

St Alban's Catholic High School



Attendance Policy

Approved by Full Governing Body 18 March 2019

Recommission date: March 2022

Notes:

Where “parents” or “carers” are referred to this means parents, carers and those with the legal or day-to-day care of one or more students at the school.

1. Principles, Aims and Objectives

1.1. Principles

- Every child in this country has a fundamental and legal right to be educated.
- Parents and school staff have a duty to strive for maximum attendance.

1.2. Aims

- To strive for maximum attendance through valuing high attendance rates.
- To encourage students to take full advantage of their educational opportunities by attending regularly.
- To recognise the external factors which influence student attendance and work in partnership with parents, the Education Welfare Officer and others to address difficulties.
- To recognise and communicate to parents/carers the link between school attendance and the educational results achieved.

1.3. Objectives

- To identify patterns of non-attendance at an early stage and work to resolve any personal or social difficulties.
- To provide an effective and efficient system for the monitoring of attendance.
- To abide by and assist in the enforcement of statutory regulations and laws relating to school attendance.

2. First day of absence

2.1. On or before the first day a student is absent, parents/carers are asked to contact the school to inform us of the absence. An option is available on the school's main telephone number to allow messages regarding absences to be left. If parents/carers do not inform the school, the Attendance Officer will make contact with them. This has the advantage of picking up any unauthorised absences of which parents/carers are unaware.

2.2. If a student is likely to be absent for some time, it may be possible to make arrangements with parents/carers for sending work home.

2.3. Note that the school does not guarantee to parents/carers that a first day call service will be provided. There are days when limited staff availability may make this not possible.

2.4. Parents/carers are asked to call each day of an absence to ensure the safety of the student. If the absence is anticipated to be extended then please discuss this with the Attendance Officer.

3. Absence requests

3.1. Where a parent is considering a term-time absence, this should be discussed with the Attendance Officer at least one month before the absence.

The current DfE Student Registration Guidelines, other statutory DfE guidance and relevant laws will be followed when deciding whether to approve an absence. Generally, term-time holiday requests are not authorised.

Other absences with exceptional circumstances, such as weddings and funerals, may be authorised. The Attendance Officer will inform parents/carers of the school's decision.

3.2. Recent changes to the law

On 1 September 2013, the Education (Pupil Registration) (England) (Amendment) Regulations 2013 came into force, changing the rules about term-time holidays.

The amendments removed references to family holidays and extended leave as well as the statutory threshold of 10 school days.

The amendments specify that Headteachers may not grant any leave of absence during term time unless they consider there to be "exceptional circumstances" for doing so. Generally, "exceptional circumstances" are once-in-a-lifetime, unavoidable situations.

3.3. How we consider a request

Our school considers each request individually, taking into account the circumstances, such as: the nature of the event for which leave is sought, the frequency of the request, whether the parent gave advanced notice, and the pupil's attainment, attendance and ability to catch up on missed schooling.

In particular, we will also look carefully at the child's previous attendance record and should he or she have causes for concerns, for example should the child's average attendance be below 95%, it is unlikely that the school will agree to authorise any further absence.

The decision regarding term-time absence requests is delegated by the Headteacher to the Attendance Officer in most circumstances. There is no appeal process. Unusual circumstances may be referred by the Attendance Officer to the Headteacher for guidance.

3.4. Exceptional circumstances and holidays

'Exceptional circumstances' are unlikely to include family holidays.

The Department for Education explains that although Headteachers have the discretion to grant leave: *"Leave is unlikely to be granted ... for the purposes of a family holiday"*.

While decisions will be made on a case-by-case basis, requests for term-time holidays will normally be refused except in exceptional circumstances.

Examples of what might constitute exceptional circumstances include:

- A parent or sibling is seriously/terminally ill and the holiday proposed is likely to be the last such holiday.
- There has recently been a death or other significant trauma in the immediate family and it is felt that an urgent holiday might help the child concerned better deal with the situation.

The school will not accept as an exceptional circumstance the fact that a holiday is cheaper during term time. An exceptional circumstance is much more likely to be a one-off, unavoidable situation.

3.5. Other exceptional circumstances

Other short-time (typically one or two days) absences for events such as weddings, christenings, funerals or taking an active part in performances will be considered on an individual basis as discussed above.

Reasons generally not acceptable as exceptional circumstances (unless for trips organised by the school) include: watching performances and sporting events, religious retreats and festivals, birthday treats, visits to home countries.

4. Fixed Penalty Notices

- 4.1. Parents can be issued with Fixed Penalty Notices for taking their children on holiday during term time and for other unauthorised absences.

