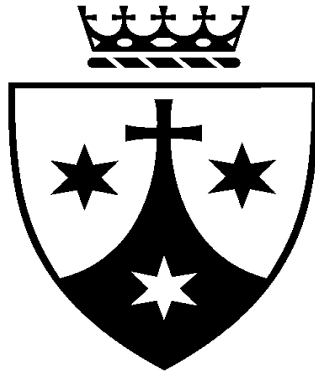


**ST. JOSEPH'S CATHOLIC PRIMARY SCHOOL
CHALFONT ST PETER**



Learning to do our best with Jesus

Attendance Policy

Date approved:	
Date reviewed:	Summer 2010
Date for next review:	Spring 2011

Introduction

All children have the right to an efficient full-time education. Regular school attendance is essential if a child is to make the most of the educational opportunity available to them. St Joseph's Catholic Primary School takes seriously its responsibility to monitor and promote the regular attendance of all its pupils. It acknowledges that irregular attendance seriously disrupts continuity of learning, undermines educational progress and can lead to underachievement and low attainment.

This Policy aims to ensure regular attendance and good punctuality which are essential for successful education.

All Staff are responsible for supporting the attendance of pupils and dealing with problem attendance. There is much that we can do and should do before involving the Educational Welfare Officer (EWO).

As part of our Whole School Attendance Policy we:

- support parents (includes carers) in ensuring the regular and punctual attendance of pupils
- make it clear to pupils and parents that regular attendance is the expectation
- have clear rules for parental contact with the school in the event of absence
- be clear on school's actions when absence is unreported by parents
- ensure prompt follow-up on unexplained absences
- clarify whether parents are expected to report absence on the first day only
- make further enquiries as necessary to establish the authenticity of a reason given
- respond promptly to issues which may lead to non-attendance
- be sensitive to the needs of the individual pupil and parent
- recognise that some parents have difficulty in understanding written communications
- recognise that some parents have difficulty with the English language
- work in partnership with the Education Welfare Service

Attendance Procedures

The register is taken twice daily, using the agreed procedures. It is the responsibility of the parent to contact the school on each day of the child's absence. A note signed by the parent giving the reason for the absence is required upon the pupil's return to school.

When a pupil returns to school and there is no explanation for the absence, a note will be sent to the parents/carers asking for an explanation. Unauthorised absence is reviewed regularly with the schools Education Welfare Officer. If a pupil's absence is consistently irregular and absences have not been authorised then the school is obliged to make a referral for Education Welfare Service involvement. This may lead to prosecution should attendance not improve.

Monitoring attendance and registers

Members of the administration staff regularly monitor attendance patterns. Pupils causing concern are identified and discussed and strategies for improving attendance are employed. Registers should be checked weekly by the Headteacher.

Punctuality

Pupils are expected to arrive no later than 8.45 am for the morning session, (lessons begin at 8.50) and at 1.00 pm for the afternoon session. Pupils arriving after 8.50 should report to the school office and will receive a late mark.

Day to day routine expectations

All schools are required to call attendance registers at the start of the morning session and afternoon session and to record whether pupils are present, absent or on an approved educational activity.

Registration

1. Attendance register

The attendance register is a legal document and it is imperative that it is accurate at all times.

2. Times

Class teachers should receive pupils into classrooms at 8.45 am for morning registration and 1.00 pm for afternoon registration.

3. Completing the register

The Headteacher will give class teachers their register and advise them how to complete it. Details of statutory and local requirements are listed in the registers. All pupils must have the appropriate mark by their name. Corrective fluid must not be used.

4. The conduct of registration

Class teachers must be punctual to registration and should arrive in the classroom in advance of the pupils so that they are there to greet them when they arrive, both at the morning session, after break time and for the afternoon session. Silence should be insisted upon when the register is being called and teachers should ensure that all pupils remove their coats and that they are seated throughout registration with their bags on the floor. At the end of registration registers must be returned to the school office.

5. Lateness

We all need to be consistent in applying lateness criteria.

Registration

Pupils who arrive after 8.45 am but before the end of registration (8.50) will be marked present, those who arrive after that time will be marked as Late with an L. After 9.15am pupils must report to the office and will be marked as U (which indicates that they have missed registration and the morning session will count as an unauthorised absence).

Attendance

A note is required on the day of the pupil's return to school after absence. This should be register marked accordingly. If the pupil returns without a note, please follow this up as soon as possible by requesting a note from the pupil.

Permissible absence

Authorised Absences are only permitted for genuine reasons e.g. illness or in exceptional circumstances, shopping or a fun day out would not be considered an exceptional circumstance. Only the Headteacher has the authority to authorise absence.

