

ST AGNES

Catholic Primary School

With Jesus beside us, we do our best

Attendance and Punctuality Policy



Created on: Aut

Author: Stephen Aravena - AWA

Approved by: Full Governing Body

Date: September 22

Last reviewed on: 26th September 2022

By: B. McDaid

Next review due by: Sept 2024

By: B. McDaid

Our Vision and Values

At St. Agnes we believe that although we are all very different we have a way of living, behaving and doing things that allow us to serve as a witness to the Catholic Faith in our Lord Jesus Christ.

Our school motto is: **With Jesus Beside Us We Do Our Best to:**



Believe

We are all valued in God's family and the school family. We **believe** in ourselves and in our abilities.

Persevere

When things get difficult we will **persevere** so that we will grow stronger, realising we can turn to each other and God.

Contribute

We will **contribute** to the life of the school, the parish, the local community and the wider world to which we all

belong.

By doing these we will:

Achieve

By being the best we can be, we will **achieve** in making a difference to others and living as God would want us to.

Statement

At St Agnes' Catholic Primary school, we are committed to the continuous raising of achievement of all our pupils. Regular attendance and good punctuality are critical if our pupils are to be successful and benefit from the opportunities presented to them. Good attendance and punctuality are fundamental to a successful and fulfilling school experience.

We expect 100% attendance and punctuality for all our pupils, and we use a variety of weekly, termly and annual awards to promote good attendance and punctuality. The governors, Headteacher and staff, in partnership with parents, have a duty to promote good attendance and punctuality at St Agnes' Catholic Primary school.

Parent or carer responsibility

Parents and carers have a legal duty to ensure that their children attend school regularly and on time. Regular attendance and good punctuality are essential to the all-round development of the child and they should be allowed to take full advantage of educational opportunities available to them in order to make good progress in their learning. Poor attendance or punctuality undermine their educational attainment and progress.

It is the responsibility of parents and carers to contact the school on the first day of absence. This is a safeguarding requirement so that all parties know that your child is safe and their whereabouts is known. Parents and carers should regularly update the school and inform the school when their child is returning.

Pupils are expected to arrive by 8:55 AM. If a pupil arrives to school late, they and/or their parent or carer should provide the reason the child is late. This is then recorded.

Legal mandate

Section 444 of the Education Act 1996 says that parents are **guilty** of an offence of failing to secure regular attendance at school unless they can prove that the child was absent:

- with leave (the school has given permission)
- due to sickness or any unavoidable cause (the sickness or unavoidable cause must relate to the child, not the parent)
- religious observance
- other exceptional circumstances (as authorised by the Head Teacher)

In law, these are the only acceptable reasons for a child being absent from school.

Authorising Absence

Only the Headteacher (or staff with delegated responsibilities for attendance & punctuality) can authorise absences. It is at the Headteacher's discretion whether to accept a parent's explanation and authorise absences. A letter or telephone message from a parent does not in itself authorise an absence. If absences are not authorised, parents will be notified.

The following reasons are examples of absence that will not be authorised:

- Persistent nonspecific illness e.g. poorly/unwell
- Absence of siblings if one child is ill
- Oversleeping
- Inadequate clothing/uniform
- Confusion over school dates
- Child's/family birthday
- Shopping trip
- Family Holidays (with some rare exceptions)

Reporting absences & lateness

As part of our efforts to improve attendance and punctuality across the school, we have a responsibility to record reasons for absences and late marks. The registers are legal documents that are regularly monitored and can be used as evidence.

We would respectfully ask that, if your child arrives to school late, you approach our admin staff in the office and let them know the reason your child is late. Please don't wait to be asked. This is something we ask of all parents and carers, regardless of what the reason is. We are aware that sometimes there are genuine reasons for your child being late.

Equally, if your child is absent from school, we would kindly ask that you contact the school and let them know the reason for your child's absence. Please contact the school every day that your child is absent, even if absent on consecutive days. You can contact the school by calling the school, emailing the school on info@st-agnes.towerhamlets.sch.uk, or you use Parentmail.

Phone calls to parents/cares from the school office begin at 9.30 AM, for any unreported absences.

Requests for leave during term time

Under the guidance issued by the DfE, applications from parents/carers for pupils to take leave in term time for the purpose of a holiday should not be authorised by schools. Tower Hamlets has a very clear policy that holidays should be taken in school holiday periods when children can enjoy them without their education being negatively affected.

