

St. Matthew's C of E Primary School

Pupil Leave of Absence Policy

St. Matthew's Church of England Primary School's mission statement

We aim to provide a positive learning experience in a safe and respectful environment. We strive to teach an inspiring and inclusive curriculum that promotes a love of learning. As a Christian school, we endeavour to develop the spiritual and moral values of all members of the St. Matthew's family, and a meaningful, loving relationship with God. We want our children to be cheerful and independent individuals who reach their potential and are proud of their achievements. We hope to develop confident, caring citizens who are well prepared to enjoy happy and rewarding lives.

Our motto: Live, Love, Learn

Introduction

Missing school for any reason can deprive a child of educational opportunities and impact on their progress at school. Children have a right to an education and denying children this right can have a long lasting effect on children being able to realise their true potential. There is a strong link between good school attendance and academic achievement.

There are 190 statutory school days a year so there are 175 other days available for holidays that would not have a negative effect on a child's education. By taking children on holiday in term time, children may receive an unspoken message that school is not important.

From September 2013 new statutory regulations relating to absence during term time were imposed by the Department for Education. The DfE removed the ability of Headteachers to authorise up to 10 days of authorised absence.

The Education (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2006 and the accompanying guidance make it clear that parents/carers **do not** have a legal right to take their child out of school for holidays in term time. Schools are now expected to refuse requests for absence during term time unless there are explicit exceptional circumstances.

Family requests for holidays for family weddings or to see relatives are *not* deemed to be exceptional circumstances. The availability of cheap flights or holidays is also *not* deemed to be an exceptional circumstance.

The onus is always on the parents to provide evidence to support applications for leave of absence.

Aims and Objectives of the policy

- To raise attendance and make sure children's education remains the primary focus;
- To reduce unauthorised absences;
- To ensure statutory regulations imposed by the Department for Education are adhered to.

The Governing Body of St. Matthew's C of E Primary School has agreed that leave of absence may only be granted in **special or exceptional** circumstances in line with statutory regulations and Local Authority guidance. All requests have to be put in writing and will be considered sympathetically. They may be referred to the governing body if necessary.

Parents/carers are expected to:

- Only request leave of absence in explicit exceptional circumstances;
- Always fill in a Leave of Absence form provided by school before booking any tickets (*wherever possible well in advance to give the Headteacher adequate time to consider the request*);
- Take the opportunity to discuss with the Headteacher prior to making a request or making any arrangements;

- Consider very carefully the implications of taking a child out of school in term time and the impact on the child's learning;
- Respect the school's policy and procedures as failure to do so may result in a child losing their place at the school (if certain conditions are not fulfilled) or a Penalty Notice being served.

The Headteacher/Governors will treat all requests on a case by case basis within the guidelines of the statutory regulations. The School will inform parents/carers whether or not the leave of absence has been authorised and supply information about Penalty Notices where appropriate.

St. Matthew's C of E Primary School will:

- Make sure the Leave of Absence policy is available on the school's website (paper copies from office);
- Remind parents/carers of the importance of ensuring their child's regular uninterrupted school attendance and the potential consequences for failing to do so;
- Actively discourage parents/carers from requesting Leave of Absence during term time;
- Remind parents/carers that they do not have the right or entitlement to expect leave to be granted in term time and, in some circumstances, a child may lose their place at school if certain conditions are not fulfilled;
- Where appropriate, give parents information about Penalty Notices;
- Report the child as 'missing' to the relevant agencies if they fail to return to school by an agreed date whether the leave of absence has been authorised or not by the Headteacher;
- Request a Penalty Notice if it is found that parents/carers have taken a child out of school under false pretences;
- Request a Penalty Notice if parents/carers ignore school policy and take their child out of school without permission or keep them off school beyond any agreed return date.

Blackburn with Darwen Inclusion and Place Planning Team

The team works in partnership with the school. They regularly monitor children's attendance and have the authority to inspect the school's registers and records. If parents/carers are found to be taking their children out of school without the Headteacher's authorisation the Inclusion Officer for the school will conduct an investigation.

Inclusion Officers have the power to pursue proceedings for a child's non-attendance at school which may lead to parents/carers or anyone else with parental responsibility receiving a Penalty Notice. The Penalty Notice will be issued by the Inclusion and Place Planning Team and will be of a value of £60 for each parent/carer for each child.

- If this is not paid within 21 days the liability will rise to £120 per parent/carer per child;
- If this is not paid within 28 days of the original date of issue then the Local Authority is required, by law, to commence proceedings in the Magistrates' Court. Conviction at the Courts could result in parents/carers receiving up to £2500 fine and/or a period of up to 3 months' imprisonment.

Julian Rogers
 Headteacher
 November 2013
 Revised 2019