



Cardinal Newman Catholic High School

Headteacher: Mrs J Warburton

June 2015

Dear Parent/Carer

The government expect all pupils to reach a minimum target of 95% attendance and from September 2015, any that fall below 90% (missing 32 or more sessions or 16 days) will be classified as a persistent absentee (P.A.). Schools are expected to adopt strategies that will achieve these targets. The government looks more favourably upon those pupils who are genuinely ill or hospitalised for long periods of time although these are still counted in the statistics that the school has to publish; it is important therefore that the school has the appropriate medical documentation in such cases.

I urge parents/carers not to take holidays in term time. Especially as the Local Authority is under direction from the government to 'take action' against parents who take their children out of school on unauthorised holidays; this is most likely to lead to parents/carers being given a 'penalty notice' or put on a 'fast track' prosecution which, if found guilty would lead to a fine and a criminal record.

There has been a great deal of research into the implications of absence on the results of pupils at GCSE and the government states that:

- of pupils who miss more than 50% of school only 3% manage to achieve 5 A* to C passes including English and Maths
- of pupils who miss between 10% and 20% of school only 35% manage to achieve 5 A* to C passes including English and Maths
- of pupils who miss less than 5% of school, 73% achieve 5 A* to C passes including English and Maths

A former schools' minister Nick Gibb is quoted as saying, ***'Whatever the reason for a child's absence from school, the data shows that when children miss a substantial part of the school term their academic achievement suffers permanently'***.

The attendance officer in school works closely with the Local Authority and uses a variety of agreed strategies to help to achieve the government targets.



- Parents/carers are contacted by e-mail if their child is absent; **a written note is required on the first day back at school however** with the dates that the pupil was absent and the reason why. It should be noted that legally it is the school that authorises an absence and not the parent/carer.
- Part of the process suggested by the Local Authority (L.A.) is for the attendance officer to speak to the pupil concerned to find out reasons why they may have been absent.
- The parents/carers of pupils with poor attendance are sent letters informing them of the current situation throughout the school year to keep them informed in the hope that improvement can be made.
- Some parents of pupils whose attendance is a cause for concern may be asked to provide medical evidence that their child is genuinely ill; usually these are pupils with a poor 'history' of attendance or are absent frequently.
- A small number of parents are invited to attend a meeting in school with the Local Authority Attendance Officer (L.A.A.O.) assigned to the school and his line manager to discuss any problems that the parent may have in ensuring the attendance of their child; inability or failure to attend the meeting usually results in a 'home visit' by the L.A.A.O. The L.A.A.O. and the school A.O. may also visit homes of pupils whose attendance is a cause for concern prior to being asked to attend a meeting in school.
- Should there be no improvement the parent/carer may be asked to a meeting with either the Headteacher and/or the governor with responsibility for attendance and punctuality.
- Where there is no improvement, or where there is a significant dip in attendance, the LA may decide to instigate a 'fast-track prosecution' as, in their opinion the parent/carer is failing in their legal duty to ensure that their child is receiving the education to which they are entitled; failure to comply with the direction given by the LA at this stage would inevitably lead to prosecution of the parents/carers in the Magistrates court. (Unfortunately over the last few years some parents have found themselves in this predicament and have had fines imposed upon them).
- Very rarely, some parents/carers find that through continued non-compliance the LA instigates an 'aggravated prosecution', where the consequences are much stiffer with the maximum fine being £2,500 and or even a prison sentence.

I trust you will ensure your child attends school regularly and punctually so that they can make the most of the opportunity offered by a sound education at Cardinal Newman and achieve their maximum potential.

Yours sincerely



J WARBURTON
Headteacher