



SAINTS PETER AND PAUL  
CATHOLIC HIGH SCHOOL

# Attendance for Learning Policy

Last updated: November 2016

This policy must be read in conjunction with the Equal Opportunities Statement of Values, Equal Opportunities Policy and Student Leave of Absence Policy.

## **1. RATIONALE**

This Policy outlines the underlying philosophy, purpose, nature, organisation and management of student attendance at Saints Peter and Paul Catholic High School.

The Policy is a result of consultation with the wider school community and an analysis of existing attendance data to establish current absence trends. It aims to ensure the enjoyment and achievement for all students at Saints Peter and Paul Catholic High School.

## **2. PRINCIPLES**

The Governors, Principal, Senior Leadership Team and staff wish to ensure that every child has the opportunity to:

1. Fully participate in school life
2. Enjoy and achieve
3. Feel a valued member of the school community

## **3. AIMS**

- To achieve 96% attendance (The national average is currently 94.8% for secondary schools).
- To ensure there is a whole school, graduated response to improving punctuality and attendance.
- To identify groups of students and individuals whose absence causes concern. □ To identify students persistently absent from school (10% or more absence).
- To track students' attendance and monitor and evaluate progress.
- To identify main causes of absence and take action to address them.

## **4. LEGAL RESPONSIBILITIES RELATING TO SCHOOL ATTENDANCE**

Under Section 7 of the 1996 Education Act a parent is responsible for ensuring that a child of compulsory school age receives an efficient full time education that is suitable to the child's age, aptitude and ability and any special educational needs a child might have.

**Prosecution.** The LA has a statutory responsibility to ensure that a parent of a child of compulsory school age has their child registered at a school and that the child attends regularly. If a parent fails to do this, the LA may bring prosecution under the Education Act (1996). As a parent, you are legally responsible for ensuring that your child attends school regularly and is punctual. If you fail to ensure this you are committing an offence under the Education Act (1996) which may lead to a fine of up to £2500 and/or a prison sentence. You may find yourself issued with a penalty notice.

**Penalty Notice.** The LA, in conjunction with the school, may issue a Penalty Notice if a child has 10 or more unauthorised sessions where the student's attendance is causing concern or below 90%. The Penalty Notice is £60 per child for each parent. The fine is to be paid within 21 days of receipt of the notice. If there is a failure to pay the fine, the amount is doubled to £120 to be paid within 28 days of the initial notice. Non-payment of fines can lead to prosecution under the Education Act (1996).

## **5. PARENTAL RESPONSIBILITIES RELATING TO SCHOOL ATTENDANCE**

Parents must:

- Contact school on the first day of absence to provide a reason for non-attendance.
- Update the school on the third day of non attendance if the absence is expected to continue.
- Request leave in advance for holidays/extended absences in term time by following the school Student Leave of Absence Policy.
- Work with the school and any other agency to resolve any difficulties which may affect regular school attendance.

## **6. SCHOOL RESPONSIBILITIES RELATING TO SCHOOL ATTENDANCE**

There is a dedicated member of the Senior Leadership Team who is the school attendance leader. As the attendance leader of the school he/she will ensure:

- Registers are accurately marked and maintained in accordance with the Education (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2006.
- A whole school approach to reinforce good attendance, student support systems and great teaching and learning to encourage all students to attend and achieve.
- Individuals or group attendance targets are set and understood by staff, parents and students.

## 7. REGISTRATION

- Parents should ensure students are in school for 8.40am and in class for period 1 8.45am.
- A student arriving after 8.50am will be marked late.
- A student arriving in school after 8.50am should follow school procedures for late arrivals and must sign in at Student Services and then go to their lesson.

## 8. CATEGORISATION OF AUTHORISED AND UNAUTHORISED ABSENCE

The parent must provide an explanation for any period of absence from school, it is the responsibility of the Headteacher to decide whether or not the absence will be authorised.

School will usually authorise absences where a student is:

- Unable to attend school due to illness
- Requires emergency dental/medical appointments. Wherever possible routine dental/medical appointments should be made after school or during school holidays. □
- Absent due to other exceptional circumstances

School will not authorise absence for:

- Shopping
- Birthdays
- Days out
- Looking after brothers/sisters
- Holidays (unless there are exceptional circumstances)

School may request medical verification where a student's attendance falls below 90%.

