

# English Martyrs' Catholic School



## Attendance Policy

*English Martyrs, as a community centred in Christ,  
strives to develop the talents of each person.  
"May they all be one"*

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| <b>Approved/reviewed by Governors:</b> |                |
| September 2022                         |                |
| <b>Date of next review</b>             | September 2023 |

### **Rationale**

We recognize that good school attendance is important for the wellbeing of student in both their personal and academic development.

We are committed to co-operation between the school, parents and students to achieve the best possible attendance. Less than full attendance undermines the educational process and leads to educational disadvantage. Accordingly the school will actively pursue the aim of high attendance and punctuality in relation to individual students and for the student body as a whole.

## **The School's Responsibilities**

The school has a responsibility to promote high attendance and punctuality for all students. The importance of high attendance is promoted in the following ways:-

- School prospectus
- Information booklets
- Information Meetings
- Termly certificates for Excellent Attendance presented in assembly
- Each student's report contains information about attendance

Current school thresholds are as follows:-

- 100% is expected and is outstanding attendance
- 98% and above is excellent attendance
- 97% and above is good attendance
- 96% and above is average attendance
- 95% and less is below average attendance
- 90% and below attendance is considered to be a persistent absentee (by school and the DFE)
- Celebration events for students

## **Registration**

The school ensures an attendance register is taken twice a day; once at the start of the morning session and once during the afternoon session.

## **Off Site Registration**

Some students take courses which take place outside school.

When the school is considering placing a student on a course at another school, college or provider, the school will discuss this with parents and inform them of the arrangements prior to the commencement of the placement.

Students are registered at off site placements and attendance and punctuality is carefully monitored and tracked.

## **First Day of Absence**

If the school has not been notified of the absence of a student, once the morning register has closed, the Attendance Officer may make a first day of absence telephone call to parents/guardians. Priority is given to students with a poor attendance record or for whom there are current ongoing concerns. Not every absence will be followed up with a first day call.

## **Support for Lateness**

Lateness is always followed up. Tutors and Heads of Year discuss reasons for lateness informally to check that there are no underlying problems. Persistent lateness is followed up by School Detention, letters home and the sequence of formal meeting outlined below (See Support for Attendance). Persistent lateness may not be authorized and the appropriate sequence of interventions, outlined above, will begin.

## **Persistent Absence**

The DFE considers a student to be a 'Persistent Absentee' when attendance falls below 90%. Where there are concerns about attendance and the prospect of a student becoming a Persistent Absentee, parents are contacted and the interventions outlined above begin. The result of this intervention could be that parents are issued with Penalty Notices or prosecuted in the Magistrates' Court.

## **Panel Meeting**

This is a formal meeting with Head of Year, Education Welfare Officer, Senior teacher, student and parents to set targets for urgent improvement in attendance. Should these targets not be met the school will consult the Education Welfare Officer to commence legal proceedings.

## **Early Help Assessment**

This is a multiple agency meeting convened by the school when they have ongoing major concerns for a child's welfare. The Attendance Welfare Service may call a EHA meeting because of ongoing attendance issues. A EHA meeting may be called whether or not the previous sequence of meetings has been completed.

## **Attendance Welfare**

The school offers support for those students who may have concerns that could affect their attendance. Our Attendance Officer, Mrs Peake, is readily available either by telephone or in person to talk with the student and / or families. Mrs Peake will liaise with the students Head of Year to put appropriate support in place in order to resolve the concerns.

## **Transition from Primary School**

The school will make every effort to identify students with attendance concerns prior to the point of admission. We will work with the current school and Education Welfare Service to ensure the proper support is in place.

## **Penalty Notices**

The Education (Penalty Notices) (English) (Amendment) Regulations 2012 give school the power to issue fixed term penalty notices for persistent non-attendance at school due to holidays or other activities. The penalty notice is issued to each parent.

## **School Annual Targets**

The school issues annual targets for overall attendance and the attendance of every sub-group (e.g. persistent absence students and any under performing group) with the Local Authority. These are regularly reviewed by the School Improvement Partner and the Governing Body, as part of the School's Development Planning Cycle.

## **Review**

The impact of school's attendance policy is reviewed by governors annually.

## **Student Responsibilities**

Student's responsibilities are outlined in the Attendance Protocol contained in the School Diary (see Appendix).

## **Support for Attendance**

The school will monitor and support students and parents to maintain regular school attendance, which is considered to be above 98%. There is a clear sequence of interventions to support students. In addition to the measures to promote attendance outlined above, the school will:-

- Make and send Attendance graphs regularly to the parents of students who fall below identified criteria – beginning at 95%. This strategy provides a valuable tool for parents and the school to work together.
- Work with the Local Authority Education Welfare Service to identify student poor attendance and punctuality. The school together with the Education Welfare Service will put in place a series of support strategies to improve attendance. These include:-
  - An informal meeting with the student, Head of Year and Education Welfare Officer to discuss reasons for poor attendance and/or punctuality. Targets will be set to improve the situation. Referral to the Pastoral Support work may be discussed.
  - An informal meeting with Education Welfare Officer and the Principal to warn students of the educational consequences of poor attendance and punctuality.

