



## Saint Patrick's Catholic Primary School

*Our Mission in Saint Patrick's is to develop each child's talents potential in a caring Catholic community inspired by the teachings of Jesus Christ.*

### **SCHOOL ATTENDANCE (INCLUDING HOLIDAY ABSENCE) POLICY**

**2021-2024**

**This policy has been developed in consultation with schools in the Corsham Cluster.**

#### **RATIONALE**

**1.1** Excellent education is vital to the lives of all children and to our society as a whole. Whilst it is known that the life chances of children may not be equal from the outset of their lives for various reasons, education can help to redress this imbalance and help to ensure that every child has the chance to fulfill their potential.

**1.2** Regular attendance is an essential foundation for raising pupil attainment. Absence from school can seriously disrupt pupils' continuity of learning. Not only do they miss out on taught lessons, but many children find it difficult to catch up when they return to school.

**1.3** Poor or irregular attendance places children at risk and in some cases can result in their being drawn into patterns of anti-social or criminal behaviour.

#### **PURPOSE**

**1.4** The purpose of this policy is to ensure that the school's legal responsibilities, with regard to pupil attendance, are fulfilled by staff, parents and pupils.

#### **ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES**

##### **2.1 Parents and carers**

Parents are responsible in law for ensuring that their children of compulsory school age receive an efficient education suitable to their age, ability, aptitude and any special educational needs which they may have. Most parents choose to fulfil this responsibility by registering children at a school. Parents have a legal responsibility to ensure their child's regular attendance.

##### **2.2 Pupils**

As pupils become older and more independent they also have a responsibility to make sure they follow school procedures made known to them for receiving their registration mark, in particular when arriving late.

##### **2.3 School**

Schools are responsible for supporting the attendance of their pupils and for dealing with problems which may lead to non-attendance.

***(Roles and Responsibilities detailed in Appendix 1)***

#### **3.1 THE EDUCATION WELFARE SERVICE (EWS)**



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The Local Authority discharges its statutory duty to ensure regular school attendance through Education Welfare Officers (EWOs) within the Education Welfare Service. The primary responsibility of the Education Welfare Service is to promote the excellent attendance of all pupils in Wiltshire, thereby contributing to raising pupil attainment. The Education Welfare Service will work in close partnership with all maintained schools in Wiltshire and other statutory and voluntary agencies to promote regular school attendance.

### 3.2 ATTENDANCE REGISTERS

Attendance registers are legal documents which may be required as evidence in court. Schools are required to take an attendance register at the start of the morning session and once during the afternoon session. Taking the register is a key part of the school day and should be seen as such by staff, parents and pupils.

### 3.3 The following action must be taken:

- On each record whether every pupil was present, absent, present at approved educational activity or unable to attend due to exceptional circumstances
- If a pupil of compulsory school age (over 5) is absent the register must also show whether the absence was authorised by the school or not
- Authorised absence means that the school has either given approval in advance for the pupil to be away or that an explanation offered afterwards has been accepted as satisfactory justification
- The law requires absences not agreed in advance to be recorded as unauthorised unless and until a satisfactory explanation is forthcoming.

### Reception Age Children

**3.4** Children do not reach statutory school age until they are five years old. However, we want to establish good attendance patterns for children from an early age so our expectations will be that they follow the same procedures as the rest of the school.

## HOLIDAY ABSENCE

### 4.1 The Wiltshire Council policy states that:

Time off school for family holidays **is not a right**. Schools have discretion to allow up to 10 days in the school year - if they believe that the circumstances warrant it.

### 4.2 Schools may agree up to 10 days "holiday leave" in **special circumstances** such as:

- \* *when a family needs to spend time together to support each other during or after a crisis;*
- \* *for service personnel and other employees who are prevented from taking holidays outside term time if the holiday will have minimal disruption to the pupil's education.*

### 4.3 In general terms, the Local Authority would expect a school to consider the potential



## Saint Patrick's Catholic Primary School

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negative impact that any absence can have on a child's academic progress, even if a child's attendance is 90% or above.

