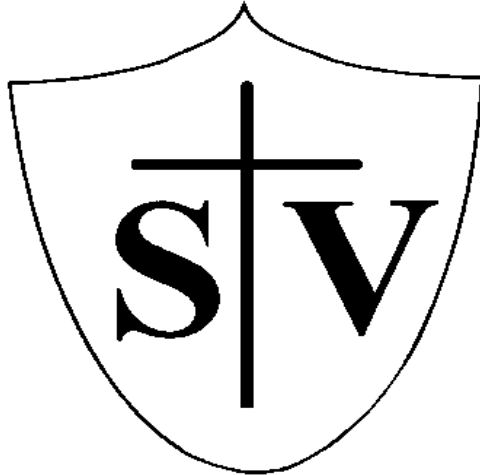


St Vincent's Catholic Primary School



Attendance Policy

Approved by:	Governing Body	Date: 19 th September 2019
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Links with other policies – This policy should be read in conjunction with:

- Behaviour
- Child Protection and Safeguarding

1.Aims

At St Vincent's Catholic Primary School we believe that children can only learn effectively if they attend school regularly. It is important that children arrive and leave school on time. It is equally important that children should not be at school if they are unwell.

St Vincent's Catholic Primary School is a happy school. Children learn best when they are happy and relaxed. All staff show concern and care about each child's welfare.

As attendance is crucial to effective learning and the continuity of learning experiences, our school places great emphasis on this in its communication with parents. The school will offer support to any family experiencing difficulties with either punctuality or attendance.

2.Communication

Information on lateness, illness and absence is given to parents in the School Brochure. This highlights the importance of being at school on time and notifying school if their child is absent for any reason.

At the pre-school induction meetings held each year for children about to enter the reception class, the importance of regular attendance is discussed and explained. This talk also includes the need for parents and children to arrive at school on time, so that each child can be given the best possible start to each school day. Being picked up on time is also stressed, especially for young children who can be very upset if they are the only ones left.

Parents are asked to share any worries their child might have in school. Sometimes little things upset children, which means they become unhappy, and may not want to come to school. Parents need to be aware of this.

At this initial meeting parents are asked to arrange their family holidays within the school holidays, rather than in term time, so that their child's education is not disrupted. The Head teacher will talk to those parents who persistently take their holidays in term time, reminding parents of the disruption to their child's education.

Statement of intent:

We aim to work together with parents to ensure that children of compulsory school age attend both regularly and punctually.

3. Parents' responsibilities:

- Parents have a legal duty to ensure that children who are registered at school, attend, punctually on a regular and full-time basis.
- Parents should ensure that, if their child is to be absent from school for any unavoidable reason such as illness, they should contact the school as soon as possible, on the first morning of absence. This may be done by email, phone, letter or in person. Verbal messages on the parent's behalf from an adult relative or representative such as a childminder or friend may be accepted at the school's discretion on the first day of absence – subsequent absences must be explained by the parent. Verbal messages from children, e.g. siblings, will not be accepted. (*See Appendix 1 – first day contact guidelines*).
- Parents cannot authorise their child's absence – only the school can do this, on the basis of the explanation provided by the parents. Should parents fail to provide a satisfactory reason, the school will record such absences as unauthorised. Schools have a legal Duty of Care and are not obliged to accept a parental explanation for pupil absence, if there is doubt about the validity of that explanation or if absences are persistent. In either case the school will ask for proof from the parents. In turn, this could involve the school having to provide extra support for the benefit of the child's education.

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- Parents should ensure that their child arrives on time for the start of the day (by 8.50 a.m.). Children arriving after 8.50 a.m. should report to the school office
- Parents should not book family holidays during term-time. Such holidays will not be authorised. (*See Appendix 2 – requesting leave of absence*).