- Pastoral Support Planning meeting. This is a formal minuted meeting involving Head of Year, Education Welfare Officer, senior staff, student and parents. The purpose of these meetings is to provide a forum to discuss poor attendance and to agree the support package for the student and parent. This support ranges from Education Welfare Office home visits, regular weekly meetings with student and Education Welfare Officer, reduced timetable, discussion of provision of courses with another provider, referral to Pastoral Support Worker/Counselling/Social Workers/Connexions.

### **Responsibilities of Parents**

Under Section 7 of the 1996 Education Act parents are required to ensure that their child receives a full time education. Parents should also ensure that their child arrives punctually to school each day.

DFE guidance states:-

If a registered pupil is absent without authorisation then the parent is guilty of an offence under Section 444(1) of the Education Act 1996; if the parent knows that his child is failing to attend regularly at the school and fails to cause him to do so, he is guilty of an offence under Section 444(1) of the Education Act 1996.

### **Penalty Notices – Unauthorised Holidays**

Penalty notices were introduced by the Government under the Antisocial Behaviour Act 2003 S444A and the Education Act of 1996. These are issued by the Education Department to each parent in respect of each child where there is an unauthorised holiday. Please note that if your child has unauthorised leave of absence, you may either be issued with a Penalty Notice, or, your case may be referred by the Local Authority directly to the Magistrates' Court. This means that the parent may be subject to a much more severe penalty i.e a maximum fine of up to £2,500 or 3 months in custody or, a community order which may involve them doing a number of hours of unpaid work. The grounds for issuing a penalty notice include:

- Where the Principal has granted consent for exceptional leave between identified dates but your child does not return on the agreed date
- Where a parent does not request permission to take their child out of school for a holiday
- Where a parent takes a child out of school for a holiday even though permission has been refused by the Principal

### **Children who become unwell during the school day**

If a child is referred to the first aid staff because they feel unwell they are assessed by the First Aider on duty. If it is deemed they are not well enough to attend school, telephone contact is made to parent/carer who are asked to collect their child from school. We do not permit children who are sick to walk home or catch a service bus under any circumstances. Should a parent wish their child to go home in a taxi the school will arrange this however parents must meet the charge when it arrives at their home. Should we be unable to make parental contact, the child will be asked to wait in the medical room until we can contact a parent. All children leaving school due to illness will be signed out by office staff.

### **Unavoidable absence due to illness**

On the morning of the first day of absence parents must inform the school. A dedicated voicemail is available 24 hours per day on the main school number (0116 2428880). If absence is to continue beyond the first day, parents are asked to keep the school informed. A letter, addressed to the student's form tutor, explaining the illness must be brought in by the student on their return to school.

### **Medical appointments**

Medical appointments during the timetabled school day (8.25 am – 2.45 pm) should be avoided. Should it be absolutely necessary to attend a medical or dental appointment, we ask parents to make appointments after 9.00 am. Students must be returned to school as soon as possible and follow the correct signing in procedure. In this circumstance parents should write to the Head of Year enclosing the appointment card in advance of the day of the appointment so that permission can be granted and the absence authorised as medical.

We do not permit children to walk home or catch a service bus alone under any circumstances for their medical appointments during the school day. Children must be collected and returned by an authorised parent or adult representative. Should a parent wish their child to go home in a taxi the school will arrange this; however, parents must meet the charge when it arrives at their home. Should we be unable to make parental contact, the child will be asked to remain in school until we can contact a parent. All children leaving school during the school day for medical appointments will be signed out by office staff.

### **Holidays/Leave of Absences**

Applications for extraordinary leave during term time should be addressed in writing to the Principal in advance by both parent(s) / carer(s) who have parental responsibility and whom the child normally resides. Parents are required to provide full details of the intended destination and reason for the extraordinary leave. Holidays should not be taken during term times due to the impact on a child's

education and applications are unlikely to be agreed unless the circumstances are deemed to be truly exceptional in nature. Holiday leave is not authorised.

### **Absences which may be authorised under exceptional circumstances**

The Principal has discretion to authorise short term absence for certain activities where the request for absence is proportionate and reasonable. This will usually be granted where there is:

- a) Exceptional family circumstances such as the sudden family bereavement or serious terminal illness of a close relative.
- b) The student is taking part in a Church sacramental or liturgical activity, e.g. Confirmation.
- c) The student performing in a Performing Arts activity (not attending as an audience member).
- d) The student is playing in a county, regional or national sports team on the day of exceptional leave.
- e) The student is taking part in a recognised town twinning exchange programme.

In the case of a) above, parents are asked to contact the School office by telephone. In case of (b – e), a letter seeking permission should be sent to the Principal at least three weeks in advance of the proposed activities. In the case of (b – d) absences are unlikely to be authorised where the proposed activity is taking place at the weekend or in the evening and the request for absence is for school day(s). As all requests are carefully considered, the outcome of the request will be communicated by letter within 10 days. Authorisation will be communicated by letter.