



St. Joseph's Catholic Primary School

Attendance Policy

Approved by:	Governing Body	Date: December 2021
Last reviewed on:	December 2023	
Next review due by:	December 2025	

Introduction

This policy was formulated in line with St. Joseph's Mission Statement. It is a primary aim of our school in accordance with the Mission Statement that every member of the school community feels valued and respected, and that each person is treated fairly and well. We are a caring community, whose values are based on mutual trust and respect for all. The policy is also linked to the school's Behaviour policy.

The policy is also formulated with regard to DfE guidelines, the Education Act of 1996 and subsequent amendments. The minimum level of attendance expected by the DFE is 95%.

Regular school attendance is the concern and responsibility of parents and teachers. Pupils need to attend school regularly if they are to take full advantage of the educational opportunities available to them in law.

Irregular attendance undermines the educational process and may hinder a child's progress.

Aims of the Attendance Policy

- To encourage regular and punctual attendance and thus ensure progression in learning.
- To support the education of those children who for family or health reasons miss school for any length of time.
- To develop consistent procedures to follow up unauthorised absences.

What is meant by regular attendance?

Legally, all children of compulsory school age must receive a proper full-time education and be in school daily. The school day starts at 8.45am and all pupils are expected to be in school at least 5 minutes before the school day begins (NB - A teacher is on duty each morning from 8.35am before the bell rings). Pupils should be collected from school punctually at 3.15pm.

Absence

An absence is defined as a child not being present when the register is called.

Authorised Absence

Some absences are allowed by law and are known as "authorised absences." For example, if a child is ill or a family bereavement or religious observance.

We realise that there are rare occasions when there might be a particular problem that causes a child to be absent. We ask parents/carers to let us know in these circumstances and we will try to deal with them sympathetically. This may be due to a medical appointment and while we appreciate that hospital appointments cannot be easily be changed, we expect parents/carers to try, wherever possible to arrange dental and doctor's appointments outside of school hours.

The school reserves the right to seek evidence for an authorised absence, e.g. wedding invitation etc.

Unauthorised Absence

There are times when children are absent for reasons which are not permitted by law. These are known as "unauthorised absences". Examples of unauthorised absence are:

- Sleeping in after a late night
- Having a birthday treat
- Buying Holy Communion clothes
- Waiting for a delivery
- Extended Holidays
- Seeing relatives

Unauthorised absences will be reported to the Ealing School Attendance Service and could result in a fine of up to £120 per child.

Procedures for the notification of absence

First Day Contact

The school asks parents to inform the office of the reason for an absence on the first day of that absence. This can be done by:

- a phone call to school (leaving a message on the answer phone).
- As soon as possible after the start of the school day school staff will contact parents who have not notified the school of the child's absence. This will happen for all children in Years Five and Six who may have travelled to school without a parent and then staff will work down the age ranges calling/texting parents where a concern arises.
- On return to school a letter explaining absence should be sent by the parent unless contact was made by phone during the absence.

School Procedures for Managing Absences

If a child is absent for more than 2 days without contact from home the school will phone home to enquire. If there is no answer, the Headteacher will contact Ealing Children's Services.

If the absence continues but there has been contact with parents, or a child returns without an adequate explanation which can be authorised, the Attendance Co-ordinator will write home.

If attendance continues to be a concern, the Headteacher may request to interview the parents.

Medical Absences

If a child should be absent from school for a considerable time due to a serious illness or medical condition, the child's teacher will provide some basic work and advise parent/carers how best to help their child.

Exceptional Circumstances

We are always concerned about the amount of school time pupils miss as a result of family holidays.

- Children should not be taken on holiday during term time.
- If a term-time holiday is unavoidable, parents/carers must request leave of absence for their children from the Headteacher before booking their holiday. A form for this may be obtained from the school office.
- In exceptional circumstances, the Headteacher may authorise leave. Parents/carers must also avoid taking a holiday in September, as it is very unsettling for a child to miss the start of the school year.
- If the school does not agree holiday leave and a child is still taken on holiday the absence will be unauthorised.
- The Local Authority may take legal action against parents/carers if the absence is unauthorised.
- If a child is kept away longer than was agreed, then any extra days will be unauthorised.
- A child may be taken off roll if he/she is away for an extended period.
- It must be remembered that if a child misses a period of time from school, it is difficult for them to catch up with their work. Valuable learning time is lost. A good understanding of the work can only take place when the pupil is in the classroom. We value parent/carers support in helping us to maintain high standards.

The Role of the Attendance Co-ordinator

The Attendance Co-ordinator will be known to all school staff so that they may refer concerns.

The class teacher will refer, to the Attendance Co-ordinator, any child in their class for whom they have concerns regarding absences, i.e. a lack of explanations, difficulty contacting parents regarding absences or unacceptable explanation by parents for absence.

The Attendance Co-ordinator will seek information on children who are a concern to their class teachers, at least half termly, in preparation for meeting with Ealing Schools Attendance Officer.

The Attendance Co-ordinator will refer to the Ealing Schools Attendance Officer any child for whom there are long standing attendance concerns, and will make available relevant information to the officer, so that any required in-depth work may be undertaken.

Punctuality

All children are expected to arrive at school on time i.e. – from 8.35am to be ready to begin school at 8.45am. The gates will be locked at 8.45am. If a child arrives after the gate has been locked the parent/carer must report with him/her to the main school office and sign the child in and give a reason for the lateness.

- Parents/carers of persistent latecomers will be invited to contact the school to discuss any difficulties they may have in this area.
- It should be noted that children arriving late find it distressing. It can also be distracting to other pupils and the teacher and affect access to the National Curriculum disrupting everyone.
- If persistent lateness then continues, the school may choose to refer the matter to the Ealing Schools Attendance Officer.
- We realise that there are rare occasions when a child may be late arriving due to unforeseen circumstances. The school will endeavour to deal sympathetically with such situations.

School Procedures for Managing Poor Punctuality

If a child is regularly late a letter will be sent home, reminding the parent/carer of the importance of good punctuality. If the poor punctuality continues, the Headteacher may request to interview the parents.

Any sustained concerns regarding punctuality which the school has tried to investigate will be referred to the attached Ealing Schools Attendance Officer.

Late Collection

Late collection can be very frightening and distressing for pupils. Parents are advised to arrive in good time to collect their children at the end of the school day.

- If an infant child is not collected by 3.25pm or a junior child by 3.25pm, they will be taken to the school office.
- If the parent/carer knows that they are going to be delayed they should ring the school administrator who will endeavour to get a message to their child.
- If no message has been received from parents, and the child is not collected the administrator will endeavour to contact the next named person on the contact form.
- If a child is still uncollected when it is time to close the school office, we will (reluctantly) be obliged to notify either Ealing Social Services or inform the Police. This step would only be taken in extreme cases.
- We realise that there may be rare occasions when a child is collected late from school. However, if this was to happen persistently we would be obliged to notify the Education Social Worker.