

SAINT ROBERT LAWRENCE CATHOLIC ACADEMY TRUST

ATTENDANCE POLICY

Date Approved: June 2013
Reviewed: February 2017
Date for Next Review: February 2020

The Saint Robert Lawrence Catholic Academy Trust (The Trust) adopted this policy on 24th June 2013 for use in all Academies within The Trust: The Local Governing Body of each Academy will note the policy at its first full meeting following adoption by The Trust.

Rationale

Regular attendance at school is essential to ensure uninterrupted progress and to enable children to extend their potential. The attendance pattern for all children is monitored weekly, with the schools seeking to work actively with parents to ensure a regular pattern is maintained. We expect all children on roll to attend every day, when the schools are in session, as long as they are fit and healthy enough to do so. We do all we can to encourage the children to attend, and to put in place appropriate procedures to support this. We believe that the most important factor in promoting good attendance is development of positive attitudes towards school and learning.

Introduction

Poor attendance can seriously affect each child's:-

- Attainment in school
- Relationships with other children and their ability to form lasting friendships
- Confidence to attempt new work and work alongside others.

Each child's attendance can be summarised as:

96% +	Excellent – Well done! This will help all aspects of their progress and life in school. This will give them a good start in life and supports a positive work ethic.
94-95%	Average – Well done, strive to build on this.
85-93%	Poor – Absence is now affecting attainment and progress at school. Please work urgently to improve the situation.
Below 85%	Unacceptable – Absence IS causing SERIOUS CONCERN. It IS affecting attainment and progress and is disrupting your child's learning. Your child's school will work with you and the Education Welfare Officer (EWO) to improve your child's attendance if there is no immediate improvement this term. Permitting absence from school without a good reason is an offence by the parent. Only the school can 'authorise' absence. The school will not assess all reasons as 'valid'.

Non-attendance is an important issue that is treated seriously. However each case is different and the Trust acknowledges that no one standard response will be appropriate in every case. Consideration is given to all factors affecting attendance before deciding what intervention strategies to apply.

a) In every case, early intervention is essential to prevent the problem from worsening. It is essential that parents keep the school fully informed of any matters that may affect their child's attendance; they are reminded of this duty in the school prospectus.

b) Prior to the engagement of the EWO, the school may make a visit to the child's home or issue letters to parents clearly defining the concerns within school regarding a pupils' absence. It is hoped that a quick response and change in levels of absence will prevent the need for EWO involvement.

Further details regarding roles and responsibilities, is identified in the appendix to this policy.

Principles

Arrival and Registration

All children should be in the school ready to register at the time set out in the School Prospectus. The register is taken twice a day. A day counts as 2 attendances. If a child arrives after the registration period, he/she must report to the school office and will be marked in as 'Late'. Arrival after 8.55am is recorded as an unauthorised late mark.

Parental Responsibility

Throughout this policy the term 'parent' represents either a single parent, both parents; and/or the carer with whom the child resides.

Parents are informed of their responsibility to ensure their children attend regularly, in the school prospectus. Punctuality is also stressed as lateness impacts on learning not only for the individual, but the class as a whole.

Attendance is discussed with each parent at consultation evenings; the percentage attendance is reported each term by way of a print-out sent home with each child. Parents have a legal obligation to ensure their children receive a full time education; this is achieved by regular attendance at school.

Illness and Medical Appointments

When a child is unwell, parents should contact the school before 9.15am on the first day of absence informing the school of the reason for absence. This may be done by leaving a message on the school's answer-phone service.

When a child is absent, the class teacher will record the absence in the register. As part of our Safeguarding Procedures, the school office will endeavour to contact the parent or carer and other emergency contacts if no message has been received regarding the reason for the absence to check on the safety of the child.

Where a medical appointment is necessary, or your child is ill, please ensure that:

- Every effort has been made to arrange medical appointments outside school hours.
- An appointment card or verification by the doctors/dentist/hospital has been obtained.
- If it is necessary for a child to be out of school for this reason, the child is returned to school directly after the appointment.
- If your child is absent due to vomiting then they should not return to school for **the next 48 hours** after the last time that the child is sick. This is to reduce the risk of infection to other children and adults at the school.

- For more than three days of absence the school requires a written explanation of why the child was absent. The school office will request this if it is not produced. A letter or email is acceptable.
- Medical certificates may be requested for absence greater than five days.

If a pupil requires time away from school to attend an appointment then parents must bring a copy of the hospital letter or appointment card to school for the absence to be authorised.

