The Romero Catholic Academy
Nurturing the Talent of Tomorrow

Attendance, Punctuality and Exceptional Leave Policy 2019/2020

Responsible for policy	**CC3**
Date of policy	**September 2019**
Date approved by CC2	**September 2019**
Date of review	**October 2020**
Chair of Directors	

Introduction

We believe that children need to be in school for all sessions, so that they can make the best progress possible. To do this it is essential that a child's time at school is maximised and even short absences can have a detrimental effect on children's learning. Any pupil's absence or late arrival disrupts teaching routines, so, in addition to affecting your own child, it may also affect the learning of others in the same class. Early poor attendance habits follow right through from primary to secondary school and into employment.

We expect all children to be at school, and on time, every day that the school is open, as long as they are fit and healthy enough to do so. We do all we can to encourage children to attend.
At our schools, we believe that the most important factor in promoting good attendance is the development of positive attitudes towards school. To this end, we strive to make our school a happy and rewarding experience for all children. We will recognise those children whose attendance is very good. We will also make the best provision we can for those children who, for whatever reason, are prevented from coming to school.

A child's health is of paramount importance and we want them to be well. If the school feel they are not well enough to learn in school they will contact the parent/carers to let them recuperate at home.

1. Legal Requirements and Local Authority Policy

1.1 Ensuring your child's regular attendance at school is your legal responsibility and permitting absence from school without a good reason creates an offence in law and may result in prosecution.

1.2 Under the Education (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2006, the governing body is responsible for making sure the school keeps an attendance register that records which pupils are present at the start of both the morning and the afternoon sessions of the school day. This register will also indicate whether an absence was authorised or unauthorised.

1.3 There is no automatic right to any leave of absence and all schools in Coventry are encouraged to adopt a policy of not authorising exceptional leave. Being mindful of this, only in very exceptional circumstances will the school grant leave of absence during term time.

1.4 Further guidance can be found in the Exceptional Leave section of this policy but it should be noted that requests for leave of absence for all Pupils will be refused.

1.5 Any leave taken without authorisation can lead to parents/carers being issued a Fixed Penalty Notice being issued, which is currently £60 per parent per child, to be paid within 21 days (the fine doubles to £120 per parent per child after 21 days). After 28 days the matter is referred to the Local Authority for non-payment and can result in court action being taken.

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 up to £1000.

2. What is the difference between Authorised and Unauthorised Absence? 2.1 Authorised absence

2.1 Authorised absence

2.1.1 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 guardian. The decision whether or not to authorise any absence will always rest with the school.

2.1.2 Only the school can make an absence authorised. Parents do not have this authority. Consequently, not all absences supported by parents will be classified as authorised. For example, if a parent takes a child out of school to go shopping during school hours or if a child is absent for their birthday, this will not make it an authorised absence.

2.1.3 There will be times when your child must miss school due to illness. You must contact the school before 9:30 am EACH day that your child is absence from school. Please note that 'unwell' is not acceptable and we do require the nature of illness. If your child is on their 3rd day of consecutive illness our Attendance Officer will make a well being home visit on their third day of illness.

2.1.4 Your child's attendance is monitored on a regular basis by staff in school. If your child has regular periods of absence or their attendance falls below a certain level, the school may notify you that in future, absences will only be authorised where medical evidence is provided. The Partnership Attendance Officer may also be asked to contact you on the school's behalf to discuss concerns about your child's attendance.

2.1.5 Wherever possible, the school would expect medical appointments to be arranged out of school hours. Where this is not possible, an appointment card/letter will need to be provided in order for the session to be authorised. Your child is expected to attend before and/or after the appointment when possible.

2.2 Unauthorised absence

2.2.1 An absence is classified as unauthorised when a child is away from school without the permission of both the school and a parent. Therefore, the absence is unauthorised if a child is away from school without good reason, even with the support of a parent.

2.2.2 Absences will be unauthorised where no contact is made by parents to explain why their child is absent each day. Absences will also be unauthorised where medical evidence has been requested and has not been provided by parents.

2.2.3 The Academy's Attendance Officer may be asked to contact you on the school's behalf to discuss concerns about your child's attendance.

3. Punctuality

3.1 Punctuality is an important life skill. It is also polite. Pupils who are consistently late are disrupting not only their education but also that of other pupils. Lateness is considered to be an equally serious absence. If lateness persists parents/guardians or carers will be invited to attend the school to discuss the problem with a school representative.