Holidays Within Term Time

Legally a parent can apply for up to 10 days authorised absence for their child in exceptional circumstances.

Medical Appointments

Pupils and parents should be encouraged to make dental, medical and hospital appointments for after school. Appointments, however, sometimes will have to occur during the school day. If this occurs, a letter of explanation in advance from the parents must cover the absence.

Truancy

Teachers should be vigilant about suspected truancy. Teachers should take note of the signs, e.g. forged notes, uncharacteristic patterns in registration. The Headteacher should be informed if they are in doubt.

BUCKINGHAMSHIRE EDUCATION WELFARE SERVICE

ADDENDUM TO SCHOOL ATTENDANCE POLICY

THE ANTI-SOCIAL BEHAVIOUR ACT 2003

The Education (Penalty Notices) (England) Regulations 2004 came into force on 27th February 2004.

Section 23 of the Anti-Social Behaviour Act 2003 empowers the following people to issue Penalty notices in cases of unauthorised absence from school:

- ◆ LEA Officers.
- ◆ Subject to governing body approval; Head Teachers and authorised Deputy/Assistant Head Teachers.
- ◆ The Police.

Under the Buckinghamshire Code of Conduct, Fixed Penalty Notices (FPN) will be issued through the Education Welfare Service (EWS). Applications should be made by the Police and by schools to the EWS for the issuing of an FPN. These will then be issued by EWS within the existing EWS procedure, as outlined in this document.

In addition, the issuing of Penalty Notices must conform with all requirements of the Human Rights Act and all Equal Opportunities legislation.

RATIONAL

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

In law, an offence occurs if a parent or a carer fails to secure a child's attendance at a school, at which he/she is a registered pupil and that absence is not authorised by the school. The use of Penalty Notices supplement the existing sanctions available under Section 444 of the Education Act 1996 and Section 36 of the Children Act 1989, to enforce attendance at school.

The Education Welfare Service is responsible for undertaking this aspect of the Local Authority's duty. Parents and pupils are supported at school and by the EWS, to overcome barriers to regular attendance through a wide continuum of intervention strategies. 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 A PENALTY NOTICE MAY BE ISSUED

A Penalty Notice can only be issued in cases of **unauthorised** absence.

Use of a Penalty Notice will be restricted to one per pupil per parent per year. If the Notice is paid but there is no improvement, the case will then be taken to court after a further period of non-attendance. However where the Penalty Notice is paid it discharges any liability for prosecution for the period stated in the notice.

The issuing of a Penalty Notice is considered appropriate in the following circumstances:

- ◆ Overt truancy (including pupils caught on truancy sweeps).
- ◆ Parentally condoned absences not approved by the school.
- ◆ Unauthorised holidays during term time.
- ◆ Excessive delayed return from extended holidays without prior school agreement.
- ◆ Persistent late arrival at school (after the register has officially closed).
- ◆ Where a pattern of poor attendance develops towards the end of a pupil's final year of statutory education.

This is not an exhaustive list. Each case will be considered individually.

To ensure consistent delivery of Penalty Notices the following criteria will apply:

Secondary Pupils: 80% attendance – 20% unauthorised absence over the last 5 weeks.

Primary Pupils: 90% attendance – 10% unauthorised absence over the last 5 weeks.

This matches the EWS existing referral criteria.

Cases that are referred to the EWO, will if no improvement is made, be passed to the Attendance & Enforcement team. This team will then issue a warning to the parent(s). This formal warning will allow the parent(s) 15 school days to effect an improvement. The warning may be issued at a Pre-Court Meeting, or in writing. Either way, the parent(s) will be given a date by which the case will be re-assessed and a Notice will be issued if there is insufficient improvement in attendance.

PROCEDURE FOR ISSUING PENALTY NOTICES

The Attendance & Enforcement Team within the Education Welfare Service will issue Penalty Notices on behalf of Buckinghamshire County Council.

Penalty Notices will only be issued by post and never as an on the spot action.

All requests to issue Penalty Notices from schools and from the Police will be dealt with by the Attendance and the Enforcement team. These requests will be considered individually and against the following:

- ◆ All relevant information is supplied in the specified manner.
- ◆ The circumstances of the pupil's absence meet all the requirements of the Code of Conduct.
- ◆ Family circumstances/ability to pay is set against the likelihood of securing an improved attendance, by issuing a Penalty Notice (this to include any cases of possible multiple issue of Notices to any one family).
- ◆ The issue of a Penalty Notice does not conflict with other interventions strategies in place, or other enforcement sanctions already processed.

