc;
- award termly Attendance Certificates for children who attain 100% attendance over the term;
- award yearly Attendance Badges for children who attain 100% attendance over the school year; and
- award Headteacher's Awards to those children who have improved their attendance over time.

What are the different types of absence?

There are three types of absence:

- *Authorised*: the school approves the pupil's requested absence;
- *Unauthorised*: the school will *not* approve the pupil's requested absence; and
- *Persistent*: when a child's overall absence equates to 10 per cent or more of their possible sessions.

Authorised absences

Examples of authorised absences would include time taken during the school day for good reason such as illness, emergency medical or dental appointments which are unavoidable during school time, family emergencies, religious observance or other unavoidable cause.

Unauthorised absences

Unauthorised absences are those which the school does not consider reasonable or unavoidable and for which no leave has been given. This type of absence can lead to a Penalty Notice being issued. Examples of unauthorised absences would include:

- Parents/carers keeping children off school unnecessarily (e.g. shopping trips, days out, birthdays, looking after other children, after a 'late night');
- absences which have not been explained despite requests from school;
- children who arrive at school too late to receive a mark in the register (after 9.30am);
- excessive illness without medical evidence; and
- day trips/holidays in term time which have not previously been agreed.

Persistent absence

A child becomes a 'persistent' absentee when they miss 10% or more schooling across the school year *for whatever reason*. Absence at this level will be doing considerable damage to any child's educational prospects and a rapid improvement will be required to improve attendance.

Every half-day absence from school has to be recorded and classified by the school as authorised or unauthorised. This is why information about the absence is always requested from parents/carers.

What should I do if my child will be absent e.g. due to illness?

If a child is absent, parents/carers should call the school, as early as possible but before 9.30am, stating a reason on the day of absence. Parents/carers of children in Year 5 and 6 children who have permission to walk to school should inform the school of any absence before 8.50am. Absences must be explained either by an acceptable written and dated note or by a personal telephone message, which will be recorded and passed to the class teacher. **Any reason given will be recorded in SIMS by the administration team for monitoring purposes.**

If the case of a child being absent with no reason given, the following steps will be taken by the School:

For children in Years 5 and 6 for whom we hold permission for them to walk to school the first thing that staff will do is check the classroom to ensure that the child is definitely absent. Office staff will then inform the Head of School and call all contact numbers held for the pupil. They will also call anyone who they are aware provides lifts for the child and finally, if they know of a sibling at another school, they will call their school. If they are unable to contact anyone by this point, they will call the Police to report the child missing and the Head of School or another member of staff may make a home visit.

For all other children, the Office staff will phone parents/carers or email and leave a message asking them to call to explain their child's absence. The call is recorded in the First Day Calling Book and the Head of School is notified of any child for whom no reason has been given. Any absence for which no reason has been given is recorded as "N" and is unauthorised. Upon the return to School of the child, the parent will be sent a letter asking them to provide the reason for absence. If nothing is received, the absence will remain unauthorised.

What will the school do if my child is absent without notification?

If contact explaining the child's absence fails to be made by parents or carers, then the school will contact the home by telephone on the initial day (known as 'first call' response), and subsequent days, following this with a letter after three days of unexplained absence. **This contact will be recorded in SIMS by the administration team.**

How do I request time off for medical or dental appointments?

Should a child require time off during the school day for e.g. medical appointments, parents/carers are required to complete an absence request form *in advance*, providing written evidence (e.g. copy appointment card, e-mail or letter) which covers the time requested. The Head of School and/or Attendance Officer will then consider the individual

request in light of the circumstances and pupil's attendance record to date and let the parents/carers know their decision.

Absence requests will NOT be authorised if the pupil's attendance is already below 90% in the current or previous school year, for reasons other than emergency medical or dental appointments.

We expect that parents/carers will endeavour to make routine medical and dental appointments for children outside school hours and during school holidays wherever possible, to minimise avoidable absences from school.

How do I make a request for exceptional leave in term time?

Exceptional leave refers to any request for time out of school in term time other than medical/dental appointments.

The school will not authorise requests for term-time absence:

- the three days at the beginning or end of school terms;
- the three days before or after half-terms; or
- during May, as this is a key period of pupil assessment.

If you wish to apply for a period of exceptional leave, you must do so in writing at least two weeks in advance to the Head of School explaining the reasons for your request, with supporting documentation wherever possible. A form is available from the school for this specific purpose, either from the school website or directly from the school office. If a child's attendance is less than 96%, it is unlikely that the exceptional leave will be authorised.

A lack of response from the Head of School does not mean the exceptional leave request has been authorised. Exceptional leave cannot be approved retrospectively.