3.2 Parents are informed and reminded of the school dates and times in a number of different ways throughout the school year. The importance of the registration time in school as a time for greetings and early morning learning is stressed to parents. All pupils who arrive late have to sign in on arrival and an accurate log of their time of arrival is made. This log can be used as evidence if a prosecution through court proceedings is initiated as a result of persistent absence or lateness.

3.3 At 9.20am the registers will be closed and the morning session will be unauthorised and coded as 'U'. **(Applicable to Cardinal Wiseman only)**

3.4 If your child has 10 or more late sessions in a 5 week period you will receive a £60 fine per parent per child from the Local Authority. **(Applicable to Cardinal Wiseman only)**

4. Procedures

4.1 Registration

4.1.1 The school day timings are on your school website.

4.1.2 The register is taken once the children have settled into class. If a child is not present when the register is taken they are given a N mark (not present). If a child arrives at school later than the school day start time they are given a Late mark. Office or teaching staff will record the number of minutes late on SIMS.

4.1.3 If your child arrives to school after the registers have closed, which is 30 minutes after the school day starts, in accordance with Local Authority regulations, your child will receive a 'U' mark that shows them to be on site, but this will not count as a present mark. This may mean that parents could face the possibility of a Penalty Notice if the problem persists.

4.1.4 The sessions timings for Nursery are on your school website. Persistent absence in Nursery may result in your child being removed from the roll.

4.2 If a child is absent without notification

4.2.1 It is the responsibility of parents to notify schools before 9:30am if their child is going to be absent from school. This must be done EACH day until your child returns to school. Where no notification has been received by 9.30am a text message will be sent or a telephone call made.

4.2.2 If there is no immediate response to the message, the absence will automatically be unauthorised and a home visit may be carried out by our Attendance Officer.

4.3 Missing children

4.3.1 If a child is missing and their whereabouts are unknown, the school will follow the Local Authority procedures in taking immediate steps to locate that child as soon as possible. A child who is Missing in Education may be:

- A child who is not at their last known address and:
- has 5 or more days of continuous absence from school without explanation, or:
- left school suddenly and their destination is unknown.

This policy does not refer to children who are missing from view or absent from Home or Care. When a child goes missing from the home, or from care, or where the school has significant safeguarding concerns for the child, the school must refer these children immediately to the Children's Advisory Support Service (CASS), and/or to the Police.

4.3.2 The Academy Attendance Officer will complete the relevant Missing Child paperwork and notify the Local Authority.

4.3.3 In the event of school transfer or a pupil moving to another area, a pupil will normally remain on roll until notification is received from the receiving school. Should no notification be received the school will make every effort to locate the pupil in conjunction with the Local Authority. If unsuccessful, a missing person form must be completed and sent to the Local Authority and the pupil removed from roll after twenty days.

4.3.4 In the case of unauthorised holidays, pupils' names will be removed from the roll after twenty days of absence. Parents are made aware of this before the leave of absence, and by letter when the child's name has been removed from the roll

5. Requests For Exceptional Leave Of Absence During Term Time

5.1 Leave of absence during term time will only be authorised in very exceptional and unavoidable circumstances.

5.2 Except in an emergency, permission for any period of leave must be sought from the school before it is due to begin and in advance of making any arrangements.

5.3 Any request must be made on an Exceptional Leave of Absence Form, which can be obtained from the school office. The appropriate information and documentation must be provided to back up the application.

5.4 Evidence of any travel bookings, if applicable, may be requested by the school. If you take your child on holiday during term time, or where your request for leave has not been granted, your child's absence will be recorded as unauthorised holiday. This will result in a Fixed Penalty Notice being issued, which is currently £6- per parent per child, to be paid within 21 days (the fine doubles to £120 per parent per child after 21 days). After 28 days the matter is referred to the Local Authority for non-payment and can result in court action being taken.

5.5 Each request for exceptional leave of absence is considered by the Principal on behalf of Academy Committee. Where necessary, a meeting will be arranged between parents and the Principal to discuss the application.

5.6 Absence for the purpose of a family holiday does not constitute exceptional leave. Taking holidays during term time will affect your child's learning and we expect parents to take holidays during official school closure periods.

5.7 If you take your child out of school for a holiday then your child's absence will be recorded as unauthorised holiday. This may result in a Fixed Penalty Notice being issued.

5.8 Where the school suspects that a child is absent due to a holiday, steps will be taken to investigate further. This will involve a home visit during the absence period with a view to having direct contact with you and your child. Parents will also be required to produce evidence (for instance medical evidence) in support of the period of absence in order to avoid the issue of a Penalty Notice and / or prosecution.