4. School responsibilities:

- The school will record and monitor attendance in accordance with both the statutory requirements and the principle that regular, uninterrupted attendance is vital to a child's educational progress and personal wellbeing.
- Registers will be taken twice daily (at 8.50 and 1.15). Any child arriving after the start of the registration period will be recorded as "late" for that session.
- Teachers will complete registers in accordance with guidance given by the Headteacher. The Headteacher will inspect registers frequently in order to ensure that they are being satisfactorily maintained and to identify any potential attendance problems or emerging patterns of absence at an early stage.
- Should a class teacher have any concerns about a child's attendance and punctuality, the Headteacher must be informed.
- Should a child be absent, the class teacher will enter the appropriate code in the register. Should no explanation have been received, staff in the office will endeavour to make contact with the parent.
- All absence notes from parents should be sent to the office with the register. The reason given for the absence will be recorded in the register. Only notes regarding absences where there are concerns need be brought to the attention of the Head teacher, who may then choose to speak to the parents.
- The Head teacher will regularly collect attendance data. Attendance reports for children whose absence falls below 95% will be sent to parents on a monthly basis.
- The Head teacher works closely with the school's Family Worker and the Local Authorities Education Welfare Officer (EWO) to promote regular attendance. Where there are concerns about the attendance of any child, they will work together with the parents in order to support the child and the family to ensure that attendance improves.
- In serious cases of poor attendance, or where there are patterns of repeated unauthorised absences a formal referral to the EWO may be made. Continued unauthorised absence from this stage could result in legal action being taken.

Where a parent/carer has decided to take their child off roll all statutory guidelines will be followed robustly.

5 Appendix 1 – First Day Contact Guidelines

First day contact is a widely used practice in schools and has been shown to improve attendance rates. The procedure is as follows:

1. As soon as the registers are returned to the office, staff check absentees against messages received. Any missing child is followed up immediately.
2. For persistent absentees, see the relevant section above. For other pupils for whom no message has been received, staff will attempt to make contact with the parent at the earliest opportunity. Where a child is missing in education and no explanation has been given, the following procedure is put into action.
 - a) As soon as registers are returned to the office, staff checks absentees against messages received
 - a) Staff will ring, email, ask a sibling, talk to the teacher, talk to peers in class in order to ascertain the situation.
 - c) Where contact has not been made after all attempts and following discussion with head teacher, staff will ring the police to report child missing.
 - d) If the child who has not arrived is known to regularly walk to school alone and contact cannot be made with the parent or carer, the matter is reported to the police straight away.

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3. When contact is made, the parent will be asked for the reason for absence. In the event that no proper reason is supplied, the child will be recorded in the register as authorised.
4. In the case of minor ailments, the parent will be encouraged to send the child in with an assurance that the school will keep a close eye on him/her. *(NB – if there has been a spate of certain symptoms in the school or community, such minor illnesses may be treated as a valid reason for absence).*
5. Reasons for absence are then added to the register.

6. Appendix 2 – Requesting Leave Of Absence

Regular school attendance is essential if children are to maximise their educational opportunities. Interruptions in school attendance disrupt continuity of learning and have a negative impact on attainment.

It is the school's responsibility to provide the best education possible. We can only do this if children attend regularly. There is a direct correlation between achievement and attendance.

The Government's regulations state that from September 2013 the Head teacher may not grant any leave of absence during term time unless there are **exceptional circumstances**. The regulations also state that the Head teacher should determine the number of days that a child can be away from school if leave is granted.

It is impossible to define what constitutes exceptional circumstances, but permission will definitely **not** be granted for the following:-

- Taking holidays because they are cheaper in term time
- Holidays that have been booked during term time by mistake or by a relative or friend who thought the dates booked were in the holidays

Section 444(A) of the Education Act 1996 empowers the local authorities to issue:

Penalty Notices for failure to ensure regular school attendance. '**Parents or carers of children with poor attendance or those who take their children on holiday in term time without school's permission or who are late returning from an extended holiday, may receive a Penalty Notice fine of up to £120 per child.**' Where a fine remains unpaid after 28 days, the matter will be referred to the Borough Solicitor, who will consider instigating criminal proceedings.

Approval

The governing body of St Vincent's can delegate to the Head teacher the keeping of the attendance register and the register can be kept and updated daily by appropriate school staff.