



ST. THOMAS OF CANTERBURY C OF E JUNIOR SCHOOL  
"Realising the potential of every child within a caring, Christian community"

## Attendance Policy & Absence on Medical Grounds

The staff at St Thomas of Canterbury Church of England Junior School are committed, in partnership with the parents, pupils, governors and the Local Authority/Diocese, to building a school which realises the potential of every child within a caring, Christian community. Regular attendance plays a fundamental role in making this happen.

The school staff alongside the Governing Body, firmly believe that all pupils benefit from regular and punctual school attendance. To this end we will do all we can to encourage parents/carers to ensure that the children in their care achieve maximum possible attendance and that any problems that prevent full attendance are identified and acted on promptly, offering support and advice where necessary.

### Expectations

#### **We expect that all pupils will:**

- attend school regularly;
- attend school punctually;
- attend school appropriately prepared for the day, including correct school uniform;
- discuss promptly with their classteacher or Deputy Headteacher/Headteacher, any problems that deter them from attending school.

#### **We expect that all parents/carers will:**

- encourage regular school attendance and be aware of their legal responsibilities;
- ensure that the child/children in their care arrive at school punctually, prepared for the school day;
- ensure that they contact the school whenever the child/children is unable to attend school;
- contact the school on the first day of the child's absence by 9:30am;
- contact the school promptly whenever any problem occurs that may keep the child away from school.

#### **We expect that school staff will:**

- keep regular and accurate records of attendance for all pupils, at least twice daily;
- monitor every pupil's attendance;
- contact parents as soon as possible when a pupil fails to attend where no message has been received to explain the absence;
- follow up all unexplained absences to obtain authorisation for the absence;
- encourage good attendance;
- provide a welcoming atmosphere for children;
- provide a safe learning environment;
- provide a sincere response to any pupil's concerns;
- make initial enquiries of parents/carers of pupils who are not attending regularly, express concern and clarify the school's and the LA's expectations with regard to regular school attendance;
- refer irregular or unjustified patterns of attendance to the Education Welfare Officer;
- meet, where possible, the requirements of the UN Convention - The Rights Of The Child, by ensuring that children are consulted in all decisions that relate to them.



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### **School Attendance and the Law**

Under the 1996 Education Act, parents and carers are responsible for ensuring their children attend school regularly and punctually. Failure to do so could result in legal action being taken against them by the Local Authority.

The register is a legal document and schools must, under the Education (Pupil Registration) Regulations 2006 take a register at the start of the morning session, and again during the afternoon session. Since September 2006, schools have been required to use statutory registration codes.

Under the Education (Pupil Registration) Regulations 2006, only the school (and not parents/carers) can authorise an absence. Where the reason for a pupil's absence cannot be established at the time the register is taken, that absence shall be recorded as unauthorised. If a reason for absence is provided by the parent/carer, the school may decide to grant leave of absence which must be recorded as authorised using the appropriate national code.

The Education (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2013 have removed all references to family holidays and leave of absence shall not be granted unless an application had been made in advance and the Headteacher/Governing Body considers that leave of absence should be granted due to exceptional circumstances. Headteachers no longer have the discretion to authorise up to ten days of absence. This discretion has been removed by the aforementioned Regulations (2013). Whilst the Headteacher/Governing Body will consider all requests on a case-by-case basis, parents must be aware that requests will normally be refused.

Where a family chooses to take a holiday during term time, the absence will be coded as unauthorised and a Penalty Notice may be issued to each parent for each child (where 5 or more days of unauthorised absence are recorded as a result).

If leave of absence is taken without the request having been agreed, the absence will be recorded as unauthorised. This may result in the Local Authority issuing a Penalty Notice, in accordance with the Essex Code of Conduct (£120 per parent, per child / £60 if paid within 21 days), where there have been 10 sessions or more of unauthorised absence recorded. If this penalty is not paid the Local Authority will instigate legal proceedings against the parent/carer in the Magistrates Court.

In compliance with the Education Act 436A (Chapter 2 Part 6) the school will, after making appropriate checks, report all Children Missing from Education to the Local Authority, Education Welfare Service, who has a duty to investigate the whereabouts of such children and negotiate their prompt return to suitable education.

### **Holidays**

The school holiday dates are published and released a year in advance and we strongly advise parents/carers to book their family holidays during the school holidays. If a 'Leave of Absence' during term time is unavoidable, a leave of absence form must be completed. This can be obtained from the school office. The Headteacher/Governing Body will then decide whether or not to authorise the absences based on exceptional circumstances. The Governing Body also has a named Governor with responsibility for attendance and absence. No parents/carers can demand leave of absence for their child/children as a right.

