

# **Sacred Heart Catholic Primary School Attendance**

## **Policy**

### **Mission statement:**

*“Let it be known to all who enter here that Christ is the reason for this school, the unseen but ever present teacher in its classes, the model for its children, the inspiration for its staff.”*

### **Introduction**

We aim for an environment which enables and encourages all members of the community to reach out for excellence. For our children to gain the greatest benefit from their education it is vital that they attend regularly and your child should be at school, on time, every day the school is open unless the reason for the absence is unavoidable. It is very important therefore that you make sure that your child attends regularly and this policy sets out how together we will achieve this.

### **Why Regular Attendance is so 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 this may affect the learning of others in the same class. Ensuring your child’s regular attendance at school is your legal responsibility and permitting absence from school without a good reason creates an offence in law and may result in prosecution.

### **Promoting Regular Attendance at Sacred Heart**

Helping to create a pattern of regular attendance is everybody’s responsibility - parents, pupils and all members of school staff.

### **Attendance will be encouraged in the following ways:**

- Accurate completion of the online registers at the beginning of each session (morning session 8.50am/ afternoon session 1:05pm KS1 or 1:15pm KS2).
- Attendance checks daily by school office; first day calling if message not received from a parent or carer, to explain a child’s absence and a home visit by members of the Senior Leadership Team if no contact made and the child is considered to be at possible risk.
- A certificate for 100% attendance for any one term and a certificate for 100% attendance throughout the year. (Attendance is 100% if there has been no absence).
- Identifying and supporting pupils who have attendance problems in advance of the transition between KS2 and KS3. This should include the sharing of relevant information with the destination school.

- Establishing a mechanism for working with those parents who are concerned that their children may be experiencing difficulty in attending school.
- Sacred Heart makes use of computerised registration systems which provides valuable year group, class and pupil level attendance data which enables speedy analysis and timely responses by the school.

### **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 any absence is always required.

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 "leave" has been given. This type of absence can lead to the Local Authority (Participation Team) using sanctions and/or legal proceedings. This includes:

- Parents/carers keeping children off school unnecessarily
- Truancy during the school day
- Absences which have never been properly explained
- Children who arrive at school too late to get a mark
- Shopping, looking after other children or birthdays
- Day trips and holidays in term time which have not been agreed
- Excessive illness without medical evidence

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 sorted out between the school, the parents and the child. If your child is reluctant to attend, please come and talk to us and we will help. It is never helpful to cover up their absence or to give in to pressure to excuse them from attending.

You can support your child by:

- Ensuring regular and early bed times
- Helping with homework
- Having uniform and equipment prepared the night before
- Providing a healthy breakfast
- Reporting any academic or social concerns promptly
- Retaining open & honest communication with the school
- Being positive about school
- Encouraging your child to invite friend's home

## **Persistent Absence [PA]**

A pupil becomes a 'persistent absentee' when they miss 10% or more schooling across the school year for whatever reason. Absence at this level is doing considerable damage to any child's educational prospects and we need parent's fullest support and co-operation to tackle this.

We monitor all absence thoroughly. Any case that is seen to have reached the PA mark or is at risk of moving towards that mark is given priority and you will be informed of this immediately.

PA pupils are tracked and monitored carefully and are automatically made known to the Participation Officer.

## **Procedures if your child is absent**

### **If your child is absent you must:**

- Contact us as soon as possible on the first day of absence via Weduc. If you are able, please also notify us of the expected date of your child's return. Should your child still be unwell on this date, please notify us via Weduc again.

### **If your child is absent we will:**

- Telephone or text you on the first day of absence if we have not heard from you;
- Contact you if we consider your child's attendance is causing concern.
- Make a home visit if your child is considered to be at risk.
- After notifying you, we will refer the matter to the Pupil Attendance & Participation Officer if attendance moves below 95%.

## **Telephone numbers**

There are times when we need to contact parents about lots of things, including absence, so we need to have your contact numbers at all times. Help us to help you and your child by making sure we always have an up-to-date number – if we do not then something important may be missed. There will be reminders to keep emergency contact numbers up to date.

## **The Participation Officer**

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 Participation Officer from the Local Authority. The Participation Officer will also try to resolve the situation by agreement

but, if other ways of trying to improve the child's attendance have failed and unauthorised absences persist, these Officers can use sanctions such as Penalty Notices per parent/carer per child. If unpaid after 28 days, a summons to Court will be issued for each unpaid Penalty Notice or prosecutions in the Magistrates Court. The legislation is the Education Act 1996 sec. 444 (1) and 444 (1A). Parents that have previously been issued with Penalty Notices for their children's unauthorised absences, in the event of further unauthorised absences may be summoned to court.

Alternatively, parents or children may wish to contact the Participation Team themselves to ask for help or information. They are independent of the school and will give impartial advice. Their telephone number is 01895 250858.

### **Lateness**

Poor punctuality is detrimental to a child's progress at school. If your child misses the start of the day they can miss work, vital information and news for the day. Late arrival at school can be traumatic for the child and can also disrupt lessons.

To help working parents the school has a breakfast club to enable parents to drop children in school from 8am. We also provide a 'soft start' in the morning. Children can be dropped off at the classroom from 8.40am to 8.50am each morning. This helps to ease traffic flow in the area and allows parents a better opportunity to be in time for the start of school each day.

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

The school day starts at 8.50am and your child is expected to be in class at that time.

Registers are marked at 8.50am and your child will receive a late mark if they are not in by that time.

At 9.00am the registers will be closed. In accordance with the Regulations, if your 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 you could face the possibility of a Penalty Notice if the problem persists.

If your child has a persistent late record, you will be asked to meet with the Deputy Headteacher to resolve the problem, but you can approach us at any time if you are having problems getting your child to school on time.

### **Exceptional Leave**

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

The Headteacher may only grant 'authorised' leave of absence during term time for exceptional circumstances and will determine the number of school days a child can be away from school if the leave is granted. Exceptional circumstances can be:

- death of parent/carer or sibling of the pupil
- life threatening or critical illness of parent or sibling of the pupil
- parent/carer recuperation and convalescence from critical illness or surgery (leave request to be made within 6 months of recovery and medical evidence required)

**The Participation Team can issue Penalty Notices for any unauthorised 'Exceptional Leave' to each parent/ carer concerned. Please note that it will be per parent per child. Payment within 21 days of receipt of the notice is £60 and £120 if paid after this period but within 28 days. If the Penalty Notice remains unpaid you will receive a summons to Uxbridge Magistrates Court. If proven you could be fined up to £2500. If unauthorised leave is repeated the Participation Team may summons each parent to court without a Penalty Notice being issued.**

#### **Requests for Performances Licences**

Current school practice enables the school to authorise requests for filming where a child's attendance is above the minimum level of 95% for our school. We do not authorise an open license during term time.

#### **School Targets**

The school has targets to improve attendance and you and your child have an important part to play in meeting these targets.

The minimum level of attendance for this school is **95%** attendance. Our target is to achieve better than this because we know that good attendance is the key to successful schooling and we believe our pupils can be amongst the best in Hillingdon.

Through the school year we monitor absences and punctuality to show us where improvements need to be made.

#### **Staff responsible for attendance matters**

Should you need to contact the school about attendance please contact one of the people listed below.

Miss S. Morahan (Deputy Headteacher)

Ms T. McManus (Headteacher)

All school staff at Sacred Heart are committed to working with parents and pupils as the best way to ensure as high a level of attendance as possible. Regular attendance supports optimising your child's attainment.