



## ST. DUNSTAN'S

### **Attendance and Punctuality**

### **Policy and procedures**

Responsible committee: Welfare &  
Inclusion

Approved by Governing Body:

Updated September 2024

Review Date: Every 3 years (Spring term)

### **Mission Statement**

Our mission is to be a happy, caring and compassionate Catholic community where each child's gifts are developed to the full and the foundations for lifelong learning are laid down. Everyone will be supported, nurtured and inspired to be the very best they can be and to persevere to overcome life's challenges.

With God's help, we will educate our children to live safely and responsibly, to care for His wonderful creation and to live their lives through the example of Jesus and the values of the Gospel.

### **Introduction**

School lays the vital foundations for a child's future life. Research shows that irregular attendance can adversely affect academic and social development. Parents/carers and school staff must work in partnership to make each child's education a positive and successful experience and to ensure that all children have full and equal access to all that the school has to offer.

Parents/carers are legally required to ensure that their children are punctual and have good attendance at school. Governors expect that pupils attend school 100% of the time when the school is open. Parents/carers are helped to do this by being encouraged to follow our established systems for informing school in case of absence, and to bring to the school's attention any concerns or difficulties that may be affecting their child's attendance or punctuality. As a school, we will offer all the support we can to enable them to carry out their responsibilities effectively.

This policy adheres to the school's Equality Policy, incorporating Disability, Gender and Race Equality Schemes.

This policy is also updated to reflect amendments have been made by the publication and introduction of **Working together to improve school attendance (2024)** and the **School Attendance (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations (2024)**. Additionally it reflect the new National Framework for issuing penalty notices and reflect changes to the law through the **Education (Penalty Notices) (England) (Amendment) Regulations 2024** and requirements for schools on data sharing introduced through the **Education (Information about Individual Pupils) (England) (Amendment) Regulations 2024**.

### **Approaches to ensure good attendance**

At St Dunstan's Catholic Primary School, we aim to provide a positive, welcoming and supportive environment within the school and its classrooms. We emphasise to parents/carers and pupils the importance of regular attendance and punctuality and we aim to offer a consistent approach to attendance matters through the implementation of procedures to record and follow up pupils' absences and lateness, as well as praising and rewarding excellent and improved pupil attendance.

We have a Senior Teacher who is our Inclusion Leader. Parents can make an appointment to meet with the Inclusion Leader if they would like help to improve their child's attendance.

### **Procedures for implementing the policy**

When parents attend the induction meeting before their children begin their schooling, the importance of regular attendance and punctuality is stressed. New parents, whose children are admitted to school throughout the year, are also given an outline of procedures in the school brochure. All parents are given a copy of "Parent's Guide to Attendance & Punctuality."

### **Contact with the School**

Parents must contact the school on the first day of a child's absence by 9am and every day thereafter giving the reason for the child's absence. The school asks for this reason to be provided via the absence reporting form that can be accessed via the school website: [Reporting Absence Form](#) If a child is absent due to medical reasons for 3 days, the school may require medical evidence to justify the absence.

If the school does not receive any contact from the parent, the school will contact the parents by telephone and then by email on the first day of absence and they may carry out a home visit to ensure the safety and wellbeing of the child. The school will then contact the parents and other contacts on the second day of absence and will send a letter to parents on the third day. A request will be made for the parents to attend school for a meeting with the Inclusion Leader. The school may also contact the Children's Single Point of Access to raise their concerns regarding the child's whereabouts and safety.

If a child continues to be absent, the details will be passed on to the Headteacher who will contact the parent/carer and consider if a referral to the Inclusion Officer (Local Authority Inclusion Service) is required.

If absence is unexplained or unjustified, then it will remain unauthorised and lead to the necessary action being taken.

If a child is absent regularly or over an extended period; or there is a pattern to the absences; or if the school is unhappy with the reason given to explain absence, the Headteacher (or Assistant Headteacher) will contact the parent/carer and invite him/her to discuss their child's attendance. This is a pre-referral meeting and failure to attend generates an automatic referral to the Local Authority Inclusion Service.

### **Authorisation of absence during term time**

A pupil's absence during term time can seriously disrupt their continuity of learning. Not only do they miss the teaching provided on the days they are away, they are also less prepared for the lessons on their return. There is consequently a risk of underachievement, which must be avoided. Absence from school can also affect a child's relationships with their peers and create anxiety for the child.

Parents should not take any unauthorised leave of absence during term time. Parents do not have the right to take their child out of school for any period of time' All parents seeking leave of absence must complete an Application for leave of absence/exceptional circumstances" form. It is for the Head Teacher to decide whether or not there are exceptional circumstances.

## **Penalty Notices**

The Surrey Attendance Service, acting on behalf of Surrey County Council may issue a Penalty Notice as an alternative to the prosecution of a parent/carer for their child's unauthorised absence from school and require the recipient to pay a fixed amount.