#### **4.4 The Local Authority would not, however, expect schools to agree holiday leave if:**

- \* the pupil already has poor attendance and the Education Welfare Service (EWS) is involved;*
- \* the pupil would miss public examinations such as National Curriculum Key Stage 2 tests.*

**Saint Patrick's Catholic Primary understands that family holidays are enriching experiences, however the academic year is designed to give families the opportunity for these breaks without having to disrupt their children's education.**

**The Department for Education has clear evidence that absence from school is linked to lower levels of attainment. The latest analysis published in March 2016 shows that every extra day missed was associated with lower attainment at age 11.**

#### **4.5 Holidays for the following reasons should not be authorised:**

- availability of cheap holidays;*
- availability of the desired accommodation;*
- poor weather experienced in school holiday periods; and*
- overlap with the beginning or end of term.*

**4.6** In addition, it is Saint Patrick's school policy not to authorise any holiday absence during April, May and June as this is when we carry out our annual assessments, including SAT tests.

**4.7** In all circumstances of holiday leave, a written application must be made by the parent with whom the pupil normally resides in advance of the holiday and a date for the pupil's return to school agreed. Holiday/ Leave of Absence forms are in the appendix or can be obtained from the school office. The school will reply with a letter authorising or declining the absence request (appendix 3 & 4).

**4.8** If a child is taken out of school for this time despite the request being declined, the absences will be unauthorised. **Where unauthorised holiday absence amounts to 10 sessions (5 school days) or more within the previous six months of the current academic year, the Education Welfare Service will be notified and the Local Authority will issue you with a Penalty Notice (Appendix 5).**

**4.9** The **Governing Body** will ensure that the LA is informed about the long-term absence of any pupils.

### **ARRANGEMENTS FOR MONITORING ATTENDANCE AND HOLIDAY ABSENCE**

**5. 1** The Headteacher will, on a termly basis, provide data on pupil attendance against the number of sessions taught, and will provide comparisons with previous terms and years. The



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Headteacher and Governing Body will evaluate the data and decide what, if any, further action is required.

**5.2** This policy is co-owned by other schools within the Corsham Cluster of schools and will be reviewed as a Cluster in consultation with Saint Patrick's Governing Body.

**Date of policy: June 2018**

**Next Review: Sept 2024**

**Updated policy: Sept 2021**

### **APPENDICES ATTACHED**

Appendix 1: Roles and Responsibilities

Appendix 2: [Holiday/Leave of Absence Request Form](#)

Appendix 3: [Letter Authorising Absence](#)

Appendix 4: [Refusal letter \(circumstances unacceptable\) over 90% attendance](#)

Appendix 5: [Refusal Letter \(maximum number of days in 6 month period exceeded\) under 90% attendance](#)

Appendix 6: [Wiltshire County Council Penalty Notice](#)

Appendix 7: [Notification of Unauthorised Absence](#)

Appendix 8: [Attendance and Progress %](#)

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### APPENDIX 1: ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

#### **Parental Responsibilities:**

- Ensure that their child attends school regularly, arrives at school on time, appropriately dressed and in a 'condition to learn' i.e. not too tired or too hungry to learn.
- Work with the school to help their child gain an appreciation of the importance of attending school regularly and punctually.
- Make medical, dental appointments etc. out of school hours, where possible.
- Notify the school if their child is absent by phone or in writing on the first day of absence, ideally first thing in the morning.
- Take holidays and day trips in school holidays.
- **Complete an 'absence from school form' (see appendix) for planned absences and return it to the office in advance of the absence. Absences, such as holidays, will not be authorised retrospectively.**
- Work with the school to take an active interest in their child's school life, to reinforce school policies/arrangements on homework, behaviour and approach to learning, to attend parents' evenings and other meetings where necessary.
- Work with the school and other agencies to resolve issues relating to non-attendance.
- Parents must seek permission from their child's Headteacher prior to any holiday in term time and give advance maximum notice for such a request.

#### **School Responsibilities:**

- To maximise attendance rates.
- Support parents in ensuring regular and punctual attendance.
- To respond promptly to any issue which may lead to non-attendance or irregular attendance.
- Be sensitive to the needs of the individual parent.
- Produce a whole School Attendance Policy which is consistently applied and clearly communicated to all parents.
- Provide formal written notification explaining the actions that may be taken and ensure parents understand the consequences of failing to ensure their child's regular attendance, in particular that the case could result in a penalty notice and/or court summons.

