

5 March 2021

Dear Parent/Carer

Attendance Matters at St Aloysius

All the staff at St Aloysius are very much looking forward to welcoming your child/children back to school on Monday 8 March. We are delighted to have all of our pupils returning to school!

I understand that some parents may have concerns about the current situation regarding Covid-19 but all staff are making huge efforts to ensure the school is as safe as possible for all members of the school community. Although parents have done an amazing job in educating their children at home during lockdown, returning to school is vital for children's education and for their wellbeing. Our aim is to work with you as parents to ensure all our students receive the most from their education.

Current DfE guidance in relation to Covid-19

'From the week beginning the 8 March 2021 school attendance is mandatory for all pupils. It is vital for pupils and students to attend school or college to minimise, as far as possible, the longer-term impact of the pandemic on their education, wellbeing and wider development. The usual rules on school attendance apply to all pupils including:

- *parents' duty to secure their child's regular attendance at school (where the child is a registered pupil at school, and they are of compulsory school age)*
- *the ability to issue sanctions, including fixed penalty notices in line with local authorities' codes of conduct*

Government guidelines dictate that no child should miss school apart from in exceptional circumstances. As a school, we have a responsibility to champion attendance and to support when attendance drops. As an academy working under Bishop Chadwick Catholic Education Trust we follow South Tyneside Local Authority's guidance in relation to attendance and therefore if a child of compulsory school age fails to attend regularly at a school, the parents may be guilty of an offence and can be prosecuted.

No school or Local Authority wants to take legal action, and every attempt to resolve parents' concerns and improve a child's attendance will be made before any formal action is considered.

Frequently asked questions: what do we do?

What if my child is sick?

We do understand that children become ill from time to time and, should your child be ill and not able to attend school, we ask that you contact school by 9.00am (if you contact school after 9.00am you may still receive a text message or phone call about your child's absence). If your child, or a member of your household has any of the key Covid symptoms they should stay at home until you can arrange a test and receive a negative result. You should contact the school on each morning of absence. You may receive a call back from one of our admin staff to check all is ok, if no contact is made from home.

We try to work with parents to ensure that all children are well supported on their return from absence. There may be instances in which school requests medical evidence in order to authorise absences. We will not ask for medical evidence unnecessarily.

My child has a medical appointment. Can they be absent?

Medical appointments should not be taken during school time where possible. Where it is essential for an appointment to take place during the school day, we encourage families to limit the time out of school. If possible, please provide the school with sight of the child's appointment card.

I, or my child is very anxious about Covid-19 and being back in school. What should I do?

We understand that there are families who may have concerns about attending school. If you have concerns about your child returning to school because you consider they may have other risk factors, you should discuss these with the school. We will seek to reassure you by explaining the measures we have in place at school to minimise risk to all members of our school community. You should contact the school office if this applies to you and they will connect you to the relevant member of staff.

We want to go on a family holiday. Is this allowed?

The Government is very firm in their guidance that schools are not allowed to authorise leave of absence during term time, including for family holidays, unless there are exceptional circumstances. Any period of unauthorised absence may result in you, as a parent, receiving a fixed penalty notice fine. If you do wish to request a leave of absence during term time please complete a 'Leave of Absence' form which is available from the school office.

We recognise that the vast majority of parents elect not to take their child out of school due to the detrimental impact it can have on their child's studies.

What time is late? What happens if my child is late?

All children are expected to be in school before 9.00 am in the Infant School and 8.55am in the Junior School.

Any child who arrives late should report to the School Office where they will be issued with a late slip to hand to their class teacher.

What happens if the school has concerns about my child's attendance?

The school monitors pupils' absence on a daily, weekly and termly basis.

If your child's absence causes concern, we will contact you to discuss this. If your child's attendance doesn't improve, you may be asked to attend a meeting. The meeting is to be seen as a supportive measure to ensure that your child attends regularly and on time to prevent escalated action being taken by the Local Authority.

Our Attendance Policy is available to view on the school website. Should you have any further questions in relation to our attendance process then please do not hesitate to contact us.

Childcare Clubs

Our childcare clubs will resume on Monday. Breakfast Club will open daily at 8.00 am and After School Club will finish at the slightly earlier time of 5.45 pm. The charges for these clubs remain the same: £3.50 per day for Breakfast Club and £8.00 per day for After School Club.

Would all parents please adhere to social distancing when on school grounds. We have uploaded our School Organisation Plan to the website, which sets out information on start/finish times and entrances and exits for each year group. Would you please take a look at this before Monday?

Thank you for your continued support. I am really looking forward to seeing the children on Monday.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Nick Conway'. The signature is stylized with a large 'N' and a cursive 'C'.

Nick Conway