

# St. Robert's Catholic First School and Nursery

Oldgate, Morpeth, Northumberland NE61 1QF



*We care, we serve, we learn together in the love and truth of  
Jesus*

## Attendance Policy

Date Reviewed:

November 2016

Review Date:

November 2017

David Sutcliffe

Headteacher:

Richard Shepherd

Chair of Governors:

**Introduction:**

This is a successful school and your child plays their part in making it so. We aim for an environment which enables and encourages all members of the community to reach out for excellence. 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:**

**Learning:-** 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.

**Safeguarding:-** Your child may be at risk of harm if they do not attend school regularly. Safeguarding the interests of each child is everyone's responsibility and within the context of this school, promoting the welfare and life opportunities for your child encompasses:-

- Attendance
- Behaviour Management
- Health and Safety
- Access to the Curriculum
- Anti- bullying

Failing to attend this school on a regular basis will be considered as a safeguarding matter.

**Promoting Regular Attendance:**

Helping to create a pattern of regular attendance is everybody's responsibility - parents, pupils and all members of school staff.

**To help us all to focus on this we will:**

- Give you information on attendance in our regular newsletter;
- Report to you at least termly on how your child is performing in school, what their attendance and punctuality rate is and how this relates to their attainments;
- Celebrate good attendance by rewarding individual and class achievements;
- Run promotional events when parents, pupils and staff can work together on raising attendance levels across the school.

**The Law relating to attendance**

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:-

- (a) to age, ability and aptitude and
- (b) to any special educational needs he/ she may have

Either by regular attendance at school or otherwise'

**The Law relating to safeguarding**

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.

### **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 any absence is always required, preferably in writing.

Authorised absences are mornings or afternoons away from school for a good reason like 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. This type of absence can lead to St Robert's First School using sanctions and/or legal proceedings. This 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 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 usually make things worse.

### **Persistent Absenteeism (PA):**

A pupil becomes a 'persistent absentee' when they miss 10% or more schooling across the school year for whatever reason. Absence at this level is doing considerable damage to any child's educational prospects and we need parents' fullest support and co-operation to tackle this.

We monitor all absence thoroughly. Any case that is seen to have reached the PA mark or is at risk of moving towards that mark is given priority and you will be informed of this.

PA pupils are tracked and monitored carefully and cases are made known to the Local Authority Education Welfare Officer.

### **Absence Procedures:**

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

- Contact us as soon as possible on the first day of absence;
- Send a note in on the first day they return with an explanation of the absence – you must do this even if you have already telephoned us;
- Or, you can call into school and report to reception, who will arrange for a member of staff to speak with you.

#### **If your child is absent we will:**

- Telephone or text you on the first day of absence if we have not heard from you;
- Invite you in to discuss the situation with the Head Teacher if absences persist;
- Refer the matter to the Education welfare Officer if attendance moves below 90%.

### **Telephone numbers:**

There are times when we need to contact parents about lots of things, including absence, so we need to have your contact numbers at all times. So help us to help you and your child by making sure we always have an up to date number – if we don't then something important may be missed.

**The School Attendance Officer:  
Education Welfare Officer [EWO]**

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 Northumberland Local Authority Education Welfare Officer. He/she will also try to resolve the situation by agreement but, if other ways of trying to improve the child's attendance have failed and unauthorized absences persist, this Officer can use sanctions such as Penalty Notices or prosecutions in the Magistrates Court. Full details of the options open to enforce attendance at school are available from the school or Northumberland Local Authority.

Alternatively, parents or children 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 Northumberland Local Authority.

**Lateness:**

Poor punctuality 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, it can be embarrassing for the child and can also encourage absence.

**How we manage lateness:**

The school opens its doors at **8:45am**.

The school day starts at **8.55am** and we expect your child to be at school at that time.

Registers are marked by **9.05am** and your child will receive a late mark if they are not in by that time.

At **9.30am** the registers will be closed. In accordance with the Regulations, if your child arrives after that time they will receive a mark that shows them to be on site, but this will **not** count as a present mark and it will mean they have an unauthorised absence. This may mean that you could face the possibility of a Penalty Notice if the problem persists.

If your child has a persistent late record you will be asked to meet with the Head Teacher and/or EWO 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:**

Under The Education Act (1996) requires parents to ensure their child attends school regularly. There is no automatic right to take your child out of school during term time. The Law does however allow Head Teachers to consider individual requests to authorise a Leave of Absence in Exceptional Circumstance(s).

The Head Teacher must be satisfied that there are exceptional circumstances to justify an authorised absence. It is the parents responsibility when submitting the request to provide all the information and evidence to prove exceptional circumstances.

The request for authorised Leave of Absence must be made at least two weeks in advance and the Head Teacher may invite the parent/carer(s) into school to discuss the request before a decision is made.

If the Head Teacher authorises the Leave of Absence it is expected that the child's attendance will be of a satisfactory level both prior and after the date covered by the request.

If the Head Teacher refuses Leave of Absence and the absence is recorded as unauthorised, the Head Teacher may refer the matter to the Local Authority requesting that a Penalty Notice be issued.

A Penalty Notice is £60 if paid within 21 days of receipt, rising to £120 if paid after 21 days but within 28 days. If the penalty is not paid in full by the end of the 28 day period the Local Authority may prosecute for the offence to which the notice applies.

Where there is more than one child, each parent may be issued with a Penalty Notice in respect of each child.

Research suggests that children who are absent from School may never catch up on the learning they have missed, which may ultimately affect exam and test results. As a parent/carer, you can demonstrate your commitment to your child's education by not allowing your child to miss school for anything other than an exceptional and unavoidable reason.

### **School Attendance Targets**

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 96% attendance** and we will keep you updated regularly about progress to this level and how your child's attendance compares.

Our target is to achieve better than this however because we know that good attendance is the key to successful schooling and we believe our pupils can be amongst the best in Morpeth.

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

Information on any projects or initiatives that will focus on these areas will be provided in our home / school newsletter and we ask for your full support.

### **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.

All school staff are committed to working with parents and pupils as the best way to ensure as high a level of attendance as possible and that every child's welfare and life opportunities are promoted.