**St. Bridget’s Catholic Primary School**

**Attendance Policy (incorporating Term Time Leave of Absence and Punctuality)**

**Introduction**

It is a legal requirement for children to attend school. St. Bridget’s Catholic Primary School places great importance on attendance and punctuality. High attendance leads to high achievement. From 1st September 2013 legislation prohibits any school from authorising leave of absence, including holidays, except in exceptional circumstances. Schools are required to take an attendance register twice a day, at the start of morning session and once during the afternoon session. The register must show whether any absence is authorised or unauthorised. It is the Headteacher, not the parent, who authorises absence.

School starts promptly at 9am. KS1 and EYFS classroom doors open at 8.50am. All children should be in class and ready to start work at 9am.

School finishes at 3pm for all children. Requests for children to leave early should be limited to exceptional circumstances.

**Authorised Absence from School**

If a child is ill or unable to attend school, parents should inform school by 9.15am on the first day of absence and provide an explanation for this non-attendance. The school will determine whether the child’s absence will be authorised or not. If the absence is prolonged, then school should be updated every two days. For repeated or regular periods of illness the school will request verification is provided such as a medical certificate from the family doctor prior to authorising any absence.

**Cumbria County Council’s Enforcement Policy states**:

*If the child’s absence falls below 90% and there is no sustained improvement despite school intervention the school will consider a referral to Children’s Services following the Attendance Protocol. Should the child’s attendance fail to improve, the Access and Inclusion Team will consider the use of legal sanctions and may in accordance with the Prosecution Policy decide to prosecute the parent(s) for failing to ensure regular school attendance.*

*Where schools can evidence clarity and reasonable process to communicate with parents and the child already has poor attendance (as agreed by the school and the Inclusion Officer) and parents have failed to attend meetings or have disregarded school advice, the school can request the Inclusion Officer to consider issuing a penalty notice.*

**It is illegal to take children out of school during term time unless there are exceptional circumstances. There is no entitlement to any leave of absence during term time.**

**Criteria for Exceptional Circumstances**

It is not possible to define all exceptional circumstances, but examples of what might be considered as such are:

1. **Service personnel returning from/scheduled to embark upon a tour of duty abroad**
2. **Where a holiday is recommended as part of a parent or child’s rehabilitation from medical or emotional issues. Evidence must be provided, from a qualified professional, such as a doctor**

Other factors may be considered by the Headteacher to be exceptional circumstances. The Headteacher may seek clarification and advice from Cumbria County Council Children’s Services.

**Procedure for applying for leave of absence in exceptional circumstances**

1. Applications for leave of absence should be made on the school’s “Application for Pupil Leave of Absence in Term Time” form, with a full explanation of the perceived exceptional circumstances.
2. The Headteacher will advise parents whether the leave of absence can be authorised.
3. Even where there are exceptional circumstances no leave of absence will be granted during any period of external exams such as SAT’s which are usually mid – May.
4. Leave will not be authorised for children in Year Two or Year Six.
5. Leave will not be authorised for children whose attendance in the current or preceding term was below 95%.
6. Leave will not be authorised on a second occasion in any academic year.
7. Leave will not be authorised for a child whose progress is less than expected.
8. Multiple or conflicting requests from separated parents or other relatives such as grandparents will not be considered.

**Promoting good attendance and punctuality, and improving poor attendance**

St. Bridget’s Catholic Primary School:

* will work closely with families to offer support and advice;
* will encourage parents and carers to ensure that their child attends school regularly and to inform school of the reason for absence the same day;
* has a home school agreement which encourages parents to foster a positive attitude by showing an interest in their child’s day at school, attending consultation evenings and other events and avoiding taking children out of school so far as is possible;
* informs parents that if a pupil is experiencing any difficulties with school these should be raised in school at the earliest opportunity;
* actively encourages good communication between school and parents which is vital to promoting punctual and regular attendance;
* records reasons for absence and meetings with families;
* will, if a child’s attendance falls below 90% over the preceding 12months, inform parents and record a chronology of contact;
* will support the family to try to improve attendance (the format of support will depend on the reasons for poor attendance and requests for support may be made to outside agencies eg school nurse, health visitor, GP, Access and Inclusion team);
* will report attendance to parents;
* promote good attendance and punctuality within school by means of assemblies, circle time, certificates, rewards etc.

Mrs Jacques is the named member of staff for dealing with attendance issues.