### **Encouraging Attendance**

St Thomas of Canterbury Church of England Junior School encourages regular attendance in the following ways:

- by providing a caring and welcoming learning environment;
- by responding promptly to a child's or parent's concerns about the school or other pupils;
- by marking registers accurately and punctually during morning and afternoon registration.
- by publishing and displaying attendance statistics where appropriate;
- by celebrating good and improved attendance;
- by monitoring pupils, informing parents/carers in writing of irregular attendance, arranging meetings with them if necessary and referring the family to the Education Welfare Service if the irregular attendance continues.



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### **Responding To Non-Attendance**

When a pupil does not attend school we will respond in the following manner:

- On the first day of absence, if no note or telephone call is received from the parent/carer by 9:30am. the school will endeavour to contact them that day;
- If there is no response, the school will continue to try to contact the parent/carer. If by 11am there has still been no contact made the Headteacher will determine the next appropriate action;
- Regular failure to report absence will be referred to the Educational Welfare Service;
- Failure to comply with the expectations set by the Educational Welfare Service may result in further action, an application for an Education Supervision Order, or court prosecution.

### **Changing schools**

It is important that if families decide to send their child/children in their care to a different school that they inform school staff as soon as possible. A pupil will not be removed from this school roll until the following information has been received and investigated:

- the date the pupil will be leaving this school and starting the next;
- the address of the new school;
- the new home address, if it is known;
- the new school has requested the pupil common transfer file (CTF).

The pupil's school records will then be sent on to the new school as soon as possible. In the event that the school has not been informed of the above information, the family will be referred to the Education Welfare Service.

### **School Organisation**

In order for the school's Attendance Policy to be successful, every member of staff must make attendance a high priority and convey this to the pupils at all times. Parents/carers need to support these views in the home to ensure that children are receiving corresponding messages about the value of education.

Registration starts at **9:00a.m.** and closes at 9:05a.m. Pupils arriving after 9:00a.m. will be marked as late (code L). Children arriving after 9:15a.m. will become an unauthorised absence (code U)

In addition to this, the School has the following responsibilities:

#### **Headteacher, Governing Body and designated member of school staff with overall responsibility for attendance to:**

- adopt the whole policy;
- ensure that the registration procedures are carried out efficiently and that appropriate resources are provided;
- check the effectiveness of the scheme for contacting parents on the first day of absence;
- ensure that key staff have timetabled periods for liaison and follow-up work with the EWS and appropriate access to attendance data;
- consult and liaise closely with the EWS on a regular basis and take responsibility for ensuring appropriate pupils are identified and referred without delay;
- to work in close collaboration with the EWS during their register analysis procedures;
- ensure that attendance percentages are available upon request around the school and to set whole school attendance targets;
- monitor and evaluate attendance with the EWS.

#### **Senior Leadership Team:**

- to oversee the registration process and ensure that registers are completed accurately and punctually;
- to liaise with the Headteacher regularly;
- to reinforce good practice at planning meetings;

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Headteacher: Mr D. M. Moran



## ST. THOMAS OF CANTERBURY C OF E JUNIOR SCHOOL

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- to help classteachers regarding concerns around the early identification of disaffection or poor attendance.

### **Classteachers:**

- to complete registers accurately and punctually at least twice daily;
- to follow up any unexplained non-attendance;
- to inform the Headteacher/line manager of concerns regarding attendance;
- to be alert to early signs of disaffection which could culminate in non-attendance and to report these concerns as soon as possible to the Headteacher or line manager.

### **Education Welfare Service (EWS):**

- Works within 4 quadrant based Area Attendance Teams to reduce persistent absence, improve overall attendance and give advice and support to children, families and schools.
- Carries out statutory duties on behalf of the Local Authority to ensure parents/carers fulfil their legal requirements in relation to school attendance.

The school may refer a pupil to Education Welfare Service where attendance remains a concern following school intervention. The EWS will work with schools and families to address attendance issues. However, if attendance fails to improve, legal action may be taken against parents/carers and could include a Penalty Notice, Education Supervision Order or Prosecution.

### **Evaluation and Review**

The school will review this policy *annually* and update accordingly to include changes in the law and guidance on good practice. The policy will be promoted throughout the school community and shared with outside agencies and partners as required.

### **Attendance Targets**

>96.5% for academic year 2013-2014 (96% actual in 2012/13)

<3.2% persistent absence for academic year 2013-2014 (4% actual in 2012/13)

This policy was written in **March 2014**.