

# Attendance Policy

## January 2015

### 1. Principles

The Governors and staff of St. Gregory the Great Catholic School recognise the importance of good attendance and punctuality to both achievement in education and success in employment. Because our role is to assist parents who are the primary educators of their children, we aim to work together with parents and carers to achieve excellent levels of attendance and punctuality, enabling all pupils to take full advantage of the educational opportunities available to them.

Our Attendance Policy is framed within the four Gospel values of our Mission Statement:

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|-------------------|--|
| <b>Wisdom</b>     | We will promote good punctuality and attendance as essential, not just to acquire knowledge, but to develop and understanding of how to use it wisely.             |
| <b>Integrity</b>  | We will act fairly and consistently in dealing with attendance matters.<br>We will teach children to value good attendance and aspects of personal responsibility. |
| <b>Justice</b>    | We will work with others to defend the right of children to an education, in accordance with the law.  |
| <b>Compassion</b> | We will respond sensitively to the needs of families, recognising that there are times when it is appropriate for children to be absent from school.               |

## **2. Rights, Responsibilities and Roles**

### **St Gregory the Great Catholic School:**

St Gregory's staff will set a good example in matters of attendance and punctuality. We will work closely with parents & carers to encourage and reward good attendance and to investigate promptly if absenteeism or lateness give cause for concern.

We will keep parents and carers fully informed of their child's attendance and punctuality.

We have signed the Service Level Statement for attendance related work and will work closely with the Oxfordshire Attendance & Engagement Team and other agencies to safeguard children and ensure good attendance.

### **Pupils:**

Pupils will ensure that they attend tutor time and lessons regularly and on time. Pupils who arrive after the register has closed will sign the late book, giving a reason for their lateness. Pupils will not leave the school campus without permission.

### **Parents & Carers:**

Parents & carers are required by law to ensure their child's regular and punctual attendance. The Governing Body has endorsed the Local Authority use of parenting contracts and penalty notices for parents / carers of persistent truants according to the provisions of the Anti-Social Behaviour Act 2003.

Parents & carers will ensure that their child attends school regularly, punctually, properly equipped and in a fit condition to learn.

Parents & carers will inform the school of the reason for any absence by phone call on the first morning of any absence, and in advance if possible. We may require this to be confirmed in writing when a pupil returns to school.

Parents will avoid arranging family holidays during term time. Requests for leave of absence will be made in advance, using the form available from reception.

### 3. Registration

It is a legal requirement to keep accurate registers of pupils' attendance. Teachers and those covering lessons at St. Gregory's will use SIMS Lesson Monitor to register pupils' attendance in tutor time and in every lesson.

The morning session register will be taken during Vertical Tutor time or, on Wednesday, lesson 1. The register will open at 08.45 and close at 09.30. The afternoon session register will be taken during lesson 4. The register will open at 12.35 and close at 13.00.

The following codes, and only these codes, will be used by tutors and teachers when completing the register:

- / or \ Present (am or pm)
- L Late (before close of register)
- N No reason yet provided for absence (by default SIMS lesson monitor will populate the register with 'N' for unmarked pupils when the register is saved).

If SIMS Lesson Monitor is unavailable (e.g. because of a technical fault), the tutor should complete a paper register and send this to the Attendance Officer as soon as possible.

Should a pupil arrive in school after the register has closed, he/she should sign the late book at the Attendance Officer's office, providing an explanation for his/her lateness.

The Attendance Officer will use the following codes to classify reasons for absence:

- B Educated off site
- C Other authorised circumstances
- D Dual registration
- E Excluded
- F Extended family holiday (agreed)
- G Family holiday (not agreed)
- H Family Holiday (agreed)
- I Illness
- J Interview
- M Medical / Dental appointments
- O Unauthorised absence
- P Approved sporting activity
- R Religious observance
- T Traveller absence
- U Late (after close of register)
- V Educational visit
- W Work experience
- # School closed to pupils and staff
- Y Enforced closure, including partial enforced closure
- X Non-compulsory school age absence
- Z Pupil not on roll

Staff must not alter these codes, except to record a pupil as present when they had been expected to be absent (e.g. changing P to / when the pupil is present because a planned sporting activity has been cancelled).