THE LAW and School Attendance

Amendments have been made to the 2006 regulations in the Education (Pupil Registration) (England) (Amendment) Regulations 2013. These amendments, as described below, came into force on 1 September 2013. They can be found on the **Department for Education website:**

<http://www.education.gov.uk/schools/pupilsupport/behaviour/attendance/a00223868/regulations-amendments>

Term-time holiday –The Education (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2006 allowed Headteachers to grant leave of absence for the purpose of a family holiday during term time in “special circumstances” of up to ten school days leave per year. Headteachers were also in a position to grant extended leave for more than ten school days in exceptional circumstances. However, amendments to the 2006 regulations remove references to family holiday and extended leave as well as the statutory threshold of ten school days. **The 2013 amendments make clear that Headteachers may not grant any leave of absence during term time unless there are exceptional circumstances.** Subsequently, Headteachers within the Trust will now determine the number of school days a child can be away from school if any such leave is granted.

This means that holidays taken during term time will be recorded as **unauthorised** in the register, unless there are exceptional circumstances, for which the Headteacher must be contacted to discuss the matter and the circumstances involved. The decision rests with the Headteacher, and families have no “right” to such leave. The application for leave must be made in advance by the parent with whom the pupil normally resides and must clearly state the special circumstances they wish to be taken into account.

School Responsibility

The Academy Trust is bound by the statutory requirement under Section 538 of the Education Act 2006 which requires governing bodies to provide information requested by the Secretary of State. This includes absence data that will be collected every term through the School Census.

The Senior Leadership Team and all staff throughout the Trust work to ensure a high level of enjoyment and commitment to learning as a means of ensuring regular attendance.

Specific responsibilities for attendance matters are identified in the appendix. At each school within the Trust, the Headteacher holds responsibility for attendance matters, supported by the Office Administration staff and the Education Welfare Officer (EWO).

Where school attendance problems occur, the schools will endeavour to work with parents in the interests of the child to achieve a positive resolution.

Attendance is recorded and data stored and analysed.

It is a statutory duty for Classteachers to call and maintain accurate registers; these are legal documents, and may be called for as evidence by the court. Classteachers are legally responsible for marking their class attendance register twice per day at the start of each session.

The Headteachers, not parents, authorises absence; The Saint Robert Lawrence Academy Trust adheres to the DfE guidelines in authorising absence. Absence for any reason during term time is discouraged.

Absence known to be for the following reasons would be authorised:

- Illness
- Religious observance
- Attendance at medical appointments which cannot be made outside school hours

When it has become necessary to make a referral to the Education Welfare Officer (EWO), all further absences will be unauthorised pending investigation. The EWO liaises with the schools regarding absences following contact with the parents.

Absence during Term Time

The Governors recognise the recent change to the law and that pupil absence during term time can seriously disrupt a pupil's continuity of learning. **Parents are therefore strongly urged to avoid booking a family holiday in term time to avoid breaking the law which came into force on September 1st 2013.** Parents do not have an automatic right to withdraw pupils from school for a holiday and in law, have to apply for permission in advance. Such permission can only be granted where the Headteacher agrees that there are "special circumstances" to be taken into account.

Applications for absence must be received at least 12 school days prior to the planned absence. When application is made for authorised absence during term time and it is agreed that there are "special circumstances", the Headteacher then also gives consideration to:

- The nature of the proposed absence and the "special circumstances" that are presented
- The attendance pattern in the present and previous academic years.

Examples of what may constitute exceptional circumstances:

- To have a short absence to attend a family funeral or to attend a special religious/cultural festival, may constitute an exceptional circumstance.
- If a parent, due to the nature of their work, cannot possibly take time off during the regular school holidays, then this might constitute an exceptional circumstance (e.g. Police or Armed Forces Personnel). This will need to be evidenced by a letter from the employer. **Factors indicated above will still be taken into account.**

Note: To have a week's winter or summer holiday in school time, because the cost is cheaper during term time, **does not** constitute an exceptional circumstance.

When an absence is authorised, parents will be provided with written evidence in the form of a proforma signed by the Headteacher.

Definitions

Every half-day absence has to be classified by the school (not by the parents) as either **AUTHORISED** or **UNAUTHORISED**. This is why information about the cause of each absence is always required; preferably in writing (letter or email) or by telephone.

Authorised Absence

An absence is classified as authorised when a child has been away from school for a legitimate reason and the school has received notification from a parent or guardian. For example, if a child has been unwell and the parent writes a note or telephones the school to explain the absence. Only the school can make an absence authorised.

Unauthorised Absence

An absence is classified as unauthorised when a child is away from school without the permission of the Headteacher.

Unauthorised absences are those, which the school does not consider reasonable and for which no authorisation has been given. This includes:

- Parents keeping children off school unnecessarily
- Truancy before or during the school day
- Absences that have never been properly explained
- Holidays/Family events that have not been agreed to having any exceptional circumstances.

Penalty Notices: Penalty Notices for Absence from school can be issued by the Attendance and Behaviour Service based on requests from schools and the police.