The **Headteacher** will ensure that:

- Pupils are registered accurately and efficiently.
- Attendance targets and attendance statistics are reported to the LA and Governing Body.
- Each child's attendance record will be reported to parents as part of their child's annual report
- Parents or carers are contacted when reasons for absence are unknown or unauthorised.
- Pupils attendance and lateness are monitored regularly.
- Excellent attendance is acknowledged.



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- Pupils absent for long periods because of ill-health receive appropriate learning support.
- Parents are strongly advised to take holidays outside of term time.
- In the case of poor attendance, where there is no explanation for the absence or it is an unauthorised holiday absence, the school will follow the LA's procedures for 'fixed penalty notices'. If high levels of absence continue a request may be made to the Education Welfare Officer to begin procedures for fast 'track to prosecution'.

All **Teachers** are expected to:

- Register pupils accurately and efficiently
- Record known absences in the register e.g. where the parent has informed the teacher.
- Report pupil attendance and lateness daily.
- Encourage pupils to attend school regularly and inform colleagues if there is a problem e.g. social or emotional problem that may lead to absences.
- Inform the Head teacher of any unusual absences.

**Administrative staff will:**

- Check registers daily.
- Ring the parent/guardian of any child who is not in school who has not already made contact with the school on the first morning of absence to ask the reason for their child's absence.
- Inform teachers of the reason for a child's absence.
- Highlight poor attendance figures to the Headteacher and teachers.



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### APPENDIX 2: HOLIDAY / LEAVE ABSENCE REQUEST FORM

Taking your child out of school during term time may harm your child's academic progress.

Schools may agree requests for absence taken during term time, where an absence has been requested in advance and:

- where a pupil's overall attendance is 90% or above and the reason for the leave of absence is deemed, by the headteacher, to be exceptional; or
- where the pupil has not had more than 10 sessions (5 school days) lost to unauthorised absence during the previous six months in the academic year and has not had any additional unauthorised absence during the previous twelve months.

As absences can only be authorised in exceptional circumstances, please explain in detail the reasons for this request. Please also attach supporting documentary evidence as appropriate, so that an informed decision can be made.

We do not authorise absences during April, May or June, as this is when we carry out our annual assessments including SATs.

*NB If you are requesting a holiday absence please submit this form three weeks prior to the absence*

Name of Child(ren)	
Date of Birth	
Class	
Date of First Day of Absence	
Date of Return	
Number of Days requested	

Reason for holiday/absence to be taken during term time:

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

I have read the Local Authority leaflet which explains Penalty Notices issued for unauthorised holidays during term time on the school website or from the school office.

Signed: \_\_\_\_\_ Relationship to Child: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_



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**For school use:**

Attendance for previous school year %:..... Present school year %:.....

Total sessions pupil absent this academic year: .....

Total unauthorised absence this year:.....

Request authorised: Yes/No      Headteacher Signature .....

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### APPENDIX 3: LETTER AUTHORISING ABSENCE

Date:

Dear

With reference to your application for leave of absence for .....for a period of ..... days, for the dates .....to .....

Due to the exceptional circumstances of this request and with consideration being given to the pupil's attendance, attainment and periods of assessment and public examinations, I am writing to advise that the reason you have provided is deemed exceptional and the absence for this period will be authorised as holiday.

Yours sincerely,

R.E. McLoughlin  
Headteacher

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### **APPENDIX 4: LETTER DECLINING ABSENCE REQUEST (over 90% attendance)**

Date:

Dear

With reference to your request for ..... to be absent for.....days for  
*family holiday / wedding / funeral / other reason (delete as necessary)*

**I regret to inform you that this will not be agreed on this occasion.**

The reason that you have provided for requesting a leave of absence does not indicate an exceptional circumstance and -

*Your son / daughter will be taking his / her SATs examinations during the period the absence has been requested; and*

*The reasons given by you for requesting leave of absence in term time do not indicate exceptional circumstances as described by the Local Authority.*

*As stated in our policy, we do not authorise absences during April, May and June, as this is when we carry out our annual assessments including SATs.*

I must advise you that if you do take your son / daughter out of school for this period of time the absences will NOT be authorised and will mean that your child will have a total of ..... sessions (... ..... school days) of unauthorised absence.

