

# St Hugh's Catholic Primary School

## Attendance Policy

### Mission Statement

St Hugh's Catholic Primary School provides a welcoming, safe and secure environment for all. Our school aims to be a community which reflects real gospel values of love and forgiveness. A community in which each individual, child or adult, can work in an atmosphere of mutual respect and understand; so as to broaden their appreciation of the world, its cultures and its people.

**Every day ..... Growing in God's Love**

### Introduction

This is a successful and happy school and your child plays their part in making it so. However, for our children to gain the greatest benefit from their education it is vital that they attend regularly and your child should be at school, on time, every day the school is open unless the reason for the absence is unavoidable. It is very important therefore that you make sure that your child attends regularly and this Policy sets out how together we will achieve this.

### Why Regular Attendance is so important

Any absence affects the pattern of a child's schooling and regular absence will seriously affect their learning. Any pupil's absence disrupts teaching routines so may affect the learning of others in the same class.

Ensuring your child's regular attendance at school is your legal responsibility and permitting absence from school without a good reason creates an offence in law and may result in prosecution.

A child not attending school is considered to be a safeguarding matter. This is why information about the cause of any absence is required

### Promoting Regular Attendance

Helping to create a pattern of regular attendance is everybody's responsibility - Parents/Carers, Pupils and all members of school staff.

To help us all to focus on this we will:

- Appropriate interventions are in place to improve punctuality.
- An appropriate curriculum is provided and will be reviewed regularly.
- The need for high quality teaching and learning throughout the school is recognised as being essential to the promotion of attendance.
- Pupils are provided with appropriate support to minimise absence from school. This includes the school and multi-agency provision as appropriate.
- Special Educational Needs, disadvantaged and Looked After pupils and other vulnerable groups are given appropriate support, and attendance is monitored rigorously.
- Effective partnerships with parent/carers are encouraged through regular contact and support provided.
- Parents/carers are kept informed of pupils' attendance and punctuality through first day contact, termly progress reports, individual letters and meetings when required.
- Good attendance and punctuality is rewarded through regular incentives.
- Attendance and punctuality is regularly discussed with pupils in class and at assemblies.
- Staff attendance roles and responsibilities are clearly defined and all staff should ensure these are followed.

### Expectations of Parent/Carer

Ensuring your child's regular attendance at school is a parent/carer's legal responsibility (Section 444 of the 1996 Education Act) and permitting absence from school that is not authorised by the school creates an offence in law.

- Ensure your child arrives for school on time. School gates open at 8:45am.
- Please telephone the school if your child is to be late.

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- For routine non-emergency medical and dental appointments please ensure they are made outside of school hours.
- Contact school by 8:30am on the first day of absence if your child is unable to attend through illness, giving an indication of the expected duration and return date to school.
- If a text message/phone call is sent as a result of your child's absence it is important that you respond, to ensure your child is appropriately safeguarded.
- In case of emergency, we need up to date contact numbers at all times so please ensure you inform us of any changes especially to mobile telephone numbers. (As a school we request a minimum of two emergency contact details be provided)
- Appointment cards/slips will be provided by parents as proof if there is no alternative but to book in school time, e.g. if a specific clinic runs in school hours

### Understanding types of absence

Every half-day absence from school 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.

#### Authorised absences

- are mornings or afternoons away from school for reasons such as illness, medical/dental appointments which unavoidably fall in school time, emergencies or other unavoidable cause.

#### Unauthorised absences

are those which the school does not consider reasonable and for which no "leave" has been given. It is this type of absence which can lead to the Authority using sanctions and/or legal proceedings and includes:

- Parents/carers keeping children off school unnecessarily
- truancy before or during the school day
- absences which have never been properly explained
- children who arrive at school too late to get a mark
- shopping, looking after other children or birthdays
- day trips and holidays in term time which have not been agreed.

Whilst any child may be off school because they are ill, sometimes they can be reluctant to attend school. Any problems with regular attendance are best sorted out between the school, the parents and the child. If your child is reluctant to attend, it is better not to cover up their absence or to give in to pressure to excuse them from attending. This gives the impression that attendance does not matter and usually make things worse.

### Persistent Absenteeism (PA)

A pupil is a persistent absentee when they miss 10% or more of their schooling across the school year for whatever reason. Absence at this level can impact on a child's educational attainment and progress. We need parent's fullest support to address this.