The Education Welfare Service will respond to all requests within 10 school days and will:

- ◆ Issue a formal written warning to the parent(s) on behalf of the referrer, outlining the details of the offence and advising that a Penalty Notice may be issued if there is no improvement in attendance.
- ◆ Give parent(s) at least 15 school days to improve their child(ren)'s attendance. Over this period the pupil must have no further unauthorised absence if the issue of the Penalty Notice is to be averted.
- ◆ At the expiry of the 15 school days, a Penalty Notice will be issued through the post if the required level of improvement has not been achieved.

At the outset of casework and before any notice is issued by the School or the LEA, the parent(s) of the child concerned must be given formal written notification explaining the possible actions that might be taken. Given that there is no statutory right of appeal against the issuing of a Penalty Notice, it is important that parents are warned of the possibility of a notice being issued. In exceptional circumstances however, a penalty notice may be issued without formal written notification.

Where the request to issue a Fixed Penalty Notice does not meet the defined criteria of the Code of Conduct, or is in any respect considered to be inappropriate, the Education Welfare Service will:

- ◆ Advise the person making the request and provide an explanation for the decision not to issue a Fixed Penalty Notice.
- ◆ Consider, recommend and/or implement alternative strategies that may be more appropriate.

PROCEDURES FOR THE WITHDRAWAL OF PENALTY NOTICES

Once issued, a Penalty Notice will only be withdrawn in the following circumstances:

- ◆ It ought not to have been issued, e.g. the use of the Penalty Notice did not conform to the terms of this Protocol, or the Penalty Notice is not paid in full within 42 days and subsequent checks indicate that no offence has been committed.
- ◆ It ought not to have been issued to the person named as the recipient; e.g. proof has been established that the Penalty Notice was issued to the wrong person.

PAYMENT OF PENALTY NOTICES

Arrangements for payment will be detailed on the Penalty Notice. Payments are made to the Local Authority and not the school and all payments will be processed through County Hall, Aylesbury.

A payment of a Penalty Notice discharges the liability for prosecution for the offence to which the notice relates. This also means that neither the fact that a Penalty notice was issued for a period of unauthorised absence and paid cannot be used later as evidence in any prosecutions for any subsequent offences.

- ◆ **The fine incurred for the payment of a Penalty Notice within 28 days is £50 per child per parent.**
- ◆ **The fine incurred for the payment of a Penalty Notice after this time but within 42 days is £100 per child per parent.**
- ◆ **If a payment is made after 42 days it is at the Attendance & Enforcement team discretion, as to whether or not they should accept payment.**

NON-PAYMENT OF PENALTY NOTICES

Non-payment of a Penalty Notice will result either in the withdrawal of the Notice, or will trigger the prosecution process under the provisions of Section 444, 1996 Education Act as detailed above.

PARENTING CONTRACTS

A Parenting Contract is a formal written agreement between a parent and either the LEA or the governing body of the school. The Parenting contract is voluntary and a parent cannot be compelled to enter into it if they do not wish to do so. Equally there is no obligation for the LEA or Governing body to offer a Parenting Contract in cases of non-attendance.

A Parenting Contract should contain:

- a) a statement by the parent that they agree to comply for a specified period with whatever requirements are specified in the contract; and
- b) a statement by the LEA or school agreeing to provide support to the parent for the purpose of complying with the contract.

Parenting Contracts can apply to each and every parent coming within the definition (for education) of a parent.

A Parenting Contract can also run alongside a Pastoral Support Programme, or an Individual Attendance Action Plan – indeed the PSP or IAAP may make reference to the Contract as a support mechanism for the parent.

As part of the Contract, a parent will usually be offered a period of voluntary parenting classes or support.

If the contract fails to achieve regular school attendance of the child, it maybe that the Attendance & Enforcement team may use the Contract as evidence in court when asking magistrates to consider a Parenting Order. Alternatively the failure to comply with a Contract my trigger a Fixed Penalty Notice if the child still fails to attend school regularly.

A parenting contract is likely to be considered in cases of truancy, where the parent is willing to address their child's truanting behaviour but needs support to do so effectively.

It must be remembered that a parenting contract is to improve the pupil's attendance at school and to address any underlying issues. It is not to be seen or to be used as punitive measure against the parent.

POLICY AND PUBLICITY

Deployment of Penalty Notices and Parenting Contracts as a sanction/support method must be included in the School's Attendance Policy - this model can be amended to act as an appendix of an existing Attendance Policy and is available on e-mail as listed below.

Ideally, all parents should be informed in writing of the new procedures and referenced to the addendum to the Attendance Policy.

e-versions of this document are available from cmayo@buckscc.gov.uk