

# St. Antony's Catholic Primary School



## Attendance Policy



## Our Lady Of Grace Academy Trust 2022-2024

**Reviewed and Agreed by staff: Autumn 2022**

**Agreed by Governors: Autumn 2022**

**Review Date: September 2024**

## Our Mission Statement



At St. Antony's Catholic School we celebrate our special talents as children of God:

We try to be like Jesus and always keep him in our hearts.

We work together in our homes, school and parish to share our gifts and learn together.

We understand that we are all different and we respect each other.

We look after our world so that we may share it together in peace.

St Antony's Catholic Primary School is part of the multi-cultural London Borough of Newham.

We value our Christian ethos and therefore respect the Cultures and Faiths of all.

## Our School's Vision



Our vision for St Antony's sees **Christ Centra** to our beliefs and practice. It holds our inclusive school as an agent of change which will engage all stakeholders: Governors, Teachers, Parents, Children, Church and Community; while inspiring all our children from Nursery to Year 6 (the next generation of our society and the future of our community) to work collaboratively with all relevant agencies to aspire to achieve to their fullest potential. Our school will function as a centre of excellence, and an axis of transformation and development within our community; by enabling all under our care to aspire to achieve self-actualisation through: sound Spiritual, Moral, Social and Cultural formation while embedding effective behaviour for learning, solid personal and shared philosophies with a positive, progressive and professional approach to life and living- while upholding core Christian and British Values- leading to the achievement of the highest academic, socio-economic and sustainable life goals. None of this can be achieved in absence, therefore excellent attendance at school will be actively encouraged and promoted among all cohorts.

## **Introduction**

This Policy has been agreed by the Governors, Staff and Pupils of St. Antony's Catholic Primary School. It represents our commitment to striving for 100% attendance, which is achievable, as this is achieved by many children annually. It sets out the principles, procedures and practice the school will undertake. Strategies, sanctions and possible legal consequences of poor Attendance and Punctuality are also detailed, as well as rewards for, and benefits of good attendance. This policy will be reviewed, amended as necessary and published annually in accordance with current legislation and guidance.

## **Principles**

- Receiving a full-time, first quality education is a child's legal entitlement.
- It is parents'/carers' legal responsibility to ensure this happens.
- Attending school regularly aids intellectual, social and emotional development
- Attending school regularly safeguards the welfare of children whilst they are not in the care of their parents.
- All children whose attendance is poor will be treated as vulnerable.

These principles are enshrined in British law, within the Education Act 1996, the Children Act 1989, and other associated pieces of legislation.

## **Aims of the Policy**

- To ensure that all children attend as near full-time as possible, in order to maximise their educational achievement and social development.
- To discharge the school's duty to safeguard its pupils to be best of its ability
- To ensure that all those responsible for children's education, including parents, carers, staff and governors understand and accept their responsibilities in relation to attendance.
- To minimise absence from school, thereby reducing levels of persistent absence.
- To improve the life chances of Newham's children and young people and prepare them to be fully contributing citizens when they reach adulthood.

## **Policy objectives:**

- **To safeguard the welfare, health, social and emotional development of children**
- **To reduce persistent absence**
- **To reduce or eliminate term time holidays/leave of absence**
- **To promote commitment to education and high achievement**
- **To maximise the potential of every individual pupil**

## **Promoting Good Attendance:**

The Governors, Head Teacher and staff will use all possible opportunities to promote the importance of good attendance and punctuality. These will include the home/school agreement, newsletters, rewards and incentives for outstanding or significantly improving attendance at assemblies and awards evenings- our ultimate aim is to have all children on roll in good attendance.

**Requests for absences during term time will only be exercised in accordance with the MAT's Policies and procedures in the MOST EXCEPTIONAL circumstance with the proviso that verification and valid evidence can be provided.**

## **RESPONSIBILITIES OF PARENTS/CARERS**

### **Understanding types of absence coding**

Every half-day absence from school has to be classified by the school as AUTHORISED or UNAUTHORISED. This is why information about the cause of any absence is always required, preferably in writing (parents are asked to fill in one of our forms in the office). Medical evidence may also be required in the form of a copy of a prescription, GP note, home office, hospital and dental appointments etc. Types of absence that are likely to be authorised are serious illness warranting hospitalisation, medical or dental appointments which unavoidably fall in school time, as well as serious accidents and emergencies.