## 9. SCHOOL SYSTEMS FOR PROMOTING REGULAR ATTENDANCE

Stage	Attendance Threshold	Consequence/Actions to be taken
Getting it right...	100% Attendance	Individual/group/year group reward – every term (PPL) 100% Attendance Standard text

<b>STAGE 1</b>	<b>Attendance drops to 96%</b>	<b>Form Tutor</b> Contact Parents/carers- standard text 94-96% Issue Guidance 1 <b>WELL-BEING</b> include 96% target in next 2 week cycle action and issues follow discussion with student logged Failure to respond move to stage 2 after two cycles
<b>STAGE 2</b>	<b>Attendance drops to 94%</b>	<b>Support from Year Mentor/PPL</b> Parental engagement/meeting/standard text Intervention mentor group allocated Issue Guidance 1 Attendance include 96% target in next 2 week cycle- action and issues follow discussion with student logged
<b>STAGE 3</b>	<b>Attendance drops below 90%</b>	<b>Lead Mentors/ PPL/EWO Jackie Burke</b> Referred through Year Group Attendance meeting (Wednesdays) Guidance 2 Attendance issued Request for parents/carers to attend Attendance Surgery with EWO (Tues/Thurs) – 96% target set and review meeting set for 4 weeks – action plan agreed and sent out to parents/carers-If no improvement –fixed penalty warning issued
<b>STAGE 4</b>	<b>Attendance continues to drop</b>	<b>EWS involvement/External agency referrals/legal involvement</b> Request to attend EWS Attendance Planning Meeting (APM) Guidance 3 Issued No improvements fixed penalty notice £60 and further prosecution

## 10. Year Team Meetings

Pastoral Progress Leaders, Year Mentors, Lead Mentors and the Education Welfare Officer will meet weekly to discuss student attendance. If a student's attendance falls below 90%, parents/carers will be requested to attend an Attendance Surgery to discuss their child's attendance. A review period of four weeks will be in place and if the attendance target is not met, then a referral will be completed to the Education Welfare Service for consideration of any legal action.

### School will:

- Contact parent/carer on first day of a student's absence where no notification has been received from the parent/carer by 11.00 am to ensure the safety of the student.
- Analyse individual attendance student data to identify patterns of absence causing concern.
- Contact parents when student's attendance falls below 96% to highlight concerns.
- Invite parents into school for a discussion when a student's attendance is below 90%.
- Invite parents to an Attendance Meeting with the school Attendance Leader/Education Welfare Officer/Progress Leader where attendance falls below 90%.
- Refer to Education Welfare when co school llege action has failed to bring about an improvement in the student's attendance.

- Use Individual Attendance Support Plans for students with attendance difficulties.
- Use Stage 3 and 4 Support Plans where exclusion or behavioural issues are affecting a student's attendance in school.
- In partnership with LA use a full range of strategies, including legal interventions, to support improvement to attendance.
- Complete a Common Assessment where complex and significant factors requiring a multi-agency response is identified.
- Implement a range of rewards for students with high levels of attendance and those improving attendance.
- Work proactively to engage with parent/carer to resolve any difficulties, which may be affecting school attendance, through parents' evenings, student reviews and homeschool agreements.
- Provide a full and diverse curriculum to engage and motivate students, including use of SEAL to promote emotional well-being.
- Make parent/carers aware of the impact of poor attendance on learning and progress.

## **11. PERSONS RESPONSIBLE FOR ATTENDANCE**

- Principal
- Attendance Leader
- Attendance Officer
- First day contact link – Year Mentor
- Governors' Attendance, Behaviour & Inclusion Panel

## **12. REVIEW OF POLICY**

- This policy will be formally reviewed every two years.
- This policy will be less formally reviewed on an annual basis.
- A copy of this policy is available on the school website.
- The policy is given in full to all parents/carers of children who are starting at Saints Peter and Paul Catholic High School.
- An electronic copy of this policy is in the staff handbook.
- The principles of this policy will be raised in the school newsletter 'In Touch' throughout the year.
- Any complaints arising from the implementation of this policy should be addressed to the Principal in the first instance.

## APPENDIX

### CHILDREN & YOUNG PEOPLE ATTENDANCE AND BEHAVIOUR SERVICE

#### PENALTY NOTICE PROTOCOL

## 1.0 LEGAL BASIS

- 1.1 Section 444A of the Education Act 1996 empowers designated Local Authority Officers, Head Teachers (and Deputy and Assistant Head Teachers authorised by them) and the Police to issue Penalty Notices in cases of unauthorised absence from school.
- 1.2 Section 105(1) of the Education and Inspections Act 2006 empowers designated Local Authority Officers, Head Teachers (and Deputy and Assistant Head Teachers authorised by them) and the Police to issue Penalty Notices in cases where an excluded student is in a public place at any time during school hours during the first five days of any period of exclusion from school without justifiable cause.
- 1.3 The Education (Penalty Notices) (England) Regulations 2007) came in to force on 1st September 2007 and set out the statutory process for the issuing of Penalty Notices.
- 1.4 The Education (Penalty Notices) (England) (Amendment) Regulations 2012 came into force on 1<sup>st</sup> September 2012 and raised the amount of penalty payable from £50 to £100 to £60 and £120 respectively.
- 1.5 Education (Pupil Registration) (England) (Amendment) Regulations 2013 came in to force on the 1 September 2013 and amended the Pupil Registration Regulations 2006 by removing references to family holiday and extended leave as well as the statutory threshold of ten school days. The Amendments make clear that Head Teachers may not grant any leave of absence during term time unless there are exceptional circumstances. Head Teachers should determine the number of school days a child can be away from school if the leave is granted
- 1.6 The issuing of Penalty Notices must conform with all requirements of the Human Rights Act and all Equal Opportunities legislation.
- 1.7 The Local Authority has the prime responsibility for developing the protocol within which all partners named in the Act will operate.
- 1.8 For the purposes of this Protocol "Parent" is as defined in the Education Act 1996 (Section 576).

