

# The Cathedral School of St Mary



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Policy written by: Mark Dyson (all staff and children consulted)

Key people responsible for Attendance: Headteacher and Parent Support Advisor

Key Governor responsible for Attendance: Leslie Burdon

## **ATTENDANCE POLICY**

**Registered pupils of compulsory school age are required by law to be in school.**

The aim of the school is to promote regular and punctual attendance

The Attendance Policy touches all aspects of school life and relates attendance directly to the school's values, ethos and curriculum.

### **Areas of Responsibility**

Promoting good attendance is seen as a shared responsibility by all in the school community and the family, rather than being left to particular individuals or groups.

#### **Schools Responsibility:**

- To provide a safe and positive environment where all children will be given the opportunity to fulfil their potential.
- Monitor pupils attendance carefully and follow up if problems arise.
- To encourage pupils to develop personal responsibility to attend school regularly and punctually.
- Set annual targets to reduce absence and submit these targets in accordance with the relevant regulations.
- Submit termly absence returns through School Census and publish information relating to levels of attendance and absence and include details of these in the school's prospectus and annual report;

#### **Teachers Responsibility:**

- To complete an attendance register accurately, in ink, at the beginning of each morning and afternoon session, pupils are marked present or absent in accordance with Plymouth LEA guidelines which will be kept in the front of each register.
- To inform the Headteacher or appropriate authority of any attendance irregularities.

#### **Parents Responsibility:**

- To ensure that their children attend school regularly and arrive in good time for the start of each session.
- To inform the school of any absence as soon as possible and confirm this in writing when the child returns to school
- Talk to the school if they are concerned that their child may be reluctant to attend.

### **Categorising Absence**

Only the school can approve absence not parents. The school does not have to accept the parents offered explanation as a valid reason for absence. If there are doubts about the explanation, the absence must be treated as unauthorised.

#### **Appointments - Medical and Dental etc.**

Such absences are considered authorised providing that the school is satisfied that the appointments are genuine.

### **Days of religious observance**

An offence is not committed where the absence results from participation in a day set aside for religious observance by the religious body to which the parents belong.

### **Excluded pupils**

Where a pupil has been temporarily excluded he / she should remain on the school roll. This should be treated as authorised absence. If a pupil has been excluded permanently his absence should be treated as authorised until after review. Once the exclusion is confirmed the pupil should be struck off the school roll.

### **Family bereavements**

Schools should respond sensitively to requests for leave of absence to attend funerals or associated events. They have discretion to authorise such absences. Where a pupil is absent for more than the agreed period early contact should be made with the family.

### **Family Holidays and extended trips overseas**

There is discretionary power for leave to be granted for the purpose of an annual family holiday or a holiday during term time. Only in exceptional circumstances may the amount of leave granted exceed two weeks. No parent can demand leave of absence for the purpose of a holiday. Periods of more than two weeks are considered exceptional. Where holidays of more than two weeks are planned to visit overseas relatives the school may find it helpful to discuss with the parents the best timing of the trip from an educational point of view. Formal authorisation of such a holiday by the Headteacher is required. (see Means of Notification).

### **Illness**

Such absences are considered authorised providing that the school is satisfied that the illness is genuine.

### **Lateness (see also Punctuality)**

Schools should discourage lateness. Schools may keep their registers open for a reasonable time (recommend maximum 30 minutes). If a child does arrive late and misses registration this must be noted for the purposes of emergency evacuation. The office staff will note the incoming pupil in the Late Book, and update the register accordingly. Late arrival after 9.10 am will be unauthorised lateness except in exceptional circumstances (see Appointments).

### **Minding the house; Looking after brothers or sisters or Parental illness**

This is an area where schools have discretion. The Secretary of State would not expect schools to grant leave except in exceptional circumstances. Most cases will be unauthorised absence.

### **Off-site Activities**

These fall into two categories - schools directed (e.g. educational visits) and individual activities (e.g. music examinations). School activities will normally be registered as authorised absences. Where the activity is of a more individual nature the school can authorise absence at its discretion. If a registered pupil requires special off-site tuition, leave of absence may be granted and the absence treated as authorised.

### **Public performances**

Leave of absence may be granted for the child to participate in an approved public performance. If the child is then absent from the performance this will constitute an unauthorised absence.

### **Pupils at pupil referral units**

Off-site units are required to keep attendance records. Provision is made for dual registration to facilitate the return to mainstream education. The pupil must be classified as authorised absent when he / she is not attending school. Arrangements of this kind should be formalised in writing.

**School leaving date**

Pupils are required to remain at school until the relevant leaving date. Any absence not agreed in advance must be treated as unauthorised.

**Shopping during school hours**

It is highly unlikely that such an absence can ever be justified.

**Special Occasions**

It is for the school to determine whether an absence in this category should be authorised or not. It will clearly depend on the circumstances.

**Traveller children**

Travellers are protected from prosecution if they can show that the nature of their trade requires travel from place to place and that the child has attended school as regularly as possible. Also where the child has attained the age of 6 years and has made at least 200 attendances during the previous six months.

**Means of notification**

Parents must inform the school of a child's absence by personal contact, telephone or letter as soon as possible. Notification by another appropriate adult may be accepted by the Headteacher at their discretion. Notification by a child is never accepted without confirmation by an adult.

*The school has a policy for contacting parents on the first day of absence where contact has not been made by the parent or carer within a reasonable time of the start of school, particularly in relation to pupils who are known to be poor attenders or who might otherwise be considered to be at risk;*

Requests for holiday absence must be made by completion of the blue holiday form (Notification of Absence - School child on Holiday) in advance. This must then be authorised by the Headteacher.

**Punctuality (see also Lateness)**

Pupils will be encouraged to attend school on time. A Latecomers book is kept in the Office. It will be monitored by the Headteacher regularly and the parents of persistent latecomers will be informed. They may be unaware of the time their child / children are arriving at school.

However, we often find that there are families who put the onus on the pupil to get him/herself up and out to school while the rest of the family sleeps. Whilst we cannot condone this attitude there is some sympathy for the children concerned. We also believe that it is better for the child to arrive in school, albeit late than to miss school because of the embarrassment caused by late arrival. We therefore treat each case on its merits.

**Rewarding Good Attendance**

Every term certificates are awarded to those children who achieve 100% attendance

**Pupil Reports**

A record of each child's attendance is included on the pupil report with a comment that draws to the attention the risk of low attainment as a result of poor attendance.