Any applications for leave in term time must be submitted at least 10 days in advance to the Headteacher. Applications received during or after a pupil has been taken on leave during term time cannot be considered and the absences will be recorded as unauthorised. All applications must be using the '**APPLICATION FOR LEAVE IN TERM TIME FOR EXCEPTIONAL REASONS**' form (Appendix A).

Requests for leave during term time will only be approved in exceptional circumstances. All holidays taken without authorisation will be referred for a Fixed Penalty Notice (please see FPN section below).

Exceptional circumstances could include:

- Where an absence from school is recommended by a health professional as part of a parent's or child's rehabilitation from a medical issue.
- The death or terminal illness of a person close to the family.
- To attend a wedding or funeral of a person close to the family.
- A strong personal reason why a family might need to take a pupil away from school for a short break.

All circumstances outlined above are subject to authorisation from the Headteacher.

Any examples provided above are illustrative rather than exhaustive. It is acceptable to take a pupil's previous record of attendance into account when the school is making decisions. The fundamental principles for defining 'exceptional' are rare, significant, unavoidable and short. And by 'unavoidable' it implies that an event could not reasonably be scheduled at another time. It is important to note that Headteachers can agree the absence of a child in exceptional circumstances and this discretion can be used also to determine the length of the authorised absence.

Promoting good attendance punctuality and responding to poor attendance & punctuality

At St Agnes' Catholic Primary school, we believe that school attendance and punctuality are the responsibility of all members of staff with specific staff taking individual responsibility.

In order to promote good attendance and punctuality, there are weekly awards given to the class with the highest attendance in order to celebrate their positive achievement. At the end of the year, there are book tokens given to those with 100% attendance.

We have also just introduced a system of sending parents positive messages when there has been a good period of attendance and/or a particularly noticeable improvement in attendance or punctuality.

The school's attendance officer has overall responsibility for monitoring attendance issues. The school's attendance officer will speak to parents and carers when necessary and will liaise with **the Attendance & Welfare Advisor** (AWA) to discuss those cases where attendance and/or punctuality are a concern.

Class teachers complete an electronic register on Integris, at the beginning of each morning and immediately after lunch. Marking the attendance registers twice daily is a legal requirement, as per The Education (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2006.

The school's attendance officer regularly goes through the register to ensure that:

- attendance and lateness records are up to date;

- where no reason for absence has been provided, parents and carers are contacted on the first day of absence by phone call;
- where there has been no communication, and no contact with parent/s or carer/s is possible, the school's attendance officer will discuss the case with the school's AWA;
- the appropriate attendance code is entered into the register (see section on National Attendance Codes);

Attendance - General

- **95 - 100%** - the class teacher to notify the school's attendance officer of any relevant concerns. The school's attendance officer will contact parent/s or carer/s, if appropriate.
- **90 - 95%** - school to send letters/arrange meetings with parents, as agreed between the school's attendance officer and the school's AWA;
- **85% - 90%** - the school's attendance officer will speak with the school's AWA to explore the nature of the absences and determine a plan of intervention.
- **Below 85%** - The school's attendance officer will refer cases to the school's AWA who will, in conjunction with the school's attendance officer and the Headteacher, write to the parent/s or carer/s and ask them to attend an ISP.
- For the cases that require intensive family support, the school may make a referral to the Early Help Hub.

Attendance - Children Missing Education

No child should be removed from the school roll without consultation between the Headteacher and the AWA, when appropriate. Please see the circumstances below:-

Where a child is missing from education, Local Authority guidance will be followed. The school will complete a Child Missing from Education (CME) referral if: -

- the whereabouts of the child is unknown, and the school has failed to make contact with the family to ascertain further information or;
- the family has notified the school that they are leaving the area but no request from another school for the pupil file has been received.

Punctuality

At St Agnes' Catholic Primary school the morning register is taken at 9 AM. Children are marked late if arrival is after their teacher has closed the register (approx 09.05 AM). Pupils arriving after that time must walk around and enter the school by the car park entrance and report to reception where their name and the reason for lateness will be recorded.

We believe that persistent lateness is a detrimental as poor attendance to pupils' social development and academic progress. Frequent lateness, after the register has closed, will be discussed with parents and could provide grounds for a Penalty Notice (please see 'Fixed Penalty Notice' section).