1.9 Any reference to “school” includes maintained schools, academies, free schools and alternative provision.

1.10 Any reference to a school “session” is either the morning or afternoon of the school day. Therefore, two sessions amount to a full school day.

## **2.0 RATIONALE**

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

2.2 The parent of an excluded student must ensure that the student is not present in a public place at any time during school hours during the first five days of any exclusion. This is in order to ensure the health and safety of the child and reduce the risk of antisocial behaviour.

2.3 In law an offence occurs under Section 103(3) of the Education and Inspections Act 2006 if a parent allows an excluded student to be present in a public place any time during school hours during the first five days of any period of exclusion without justifiable cause. The Attendance & Behaviour Service delivers this Local Authority responsibility.

2.4 In law an offence occurs if a parent/carer fails to secure a child’s regular attendance at a school which they are as a registered student and that absence is not authorised by the school. Penalty notices supplement the existing sanctions currently available under Section 444 of the Education Act 1996 or Section 36 of the Children’s Act 1989 to enforce attendance at school where appropriate. The Attendance & Behaviour Service delivers this Local Authority responsibility.

2.5 Parents and students are supported at school and Local Authority level to overcome barriers to regular attendance through a wide continuum of assessment and intervention strategies. Sanctions of any nature are for the use only where parental cooperation in this process is either absent or deemed insufficient to resolve the presenting problem.

2.6 Sanctions are used as a means of enforcing attendance where there is a reasonable expectation that their use will secure an improvement.

## **3.0 CIRCUMSTANCES WHERE A PENALTY NOTICE MAY BE ISSUED**

## **A) PENALTY NOTICE IN RESPECT OF UNAUTHORISED ABSENCE**

3.1 Penalty Notice's for irregular school attendance can only be issued in cases of **unauthorised** absence. Parents can be issued with more than one Penalty Notice in an academic year. In cases where families have more than one child with unsatisfactory attendance multiple issue may occur but this will be the subject of careful consideration and co-ordination.

3.2 The Local Authority deems regular attendance as 95% or above. This is in light of the government having amended the measure of persistent absence to 90% and Local Authorities being expected to raise attendance levels to above this rate. Therefore, attendance less than 95% is deemed unsatisfactory.

3.3 In light of this the issuing of a Penalty Notice is considered appropriate (following the issue of any warning letter as set out in paragraph 3.4 below), where a child's attendance is below 95% during the previous 38 weeks and one of the following circumstances applies:

- Overt truancy (including students caught on truancy sweeps)
- Unauthorised absence where no reason is provided by the parent or the reason is not accepted by the school, including parentally condoned absences, i.e. with the full knowledge and consent of the parent or where a child has not returned to school following a period of agreed leave of absence.
- Late for 10 or more sessions (after the register has closed) in the previous 12 weeks.

### **WARNING LETTER TO IMPROVE SCHOOL ATTENDANCE.**

3.4 A parent will receive a formal warning letter in respect of the possibility of a Penalty Notice once it is established that there has been 10 unauthorised sessions of absence during the previous 12 weeks. Parents will have a 4 week period to improve attendance to a minimum of 95% before consideration will be given to issuing a penalty notice. However should there be future period(s) of absence within 38 school weeks from the start date of the period of absence which the warning letter relates then a penalty notice may be issued without further warning.

3.5 There will be no restriction on the number of times a parent/carer may receive a formal warning of a possible issue of a Penalty Notice in relation to unauthorised absence from school.

3.6 Any Penalty Notice issued following a warning letter must be issued in accordance with paragraph 3.3 of this Protocol.

3.7 However, parents will not be issued with a warning letter if there is leave of absence that has been requested by the parent but has not been approved by the proprietor. This is because the application for leave of absence will contain

a warning that the parent may be issued a Penalty notice if the school do not authorise the requested period of leave of absence. In these circumstances a Penalty Notice may be issued in accordance with paragraph 3.8 below.

