



# School Attendance Policy

## Introduction

The Governors and Staff at St Gabriel's are committed to providing a safe and secure learning environment for all pupils and to apply all policies and strategies fairly to ensure that everyone in school is treated with respect and understanding and in compliance with all legislation and guidance.

The School's ethos, as set by Governors and Staff, is based upon the belief that Pupils learn best in a safe and calm environment that is free from disruption and in which education is the primary focus; in applying a strategy for application of this policy, this has been paramount. Good behaviour is the key to this ethos and the values of:

- respecting each other
- facilitating an effective educational learning environment
- knowing how actions may impact or affect another person.

It is our aim that these values, firmly rooted in the school's Christian ethos, permeate the whole school environment, not only in the playground, corridors, and classrooms but also beyond the school's premises/site.

## Rationale

At St Gabriel's we expect all our pupils to take full advantage of the educational opportunities available to them. Poor attendance and punctuality can adversely affect a pupil, their class, and the school's performance and has potential longer term consequences. The Head Teacher, Staff and Governors aim to encourage excellent levels of attendance and punctuality and have adopted and apply appropriate procedures to deal with such matters.

As a school we believe that the most important factor in promoting school attendance is the development of positive attitudes towards school – by both children and parents. To this end we strive to make our school a happy and rewarding experience for all our children. This includes our parents/carers – that, whatever their own personal experience of school may have been, they feel welcomed, encouraged and supported; that they recognise and value our school ethos in promoting a happy and productive 'family' environment.

## Statutory Framework

Under the 1996 Education Act a pupil is required to attend the school where they are a registered pupil. By law all children of compulsory school age (between 5 and 16) must receive a suitable education.

Schools are open for 190 days each year and all pupils have the right to their 190 days of teaching and learning and a wider school experience.

## Rights and Responsibilities

Ensuring all pupils have excellent school attendance and punctuality is the responsibility of all school staff, parents/carers and the pupils themselves.

## Pupils

All pupils are expected to attend school regularly and punctually. Pupils who, for whatever reason, experience attendance difficulties will be offered a range of support.

Pupils are encouraged to talk through any problems that may be the root cause of any attendance issue(s) and where appropriate / necessary, parents will be contacted. Pupils with consistently good attendance or pupils who have overcome significant difficulties relating to their attendance are praised or rewarded.

## Parents' responsibilities

Parents / carers are committing an offence if they fail to ensure that their child is attending school on a regular basis.

Attendance and Punctuality:

- a) The primary responsibility for ensuring that their child attends school regularly and arrives on time rests with parents / carers. They must also ensure their child is properly dressed, equipped with learning material and in a fit condition to learn.
- b) Attendance and punctuality can be affected by a wide range of school, home-based or community factors.
- c) In reference to children being in a fit condition to learn, parents please note: children who are in the habit of staying up late or regularly missing breakfast may be tired at the start of the day and not in the correct state to learn.
- d) If a child is prevented for any reason from attending school or is late, parents must notify the school as soon as possible by telephone and/or in writing.
- e) A child's absence from school will be considered as unauthorised until a satisfactory explanation is provided by the parent / carer.
- f) Parents / carers will be notified promptly of any concerns relating to their child's attendance or punctuality.
- g) Communication to parents / carers regarding such matters may include phone calls, letters, or a home visit from the Education Welfare Officer.

## Appointments

- Parents should avoid, if at all possible, making dental / medical appointments for their children during school hours.
- Parents are encouraged to make routine appointments during school holidays or after school hours.
- Family bereavement or taking part in an agreed religious observation is acceptable for short absences but must be requested in advance.
- Unacceptable reasons for children missing school include shopping and birthdays.

This is not an exhaustive list.

## Holidays in term time

Revised regulations, which came into effect on 1<sup>st</sup> September 2013, removed all references to 'family holidays', 'extended leave' and the former statutory threshold which allowed up to ten school days leave per year for the purpose of a family holiday during term-time.

**The regulations are explicit that:**

- **Headteachers cannot authorise any leave of absence during term time unless they are satisfied that there are exceptional circumstances.**
- **Parents must make an application in advance.** Schools cannot **grant** retrospective approval for **any** leave of absence.
- There is **no entitlement** for parents to take their child on holiday during term-time.

In addition, when considering applications for discretionary leave of absence, **Headteachers must always:**

- **be satisfied that each child's individual circumstances warrant being granted leave;**
- take into account the frequency of any such requests, the pupil's attainment, overall attendance and ability to catch up on missed lessons; and then

- determine the number of days, if any, a child can be away from school.

Please note: requests for absence in the period leading up to, or the week of, any formal tests (SATs) will **automatically be refused**. Any absence in Year 6 would also, in most circumstances, be routinely refused.

**Consequently, a request for leave of absence in term time is not guaranteed automatically. It will be a rare, irregular occurrence, only allowed in exceptional circumstances.**

The Local Authority Policy Statement **identifies** a generic list of **examples** of 'exceptional circumstances' which **may** justify approval. These examples include:

- members of the armed forces who are returning home from active duties.
- emergency services personnel (Police, Ambulance, Fire and Rescue) who are unable to take leave at certain times of the year.
- employees who are prevented from taking family holidays outside term-time.
- the death of an immediate family member (**parent, grandparent, sibling, uncle or aunt**).
- a child or parent/carer receiving medical treatment abroad – additional guidelines apply and evidence must be supplied **which is supported by a senior medical consultant**.
- families who can evidence that they have experienced genuine disruption to their originally agreed return travel plans, e.g. severe weather conditions or civil unrest.

