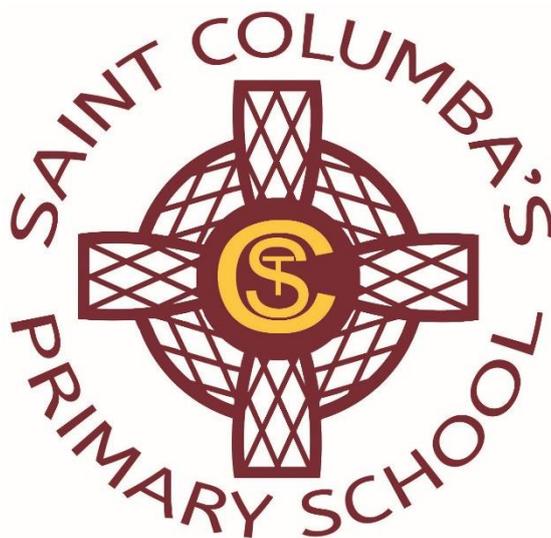


# St. Columba's Roman Catholic Primary School



## Attendance and Punctuality Policy

Head Teacher: Mrs. C. Garbutt

ORIGIN: Guidance Document North Tyneside Education HR Advisory Team

This Policy was ratified by St. Columba's Governing Body in **April 2019**

Signed by the Head Teacher: *Mrs C. Garbutt*

Signed by the Chair of Governors: *Mr. P Dinsley*

Date of next review: **see amendments on page 7 following COVID-19 updates – September 2020**

This policy will be reviewed in **April 2021** or sooner if deemed necessary. All staff and governors will be consulted as to its effectiveness as part of the review process.

**Requests for copies** - If a signed paper copy of this policy is requested, the school office will provide this free of charge.

## School Agreed Statement

The school emphasises the need for every pupil on roll to attend everyday, when the school is in session, as long as they are fit and healthy enough to do so. We believe that the most important factor in promoting good attendance is the development of positive attitudes towards school. We will endeavour to ensure that all partners: staff, parents, governors, Local Authority staff and the wider community are all accountable and work together in support of the school's attendance policy, which is essential if effective schooling is to take place. The school fully recognises the link between attendance and attainment. Historical figures from the Department of Education show this link very clearly:

% Absence	-4%	4-5%	5-6%	6-7%	7-8%	8%+
L4+ English and maths	84	77	69	61	57	52
2 levels progress English	87	85	83	80	78	76
2 levels progress maths	82	78	74	70	68	66

## Every School Day Counts

95% attendance = 2 weeks absence

90% attendance = 4 weeks absence

80% attendance = more than half a term absence



## Aims and Guiding Principles

- To successfully implement the school's attendance policy, the law and the Local Authority policy and procedures.
- To ensure pupils attain a regular pattern of attendance and punctuality that will support levels of achievement in school
- To foster positive attitudes to school and make best use of all resources and opportunities offered.
- To guide and support all partners on attendance issues.
- To work towards attaining school attendance targets and so achieve and sustain high levels of attendance at St. Columba's.

## School/Governors Responsibility

- Every teacher is responsible for the registration of pupils at the beginning of each school session and will ensure that this paper copy is passed to the office to record electronically.
- Mrs Craggs, the Attendance Co-ordinator will be responsible for ensuring that follow up action is taken, including informing parents when pupils are absent or persistently late. This will include parental consultations to discuss with the Attendance Co-ordinator and/or class teacher or Headteacher ways in which their child's attendance and/or punctuality can be improved.
- The school will maintain regular liaison with the Attendance and Education Welfare Service (A.E.W.S.) at North Tyneside ensuring that referrals are made correctly and in appropriate cases that information for national and local statistics are provided.
- All staff will provide positive communication to parents and apply a consistent approach encouraging punctual regular attendance from all pupils.
- That individual pupil attendance rate and lateness is informed through parental reporting, termly attendance reviews and at other appropriate parent/teacher meetings.
- To record annual attendance figures for each pupil on end of year academic reports.

- To encourage and inform pupils of the importance of daily attendance/punctuality in relation to their overall attainment gains, and to praise and promote good attendance and punctuality across the school by awarding certificates in celebration assemblies.
- That Governors support and work in partnership with school staff in the raising of attendance levels and the setting of realistic school attendance targets. The school has a responsibility to inform the Governors on attendance through the head teacher's termly report.

### **Parental Responsibility**

Parents need to take the responsibility for their child's daily attendance and punctuality at St. Columba's very seriously.

Parents should support and ensure their child keeps the agreed school times:

Bell rings at 8.55am for registration

Teaching time starts at 9.00am after which admission is through the main reception doors only.

End of school day is 3.30pm.

