

St James the Great RC (VA) Primary and Nursery School



Policy for School Attendance

Summer 2009

Rationale

Regular school attendance has always been important. Without it the efforts of the best teachers and the best schools will come to nothing. Education provides a means of advancement for all young people. Pupils need to attend regularly if they are to take full advantage of the educational opportunities available to them in law. Irregular attendance undermines the educational process and leads to educational disadvantage. It places at risk and in some cases it can in pupils being drawn into patterns of anti-social or criminal behaviour.

(Extract from Department for Education Booklet 'School Attendance' May 1994)

Home/School Partnership

Parents are responsible for ensuring that children of compulsory school age receive efficient full-time education. (Section 36, 1944 Education Act). In most cases children attend school and therefore parents should ensure that their children attend, and stay at school.

At St James the Great School the staff and governors endeavour to support parents in this responsibility by:

- a. providing a comprehensive induction programme for new entrants and parents to help children come to school willingly with a positive attitude
- b. encouraging parents to discuss any attendance related problems with the class teacher/head teacher
- c. aiming to ensure that the school is bright, clean, warm and welcoming
- d. teachers/classroom assistants being available prior to the start of the school day for urgent communication with parents
- e. informing parents of any changes in the school routine by newsletter e.g. school trips, church services etc

Reporting Absences

It is parents responsibility to inform the school of the reason for a child's absence as soon as possible.

At St James the Great School parents are expected to contact the School Office on the first day of absence giving as much information as is available at that time. If the absence is prolonged, interim information would be appreciated, so that the school can help with homework or other necessary arrangements.

On their return to school children should bring a letter from their parents confirming the reason for their absence and giving any other appropriate information. The school offers the parents the option to complete an Absence Slip, supplies of which are readily available via the School Office.

In the event of no contact having been made regarding a child's absence by the end of the school day, the parents may be contacted by the class teacher/headteacher. If unexplained absence continues, or the school is concerned regarding irregular attendance the assistance of the Education Welfare Officer may be enlisted.

Registration

Under regulation 3 of the Pupils' Registration Regulations 1956, all schools must keep an attendance register on which, at the beginning of each morning and afternoon session, pupils are marked present or absent. The 1991 Regulations also state that registers must state whether an absence is authorised or unauthorised.

The session times for St James the Great School are:

Morning Session 9:15 am - 12:15 pm

Afternoon Session 1.15 pm – 3.30 pm (Juniors)

1.30 pm – 3.30 pm (Infants)

It is important that classes make a prompt and effective start.

Authorised/Unauthorised Absence

Only the school, within the context of the law, can approve absence, not parents. (Section 199, Education Act 1993).

The question of authorised and unauthorised absence is a fairly recent issue and to help parents distinguish between the two the following guidelines are included. If after reading these guidelines you are still in doubt please contact the Headteacher.

- a. **Illness, Medical and Dental Appointments** - If the school is satisfied that a pupil of compulsory school age is prevented from attending school by reason of illness then the absence will be treated as authorised. Leave for medical or dental appointments may be given (ie. the absence may be authorised) where confirmation has been received from the parents (either in person, in writing or by a telephone call) or on production of an appointments card. A Record Sheet is kept in the class register folder and used to record details of pupils leaving or returning to the site other than at the start and end of a session.
- b. **Lateness** - The school policy is to encourage punctuality but to actively discourage lateness as it can seriously disrupt lessons. If a child is late and misses registration, a late mark will be recorded. Obviously the school will be sympathetic if this is for a good reason. If however a pattern of lateness starts to emerge, parents will be invited to discuss the matter with the class teacher/headteacher in order to reach a satisfactory solution. **Late is after 9:25am.**
- c. **Special Occasions** - It is for schools to determine whether an absence in this category should be authorised or not: much will depend on the circumstances of

the particular case. Generally the rule should be that only truly exceptional occasions should be sanctioned through authorised absence after discussion with the Headteacher.

- d. **Family Bereavements** - The death of a family member can be a particularly traumatic event in any young person's life. Schools have discretion to authorise absence to attend funerals or associated events and any request would be dealt with sympathetically.
- e. **Family Holidays** – Absences for holidays in term time are deemed not to be in the best interests of children, as over a year when added to unavoidable absences due to illness, they can result in a significant period of absence building up. It is the school's policy not to grant such leave other than in very extenuating circumstances. To enable parents to plan for holidays out of term time, term dates are issued up to three years in advance.

Requests for leave of absence must be submitted in advance to the Headteacher in writing giving the reasons for the request. The Headteacher will determine whether he can grant the leave or whether it needs to be referred to the Governors for consideration. A written response to any such request will be provided within 10 working days.