



Saint Mary's Catholic Primary School

Agreeing absences from school during term time for children and young people who are looked after

Introduction

This policy clarifies the current policy and procedure for agreeing that 'Looked After Children' can be absent from school during term time. The current policy was first agreed in 2007.

Policy

As the Corporate Parent, the Local Authority recognises the importance of school attendance in enabling Looked After Children to achieve their potential and therefore will not agree that they should be absent from school other than when they are ill or in exceptional circumstances.

When children are Looked After, the Local Authority either shares parental responsibility if the child is subject to an interim Care Order or Care Order (including Placement Orders) or acts in Loco Parentis when the child is accommodated under S20 of the 1989 Children Act. It is therefore only the Local Authority who may seek permission from the school for the child or young person to be absent from school during term time. It is not the responsibility of Foster Carers or Residential establishments (whether Local Authority controlled or managed by an agency) to seek permission directly from the school.

Guidance

Foster Carers/Residential Staff should initially contact the child's allocated Social Worker if they wish to request permission for an absence from school in term time for a child and they believe the circumstances to be exceptional.

The allocated Social Worker should discuss with the service provider (Foster Carer/Residential establishment) the reasons why the request is being made. It may also be appropriate for the allocated Social Worker to discuss the issue with the Team Manager.

Following these discussions one of two situations may arise:

1. The allocated Social Worker and his/her Team Manager is mindful of supporting the request.

If this is the case the allocated Social Worker will email the Assistant Director (Children and Families) advising the Assistant Director of the request and the worker's recommendation (copying in their Team & Service Managers).

The email should contain a password protected attachment with the following information:

- Name of the child
- Date of birth
- School attended
- ICS Number
- Proposed date of absence from school
- Reasons for absence

- A description of the exceptional circumstances
- Alternatives which been considered and the reason they are not feasible
- The social worker's recommendations
- If the child is placed with an in house foster carer, any additional relevant information from the foster carer's support worker
- Any additional information which may assist the Assistant Director

It is important to note that comments like "the child has 100% attendance", "the child is doing well in school" do not constitute an exceptional reason for agreeing the absence. Neither does a lower holiday cost or the fact that the holiday is already booked.

The AD will make a decision within 5 working days of receiving the request and will reply to the child's social worker (copying in the fostering support worker if the child is placed with an in house carer) giving the reason for their decision.

2. The second alternative is that the allocated Social Worker or/and their Team Manager is mindful of refusing permission.

If this is the case the Service Provider should be notified in writing of the decision and the reasons for that decision.

In such circumstances the Service Provider may appeal to the Assistant Director. In these instances a similar report is required from the allocated Social Worker explaining the reasons for his/her decision and included in the report should be any written representations the carer wishes to make.

The Assistant Director will then make a decision and write to the Service Provider with a copy to the allocated Social Worker, and where relevant the Fostering Support Social Worker.

In the absence of the Assistant Director this responsibility will be delegated to a Senior Manager.

It is important to note that many of these situations require swift action and it is important that decision making is expedited so that times between the worker being informed of the request and the final decision should be no longer than 10 working days.

If permission is granted due to exceptional circumstances, then the social worker should contact the school and complete the appropriate paperwork to seek permission from the Headteacher of the school.

Signed: Executive Headteacher: S.L. Slack **Mrs S Slack**

Signed: Governor: G. Duncan **Mrs G Duncan**

Date: June 2020

Review Date: June 2022