### **Circumstances when a Penalty Notices may be issued**

1. Pupils identified by police and Surrey Attendance Advice Officers engaged on Truancy Patrols and who have incurred unauthorised absences.
2. The Education (Pupil Registration)(England)(Amendment) Regulations 2013, state that Head teachers may not grant any leave of absence during term time unless there are exceptional circumstances. The Head teacher is required to determine the number of school days a child can be away from school if leave is granted.

Where a child is taken out of school for 10 sessions or more and the 'leave of absence' is without the authority of the Head teacher, each parent is liable to receive a penalty notice for each child who is absent. In these circumstances, a warning will not be given where it can be shown that parents had previously been warned that such absences would not be authorised and that they will be liable to receive a Penalty Notice if the leave of absence is taken.

3. The issue of a Penalty Notice will also be considered where a pupil has incurred 10 or more unauthorised sessions during the preceding 10 school weeks. The parents' failure to engage with supportive measures proposed by the school will be a factor when considering the issue of a Penalty Notice. Unauthorised absence will include late arrival after the close of registration without good reason.
4. Section 103 of the Education and Inspections Act 2006 places a duty on parents to ensure that their child is not in a public place without justifiable cause during school hours when they are excluded from school. This duty applies to the first five days of each exclusion. Failure to do so will render the parent liable to a Penalty Notice. If the Penalty Notice is not paid, the recipient will be prosecuted for the offence under Section 103. Alternative education provision will be made from the sixth day of any exclusion and failure to attend such provision without good reason will be treated as unauthorised absence.

*With the exception of unauthorised leave of absence taken in term time (Paragraph 2 above) parents will be sent a 'Notice To Improve' their child's attendance, warning them of their liability to receive such a notice before it is issued.*

### **Amount Payable Under a Penalty Notice: The Education (Penalty Notices) (England) (Amendment) Regulations 2024**

1. If a parent/carer has not incurred a penalty notice relating to the relevant child/children since 19 August 2024, then the penalty notice will be charged at the rate of £160.00, **per parent/carer per child**, if paid within 28 days. This will be reduced to £80.00 if paid within 21 days of receipt of the notice. Failure to pay the Penalty Notice will result in Surrey County Council considering legal proceedings against you in the Magistrates Court.
2. If you have incurred a penalty notice relating to this child/children since 19 August 2024, the rolling 3 year period will be activated from the date of the first penalty notice and the second penalty notice will be charged at the flat rate of £160.00, **per parent/carer per child**, if paid within 28 days. There will be no reduction for payment within 21 days. Failure to pay the Penalty Notice will result in Surrey County Council considering legal proceedings against you in the Magistrates Court.
3. If you have incurred 2 penalty notices relating to this child/children in the rolling 3 year period since the first penalty notice was issued, then you will NOT receive a third penalty notice – Surrey County Council will have no option but to consider a prosecution, per parent/carer per child, in the Magistrates Court under s 444 Education Act 1996.

Should unauthorised absence become a concern the Headteacher will be obliged to consider such absence as serious and will consider all options up to and including removing the child from the school register.

### **Lateness**

The school day begins at **8.55am**.

There is an **arrival window** between **8.40am and 8.55am** to assist with congestion.

Children may not be left before 8.40am as they are not supervised.

Registration takes place at **8.55am**.

Children arriving in school after **9.00am** and before **9.10am** will be marked late. ('L')

Code)

**9.10am** is the official time that registers are closed. If a child arrives after this time an absence will be recorded. ('U' code)

Where persistent lateness gives cause for concern, further action will be taken. This may involve contacting the appropriate authority outside the school. The class teachers will monitor lateness on a weekly basis. If a child is regularly late class teachers will inform the Head teacher who will send a letter to the parent/carer. If the child continues to be late, an appointment will be made with the parent/carer in order to agree a way forward.

If there is a negative response or little or no improvement after discussions about attendance or lateness, a referral will be made to the Local Authority Inclusion Service.

**This can include late arrival after the close of registration on 7 occasions in any six week period** (not including school closures).

The liable parent/carer will receive a written warning of the possibility of a Penalty Notice being issued and a maximum of 15 school days to effect improvement. During this period the pupil is not expected to incur any further lateness.

### **Registration**

It is of the utmost importance that registers are completed fully and correctly so that accurate attendance records can be kept and any problems addressed promptly. All staff have responsibility for this, but it is the Head teacher who will be the first one alerted to any attendance concerns.

### **Collection of children at the end of the school day**

Children should be collected promptly at the end of the school day:

**3.05pm** for Reception

**3.10pm** Year 1

**3.15pm** for Years 2 and 3

**3.20pm** for Years 4, 5 and 6

On exceptional occasions when a parent may be unexpectedly delayed when collecting their child, if the child is in Lower School they wait in their classroom until **3.25pm** and will then be taken to wait at the school office.