Only Attendance Officers may alter attendance codes retrospectively to correct clerical or factual errors. In these cases an attached comment explaining the change will be entered in SIMS Lesson monitor.

### 4. Authorised/Unauthorised Absence

It is the role of the school to decide whether an absence is to be authorised. Parents & carers must inform school of the reason for any absence by phone call on the first morning of the absence. We may require this to be confirmed in writing when a pupil returns. Only the school's acceptance of the explanation offered authorises the absence.

Absence from school may be authorised if it is for the following reasons:

- Sickness;
- unavoidable medical/dental appointments (wherever possible these should be made outside of school hours);
- days of religious observance;
- exceptional family circumstances, such as a bereavement; or
- a catastrophic event at home.

Absence from school will not be authorised for:

- shopping;
- looking after brothers, sisters or unwell parents / carers;
- minding the house;
- holidays, or
- birthdays.

### **Requests for leave of absence**

Any request for absence in advance must be made using the 'Exceptional Leave of Absence Form for absence during school term' form (Appendix 1) and should explain fully the reasons for requesting the absence. We appreciate that there are sometimes reasons where such absences are appropriate.

However amendments have been made to the 2006 pupil registration regulations in the Education (Pupil Registration) (England) (Amendment) Regulations 2013, which came into force on 1 September 2013.

Schools can no longer grant up to 10 days' leave in special circumstances for the purpose of family holiday. The 2013 amendments to the 2006 regulations remove references to family holidays and schools may now only grant leave in 'exceptional' circumstances.

Decisions on authorising absence requests will be made by the Senior Member of Staff taking the following into consideration:

- the amount of time requested;
- age of the child;
- proximity of examinations and other assessed components of public examinations;
- previous attendance & punctuality record;
- the pupil's educational needs;
- the pupil's ability to catch up with any missed work;
- general welfare of the child;
- purpose of the leave requested;
- circumstances of the request;
- when the request was made;
- National and Local guidance on the authorisation of absence;
- information provided by the County Attendance Team or other agencies.

All requests for exceptional leave of absence will receive a written response giving the reason for the decision. Letters approving requests will state the expected date of return and that parents will contact the school if anything delays the pupil's return. If a pupil fails

to return when expected, we will inform the County Attendance Team. Letters refusing requests will explain the reason and that ignoring the refusal will result in an unauthorised absence being recorded; also that this may be referred to the County Attendance Team .

### **Approved Educational Activities**

There are a number of activities that form a valuable part of a pupil's education but take place off the school campus. These include courses activities run by other providers where participation by pupils from St Gregory The Great has been arranged by the school; sporting activities; work experience for pupils in years 10 and 11 which takes place within the legislative framework; dual registration arrangements with other schools; and electronic and distance learning when logging in and working can be verified.

Requests to take part in activities arranged by others, including parents, will only be approved if we believe that the activity satisfies the regulatory requirements including supervision of the activity by someone authorised to do so by the school. Consideration of such requests will include:

- the nature of the activity;
- the benefits to the pupil;
- the effect on the pupil's education;
- the amount of time requested; and
- the timing of the activity.

Requests by parents & carers for flexi-schooling will be considered by the school. Such requests must fulfil the regulatory requirements described above and any agreement is at the Head Teacher's discretion.

## **5. Procedures for Following Up Absence/Lateness**

All unexplained absences will be followed up on the first date by the Attendance Officer by telephone call and/or text message. Should a pupil be absent for more than three consecutive days without an explanation, the Attendance Officer will write to the parents.

The school may require written confirmation of the reason for a pupil's absence, especially where their attendance is a cause for concern. Form tutors will collect written explanations from returning pupils and pass these to the attendance Officer.

If a pupil is late to registration, they will sign the late register giving a reason for their lateness. Should a pupil be persistently late three or more times in a week, the Senior Member of staff will write to the parents/carers.

Pupils who arrive late to a lesson may be required to make up the time after school, subject to their parents/carers being informed.

All notes from parents regarding a pupil's absence will be stored on the child's file after they have been initialled (and dated) by the form tutor and kept for six months.

Should a written explanation not be provided by parents/carers when requested, then the Senior Member of Staff will write to the parents. When a pupil is persistently late or absent without good reason and the school's efforts to effect improvement have been unsuccessful, we will refer the matter to the County Attendance Team. This may lead to a penalty notice and fine.