### **Examples of types of absence that are not considered reasonable and which will not be authorised under any circumstances are:**

- Going out with parents to celebrate birthdays, anniversaries and events
- Minding other younger children/siblings in the family
- Staying at home because other members in the family are unwell
- Day trips and holidays in term time that are in contravention of LBN attendance procedures
- Arriving at school too late to get a 'present' mark on one or many occasions
- Truancy from school

### **Reluctant attenders/school refusal**

You should do everything possible to encourage your child to attend. However if the reason for their reluctance appears to be school-based, such as difficulty with work, or problems settling in, difficulties forming friendships with peers etc. please discuss this with the school at the earliest opportunity and the school will do everything possible to support you with addressing the matter. Colluding with your child's reluctance to attend is likely to make the matter worse. Transferring the blame on to others without valid reasons is also not a healthy approach, as it does not address the real root cause of the problem. Working in partnership with the school usually derives the best outcomes.

In some cases School refusal/school phobia may be linked to a psychological condition that can usually be medically diagnosed via your GP's referral to the right agency. Other arrangements may be put in place for a child with genuine school/ crowd/people phobia.

## **SCHOOL PROCEDURES**

### **1. Registration and punctuality procedures**

Registers are taken twice a day, once at the start of the school day at 8:45am but registers remain open until 9 a.m. After 9am a child is deemed late at St Antony's Catholic Primary. Registers are taken again during the afternoon session after lunch. Pupils arriving after the end of the Registration period will be coded L (Late) which is a present mark but indicating lateness. The number of minutes late will be recorded in the late register at the main office.

**The morning registration period will start at 8.45 a.m. and end at 9.00 a.m. after which a child is classified as late.**

**The afternoon registration period will start at 1.00.p.m. for KS1 and Reception and at 1.30 p.m. for KS2.**

**Nursery and Viridis although non-statutory, are expected to observe good attendance within their stipulated time frames in both mornings and afternoons.**

**Only the Head Teacher or designated member(s) of SLT acting on the Head's behalf can authorise absences.** If there is no known reason for the absence at registration, then the absence will be recorded as unauthorised, until a satisfactory reason is provided. If the reason given is not satisfactory in the school's view, and/or evidence of the reason cannot be provided, the absence will be coded as an **Unauthorised absence**. Absence notes received from parents/carers will be kept for the remainder of the academic year; or longer if there are concerns that require further investigation or legal action. If a pupil is persistently late the Head and SLT will arrange to meet with the family as soon as the pattern is identified- to ascertain the reasons for lateness and to assist with supporting the family if in need. If the lateness is down to bad habits then the relevant authorities will be called to address the matter.

### **2. First Day Absence Contact**

Parents are expected to notify the school if their child is unable to attend for any unavoidable reason, such as illness. If the school does not receive notification it will text/telephone on the first day of absence, to try to ascertain the reason for the absence. If no good reason is given the absence will be deemed unauthorised. First day contact will be carried out as early as possible in the school day, in order to notify parents whose children may have set off for school (as they travel on their own), but may not have arrived, as expected. If there are any accidents or emergencies the school will take any needed action necessary inclusive of calling the parents.

### **3. Second Day Absence Contact**

If the child is still absent on the second day without contact from the family, a telephone call will be made to the home. The family may be asked to come in to school for a meeting. If it

is found there was illness or emergency parents will be asked to bring in the needed proof or paperwork to verify the reasons for the absence.

#### **4. Continuing Absence Procedures**

In the event of an absence of three or more days without contact from the family, a home visit may be made. Any child who is absent without explanation for 8 consecutive school days (85%), who has a pattern of erratic attendance (85%), or persistent lateness after registers close will be referred to the Attendance Management Service/ CYPs/Social Worker in the LBN in order that further investigations can be made. Such cases will be allocated to a social worker who will visit the home, set targets for improvement, signpost sources of support if needed, and ultimately recommend court action or a Penalty Notice if there is no improvement.

