



SAINT NORBERT'S CATHOLIC VOLUNTARY ACADEMY

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Mission Statement: To live, love and learn in the footprints of Jesus.

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Attendance

Dear Families,

There is a very simple principle behind our approach to attendance: children need to be in school for us to teach them.

Every school day matters. Our curriculum is carefully planned so that children build knowledge, understanding and skills over time. Today's lesson often depends upon yesterday's learning; next week's work builds upon what has been taught this week. When children miss school, they therefore miss much more than a worksheet or an activity which can simply be completed when they return. They miss teaching – explanations, modelling, questioning, discussion, feedback, practice and opportunities for teachers to identify and address misconceptions as they arise.

This is particularly important because learning is cumulative. A gap created by several days away from school can make subsequent learning more difficult to access. Teachers will, of course, always support children following unavoidable absence, but it is neither possible nor reasonable to recreate individually everything that has taken place in a classroom over several days. There is no substitute for being there.

Attendance matters for other reasons too. School is where children learn to develop friendships, routines, confidence, independence and a sense of belonging. It is where they learn alongside others, contribute to the life of their class and school, and benefit from the many experiences which take place beyond individual lessons. Regular attendance helps children to feel secure in these routines and ensures that they remain connected to their learning and to their school community.

I do completely understand the attraction of holidays during term time. The difference in cost between a holiday taken during the school holidays and the same holiday taken a week or two earlier can be considerable. At a time when many household budgets are stretched, I appreciate why cheaper deals can be very tempting.

However, this cannot alter our responsibility to protect children's education. For that reason, I must emphasise that Headteachers are only able to authorise absence during term time in exceptional circumstances, and the fact that a holiday is considerably cheaper would not ordinarily make those circumstances exceptional.

I also need to be clear about the important distinction between genuine illness and other absence. Children become poorly and, when they are genuinely too unwell to attend, they should - of course - remain at home. Families should never feel that we expect an unwell child to be sent into school simply to improve our overall attendance.

Equally, an absence reported to school as illness must genuinely be because a child is unwell. There are occasions when information subsequently available to school can be difficult to reconcile with the reason originally given for an absence. Where this happens, we may need to seek clarification and ensure that the absence is recorded accurately. Honesty and trust between home and school are extremely important to us, and I would always much rather that a family was open with us about an absence than felt that another explanation needed to be given.

Where leave is taken without authorisation, it will be recorded as unauthorised and may result in further action in accordance with the national attendance framework and local arrangements.

Ultimately, this is not about chasing an 'attendance figure'. It is about something much more important: protecting every child's entitlement to an education – as a Rights Respecting School, we - especially - must prioritise this. We have high expectations for the children at St Norbert's because we care deeply about them and want them to flourish. We want to give them the very best teaching, opportunities and experiences that we can; but we can only do that when they are here.

Thank you for working with us and for helping us to make every school day count.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "A Dawson".

A Dawson