## Circumstances where a penalty notice may be issued

A Penalty Notice can only be issued in cases of unauthorised absence. Where at least 10 school days (20 sessions) have been lost due to unauthorised absence in no more than 10 weeks. Persistent late arrival at school (after the register has closed) equivalent to 20 sessions of unauthorised absence in a period of no more than 10 weeks. A child present in a public place during the first five days of exclusion without reasonable justification.

Parents will be sent a warning letter before a Penalty Notice is issued. The warning letter will indicate the period of time over which improvement is expected (typically a further 15 school days).

The exception would be for a leave of absence that has not been approved by the Headteacher. In such cases a Penalty Notice Warning Letter may be issued.

## **6. Strategies for Promoting Attendance/Punctuality**

The curriculum will be monitored and developed to meet the needs of all pupils. A variety of teaching & learning strategies will be used to engage and enthuse different groups of pupils. Student voice feedback will be used in the planning and evaluation of the curriculum and teaching & learning. Attendance statistics will be collected and used to inform pastoral and curriculum practices.

Good attendance will be rewarded through weekly tutor group & termly house competitions and termly attendance awards letters from the Head Teacher.

Parents will be kept regularly and fully informed of all concerns regarding attendance and punctuality.

Termly reports will be made by the Head Teacher to the Governing Body on the issue of attendance and punctuality.

Visits to feeder primary schools will be made in order to ensure the fullest support for all pupils during secondary transfer and in order to help identify any pupils who may need special help.

Pupils whose attendance falls beneath 90% will be set targets for improvement and referred to the County Attendance Team. In the case of Looked After children, the threshold shall be 95% attendance. These targets will be regularly reviewed by the Head of House.

Pupils who have been absent for any extended period of time will be reintegrated back into school through a structured and individually-tailored programme, constructed in consultation with parents and the County Attendance Team.

The school gates will be locked at 8.45 and students will need to sign in at reception on arrival to school after 8.45. Pupils who are late will be given a late detention at the end of the school day.

## 7. Collection of Attendance Data

Each week summary attendance data for each tutor group will be collected in order to inform the rewards system and assess on-going performance. Each week punctuality data for late pupils will be collated and parents informed where appropriate (see Section 5). This data will be analysed by Heads of House / Deputy Heads of House to identify trends and patterns and link attendance with attainment.

Each term (six times a year) the following data will be collected and analysed in order to assess performance and trends:

- whole school and year group attendance rates;
- numbers and proportion of persistent absentee pupils (<80% attendance) and pupils at risk from becoming persistent absentees (<90% attendance);
- attendance rates for particular pupil groups (gender, ethnicity, SEN, Looked After children).

Attendance data will be used to set a range of attendance targets for the whole school, for identified cohorts and, where appropriate, for individual pupils.

## 8. Monitoring and Evaluation

The operation and impact of this policy will be monitored by the Senior Member of the Leadership Team. This policy will be reviewed annually by the Governing Body.

This policy was agreed by Partnership Committee of the Governing Body on Tuesday 26<sup>th</sup> January 2010 and reviewed January 2011.

- Reviewed January 2011
- Reviewed January 2013
- Amended in light of change in Vertical Tutor time within school day (September 2013) and publication of additional DfE advice (January 2014).
- Reviewed January 2015

Next review: Spring 2016.

## Relevant Documents

- Anti-Social Behaviour Act 2003
- Advice and Guidance to Schools and Local Authorities on Managing Pupil Attendance. DfES Circular 2005.
- Advice on School Attendance Policy. Cambridgeshire County Council. April 2008.
- Absence and Attendance Codes: Guidance for Schools and Local Authorities 2009
- Service Level statement for Attendance Related Work. Oxfordshire Behaviour & Attendance Team 2009.
- The Education (Pupil Registration) Regulations 2006 (Amended 2010). Christ at the Centre (2<sup>nd</sup> Ed.). Monseigneur Marcus Stock. Diocesan Schools Commission, Archdiocese of Birmingham 2012.
- School Attendance: Departmental advice for maintained schools, academies, independent schools and local authorities. DfE November 2013
- Parental responsibility measures for school attendance and behaviour. DfE

November 2013

- Penalty Notices Code of Conduct January 2015