We will give priority to any pupil either at the PA level or at risk of reaching it and parents will be informed of this immediately so that together we can put a plan in place to get that child back into school. All PA cases are also automatically made known to the Education Welfare Officer.

### Absence Procedures

If your child is absent you must:

- Contact the school by 8.30am, on the first day of absence
- Send a note in on the first day they return with an explanation of the absence
- If your child is absent for more than 3 days you must contact the school again

If your child is absent we will:

- Telephone/text you on the first day of absence if we have not heard from you
- If we do not receive a response we will continue to try and contact you or a family member
- We may also visit your home for further clarification as a child not attending school is considered to be a safeguarding matter.

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- If we are not satisfied we will contact our Education Welfare Officer
- If your child is absent on a regular basis, we will invite you in to discuss the situation with the Welfare Officer. This matter may then be referred to the Education Welfare Officer

### The Education Welfare Officer:

Parents are expected to contact school at an early stage and to work with the staff in resolving any problems together. This is nearly always successful. If difficulties cannot be sorted out in this way, the school may refer the child to the Education Welfare Officer. They will also try to resolve the situation by agreement but, if other ways of trying to improve the child's attendance have failed and unauthorised absences persist, these officers can use sanctions such as Penalty Notices or prosecutions in the Magistrates Court. Full details of the options open to enforce attendance at <https://liverpool.gov.uk/schools-and-learning/education-welfare/school-attendance-behaviour-welfare/> school are available from the school or the Local Authority.

Alternatively, parents may wish to contact the EWO themselves to ask for help or information. They are independent of the school and will give impartial advice. Their telephone number is available from the school office or by contacting the Local Authority on 0151 233 3916.

### Lateness

Being late is not acceptable. If your child misses the start of the day they can miss work and do not spend time with their class teacher getting vital information and news for the day. Late arriving pupils also disrupt lessons and can be embarrassing for the child. Lateness can also encourage absence. You may be prosecuted by

### How we manage lateness

Your child can arrive in school from 8.45am when the school gates open. The school day starts at 8.55am and we expect your child to be in at that time. If they arrive after 8.55am, they will be marked late.

If your child has a persistent late record you will be asked to meet with the Welfare Officer to resolve the problem, but you can approach us at any time if you are having problems getting your child to school on time.

### Leave of absence in Term Time

Leave of absence in term time will affect your child's schooling as much as any other absence and we expect parents to help us by not taking children away in school time.

There is no entitlement in law to time off in school time to go on holiday.

All applications for leave must be made in advance to the Headteacher. In deciding the school will consider the circumstances of each application individually, including any previous pattern of leave in term time. *Please be aware however that in line with Local Authority and Government guidance, leave of absence in term time will only be considered in the most exceptional of circumstances.*

Full details of our policy and procedures are available from the school, but it is important that you understand the circumstances when leave in term time will never be agreed by us:

- When a pupil is just starting the school. This is very important as your child needs to settle into a new environment as quickly as possible.
- Immediately before and during assessment periods (SATS)
- When a pupil's attendance record already includes any level of unauthorised absence
- Where a pupil's attendance rate is already below (90%) or will fall to or below that level as a result of taking holiday leave.
- Any period of leave taken without the agreement of the school, or in excess of that agreed, will be classed as unauthorised and may attract sanctions such as a Penalty Notice.
- Leave of absence requests for exceptional circumstances must be completed on the form available from the school office. Leave of absence can only be authorised by the Headteacher.

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### **School targets, projects and special initiatives:**

The school has targets to improve attendance and your child has an important part to play in meeting these targets.

The minimum level of attendance for this school is 97% and we will keep you updated regularly about progress to this level and how your child's attendance compares to this level.

Our target is to achieve better than 97%. We are aiming for this level because that is the attendance needed for pupils to achieve the best from their schooling and we believe we can achieve this and be amongst the best attended schools in the city.

Through the school year we monitor absences and punctuality to show us where improvements need to be made.

### **Summary:**

The school has a legal duty to publish its absence figures to parents and to promote attendance. Equally, parents have a duty to make sure that their children attend. School staff are committed to working with parents as the best way to ensure as high a level of attendance as possible.