

ST WILFRIDS RC PRIMARY

BISHOP AUCKLAND COUNTY DURHAM

ATTENDANCE POLICY

ST WILFRID'S RCVA PRIMARY SCHOOL

BISHOP AUCKLAND

CATEGORISING ABSENCE – AUTHORISED or UNAUTHORISED

Authorised Absence

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. The following reasons for absence are regarded as authorised:-

Sickness/illness (where a parent has notified the school via telephone or in writing, or provided a medical note to explain the absence.) Medical/dental appointments that cannot take place out of school hours (evidence may be requested by the school). Family bereavement or attendance at a family funeral.

Exclusion - Prevention from attending by an unavoidable cause, agreed beforehand with the Head Teacher

Only the school can authorise an absence. Parents do not have this authority. Consequently, not all absences notified by parents will be classified as authorised.

Unauthorised Absence

Unauthorised absences are absences that the school considers do not meet the above criteria and for which no 'leave' has been given. These may include:-

Parents keeping children off school unnecessarily (e.g. to go shopping during school hours/a child's or family member's birthday/looking after brother or sister). Family holiday taken without authorisation from the Head Teacher. Absences with no reason given (see above criteria). Late arrival at school i.e. after registration has closed.

Punctuality Any child who is later than the 8.55 am start will be required to use the main entrance door and register their lateness, with a reason, at the School Office. All lateness is carefully monitored by the school, parents will be contacted if punctuality becomes a concern and referrals will be made to the Local Authority for persistent lateness.

Term Time Holidays From 1 September 2013 legislation states that Head Teachers may not grant any leave of absence for holiday during term time unless there are exceptional circumstances. There will be no entitlement to any leave of absence for a holiday during term time.

## INTRODUCTION

At St Wilfrids we believe that good attendance at school is essential for a pupils' education and establishes a positive working ethos early in life. 100% attendance is certainly possible, but in the event of your child being away from school it is essential that you, the parent inform the school of the reasons for absence.

### WHY?

The Education Act 1996 requires parents and carers to ensure their child receives efficient fulltime education, suitable to their age, ability, aptitude and any special needs they may have, either by regular attendance at school or otherwise.

Under current government legislation, all absence figures, together with the reasons for absence have to be reported to the Schools Governing Body, Local Authority (LA), and the Department for Education (DfE).

Parents, guardians and carers must ensure that they are fully aware of the schools attendance policy as any absence will have a huge impact on your child's learning. Regular school attendance is essential and parents, guardians and carers, together with our school staff all have a part to play in ensuring full potential is achieved.

Pupils are expected to attend school for the entire duration of the academic year, unless there is an exceptional reason for the absence. There are two main categories of absences:

: is when the school has accepted the explanation offered as satisfactory justification for the absence, or given approval in advance for such an absence. : is when the school has not received a reason for absence or has not approved a child's absence from school after a parent's request.

Please be aware that when a parent telephones the school with information that their child is unable to attend due to illness, or other circumstances, this may not be automatically authorised. Your child's current and previous school attendance will be taken into consideration and as a result the absence may not be authorised.

Keeping your child off school with minor ailments such as a headache or slight cold is not acceptable. Repeated absences will require us to request that you obtain medical evidence from your doctor's surgery. This may be in the form of a date stamped compliment slip confirming your visit, or prescription or medicine bottle. Any of the above is to be shown to a member of the school office.

There is a clear connection between regular attendance and achievement. As attendance deteriorates, so does performance, achievement, friendship circles and self-esteem.

The achievement and maintenance of high levels of attendance is the shared responsibility of parents, guardians or carers, School with its Governing Body and the Local Authority.

## SCHOOL PRACTICE

In line with the Government and Local Authority guidelines

Registers are taken twice daily - in the morning and in the afternoon. Parents, guardians or carers should always telephone the school office before 8.50am if their child will not be attending school. The school answer machine is available 24 hours: the school's office is available from 8.30am. Office staff will ask you the reason for absence in case there is a pattern of illness within the class. First day calls are made by the School Office if the school has been given no prior notification of a pupil's absence. A written explanation must always be given when the child returns to school if the absence is for more than one day. The Headteacher will write to the parents, guardians or carers of those children whose attendance is a cause for concern. Parents, guardians or carers may be asked to meet with the EWO or Headteacher to discuss absences. Should absences persist with no improvement then the matter will be referred to the Education Welfare Service.

### Absences during term time

The Education (Pupil Registration) (England) (Amendment) Regulations 2013 explanatory note states: Regulation 7 of the 2006 Regulations is amended to prohibit the proprietor of a maintained school granting leave of absence to a pupil; except where an application has been made in advance and the proprietor considers that there are exceptional circumstances relating to the application. Applications for holidays in term time based on work patterns will not be considered as 'exceptional circumstances.'

### Parent Action

Parents must request leave as far in advance as possible. Applications to be made in writing on the schools 'leave of absence form', giving the reason for the request

### School Action

Leave of absence taken without authorisation may be referred to the Education Welfare Service. This may result in prosecution proceedings, or a Fixed Penalty Notice. If a Fixed Penalty Notice is issued, a separate Notice would be issued to each parent for each child.

As of September 1st 2013, the rate per parent per child will be £60 if paid within 21 days and rising to £120 if paid between 22 and 28 days.

A couple receiving a fixed penalty notice for leave of absence without authorisation for two children would be liable for a fine of £240 if paid within 21 days. If the penalty notice is not paid each parent may be liable to prosecution at the Magistrates Court, and if proved, each notice may receive a criminal conviction and/or a fine to the maximum of £1,000 plus costs.