There is no entitlement to any days' absence from school per academic year and the 'right' for your child to be granted exceptional leave cannot be earned through good attendance.

How is my child's attendance recorded by the school?

Complete and accurate daily registers are of key importance. Registers provide the daily record of the attendance of all pupils; they are documents that **may be required in a court of law**, for example as evidence in prosecutions for non-attendance at school. They also contribute to pupil's reports and to records of achievement.

St Louis staff complete the daily class registers electronically in SIMS, and all staff receive appropriate training in order to carry out this task. Should the electronic system fail, there is a back-up paper version to be used in such circumstances, thus ensuring that attendance is always accurately recorded.

In terms of completing the back-up paper version of attendance registers, staff use:

- **black** diagonal line to denote presence;
- **red** circle to denote unauthorised absence;
- **red circle with correct symbol recorded inside in Red** for absence – no unmarked sessions allowed; and
- No tippex.

At 9.30am, the registers are closed. In accordance with the regulations, if a child arrives after that time, they will receive a mark that shows them to be on site, but this will NOT count as a present mark and it will mean they have an unauthorised absence. This may mean that parents/carers could face the possibility of a Penalty Notice if the problem persists.

If your child develops persistent lateness, you will be asked to meet with the Head of School and/or Attendance Officer to resolve the problem, but you can approach us at any time if you are having problems getting your child to school on time.

What happens if my child is late for school?

School begins at 8.50am promptly and all pupils are expected to be in class for registration by this time. Outside doors are closed at 8.50am. Any child arriving later than 8.50am should enter school via the main entrance reporting to the school reception. The parent or carer should give a reason for the lateness and sign the late register. The Receptionist will then escort the child to their classroom with a late slip for the classteacher.

Pupils who are consistently late are disrupting not only their own education, but also that of others. Where persistent lateness gives cause for concern further action may be taken.

Registers officially close at 9.30am and registration after this time without an authorised reason will be classed as unauthorised and will count towards the school’s absence return.

How does the school monitor children’s attendance?

The school monitors all children’s attendance at school on a daily basis. The school notes any children whose attendance falls below the thresholds below and the Head of School contacts the parents/carers by letter to advise them that the child’s attendance needs to improve.

96% and above	Good attendance level.
Between 93% and 96%	Below an acceptable level.
Between 90% and 93%	Significantly below an acceptable level.
Below 90%	Extremely low. An improvement must be made.

Whilst we understand that some absences (e.g. illness) can be unavoidable, the attendance of any children whose parents/carers have been sent a letter will be monitored more closely from that point on. Should the children's attendance not improve within four school weeks, the parents/carers may be invited to meet with the Head of School to discuss further. Where attendance does improve, the Head of School will write also to parents/carers to acknowledge the fact and to thank them for their support.

How does the school recognise good attendance?

We recognise that the majority of children have good attendance in school and that most parents/carers ensure that their children are attending school regularly. It is important that this is recognised.

The school will recognise good attendance (96% or above) through:

- awarding the Attendance Cup each week in Celebration Assembly to the class with the highest attendance in the previous week;
- awarding termly Attendance Certificates for individual children who attain 100% attendance over the term;
- awarding yearly Attendance Badges for individual children who attain 100% attendance over the school year; and
- awarding Headteacher's Awards to those children who have improved their attendance over time and write thank you letters to their parents/carers for their support.

What can parents/carers do to support their child's attendance?

Parents/carers can support their children in avoiding unauthorised absences by measures such as:

- let the school know as soon as possible why your child is away;
- make routine medical and dental appointments outside school time;
- do not allow your child to have time off school unless it is really necessary.
- ensuring regular and early bed times in term time;
- helping with homework;
- having uniform and equipment needed prepared the night before;
- providing a healthy breakfast;
- reporting any academic or social concerns to the class teacher promptly;
- being positive about school (even if that was not your own personal experience); and
- encouraging your child to invite friends home for play occasionally.

If you are concerned about your child's attendance at school you should:

- Talk to your child; it may be something simple;
- Talk with your child's classteacher; and

- Talk with the Head of School or Attendance Officer to see what support may be available.

Summary

- Good attendance at school is an example of the effective partnership between school and parents/carers.
- Good attendance promotes good achievement for children.
- Parents/carers have a legal responsibility to ensure their child's good attendance at school. This means attendance of at least 96%.
- St Louis Catholic Academy has a legal duty to promote good attendance for all pupils and to publish its attendance figures and its Attendance Policy.
- St Louis Catholic Academy supports parents/carers and children through a range of measures to promote good attendance and address poor and/or deteriorating attendance on a prompt and regular basis, so that children can benefit from their education as fully as possible.