

## ATTENDANCE POLICY

### **Mission:**

Saint Aidan's mission is to create a stimulating, secure and caring environment within which **all** members of our community develop their potential to the full.

Students can only maximise this learning opportunity if they are at school, on time, every day the school is open. Absence is not acceptable unless it is unavoidable or authorised by school. The responsibility for attendance lies with the **parent**.

### **Definitions:**

Saint Aidan's, not the parents of an individual student, is required to classify any absence as either **authorised** or **unauthorised**. In order to classify absence parents/guardians/carers are always required to give a reason or cause for an absence in writing.

Authorised absences are mornings or afternoons away from school for a good reason like illness or other unavoidable cause.

Unauthorised absences are those which the school does not consider reasonable and for which no 'leave' has been given. This includes:

- \* Parents keeping children off school unnecessarily;
- \* Truancy before or during the school day;
- \* Absences which have never been properly explained;
- \* Holidays.

Children are sometimes reluctant to attend school. Any problems with regular attendance are best sorted out between Saint Aidan's, the parents and the student. If a student is reluctant to attend, it is never better 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 may make things worse. Support systems exist to help with such problems.

### **Aims of Policy:**

1. To improve the overall percentage attendance of students on roll at Saint Aidan's.
2. To make attendance and punctuality a priority for all those associated with the school including students, parents, teachers and governors.
3. To ensure roles and responsibilities are defined and agreed to promote consistency in carrying out designated tasks with regard to attendance issues.
4. To provide support, advice and guidance to parents and students.
5. To have a systematic approach to gathering and analysing attendance related data.
6. To continue to develop positive and consistent communication between home and school.

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7. To promote effective partnerships with the local authority and with its services and agencies, to enhance punctuality and attendance.
8. To recognise and respond to the needs of the individual student when planning reintegration following significant periods of absence.
9. To reward those students who have excellent attendance records.

### Procedures:

- A In the event of an unavoidable absence parents should contact school as soon as possible by phone, e-mail, letter or in person. They should indicate the reason for absence and how long it is likely to last. A record of this communication will be added to SIMS.

The student's attendance record will be amended immediately with the appropriate code for the absence by the Form Tutor.

- B Punctuality will also be recorded electronically on the student's record by the Form Tutor. The School's register closes at 8.55 a.m. If punctuality and/or absence becomes a problem the Form Tutor will be responsible initially with contacting the parents to discuss the situation. The Head of Year should also be made aware of the situation so that it can be monitored.
- C Government regulations, introduced in September 2013, make clear that holidays taken during term time will no longer be "authorised absences". This relates to **ALL** years in school. As such, parents are advised, in the strongest possible terms, not to arrange holidays during term time.

All applications for term time leave for any reason must be made, in advance, in writing or by email. Requests can only be authorised if the circumstances surrounding the request are considered to be exceptional. It is important that you understand that leave in term time will **not** be agreed by us at any time unless circumstances surrounding the request can be evidenced, by parents, to be exceptional.

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.

In certain circumstances, parents risk losing their child's place on the school roll if the pupil does not return to school on the agreed return date. Readmission cannot be guaranteed.

The specific circumstances which outline when a pupil can be removed from roll are laid out in Regulation 8 (1) (f) (i-iii) of The Education (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2006 (Amended 2010 and 2013).

- D Saint Aidan's will use the standard SIMS system for recording attendance and absence. The daily maintenance of this is the responsibility of the Form Tutor.

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- E Saint Aidan's employs a School Attendance Co-ordinator (SAC) whose role is to assist the Form Tutors, Heads of Year, Assistant Heads and the local authority to monitor attendance issues.
- F The SAC will act on instructions to undertake:
- i. first day of absence enquiries for identified students;
  - ii. a third day telephone call or letter, if no contact on behalf of an individual student has been made;
  - iii. to check previous absences if no note has been submitted;
  - iv. to monitor individuals who are giving cause for concern;
  - v. to produce individual students' attendance records as required;
  - vi. to feedback information to specific Form Tutors after making enquiries about absences;
  - vii. to gather evidence for penalty notices and prosecution where attendance is unacceptable.
  - viii. to check on a monthly basis with Form Tutors that attendance records are accurate;
  - ix. to see students on an individual basis to support and encourage better attendance;
  - x. to liaise regularly with the school's Heads of Year and Assistant Heads on all attendance issues.
  - xi. to take the Lead, within the Student Support Team, on attendance issues and to work in partnership to address those issues.

Parents are expected to contact Saint Aidan's at an early stage and to work with the Form Tutor and/or Heads of Year resolving any attendance problems together. This is nearly always successful. If difficulties cannot be sorted out in this way, Saint Aidan's may refer the child to the SAC. The SAC will also try to resolve the situation by agreement but, if other ways of trying to improve the student's attendance fail, these Officers can use court proceedings to prosecute parents or to seek an Education Supervision Order on the child. The maximum penalty on conviction is a fine of £2500 and/or three months imprisonment in accordance with Anti-Social Behaviour Act.

### **Penalty Notices:**

Section 23 of the Anti-Social Behaviour Act 2003 brought into force Sections 444A and 444B of the Education Act 1996 which empower designated LEA Officers, Headteachers (and Deputy and Assistant Headteachers authorised by them) and the Police to issue Penalty Notices in cases of unauthorised absence from school.

The Education (Penalty Notices) (England) Regulations 2004 (as amended) came into force on February 27<sup>th</sup> 2004.

Regular and punctual attendance at school is both a legal requirement and essential for students to maximise their education opportunities.

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In law, an offence occurs if a parent/carer fails to secure a child's regular attendance at the school at which they are registered. Penalty Notices supplement the existing sanctions currently available under Section 444 of the Education Act 1996 or Section 36 of the Children Act 1989, to enforce attendance at school where appropriate.

Legal action in the Courts may be used as a strategy to improve attendance when parents have failed to secure their children's regular attendance at school. Penalty Notices are a further option available to the Local Authority.

However, sanctions of any nature are for use only where parental co-operation in this process is either absent or deemed insufficient to resolve the presenting problem.

When support to improve attendance has failed to bring about improvement, the school may request the issuance of a Penalty Notice from the Local Authority.

Payment of a Penalty within 21 days of receipt of the Notice is £60.00 (subject to review). Payment after this time, but within 28 days of receipt of the Notice is £120.00 (subject to review).

Circumstances in which a Penalty Notice may be issued include:

- Truancy;
- Unauthorised holidays in term time;
- Persistent late arrival after the register has closed.

Non-payment of the Penalty Notice within the 28 days time limit will trigger the prosecution process under the provisions of Section 444 of the Education Act 1996.

### Supplementary Information:

Saint Aidan's will actively seek to support excellent attendance through regular awards. These will include regularly rewarding the forms with the highest attendance, as well as celebrating the achievements of all students who achieve good attendance. The Student Support Team will be central in assisting students and their families to overcome attendance problems. As such, this policy should be read in conjunction with the "Student Support Team" policy.

<b>Reviewed by</b>	<b>Mr Anthony Lord</b>
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