#### **5. Frequent/Persistent Absence Procedures**

Regular checks of the late and class registers will be made to identify pupils with a pattern of absences and lateness that may lead to Persistent Absence (PA), that is to say absence of 15% or more in a half term. The LBN Attendance Officer/Social Worker will be notified/ responsible for identification of any emerging concerns, and putting in place actions for each pupil of concern. Initially the school will try to resolve the problem with parents/carers, but if the pattern continues the school will refer the matter to the Borough Authorities. In cases where there appear to be issues requiring outside intervention to support the family and the child, referral may be made through the Triage/MASH/Early Help system for external agency support. All PA pupils and their parents will be subject to an Action Plan or Parenting Contract. Such a plan or contract may include allocation of additional in-school or external support. Examples of unjustifiable reasons for absence from school would be:

- Going out with parents for celebrations such as birthdays, anniversaries etc.
- Minding other younger children in the family
- Staying at home because other members in the family are unwell
- Day trips and holidays in term time that have not been agreed
- Arriving at school too late to get a present mark
- Truancy

#### **6. Consequences of Poor Attendance /Punctuality**

For pupils whose attendance and/or punctuality fails to improve, after a range of interventions and support measures have been tried by the school, the ultimate consequences may be one of the following:

- 1) The school may ask the Council to issue a Penalty Notice on its behalf. A Penalty Notice carries a fine of £60, per parent, per child. If the fine is not paid within 21 days it rises to £120 per parent, per child. If not paid at all, court action will be initiated.
- 2) The school may ask the Council initiate court action under Section 444 of the Education Act 1996, which could lead to fines of up to £2,500, or even imprisonment.

- 3) In some cases, action may be taken under the Children's Act 1989 to protect the welfare and development of the child as persistent absence and lateness is a sign of gross negligence on the part of parents-this may be deemed a Safeguarding matter.

### **7. Children who Cease to Attend without Prior Notification (CME) procedures**

Procedures for trying to trace children who cease to attend without prior notification are covered in detail in the CME Policy and Procedures. However, if, after ten days continuous absence school has been unable to ascertain the whereabouts of a pupil, they will refer the child's details to the Local Authority for it to perform further checks that are not available to school. If after 20 days continuous unauthorised absence, their whereabouts cannot be traced, they will be removed from the school roll.

### **8. Non starters**

Pupils who are allocated places but fail to start are also treated as CME. If the school has been unable to make contact with the family during a ten-day period after their expected arrival, they will refer the pupils to the local authority CME team for further checks.

### **Vulnerable Children**

Children who are Looked After (LAC), subject to a Child Protection Plan (CP), Children in Need (CIN) will be treated with highest priority and will be known to the MASH TEAM/Social Services/LBN Attendance Officer. Any unexplained absence will be followed up immediately by a telephone call to the home, a home visit or by a call to the AMS Duty Desk in order that a same-day visit can be made. Children with Special Educational Needs (SEN) will be treated with similar priority in order that their time in school can be maximised, and their learning supported to the greatest extent possible.

## USEFUL INFORMATION FOR PARENTS AND CARERS

### Introduction

St Antony's is a successful school, and you and your child play a great part in making it so. We aim to encourage all members of the school community to reach for excellence. For children to gain the greatest benefit from their education it is vital that they attend regularly, and your child should be at school in good time for the start of the school day, every day the school is open, unless they are genuinely ill or there is some other unavoidable reason.

Some children are reluctant to go to school and say they do not feel well. It is for you as the adult, to judge whether they are genuinely unwell, or just unwilling. It will be better for them in the long run to go to school, rather than avoid it, as days off mean they will fall further behind and make them even more reluctant. Your job as the parent is to encourage them to attend.

Ensuring your child's regular attendance at school is YOUR legal responsibility and permitting absence without good reason is an offence in law and may result in legal action being taken, or a Penalty Notice being issued (see below).

### Learning

Any absence affects the child's learning, and the more they miss the harder it will be for them to catch up. Research has shown that for every percentage point of absence, attainment is significantly lower.

