



Saint Paul's Catholic High School

July 2021

Dear Parent/Carer,

St Paul's Catholic High School is working in partnership with parents and Manchester City Council to encourage children back into school following several very difficult months for parents and schools. We would like to thank parents for the work you have done in ensuring your children have received education during this period.

In March 2020 when the coronavirus (COVID-19) outbreak was increasing, the government made it clear that no parent would be penalised or sanctioned for their child's non-attendance at school. Schools were then closed to all but a specific group of pupils; those of key workers and vulnerable children.

Now the circumstances have changed, it is vital for all children to return to school to minimise as far as possible the longer-term impact of the pandemic on their education, wellbeing, and wider development. We know that children have missed being with their friends and the wider social aspects of school. This means that now the usual rules on school attendance apply.

Manchester City Council's School Attendance Team are working closely with St Paul's Catholic High School to address levels of unauthorised absence recorded by some pupils, especially those parents removing their child/ren during term time for holidays. We fully appreciate that there may be occasions when a pupil's attendance and punctuality may be affected due to exceptional circumstances. In these cases, support and advice will always be available from the school. Unfortunately, despite this support, attendance and punctuality levels for some pupils continue to fall below the school's expectations. All pupils' attendance and punctuality is now closely monitored by the local authority and school.

Pupils arriving late for school not only impacts on the late arrival, but also on the teacher and the rest of the class as it interrupts the learning, and the teacher then may need to spend time repeating what has already been said. This is not acceptable and will be addressed as unauthorised absence and considered for statutory action.

All parents/carers are now warned that from the date of this letter statutory action will be considered for any unauthorised absences recorded. Absences may be used both prior to the date of this letter and following the date of this letter. Parent/carers who have previously received penalty notices are now warned that if their child/ren record any further unauthorised absences you may not be given the option of penalty notices but considered for a direct prosecution which will include a formal interview at the town hall to discuss the reasons for their child's poor school attendance and punctuality. For those parents who do not attend the interview, or do not have reasonable explanations for their child's absence, it may lead to statutory action which could be a summons to appear before the City Magistrates to explain the reasons for their child's absences from school.

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PENALTY NOTICES - (Anti-Social Behaviour Act 2003)

A penalty notice will be issued to each parent for each child. The penalty notice incurs a fine of £120 to be paid within 28 days, which is reduced to £60 if paid within the first 21 days. Failure to pay the penalty notice may result in legal proceedings being taken against you. Other statutory action may also be considered under the Education Act 1996, which may result in you being prosecuted in the Magistrates' Court. If you are found guilty, you will receive a criminal record and may receive a fine of up to £2,500 and/or three months' imprisonment.

DIRECT PROSECUTION – Section 444 of the Education Act 1996 states that if a parent fails to ensure the regular school attendance of their child if he/she is a registered pupil at a school and is of compulsory school age, then they are guilty of an offence. Parents will be invited to the Town Hall to be interviewed under PACE (Police and Criminal Evidence). This is a formal interview which is recorded and may be used in evidence. Parents are interviewed separately and may be accompanied by a solicitor. If found guilty at court the parents will receive a criminal record and magistrates may deal with the matters by way of fines up to £2500 and/or custodial sentence of up to 3 months imprisonment for each parent.

If your child is experiencing any problems that may be affecting their attendance or punctuality, then please contact the school on 0161 499 0000 to discuss any support that could be provided to ensure their regular attendance.

School starts each day at 8.40am. Pupils arriving after this time may be recorded with unauthorised absence and could be subject to statutory action.

After so much disruption to your child/ren's education over recent months, the most important thing is that the school and parents work together to get children back into school.

We wish you and your child all the best for the coming academic year.

Yours sincerely

Janet Hall
Statutory School Attendance Manager
Children & Families Directorate

Yours sincerely

Alex Hren
Head teacher
St Paul's Catholic High School

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