5.9 If the pupil is female and from a Female Genital Mutilation (FGM) practising of affected community, the Safeguarding Lead will arrange a meeting with the parent/carer and use direct questioning to ascertain whether 'cutting' of the girl will be undertaken during the leave of absence. The Safeguarding Lead will then take the information from this meeting and make a decision on whether to refer to local Referral and Assessment Services or the Police.

6. Long-term absence through accident or illness

6.1 If a child is under the care of a hospital Consultant and a Consultant's letter has been produced, and the absence is likely to continue for an extended period, or to be a repetitive absence, the school may liaise with the hospital education service so that arrangements can be made for the child to be given some tuition outside school.

7. Monitoring

7.1 Class teachers are responsible for recording attendance in their class

7.2 The Learning Mentor (or equivalent) and Academy's Attendance Officer monitor attendance on a fortnightly basis and will issue letters, make telephone calls, arrange school meetings, request medical evidence or undertake home visits where necessary to address levels of absence observed.

7.3 The rates of attendance will be reported in the school prospectus, in the Principal's report and in the annual Academy Committee' report.

8. Repeated unauthorised absences

8.1 The Governors supported by the Local Authority, reserve the right to consider taking legal action against any parents or carers who repeatedly fail to accept their responsibility for sending their children to school on a regular basis. A 'Form A' penalty notice will be issued in respect of unauthorised absence (i.e. parentally condoned absence, persistently late arrival at school, truancy) if a child has 10 or more sessions of unauthorised absence in any 5 week period.

8.2 If a child has a repeated number of unauthorised absences, the parents or carers will be asked to visit the school and discuss the problem. The Academy Attendance Officer may be asked to contact you on the school's behalf to discuss concerns about your child's attendance.

It is recognised that poor school attendance can be the result of difficulties faced by a child or family therefore a co-ordinated approach by a number of agencies can help these children and families.

9. Persistent Absence

9.1 Since the 1st September 2015, the Government has reduced the threshold from 15% to 10% for persistent absence. This will now class a child with attendance below 90% as a persistent absentee. This equates to 38 sessions or 19 days of absence across the year. Regular attendance at school is essential to ensure uninterrupted progress and to enable children to fulfil their potential. The attendance pattern for all children is monitored weekly with the school seeking to work actively with parents to ensure that regular attendance is maintained. The Department for Education has published data on their website that clearly shows the link between attendance and attainment. A child becomes a 'persistent absentee' (PA) when their attendance falls below 90% at any time during their school life. All children whose attendance has fallen to 90% or are at risk of becoming persistent absentees will be monitored rigorously.

10. Rewards for good attendance

10.1 All the children who have 100 per cent attendance in any one term will receive recognition for their attendance, awarded at the last assembly of the term. There are special incentives for any child who has 100 per cent attendance for a whole year.

10.2 The class with the highest attendance each week will receive recognition.

10.3 Parents/carers will be texted monthly if their child has 100% attendance. **(Applicable to Cardinal Wiseman Only)**

11. Review

The policy will be reviewed by Core Committee Three every two years, or earlier if considered necessary. Next Review Date: October 2020

Application For Exceptional Leave Of Absence

This application must be submitted to the Principal before the proposed period of exceptional leave. In case of emergency, this form must be completed beforehand, as far in advance as possible.

As recommended by the Local Authority, the school has a strict policy on Exceptional Leave. This applies to **ALL** the children of the school community. A copy of this form and the school's Attendance Policy can be obtained from the school office and from the school's website.

Name of child		**Class**
Proposed date(s) of absence	**From:**	**To:**
Siblings at other schools	**Name & DOB of child(ren)**	**Name of school**
Reason for proposed absence (please continue on the reverse of this sheet if necessary)		
Signature of parent/guardian	**Name of parent/guardian**	**Date of request**

Your application will be considered by the Principal. There may be circumstances where a meeting will be arranged for you to discuss your application with the Principal. Evidence of travel bookings may be required. Your child's attendance record will be taken into consideration.

If permission is refused and your child is absent for the above period, it will be recorded as unauthorised absence and you may receive a Fixed Penalty Notice. Similarly, if your child fails to return on the agreed date, the same may apply. If your child is absent for a prolonged period without agreement, your child can lose their school place and will be removed from roll.

For official use only:		
Action	**Initials**	**Date**
Seen by Principal		
Principal's comments (e.g. in support or on attendance record)		
Evidence provided by the parent to support the request		