Actions taken by the Attendance & Welfare Advisor (AWA)

We monitor school attendance & punctuality by regularly checking the registers. All persistent absence and/or punctuality is discussed with the school's AWA. Cases that meet the threshold will be referred to the AWA for follow up. Below is the referral criteria;

- 15 sessions of authorised absence over a 5 week period
- 10 sessions of unauthorised absence over a 5 week period
- 10 consecutive sessions of unauthorised absence
- 10 late marks over a 5 week period
- 6 sessions or more of holidays taken during term time

Once the AWA becomes involved in a case, he/she will follow the intervention pathway below;

Attendance and/or punctuality letters – in the first instance the AWA will often write to parents outlining the school's concerns in relation to attendance and/or punctuality. It is sometimes the case that parents/carers are unaware of the accumulative impact of a number of absences or late marks on their child's academic progress and/or social development. A letter which alerts parents/carers of the number of absences and/or late marks, can sometimes be helpful in bringing about an improvement in attendance and/or punctuality. After receiving the letters, parents and carers are welcome to contact the AWA to discuss the content of the letter.

In School Panel (ISP) attendance Meeting – where a pupil's attendance and or punctuality is becoming a concern, the AWA may ask the parent/s to attend a meeting in school. During the meeting, reasons for poor attendance and/or punctuality will be explored and a plan developed, outlining how any identified issues will be addressed.

Home visits - if there is no response to the request of an ISP, and/or absences persist, the AWA may decide to visit the family home.

Fixed Penalty Notice (FPN) warning letters – if there is still no resolution or improvement in the pupil/s' school attendance and/or punctuality, the AWA will send a warning letter to the parent/s or carer/s, which will outline the process of a referral to the Local Education Authority (LEA), under the Fixed Penalty Notice (FPN) Scheme. This letter, which will be written on the school's official headed paper, will outline the number of sessions that a pupil has been absent or late and will alert the parent to the possibility of receiving a fine under the FPN scheme, should there be no immediate improvement in their child's attendance and/or punctuality.

Fixed Penalty Notice (FPN) – as well as issuing FPN fines for unauthorised holidays taken during term time, an FPN can also be served when;

- there are 10 or more half day sessions of absence (5 school days) without authorisation during any 100 possible school sessions or period of 50 days of schooling – these do not need to be consecutive.
- an excluded child is found in a public place during school hours.
- there is a large number of late marks (10 in a 10-week period) and there is no good/known reason for those late marks.

Where an FPN is served, the regulations state that the penalty will be £120 to be paid within 28 days, reduced to £60 if paid within 21 days. Penalty Notices are issued to each parent of each child. Failure to pay the penalty in full by the end of the 28 day period will result in prosecution by the LEA.

Prosecution by the LEA – where an FPN has not been paid, the LEA will inform the AWA (and the school) that legal proceedings have been initiated against the parent/s or carer/s of that pupil. The LEA will request relevant information from the school, which the school must provide.

Liaise with other agencies (where relevant) – there may be some situations where, following discussions between the AWA and the parent/s or carer/s, it becomes apparent that the family require support. At this point the AWA will obtain consent from the parent/s or carer/s to make referrals to relevant support services.

Appendix A

APPLICATION FOR LEAVE IN TERM TIME FOR EXCEPTIONAL REASONS

Part 1 - to be completed by the parent/carer

Pupil's name:	Year/Class:
Address:	Date of birth:
	Telephone:
	Mobile:
Email:	
Last day of attendance in school:	
Date of return to school:	
Please give details of the purpose and exceptional reason(s) for this application for leave in term time and why the leave cannot be taken in school holiday time. Attach any supporting evidence from a medical professional related to the case:	
Please provide the address of where you and your child/children will be staying:	
Email for contact:	

Part 2 - to be completed by the school

Tick	
	Supporting evidence for purpose and exceptional reasons for the leave in term time provided, including Tickets / Itinerary if applicable (please attach a copy to the form)
	<p>This application has not been approved because there is insufficient evidence that the leave must be taken in term time.</p> <p>Please change your arrangements. If your child's school place is lost, you will have to re-apply for a place and your child may not be able to return to this school.</p>
OR	
	<p>This application been agreed for ____ school days.</p> <p>Your child must return to the school on:</p> <p>_____</p> <p>No reminders will be sent. It is the parent's responsibility to notify the school of any future changes in circumstances.</p>

Parent/carer signature:		Date:	
Headteacher's signature:		Date:	