**Note:** in the case of all intended travel abroad, copies of travel arrangements/tickets are requested providing confirmation of intended dates of both outward and return journeys.

Each application will be considered individually by school and all the factors taken into account. The child's overall attendance and punctuality record will also be examined as part of the decision process.

### **Penalty Notices – Circumstances of Use**

The circumstances in which a penalty notice for non-attendance may be issued include:

- Parentally condoned absence
- **Unauthorised holidays in term time**
- **Unwarranted delayed return from discretionary leave (without school agreement)**
- Persistent late arrival after the register has closed

'Parentally condoned absence' also refers to 'ad hoc' absences, not necessarily consecutive days, which are deemed to be **unauthorised**.

Penalty notices may be issued in these circumstances for a **minimum of 10 unauthorised school sessions (5 days)** by any child in any **one term** and/or a **minimum of 14 unauthorised school sessions (7 days) over two consecutive terms**.

Persistent late arrival after the register has closed will be monitored and determined by the school's Education Welfare Officer and Penalty Notices issued accordingly.

*(Note: these procedures comply with BwD, Blackpool & Lancashire County Local Authorities' Joint Procedures for Issuing Education-related Penalty Notices July 2015 – policy available upon request.)*

### **Penalty Notices - costs**

By law, individual Education Penalty Notices are required to be issued to each liable parent/carer per child, i.e. in the case of a family with both parents and two children who are taken out of school without the Headteacher's permission, 4 x separate Penalty Notices will be issued.

Further amendments to the Education Regulations have reduced the time limits by which a Penalty Notice amount must be paid:

Payment of penalty within 21 days - £60 per parent, per child; and where not paid

Payment of penalty within 28 days - £120 per parent, per child  
Non-payment of the penalty within 28 days will normally trigger prosecution in the Magistrates Court

Please refer to school's Absence During Term Time Policy.

## **Registration**

Each Class Register is called promptly at 8.55am and at 1.05pm. The Register is marked in accordance with the regulation and symbols as set out by the Department for Education. Pupils arriving after the yard gates have closed must enter school through the main entrance and report to the office. These children will then be issued with a 'late' card to issue to their class teacher to ensure that the register is marked accurately.

Registers are monitored daily and act as the initial warning system for a number of issues which may affect the child's welfare, including truancy, child protection, illness and a range of home- and school-based issues.

The school office will contact parents of children who have not telephoned the school by 9.30 a.m. to provide a reason for the absence.

## **Education Welfare Officer (EWO)**

The EWO regularly and independently checks the school registers to ensure the correct procedures are being followed. Accurate marking of registers is fundamental to the whole school approach to promoting good attendance and staff adhere strictly to that requirement.

The EWO follows up absences by telephoning and / or home visiting parents / carers. The EWO relies on data from the attendance register being precise, therefore amendments to registers are not permitted, as inaccurate, amended or incorrect information undermines the partnership school develops with pupils, parents / carers and other agencies involved with or supporting school and it is acknowledged that this may also damage confidence in the school, and may result in a child being wrongly punished at home.

## **STRATEGY FOR FOLLOWING UP ABSENCES**

### **Procedures**

At St Gabriel's we offer an environment in which pupils feel valued and welcomed. The school's ethos must demonstrate that pupils feel that their presence in school is important, that they will be missed when they are absent or late and that follow-up action will be taken.

- The school office will contact with parents of absent children who have not already informed the school of the reason for their absence by 9.30 a.m.
- Parents of pupils returning to school after a period of absence must confirm the reasons for the absence. Failure to provide a written note or offer a satisfactory explanation for the pupil's absence is a key point in absence monitoring and the school administrator will contact the parents again.
- Should a pupil be persistently absent or late, and if the school's efforts to effect an improvement in attendance or punctuality have been unsuccessful, the Education Welfare Officer will be notified.

### **Specific Strategies**

- Parents will be informed of the importance of good attendance and punctuality.

- Staff complete registers accurately for each session and will bring to the attention of the Head Teacher and Education Welfare Officer any absences that are cause for concern or that appear suspicious.
- The Education Welfare Officer will meet regularly with the school Business Manager and other staff in school and professional staff from other agencies that support school in order to identify, assess and support those pupils who are experiencing attendance difficulties.
- The Head Teacher is always notified of the name of each pupil arriving late for school, and records are kept of the times and occasions that the pupil is late.
- All parents / carers are asked to telephone or notify the school if their child is absent or ill.
- The school office will make telephone contact, initially using the home contact details, when a child is absent, should the parents have failed to notify the school that their child will be absent and provide a reason for that absence, e.g. illness.
- Where a pupil is developing a pattern of occasional absences the parent / carer will be contacted to discuss the pattern.
- The Education Welfare Officer follows up absences that are suspicious or causing concern.
- Where appropriate the school and the Education Welfare Officer will work closely with the local authority to take legal action against parents / carers who are unlawfully keeping their children from school.
- Attendance data is regularly collected and analysed in order to help identify patterns, set targets, correlate attendance with achievement, and support and inform policy / practice.
- Good or greatly improved attendance is recognised and rewarded.

## **Outcomes**

The Head Teacher and Staff, supported by the Governors, will do all they can to ensure that pupils come happily, willingly, regularly and punctually to school and ensure that they gain the greatest possible value from their education.

**Revised: January 2016**

**To be reviewed: Spring 2019**