### **Nursery sessions**

Morning 9.00am - 12 noon

Afternoon 12.30pm - 3.30pm

- Parents should notify the school (as soon as possible - before 9.30am) of any absence or illness their child has. This can be done by telephoning the school office on 0191 200 7235, a direct conversation with a member of staff or a written note if aware of the absence in advance i.e an appointment. If your child is absent and you have not notified the school we will contact a parent or guardian via phone call from 9.30am onwards. If we do not find out why your child is absent they will be recorded as unauthorised (please note we need an adult to inform us of a reason for absence, a sibling passing a message on is not sufficient)
- Parents should inform the class teacher or Mrs Craggs in advance, where possible, of medical/dental appointments with supporting documents e.g. hospital letter, appointment card etc. Wherever possible dental and medical appointments should be made outside of school hours. An authorisation slip will be given if these appointments are during the school day.
- Parents should support the school's attendance policy to the full and enter constructive dialogue with staff regarding their child's non attendance / punctuality.

### **Managing excellent attendance**

Identifying and praising good attendance can play a major role in the improvement of the overall school attendance rate. At St. Columba's we celebrate and acknowledge this in a number of ways:-

- Praising the individual pupil.
- Positive comments to the family.
- Recognition in school assemblies.
- Presenting the individual with an achievement/attendance certificate at the end of each term for attendance and punctuality.
- Written comments on parental reports.
- Weekly attendance figures for each class are reported on the Iona Star. This is the school weekly newsletter which is sent home to parents and published on the website. The winning class receives an attendance trophy for the week.
- Commending pupils who have been making an effort to improve their attendance.

It is important that school responds to pupils showing excellent attendance. All of the children who have 100% attendance from the beginning of a new academic year will receive an attendance certificate awarded in the final assembly of the school year in July.

## **Attendance Targets**

The school sets attendance targets each year. These are agreed by the senior staff and governors. These attendance targets are then agreed with the LA link inspector / School Development Partner as well. The targets are challenging yet realistic, and based on attendance figures achieved in previous years. Targets at St. Columba's are around 96%.

## **Managing non-attendance / persistent lateness.**

### **Authorised absences**

An absence is classified as authorised when a child has been away from school for a legitimate reason and the school has received notification from a parent or carer in writing or through a telephone call. Only the school is able to make an absence authorised. Parents do not have this authority, so there may be absences supported by a parent that the school cannot authorise. **Please Note:** If your child is genuinely unwell keep them off school. There have been instances of parents sending children back to school too quickly after an illness and this has resulted in the child needing further time off. If the absence is longer than five days parents should contact the class teacher to arrange for work to be sent home to ensure the child can keep up with their school work.

### **Unauthorised absence**

An absence is classified as unauthorised when a child is away from school without permission of the school. Therefore the absence is unauthorised if a child is away from school without good reason, even with the support of a parent. Below is a list of some reasons that are classified as unauthorised absences.

Shopping trip	Birthday treat/family treat
Visiting relatives	Family working patterns/commitments
Parent unwell	Child refusing to come to school
Another sibling unwell	Holidays in term time without authorisation
Waking up late and not coming to school	

## **Monitoring Attendance**

The Local Authority monitor our registers/evidence of absence on a regular basis. If a child's absence falls below 85% the child is classed as a persistent absentee and they will be closely monitored for their attendance. A conversation will take place to see if there is anything school can do to support the child and family.

If a child has a repeated number of unauthorised absences, or persistent absence, the parents or carers will be asked to visit the school and discuss the problem with the Headteacher. If there is no improvement, and there is a long-term concern about the attendance of the child, the school will then inform the Local Authority support services (Attendance and Education Welfare Service - A.E.W.S.), who will contact the parents or guardians to ensure that they understand the seriousness of the situation. Penalty Notices may be issued as a result. Records will be kept of any meetings, external agency support or interventions which may take place as a result of monitoring and tackling persistent absence.

## **Punctuality**

Registers are taken soon after each session begins and any child who is not in class when this registration occurs and who subsequently arrives at school will be marked as late. With children's safeguarding in mind, the school has decided to lock all external gates at 9.00am each day. After this period entry to the school will be through the main doors only and your child will be recorded as late.

Some figures for you:

**Lateness = Lost Learning**



**5mins late each day = 3 days learning lost**

**10mins late each day = 6.5 days learning lost**

**15mins late each day = 10 days learning lost**

**30mins late each day = 19 learning days lost**

**Lateness is monitored and punctuality warning letters are issued to parents termly.**

### **Holidays in Term Time**

**VERY IMPORTANT** - A change to the law on attendance. The government has changed the law on authorised holidays and leave of absence with effect from 1<sup>st</sup> September 2013. From September 2013 we have been advised by the Attendance and Education Welfare Service (A.E.W.S.) to inform you of the following changes to the law:

Term times are for education. This is the priority. Children and families have 175 days off school to spend time together, including weekends and school holidays. The school policy is not to grant absences during term time and will only be authorised in exceptional circumstances.

#### **Exceptional Circumstances may include:**

- Absences to visit family members are not normally granted during term time if they could be scheduled for holiday periods or outside school hours. Children may however need time to visit seriously ill relatives.
- Absence for a bereavement of a close family member is usually considered an exception circumstance but the funeral service only, not extended leave.
- Absences for important religious observances are often taken into account but only for the ceremony and travelling time, not extended leave. This is intended for one off situations rather than regular or recurring events.
- The needs of families of services personnel will be taken into account if they are returning from long operational tours that prevent contact during scheduled holiday time.
- Families who need time together to recover from trauma or crisis.