There are approximately 195 school days (390 sessions) a year which your child is expected to attend. There are also approximately 71 days (142 sessions) of school holidays. This is over 13 school weeks. Please ensure that your holidays are taken during this period.

Lateness

#### TIMELINE

8.45 am School Doors are opened 9.00 am School Bell rings School Gates are locked Children arriving after this time must use the main school entrance Parents will be contacted if children persistently use this entrance 9.00 am Cut off time for latecomers Pupils arriving after 9.00 am will receive an 'L' in the Register. Several 'L's in the Register will be called in to explain the circumstances for lateness. 9.15 am If children arrive at school later than 9.15am, the pupil will receive a 'U'. This equates to an absence although we are aware that the pupil is on the school premises in accordance with health and safety.

Pupils learn best when they arrive punctually at school. The school bell goes at 9.00am each day. The school gate will be locked when the bell rings. Any pupil arriving late should enter the building through the main entrance and report to the school office. All late comers must be signed in at the school office. A member of the office staff will then send the pupil to their classroom. If a pupil is late due to a medical appointment, they will receive an authorised absence coded 'M'. The school should be informed of the appointment before it takes place, wherever possible. Please be advised that it is expected that doctors and dentists appointments are to be made outside of school hours or during school holidays.

Pupils who are consistently late are disrupting not only their own education but also that of the other pupils. Lateness is considered to be an equally serious absence. Parents, guardians or carers of pupils who seem to be developing patterns of lateness will be reminded by letter of the importance of good time keeping. If lateness persists parents, guardians or carers will be invited to attend the school and discuss the problem with the Headteacher.

#### The Role of the School Management

Pupils learn best when parents and staff work in partnership to maximise pupils' attendance at school and everyone is clear of expectations and procedures. The staff at St Wilfrid's RCVA Primary School has an obligation to enquire and challenge the reasons for pupils' absences and/or lateness and do insist on written evidence for any such absences.

- There is also an expectation that the staff report concerns over absence and lateness to the School Administration Officer, Mrs Pickering or to Miss Sands
- The school will send letters to parents, guardians or carers should there be any concerns regarding their child's current attendance level, unexplained absences or lateness
- The school collects information daily and weekly from the registers on absences. This information is forwarded to the Local Authority and Department for Education.

## Attendance support team

Section 444 of the Education Act states that “if a child of compulsory school age, who is a registered pupil at a school, fails to attend regularly at the school, the parents are guilty of an offence.”

Durham County Council, may issue a Fixed Penalty Notices or prosecute parents when children do not attend school regularly. A Fixed Penalty Notice when requested by a Headteacher can be issued as long as the following criteria apply:

- At least 10 sessions (equivalent to five school days) of unauthorised absence by the pupil during the current school term, or 20 sessions (ten school days) in the previous 4 months. This applies to any holidays of five days or more that are taken during term time.
- Other than in specific circumstances, the parent will receive a formal warning of the possibility of a Penalty Notice being issued and given a fixed number of school days to affect improvement. Within this period, further unauthorised absence will trigger the issue of a notice without warning.

The school’s framework for tackling poor attendance promotes early intervention and aims to ensure that appropriate action is taken to tackle non-attendance as soon problems become apparent. The framework includes:

- phone calls made to home on the first day of any unexplained absence
- Informal conversation regarding non attendance/lateness (School Admin Officer)
- Head Teacher given fortnightly updates on all pupils with attendance of less than 90%
- Meeting C. Pickering (AO), J.Sands (HT) Formal letter sent out where appropriate (EWS3)
- Letter requesting medical evidence for any absence sent to parent (EWS5) – this is automatic for persistent absentees (Attendance less than 85%)
- Attendance Case Conference set up
- Fixed Penalty Notice issued

It is hoped that in the majority of cases issues can be resolved within the first three of the above interventions. This involves engaging the parent and specifying what improvements need to be made over a fixed time-frame . Parents have the responsibility for ensuring that their child attends school regularly. Where a parent fails in this responsibility and no improvement is brought about within the specified time frame, legal proceedings are initiated in the Magistrates Court.

## Promoting and Celebrating Good Attendance

At St Wilfrids, we want to promote and celebrate excellent attendance. It is the Governors legal responsibility to monitor and evaluate the attendance in their schools. The schools attendance figures are presented to the Governing Body on a termly basis.

Date of Policy: September 2018

Date of Review: September 2019

### TIPS FOR SUCCESS

Good attendance starts the night before. Children need about 9 to 11 hours of sleep, according to the National Sleep Foundation. When the lights go out, so should the cell phones, videos games and computers. Establish positive evening routines that allow time for your child to complete homework. Being prepared can help lessen your child's anxieties when it comes to attending school the next day. Don't promote or tolerate your child being absent from school. Talk to your child about the importance of attending school every day. When family assistance is needed, reach out to friends and neighbours, your place of worship, a local community organization or other networks of support instead of allowing your child to miss school. Health is a priority, and that means mental health too. Don't be afraid to ask how your child is doing, or whether he or she is feeling depressed. Get to know the folks in your child's school - from teachers and administrators to school safety officials and lunchroom aides. They are like an early warning system when it comes to absenteeism, and they might be aware of any problems, like bullying, that your child is facing in school. If your child is missing 2 or 3 days of school per month, he or she is already on the wrong track. This will end up totalling more than one entire month of lost school by the end of the year. Don't forget: sending your child to school is required by law. - See more at:

<http://www.boostup.org/improveattendance/#sthash.ZC9cuq7N.dpuf>