The following circumstances are considered as appropriate reasons for the issuing of Penalty Notices:

- Truancy, including truancy sweeps
- Parentally-condoned absences
- Holidays/Family events in term time where no exceptional circumstances were agreed
- Excessive delayed return from Holidays/Family events whether or not exceptional circumstances were agreed beforehand by the Headteacher
- Persistent lateness after the register has closed
- Allowing a child to be in a public place within the specified timescale when excluded from school

The absence of a pupil from school in any of these circumstances will result in a Penalty Notice being considered.

Rewards

The prime benefit derived from regular attendance is that continuity and progression in learning are ensured. Each academy may adopt its own incentive scheme.

Review

This policy will be reviewed every three years according to the schedule for policy review.

Appendix 1

Role	Responsibility
Headteacher	<p>Operational management of the policy.</p> <p>Consider requests for authorised absence. Give approval in advance in appropriate circumstances, taking account of the child’s attendance record.</p> <p>Authorise absence after it occurs when a satisfactory explanation is accepted.</p> <p>Ensure that anti-bullying and behaviour policies are followed and ensure action is taken in response to any difficulties reported and [e.g. bullying/behaviour] which impact on attendance.</p> <p>Consider the use of a Penalty Notice for unauthorised absence or lateness.</p> <p>Complete HT witness statements on pupil absence for court use.</p> <p>Oversee day to day attendance where there is cause for concern, working closely with parents and children to improve poor attendance.</p> <p>Monitor pupil attendance monthly, report to the Headteacher and take action according to this policy.</p> <p>Analyse trends in attendance data to identify appropriate action.</p> <p>Investigate reasons for absence exploring any underlying cause either at home or in school.</p> <p>Liaise with the Education Welfare Officer and make referrals as necessary.</p> <p>Work with the EWO towards improved patterns of attendance for referred pupils identifying the course of action that should be taken.</p> <p>Make referrals to other agencies where appropriate.</p> <p>Work with Class Teachers to agree and implement strategies to reengage pupils with emerging attendance problems.</p> <p>Work with the Inclusion Leader to plan reintegration for pupils who have been absent for a period.</p> <p>With the Attendance Secretary, compile and update standard letters re: % attendance, notification of reasons for absence and lateness and send to parents where necessary.</p>
Class Teachers	<p>Prepare and deliver stimulating and enjoyable learning for all children.</p> <p>Registration of pupils at the start of morning and afternoon sessions.</p> <p>Alert the attendance secretary/FLO of any children who demonstrate an unsettled pattern of attendance or whose attendance pattern changes.</p> <p>Return registers to the designated place immediately after registration.</p> <p>Report percentage attendance at parent consultations; encourage regular punctual attendance; work to secure this.</p> <p>Ensure all absence notes are passed to the attendance secretary via the class register folder.</p> <p>Work with the DHT to agree and implement strategies to re-engage pupils with emerging attendance problems.</p>
Office Manager	<p>Print weekly registers.</p> <p>Make calls to parents when first day of absence contact has not been made by parents.</p> <p>Accurately record attendance data daily using agreed codes.</p> <p>Record late arrival and reasons.</p> <p>Ensure reasons for absences are accurately recorded.</p> <p>Prepare standard letters requesting reasons for absence when this is unexplained.</p> <p>Prepare letters to inform parents when a child’s attendance is giving cause for concern and is thus being monitored.</p> <p>Collect absence notes and record reasons for absence.</p> <p>Meet with Headteacher reporting monthly attendance monitoring and take agreed</p>

	<p>action. Provide attendance reports when requested and ensure DfE attendance returns are accurate.</p>
Parents	<p>Ensure their child attends daily and on time. Keep the school fully informed on all matters that might affect attendance and their child in school. Telephone school on the first day of any absence to inform school of the reason. Provide a note confirming the reason for absence on the child's return to school. If attendance becomes a problem – work with the school to improve matters. Give serious consideration to whether it is appropriate or necessary to request term time absence. Make application for any term time leave of absence prior to proposed dates.</p>
Education Welfare Officer	<p>Work closely with school and families to resolve attendance issues. Visit school for meetings at agreed times. Identify, with school, cases of unauthorised absence which necessitate action and advise on responses. Provide written reports to school in the form of consultation sheets. Complete regular register checks. On receipt of a written referral, take appropriate action, which may include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Advice on strategies to improve attendance • Assessment home visits • Action Planning • Agreed time-limited intervention • Attendance at school meetings • Written record of work undertaken • Verbal feedback where appropriate • Written response to referral within 10 days • Liaise with other agencies • Onward referral to other agencies • Liaison with other Local Authority department • Preparation of cases for prosecution including sending warning letters • Preparing Witness Statements for Magistrates Court
Governing Body	<p>It is the responsibility of the governors to monitor overall attendance. The Governing Body also has the responsibility for Attendance Policy, and for seeing that it is carried out. The Governors will therefore examine closely the information provided to them, and seek to ensure that the school's attendance figures remain high. Attendance Policy will be reviewed by the Governing Body every three years, or earlier if considered necessary.</p>