**These examples are illustrative rather than exhaustive. The fundamental principles for defining "exceptional" are rare, significant, unavoidable and short. By unavoidable we mean an event that could not reasonably be scheduled outside of term time.**

- Parents/Carers **CANNOT** ask for a leave of absence as an automatic right.
- Parental requests **MUST** be in writing.
- Extended periods of absence will be granted **ONLY** in exceptional circumstances and where children's attendance is high, provided that the timing of the absence does not unduly affect a child's education (e.g. in the approach to their SATs)

If you do need an absence day, you should fill in an application for authorised absence form at the school office or write a letter to request permission from the Headteacher. However, the change to the law now means that even these exceptional absences may not be authorised if children have attendance below the national average or the timing is inappropriate and will affect the child's educational experience (e.g. absence in the first week of a new academic year or in their SATs year). If a child is taken out of school for a holiday without school authorisation, they could be highlighted

to the Local Authority who would take the appropriate action. We know that these changes will not trouble most parents - the vast majority do not attempt to take holidays during term time anyway and we have really improved the attendance and punctuality of children across the school thanks to your support. The government has changed the law because of the impact that low attendance has on children's progress. Even two weeks out of school can have a lasting effect on a child's skills and attainment if they miss out on crucial learning. As we are sure parents will appreciate, teachers do not have the capacity to spend additional time providing catch-up work for children when parents have chosen to keep them away from school. If you have any queries about the new attendance laws don't hesitate to contact Mrs Craggs or Mrs Garbutt.

Year 6 and Year 2 will not be granted permission for absence before the tests in May of any year.

### **Role of the Attendance and Education Welfare Service (A.E.W.S.) at North Tyneside**

Responsibilities include:-

- Supporting and encouraging the school in monitoring and promoting good attendance and providing guidance on issues relating to attendance.
- Checking the attendance registration sheets with an assigned member of staff at regular intervals.
- Identifying with the school irregular attendance, whatever the cause.
- Responding promptly to referrals from the school, providing feedback on action taken and advising on any possible legal actions.
- Enabling parents to discharge their legal responsibilities for attendance matters.

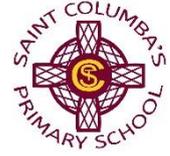
### **Reporting and working with Governors**

Improving the level of school attendance is a priority task of the L.A. and therefore Governors share an important role in supporting their school to raise levels of achievement. The Governing Body of St. Columba's is clear in its wish to support the attendance initiative and has high expectations of the school. St. Columba's has a strong commitment to educating its pupils and therefore will not tolerate lengthy pupil absence and will no longer authorise holidays during term time.

### **Criteria to measure success**

We are successful when:

- The termly and annual attendance percentage rate shows continual improvement in pupil attendance.
- All staff are successfully implementing the agreed School Attendance Policy and Procedures.
- We have raised the profile and importance of regular and punctual attendance within the local community (pupils/parents/carers).
- We have made more effective use of any outside agency support including the Attendance and Education Welfare Service (A.E.W.S.)
- We have achieved the annual school attendance targets.



## **COVID-19 UPDATES**

Persistent lateness refers to frequent and regular lateness. We acknowledge that families may be occasionally subject to events/circumstances which are out of their control.

### **Points to consider:**

- As a response to the latest government guidance, pods have been given staggered pick up and drop off times to limit the possibility of cross contamination and to adhere to social distancing measures, where possible.
- To limit the impact that this necessity has on teaching time, timings have been minimised to a 15 minute window.
- Siblings may arrive earlier or later than their allocated pod time. Whilst this is not ideal, this is necessary in order to ensure that parents are not congregating on the school grounds. Please choose the earliest time for drop off and the latest time for pick up.
- If children are late in the morning, they may be held at the school gate by members of staff until there is an appropriate time for them to enter (e.g. before or after another pod). However, late children will still need to access the classroom through their fire door, not the main front office door.
- If parents are late to collect children in the afternoon, pupils must remain within the classroom and are still to be collected from the fire door by their parent. They must not be sent to the main office. Again, this is to limit cross contamination and mixing of pods.

### **Persistent lateness response:**

If families are persistently late, the following steps will be taken. These are intended to 'escalate' the response to the situation, if it should continue in a hierarchical order.

1. Informal reminder from staff who are monitoring the one way entry/exit system (Mrs Craggs or Mrs Wallace). Staff will give an informal verbal reminder, asking families to remain within their assigned window. This can be reiterated by class teachers at the fire doors.
2. Formal email/telephone call from the school office. This will state the given time for the pod, the rationale behind the staggered timings and the number of 'lates' that have occurred so far.
3. Formal email/telephone call from class teachers or phase leaders. This will reiterate the points above and outline the next steps which will be taken if the lateness does not improve. Families will be consulted about whether they need additional support and this support will be dealt with on a case by case basis.
4. Formal letter and follow up meeting with Mrs McGrady, Miss Quinn or Mrs Garbutt. Families will be asked to sign a completed action plan and adhere to strict targets.
5. Information reported to the Local Authority and advice taken.