### Safeguarding

There is extensive research linking poor school attendance and exclusion with crime and anti-social behaviour, and risk of exploitation by unsuitable adults. For this reason, failure to attend regularly will be regarded as a safeguarding issue.

### Understanding absence percentages

You may wonder why a school would be concerned if your child's attendance is below 95%. This may make it easier to understand:

**95% equates to half a day off every two weeks**

**90% equates to a day off every two weeks**

**85% equates to one and a half days off every two weeks**

**80% equates to one whole day off every week**

**A secondary age child whose attendance is 80% will have missed ONE WHOLE YEAR of education by the time they leave school**

Even the brightest and most enthusiastic learner will find it hard to keep up with their work with these levels of absence. That is why we encourage the highest attendance possible. **The school's average attendance is 97% however our aim will always be to have 100%!**



## **Understanding types of absence coding**

Every half-day absence from school has to be classified by the school as **AUTHORISED** or **UNAUTHORISED**. This is why information about the cause of any absence is always required, preferably in writing. Medical evidence may also be required in the form of a copy of a prescription, GP note, etc. Types of absence that are likely to be authorised are serious accidents (broken leg or arm), illness, medical or dental appointments which unavoidably fall in school time or emergencies (home flooding, fires, traffic accidents etc.).

### **Persistent Absence**

**A pupil is classed as a persistent absentee when they miss 15% or more schooling across the school year, for whatever reason, whether it be authorised or unauthorised, or a mixture of both.** Absence at this level is doing considerable damage to a child's educational prospects and we need parents' full support and encouragement to tackle it. PA pupils are tracked and monitored carefully through our pastoral system, and we combine this with tracking academic progress to assess the effect on the pupil's attainment. All our PA pupils and their parents are subject to an Action Plan, which may include allocation of some kind of support.

### **Parenting Contracts**

You may be asked to participate in a Parenting Contract to support your child's attendance. These are initiated where school feels you may need help in influencing your child to attend properly. A meeting will be held to which you and your child will be invited. The issues will be discussed and agreement reached as to what the school will do, the child will do and what you as parents/carers will do to try to improve the situation. You may be offered some form of support such as counselling or parenting classes (Triple P) to assist you in setting boundaries and enforcing expectations of your child.

## **Reporting your child's absence**

**If your child is absent you must:**

- **Contact the school as early as possible on the first day of absence, either by telephone or in person, and or send in a note explaining with a friend or relative**
- **Secondly, send a note in on the first day they return with an explanation of the absence**

## **Applications for leave of absence in term time**

**This school's policy is not to authorise holidays/absences during term time as this is the law.**

Any applications for leave in term time must be made in writing to the Head teacher. There is no automatic right to term time leave of absence no matter what the circumstances, and your request is likely to be declined except in the most exceptional circumstances. Each application will be considered on its own merit, and the attendance record(s) of the child/ren concerned will be taken into account when making a decision of this nature no matter who is requesting.

## **Penalty Notices**

Penalty Notices can now be issued for a range of attendance-related offences, including unauthorised term-time holidays, poor attendance and poor punctuality, a child coming to the attention of the police in school time, or located twice or more in truancy sweeps in 6 months. Further details are available on [www.newhm.gov.uk/schools/Attendance](http://www.newhm.gov.uk/schools/Attendance).

#### **Your contact details**

Please make sure that the contact details you have given to the school are kept up to date, so that in the event of an accident, emergency or any other need to contact you we have the correct details.

#### **Useful school contacts**

|                            |                     |
|----------------------------|---------------------|
| <b>Attendance Officers</b> | School Office Staff |
| <b>Head Teacher</b>        | Angela Moore        |

#### **Legal References**

Section 7 of the Education Act 1996 states that *the 'parent of every child of compulsory school age shall cause him/her to receive efficient full time education suitable to his/her age, ability and aptitude, and to any special educational needs he/she may have, either by regular attendance at school, or otherwise.'*

Section 175 of the Education Act 2002 places a duty on local authorities and governing bodies to have regard to guidance issued by the Secretary of State with regard to safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children and students under the age of 18.

The Children Act 1989 provides for a number of actions that can be taken to protect children's safety and welfare, on the premise that the welfare of the child is paramount.