Children in Key Stage 2 wait with their teacher until **3.30pm** and are then taken to wait at the school office.

No pupil may leave the school unless collected by their parent/carer or a person named on the child's "Going Home" form. Year 6 pupils may leave school unaccompanied if their parent/carer has given written permission and their parent feels they are sufficiently responsible to do so.

### **Procedures for those having Parental Responsibility but not living in the child's home**

We are required to maintain a list of names and addresses of those having parental responsibility. The law instructs us to make reasonable attempts to gather such information in the case of parents not living in the child's home.

In order to do this, we may ask one parent to provide appropriate details of the other.

### **Key Expectations**

It is vital that all members of the school community work together to instil good attendance and punctuality in pupils as a means of preparing them to be socially responsible and to facilitate learning, allowing all pupils to have equality of opportunity and achieve their potential.

### **Schools are expected to:**

- Build strong relationships and work jointly with families, listening to and understanding barriers to attendance and work with families to remove them
- Have a clear school attendance policy on the website which all staff, pupils and parents understand
- Develop and maintain a whole school culture that promotes the benefit of good attendance
- Accurately complete admission and registration registers
- Have robust daily processes to follow up absence
- Regularly monitor data to identify patterns and trends and understand which pupils and pupil cohorts to focus on
- Have a dedicated senior leader with overall responsibility for championing and improving attendance
- Make the statutory data returns to the Local Authority and Secretary of State
- Regularly inform parents about their child's attendance and absence levels
- Support pupils back into school following a lengthy or unavoidable period of absence and provide support to build confidence and bridge gaps

- Be mindful of pupils absent from school due to mental or physical ill health or their special educational needs and/or disabilities and provide them with additional support.
- Share information with and work collaboratively with other schools in the area, the local authority and other partners where a pupil's absence is at risk of becoming persistent or severe

**The Governing body is expected to:**

- Recognise the importance of school attendance and promote it across the school's ethos and policies
- Take an active role in attendance improvement
- Support the school to prioritise attendance
- Oversee the implementation of the Attendance Policy
- Ensure that school leaders fulfil expectations and statutory duties
- Regularly review attendance data, discuss and challenge trends and help school leaders to focus improvements efforts on those who need it most
- Ensure school staff receive adequate training on attendance
- Work together with leaders to set whole school cultures and evaluate the successes of the strategies implemented

**The Headteacher (or relevant Senior Leader) is expected to:**

- Report attendance to the Governing Body on a termly basis.
- Regularly review attendance issues and registers, as well as liaison with parents/carers, pupils and other agencies
- Formally meet with parents/carers if a teacher raises further concerns after the initial meeting to discuss the issues preventing an improvement to attendance or punctuality
- Make referrals to the Local Authority Inclusion Service – this could result in a penalty notice being issued to the parent/carer concerned, or a prosecution of the parents in the Magistrates Court.
- Contact the Inclusion Officer if significant concerns arise in between termly register checks

**Class teachers are expected to:**

- Accurately take the register every morning and afternoon (recording absences and lates)



- Take responsibility for monitoring attendance and punctuality
- Inform the Headteacher should there be an issue with a child's attendance or punctuality
- liaise with the parents/carers concerned in the first instance and refer to the Headteacher if the situation does not improve.

**The school office assistant (attendance) is expected to:**

- Check the daily registers every morning and afternoon to follow up on any absences
- Check the absence reporting form and add the provided information to the electronic register
- Ensure absences are correctly coded correctly
- Follow up on any absences for which a reason has not been provided
- Request evidence of medical attention as necessary after day 3 of an absence for ill health
- Informing teachers and the Head teacher of notified absences or lates

**Parents are expected to:**

- Ensure their child attends every day the school is open except when a statutory reason applies.
- Notify the school as soon as possible when their child has to be unexpectedly absent (e.g. sickness)
- Only request leave of absence in exceptional circumstances and do so in advance
- Book any medical appointments around the school day where possible

**The Local Authority are expected to:**

- Rigorously track local attendance data to devise a strategic approach to improving attendance for the whole area and make it a key focus of all frontline council services
- Have a School Attendance Support Team which provides the following core functions free of charge to all schools in their areas to remove area-wide barriers to attendance through:
  - Communication and advice
  - Targeting Support Meetings
  - Multi-disciplinary support for families
  - Legal intervention

- Monitor and improve the attendance of children with a social worker through their virtual school
- Provide each school with a named point of contact in the School Attendance Support Team who can support with queries and advice
- Offer opportunities for all schools in the area to share effective practice.

**Key terminology:**

**Persistent absence:** where absence means that pupils are missing 10% or more of school

**Severe absence:** where absence means that pupils are missing 50% or more of school

**Monitoring and evaluation**

This policy will be reviewed annually, along with the effectiveness of the systems that are in place.