### **B) PENALTY NOTICE IN RESPECT OF UNAUTHORISED REQUEST FOR LEAVE OF ABSENCE (HOLIDAYS IN TERM TIME)**

3.8 A Penalty Notice is considered appropriate where a child's attendance is irregular i.e. below 95% during the previous 38 weeks and the following circumstances apply:

- Leave of absence for a period of 5 school days or more (10 or more sessions) taken following a request being submitted to the school where that request was **not** approved as exceptional circumstances by the proprietor of the school.

### **C) PENALTY NOTICES IN RESPECT OF BEING PRESENT IN A PUBLIC PLACE FOLLOWING EXCLUSION**

3.9 A Penalty Notice may be issued in respect of the presence of an excluded student in a public place, where an authorised officer believes that a parent has committed an offence under Section 103(3) of the Education and Inspections Act 2006.

3.10 The parent will receive a formal warning about the possibility of a Penalty Notice being issued if their child is found in a public place, at the same time that they are advised of the exclusion.

## **4.0 PROCEDURE FOR ISSUING PENALTY NOTICES**

4.1 The Attendance & Behaviour Service will issue Penalty Notices in Halton. This will ensure consistent and equitable delivery, retain school-home relationships and allow cohesion with other enforcement sanctions.

4.2 Penalty Notices will only be issued by post and never as an on the spot action; this is to satisfy that all evidential requirements are in place and to meet Health and Safety requirements.

4.3 The Attendance & Behaviour Service will discuss requests to issue Penalty Notices from schools, Cheshire Police and neighbouring Local Authorities. These requests will be actioned provided that:

- The circumstance of the student's absence meets all the relevant requirements of this Protocol.
- 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 to any one family)
- The issue of a Penalty Notice does not conflict with other intervention strategies in place or other enforcement sanctions already being processed.

4.4 Schools must consider every aspect of a student's case before considering whether a Penalty Notice would be appropriate (for either presence in a public place following exclusion or for unauthorised absence). This must include strategic discussions with the assigned Education Welfare Officer and any other attendance support staff who have involvement with or knowledge of the student/family.

## 5.0 PROCEDURE FOR WITHDRAWING PENALTY NOTICES

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

- Proof has been established that the Penalty Notice was issued to the wrong person
- The use of the Penalty Notice did not conform to the terms of this Protocol
- It appears to the authority that the notice contains material errors

5.2 With regards to the latter a prosecution may still be brought in respect of the period for which the Penalty Notice was issued provided that a new Penalty Notice was issued when the first Penalty Notice was withdrawn and the Penalty Notice remains unpaid.

5.3 If a Penalty Notice is withdrawn then any monies paid must be re-paid to the recipient.

## 6.0 PAYMENT OF PENALTY NOTICES

6.1 Arrangements for payment will be detailed on the Penalty Notice.

6.2 Where payment is received in accordance with the Penalty Notice a parent cannot be convicted of the offence to which the Penalty Notice relates.

6.3 Payment of a Penalty Notice discharges the parent liability for the period in question and they cannot subsequently be prosecuted under other enforcement powers for the period covered by the Penalty Notice.

6.4 Payment of a Penalty Notice within 21 days is £60 and payment after this time but within 28 days is increased to £120.

6.5 Payment cannot be made by way of part payment or instalments.

6.5 The Local Authority retains any revenue from Penalty Notices to cover enforcement costs (collection or prosecuting in the event of non-payment).

## 7.0 NON-PAYMENT OF PENALTY NOTICES

7.1 Non-payment of a Penalty Notice issued for unauthorised absence from school may result in the withdrawal of the Notice and may result in a prosecution being brought under the provision of Section 444(1) of the 1996 Education Act.

7.2 Non-payment of a Penalty Notice issued where a parent allows an excluded student during the first 5 days of any period of exclusion to be present in a public place without justifiable cause may result in a prosecution under Section 103(3) of the Education and Inspections Act 2006.

## 8.0 POLICY AND PUBLICITY

8.1 Deployment of Penalty Notices as a sanction is included in the Authority's Attendance and Behaviour Policy.

8.2 All School Attendance Policies will include information on the deployment of Penalty Notices for unauthorised absence and this will be brought to the attention of all parents. Schools should ensure they amend their Attendance Policies accordingly.

8.3 School Behaviour Policy will include information on the issue of Penalty Notices where a parent allows an excluded student to be present in a public place during school hours without justifiable cause.

8.4 The Local Authority will include information on the use of Penalty Notices and other attendance enforcement sanctions in promotional/public information material.

## 9.0 REPORTING AND REVIEW

9.1 The Attendance & Behaviour Service will report at regular intervals to Head Teachers, Elected Members and Cheshire Police on the deployment and outcome of Penalty Notices.

9.2 The Attendance & Behaviour Service will review Penalty Notice use at regular intervals and amend the general enforcement strategy as appropriate.