If further unauthorised absence is recorded that amounts to 10 sessions or more within a 6 month period and additional unauthorised absence is within the previous 12 months, the Education Welfare Service will be notified and the Local Authority may issue a Penalty Notice\* to each parent for each child. The 12 month period includes all unauthorised absence up to and including the day the Education Welfare Service is notified.

Your son / daughter's attendance will be monitored and you will be notified if there is further concern.

Yours sincerely

R.E. McLoughlin  
Headteacher

\*the Penalty Notice shall be a sum of £120 if paid within 28 days, reduced to £60 if paid within 21 days.



## Saint Patrick's Catholic Primary School

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### **APPENDIX 5: LETTER DECLINING ABSENCE REQUEST (under 90% attendance)**

Date:

Dear

With reference to your request for ..... to be absent for ..... days for

*family holiday / wedding / funeral / other reason (delete as necessary)*

I regret to inform you that this will not be agreed on this occasion.

The reason that you have provided for requesting a leave of absence does not indicate an exceptional circumstance as described by the local authority and

- a) Your son / daughter's current attendance rate is currently less than 90%*
- b) Your son / daughter has had ..... unauthorised absences between ..... and .....*
- c) Your son / daughter will be taking his / her SATs / GCSE examinations during the period the absence has been requested; and*
- d) His / her educational progress will be affected by any disruption at this point in time (delete as applicable)*

I must advise you that if you do take your son / daughter out of school for this period of time the absences will NOT be authorised and will mean that your child will have a total of ..... sessions ( ..... school days) of unauthorised absence.

Where a pupil's overall attendance is less than 90% and unauthorised absence amounts to 10 sessions or more within a 6 month period and additional unauthorised absence is within the previous 12 months, the Education Welfare Service will be notified and the Local Authority may issue a Penalty Notice\* to each parent for each child. The 12 month period includes all unauthorised absence up to and including the day the Education Welfare Service is notified.

Yours sincerely

R.E. McLoughlin  
Headteacher

\*the Penalty Notice shall be a sum of £120 if paid within 28 days, reduced to £60 if paid within 21 days. If the Penalty is not paid in full within 28 days the Local authority is required to commence proceedings in the Magistrates' court for the offence of unauthorised absence.



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### APPENDIX 6

Wiltshire Council  
Where everybody matters

# PENALTY NOTICES FOR UNAUTHORISED LEAVE OF ABSENCE DURING TERM TIME

**s444A and s444B Education Act 1996  
&**

**The Education (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2006**

**Information for Parents and Carers**

**September 2016**

#### **What are s444A and s444B of the Education Act 1996?**

Section 444A and section 444B of the Education Act 1996 give powers to the Local Authority (LA) to issue Penalty Notices where the parent/carer is considered capable of but unwilling to secure an improvement in their child's school attendance.

#### **Why are these powers available?**

Reducing absence from school is a key priority at both national and local level. Missing school reduces a pupil's educational attainment and life chances.

#### **What is a Penalty Notice?**

A Penalty Notice is an alternative to prosecution and is used to try and secure an improvement in a pupil's school attendance without the need to appear in Court. As long as the penalty is paid the Penalty Notice enables parents or carers to discharge their potential liability for prosecution for the period covered by the Penalty Notice.

#### **What are the costs?**

Payment of £120 is required within 28 days of receipt of the Penalty Notice; this sum is reduced to £60 if paid within 21 days. If the penalty is not paid in full within 28 days the LA is required



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to commence proceedings in the Magistrates' Court for the original offence of your child's poor school attendance. If you plead guilty or are found guilty the Courts have a wider range of options which could include a maximum fine of £1000. In addition a Parenting Order could be imposed.

Penalty Notices are issued to each parent for each child and payment is required for each Penalty Notice issued.

### **Who issues them?**

The Local Authority through the Education Welfare Service.

### **How are they issued?**

By post to your home.