The government's attendance guidance document explains:

Parents have a legal duty to make sure that their child aged 5-16, if registered at a school, attends that school regularly. If taking an unauthorised term-time holiday is grounds for issuing a penalty notice according to the local authority's code, and if the leave of absence for holiday was not authorised by the school, either the school or the local authority may issue a penalty notice.

Amendments have also been made to the 2007 penalty notices regulations in the Education (Penalty Notices) (England) (Amendment) Regulations 2013. These amendments came into force on 1 September 2013.

- 4.2. The 2013 amendments reduce the timescales for paying a Penalty Notice. Parents must, from September 2013, pay £60 within 21 days or £120 within 28 days. The fine is per child and per parent, so three children with two parents could receive an initial demand for £360. Unpaid Penalty Notices will usually result in a summons for a court appearance. Penalties imposed by a judge tend to be higher than settling a Fixed Penalty Notice and can include a criminal record, fines up to £2500, legal costs, and/or a prison sentence of up to three months.

- 4.3. The school refers a pattern or extended period of unauthorised absences to the local authority for the issuing of a Fixed Penalty Notice if no acceptable reason can be identified for the absences and so they remain unauthorised. Typically, unauthorised absences of three or more days or a pattern of three or more consecutive or non-consecutive school days of unauthorised absence in the prior 12 weeks are grounds for the consideration of a Fixed Penalty Notice being issued. A pattern of unauthorised absences over a longer period, such as adjacent to school holidays on a number of occasions, may also be grounds for a fine to be considered.

- 4.4. Definition of regular attendance

The school considers attendance as regular when a student attends every term-time day other than:

- 1) when prior permission for an absence has been given by the school or
- 2) when the student is ill or attending an urgent medical or dental appointment, notification of which has been provided to the school by a parent/carer or
- 3) when a day has been exclusively set apart for religious observance by a religious body to which a parent/carer belongs, prior notification of which has been provided to the school by a parent/carer

5. Deleting a pupil from roll after an absence

- 5.1. Regulation 8 of the Education (Pupil Registration) (Education) Regulations 2006 sets out the circumstances under which a pupil of compulsory school age can legally be removed from the school roll:

Section 1(h) says that: *"if the absence is not authorised, then the pupil may be deleted from the roll after 20 school days"*.

- 5.2. Section 1(f) says that: *"if the school authorises an absence for more than 10 school days and the pupil does not return within 10 school days of the agreed return date, then he/she may be deleted from the roll. This is not the case if the school has been provided with evidence that the pupil's return is prevented by an "unavoidable cause"*".

6. The start of the school day

- 6.1. The school day starts at 8.50 with registration. Students should arrive on the school grounds by 8.45 to allow them time to reach registration by 8.50.
- 6.2. Students arriving during registration will be recorded with a late (L) mark, which is officially a present mark for the morning. Students arriving after registration ends (9.10) will be recorded with an unauthorised absence for the morning (a U mark).
- 6.3. A pattern of lateness will be dealt with accordingly, with appropriate sanctions applied. If the pattern includes arriving after 9.10 then these unauthorised absences will be dealt with as with other unauthorised absences and can lead to a Fixed Penalty Notice being issued.

7. Regular illness, chronic medical conditions and appointments

7.1. Regular illness reports

If a student is often reported as too unwell to attend school and this leads to attendance lower than the school average, particularly if close to or below 90%, the school's Attendance Officer will contact the student's parents/carers to understand the background to the absences.

We will be supportive of a student who is unwell. This may include sending work home for longer absences or otherwise ensuring some education continues, providing this does not interfere with the student's recovery. If attendance due to reported illness is low over an extended period of time then parents/carers will be asked to provide medical confirmation and guidance on the support needed. This also allows future absences to be authorised.

7.2. Chronic illness

If a parent reports that their child has or develops a chronic condition that will limit their attendance at school we will ask that parents/carers provide a letter from the consultant managing the condition. This to include information about the condition, the impact it has on school attendance and what support the school is asked to put in place to ensure that education continues as fully as possible.

We appreciate that in some cases it may take some time for a letter from a consultant to be provided, particularly for mental health problems. However, this is a requirement of the Local Authority for their support to be provided and without it what the school can offer will be limited.

In some cases where there is a lack of confirmation of the need for absences, we may not authorise further absences from school.

Once we receive specialist medical guidance we will work with parents/carers and the student to put into place, or help seek, the required support. This may include a referral to the Local Authority for provision of a home tutor.

7.3. GP, dental and orthodontic appointments

We ask parents/carers to seek appointments before or after the school day or during the school holidays. Generally, only urgent dental and orthodontic appointments during the school day will be authorised.

Signed by Mr D Verney, Chair of Governors:

Date:
