



# *St Mary's Catholic Primary School*

***Executive Head: Mrs Clare Tickel***

*Head of School: Mr Simon Thomas*

*Diocese of Plymouth*

At St Mary's Catholic Primary School, we value the efforts that all parents and children make to attend school promptly and regularly. Frequent absences can affect the continuity of learning and can lead to poor relationships and outcomes for children. Good attendance and punctuality (at least 96% attendance) are essential if pupils are to achieve their full potential, enjoy school and be well prepared for their future learning.

We do, therefore urge all parents to ensure that their children do not take unnecessary time off from school.

By promoting good attendance and punctuality we aim to:

- Make good attendance and punctuality a priority for all those involved in the school community.
- Raise pupils' awareness of the importance of good attendance and punctuality
- Provide support, advice and guidance to families, pupils and staff.
- Work in partnership with parents, carers and external agencies including the local authority to promote positive engagement, attendance and punctuality.
- Celebrate good attendance and punctuality.

## **Registers:**

School starts at 8.50 am and the registers will be kept open until 9.10 am. During that time children will be marked present. Children arriving after 8.50am will need to report to the office and will be recorded as an authorised late, children who arrive after 9.20am will have their lateness recorded as an unauthorised absence except for visits to the doctor or dentist, or a similar authorised event.

We ask all parents to notify the school as soon as possible to report the reason for their child's absence so that this can be recorded electronically. Authorised absences include sickness, visit to the doctor, dentist or hospital, an agreed educational visit, and in other exceptional circumstances for which the Headteacher may give permission. Wherever possible we ask that appointments are made out of school time.

Where medical absences become a frequent occurrence there may be a need to ask for medical evidence, particularly if the absences are prolonged. We may also ask, in partnership with parents for involvement from health professionals so there is a shared understanding of health needs and at time a health care plan may be put in place.

### **Leave of Absence is exceptional circumstances:**

Headteachers may only grant leave of absence for exceptional circumstances, the following examples of such exceptional circumstances as a guide for Headteachers when considering leave of absence requests. Please complete the leave of absence form to request, available from the office (appendix i)

### **Examples of any exceptional circumstances where leave may be granted during term time:**

- Funeral of parent, grandparent or close relative - Headteachers should use their discretion having heard from parents about travel and funeral arrangements and taking into account the distance to be travelled
- Out of school programmes such as music, arts or sport operating at a high standard of achievement and agreed by the LA - as appropriate. BCP Performance licensing can advise schools on individual circumstances if required.
- Religious observance - The Education Act 1996 S444 (3) (c), states ‘‘on any day exclusively set apart for religious observance by the religious body to which his/her parent belongs’’.
- Weddings of parents and siblings

### **Examples of circumstances NOT considered as exceptional**

- Holidays abroad for the purpose of visiting a sick relative, excepting where that person is seriously ill. Medical evidence may be requested.
- Pilgrimages by parents (e.g., Hajj). These are rare but can result in children being away from school for significant periods of time.
- Holidays taken in term time due to lower cost/parental work commitments.

### **Fixed Penalty Notices:**

- We, as all schools in BCP are signed to the Penalty Notice code of conduct. The Headteacher may decide to request a Fixed Penalty Notice for persistent

unauthorised absence or unauthorised holidays taken during term time. Under existing legislation, parents/carers commit an offence if a child fails to attend regularly and the absences are categorised as unauthorised (the school viewing reasons provided as unacceptable; or no explanations received; or 'truancy').

- Depending on circumstances such cases may result in prosecution under Section 444 of the Education Act 1996. However, legislation allows the Local Authority to issue a Penalty Notice under Section 23 of the Anti-Social Behaviour Act 2003 to each parent/carers with responsibility for a child in respect of the offence.
- A Penalty Notice is seen as a simpler sanction to focus parents on their responsibilities and does not require an appearance in Court. Payment of a Penalty Notice offers a person the opportunity of discharging any liability to conviction of the offence under section 444(1) to which the notice relates.
- A Penalty Notice under Section 23 of the Anti-Social Behaviour Act. If a Penalty Notice is issued, the fine for each parent/carer for each child, would be £60 if paid within 21 days or £120 if paid within 28 days.
- Section 444 of the Education Act 1996 allows the Authority to issue a Penalty Notice under Section 23 of the Anti-Social Behaviour Act 2003 to each parent/carer with responsibility in respect of the offence. A penalty notice is a notice offering a person the opportunity of discharging any liability to conviction for the offence under section 444(1) to which the notice relates by payment of a penalty in accordance with the notice. Where a person is given a penalty notice he/she cannot be convicted of the offence to which the notice relates if he/she pays the penalty notice in accordance with the notice.

## **Prosecution**

In cases where there is persistent failure to secure good attendance and offers of support have been unsuccessful in creating change, we may refer to the use of legal prosecution under section 444 of The Education Act 1996 and refer to BCP council to progress to prosecution. Wherever possible, we hope to avoid such action.

## **Following up Absences:**

The school has a safeguarding duty to monitor children's absences. On the first day of absence contact is made, via Groupcall text message service, with the parent / carer of the child to find out why the child is absent. There is also a Health and Safety aspect to First Day Calling - a child who is missing from school may have come to harm.

Our Independent Social Worker works with the school to monitor attendance. In line with Local Authority guidelines, we operate a system of "warning" letters re persistent absence i.e., letters 1 and 2 followed by involvement with the ISW if efforts are not successful and concerns persist. Parents who have difficulties in getting their children to school should speak to the Headteacher about the matter.

**Reporting Attendance and Absence:**

Attendance and absence will be recorded in the Headteacher's reports to the Governing body each half term. All parents will be given their child's record of attendance in the school report which they will receive each summer. Additionally, attendance will be reported to all school age children at the beginning of each term.

**Transferring school / Leaving the country and Children Missing Education (CME):**

If families move away from the area, or wish to transfer their child to another school, the Headteacher must be informed in writing and this must include the child's forwarding address details and school information (including those that move out of the UK) - there is a leavers form (available from the office) that must be completed fully prior to a leaving date. Children cannot be removed from the school roll until we have been notified by another school that a place has been offered and accepted. Children who stop attending and who cannot be traced cannot be removed from the school roll, they are referred as CME to the local authority where further checks are undertaken in line with their CME policy.