### **Can I be prosecuted if I pay the penalty but my child is still missing school?**

Yes. You will not be prosecuted for the period included in the Penalty Notice – payment discharges your liability in this respect. However, legal proceedings might be considered for further periods of poor attendance not covered by the Penalty Notice, depending upon the circumstances.

### **When are they issued for unauthorised Leave of Absence**

Penalty Notices are issued for absence taken during term time where a pupil's overall attendance is less than 90% and the leave of absence has not been authorised by the school or an absence has not been requested in advance and pupil has had a minimum of 10 sessions (5 school days) lost to unauthorised absence during the previous six months in the academic year and additional unauthorised absence during the previous twelve months up to and including the day the Education Welfare Service is notified.

### **What is unauthorised Leave of Absence?**

- A parent has made a request for leave of absence in term time and this has not been agreed by the school;
- A parent has not applied leave of absence in advance of the absence (the regulations do not allow retrospective approval); or
- If the parents keep the child away from school for longer than was agreed, the extra time is recorded as unauthorised

### **When can Leave of Absence be authorised?**

Amendments made to the 2006 regulations in the **Education (Pupil Registration) (England) (Amendment) Regulations 2013** make clear that headteachers may not grant any leave of absence during term time unless there are **exceptional** circumstances.

### **Why have I received this leaflet?**

This leaflet is sent to parents in Wiltshire to inform them of the extended use of Penalty Notices for unauthorised leave of absence or for parents who have requested leave of absence during



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term time.

If the leave of absence you have requested is not agreed by the school and your child has had a minimum of 10 sessions (5 school days) lost to unauthorised absence during the previous six months in the academic year and additional unauthorised absence during the previous twelve months the Local Authority will be notified and a Penalty Notice will be issued to each parent for each child.

### **What can I do now?**

If the leave of absence that you have requested is not authorised you are advised not to take your child out of school.

### **Who can I discuss this with?**

In the first instance talk to your child's school; otherwise the Penalty Notice Officer can be contacted on:

**Tel: 01722 438123 Email: [PNLO@wiltshire.gov.uk](mailto:PNLO@wiltshire.gov.uk)**

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### APPENDIX 7

Wiltshire Education Welfare Service  
Early Help – Operational Children's  
Services

Wiltshire Council  
Where everybody matters

### W4 - School / Academy Notification

Appendix 6

#### Pupil Unauthorised Absence / Leave of Absence

FULL NAME OF PARENT (1):	FULL NAME OF PARENT (2):
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ADDRESS:	ADDRESS:
POSTCODE:	POSTCODE:

NAME OF PUPIL:	DOB:
NAME OF PUPIL:	DOB:

ADDRESS:
POSTCODE:

SCHOOL:	Overall attendance % to date
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Period of unauthorised leave of absence FROM:	TO:
Number of additional unauthorised absence in previous 12 months - <i>please attach registration certificate</i>	

HEADTEACHER:	<b>AUTHORISED BY PNLO:</b>
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<b>SIGNED:</b>	<b>DATE:</b>	
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**NOTIFICATION OF UNAUTHORISED LEAVE OF ABSENCE IN TERM TIME / UNAUTHORISED ABSENCE**

**PLEASE ATTACH COPIES OF:**

REGISTRATION CERTIFICATE AND ALL RELEVANT DOCUMENTATION RELATING TO SCHOOL ATTENDANCE MEETINGS **OR** LEAVE OF ABSENCE REQUEST FORM AND REFUSAL LETTER TO PARENT.

*Where parents have not applied for leave of absence in advance the school must provide a signed witness statement which states that the pupil was believed to be on holiday*

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### APPENDIX 8: ATTENDANCE AND PROGRESS %

Percentage attendance	What this means for your child
98+%	Excellent attendance that will contribute towards excellent learning and progress.
96-97%	Good attendance that will contribute towards good learning and progress.
93-95%	Average attendance.
80-93%	Below average attendance that may begin to have an adverse effect on learning and progress. The school will closely monitor the absences and reasons for them.
Less than 80%	Very poor attendance that will have a negative effect on learning and progress. The Educational Welfare Officer will become involved in supporting the family to improve attendance.

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