



St Joseph's Catholic Primary School
Following in Jesus' footsteps we live, learn and love

WHOLE SCHOOL ATTENDANCE POLICY

Introduction:

This is a successful school and your child plays their part in making it so. We aim for an environment which enables and encourages all members of our school community to reach out for excellence. For our children to gain the greatest benefit from their education it is vital that they attend regularly and your child should be at school, on time, every day the school is open unless the reason for the absence is unavoidable.

Why regular attendance is so important:

Any absence affects the pattern of a child's schooling and regular absence will seriously affect their learning. Any pupil's absence disrupts teaching routines and may affect the learning of others in the same class.

Ensuring your child's regular attendance at school is your legal responsibility and permitting absence from school without a good reason creates an offence in law and may result in prosecution.

Understanding types of absence:

Every half-day absence from school has to be classified by the school as either **AUTHORISED** or **UNAUTHORISED**. This is why information about the cause of any absence is always required.

Authorised absences are mornings or afternoons away from school for a good reason like illness, medical/dental appointments which unavoidably fall in school time, emergencies or other unavoidable cause.

Unauthorised absences are those which the school does not consider reasonable and for which no 'leave' has been given. This type of absence can lead to the Authority using sanctions and/or legal proceedings. This includes:

- Parents/carers keeping children off school unnecessarily
- truancy before or during the school day
- absences which have never been properly explained
- children who arrive at school after the register has closed
- shopping, looking after other children or birthdays
- leave in term time which has not been agreed
- days that exceed the amount of leave agreed by the Headteacher

Parents should be aware that the decision whether to authorise an absence or not rests with the school. Hence, if there is any ambiguity relating to an absence, school may request further evidence from parents before an absence may be authorised. This may be in the form of a prescription or appointment card or similar.

Whilst any child may be off school because they are ill, sometimes they can be reluctant to attend school. Any problems with regular attendance are best sorted out between the school, the parents and the child. If your child is reluctant to attend school it is better to speak to school to resolve the issue, rather than trying to cover up their absence, or give in to pressure to let them stay at home. This gives the impression that attendance does not matter and usually make things worse.

The school takes unauthorised absence seriously and, particularly in the case of repeated unauthorised absences, will undertake further liaison with the family, pupil and the PAST team. The Local Authority may also issue Penalty Notices in respect of unauthorised absence. This includes holidays which are taken without a prior request being made; and those taken after a prior request has been made and parents have been informed that the period of absence would be classed as unauthorised but the holiday been taken regardless of this advice. The Local Authority may also issue a Penalty Notice for days taken in excess of the agreed period of leave; without good reason.

Persistent Absence:

A pupil becomes a 'persistent absentee' when their attendance falls below 90% or more of their schooling across the school year **for whatever reason**. Absence at this level is doing considerable damage to any child's educational prospects and we need parents' fullest support and co-operation to tackle this.

We monitor all absence thoroughly, therefore any pupil whose attendance indicates they are likely to reach the PA threshold will be given priority consideration, and parents will be informed of this immediately.

PA pupils are tracked and monitored carefully through our pastoral system and we also combine this with academic mentoring where absence affects attainment.

All PA cases are also automatically made known to the Local Authority School Attendance Team.

The Local Authority School Attendance Team:

If difficulties cannot be sorted out using in-school strategies, the school may refer the child to the Pupil Attendance Support Team (PAST). They will try to resolve the situation by agreement but, if other ways of trying to improve the child's attendance have failed, and unauthorised absences persist the case may be referred to the Court Officers, who can use sanctions such as Penalty Notices or prosecutions in the Magistrates Court. Full details of the options open to enforce attendance at school are available from the school or the Local Authority.

Lateness:

Poor punctuality is not acceptable. If your child misses the start of the day they can miss work and do not spend time with their class teacher getting vital information and news for the day. Late arriving pupils also disrupt lessons, which can be embarrassing for the child and can in turn, encourage absence. **Being 10 minutes late every day throughout the academic year is the same as missing two weeks of school.** We now have a late book in place which we record any lateness after 9am. If your child is late more than three times in

a half term a letter will be sent home and you may be invited into school to discuss ways to improve punctuality.

Leave in term time:

Following the September 2013 amendment to The Education (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2006 , **head teachers no longer have the discretion to authorise leave in term time to allow pupils to go on holiday.**

Leave of absence **SHALL NOT** be granted unless:

- a request for leave has been made in advance, by a parent with whom the pupil normally resides, and
- The head teacher considers that leave of absence should be granted due to the **EXCEPTIONAL CIRCUMSTANCES** relating to the request.

ADDITIONAL FACTORS FOR CONSIDERATION

Pupils attend school for a maximum of 190 days each academic year. Regular attendance is vital for your child's educational progress. The Local Authority expects that all parents/carers ensure their children attend school whenever possible. Absence during school time is largely prohibited by regulation and hinders academic progress. Even in exceptional circumstances, the following factors may be taken into account when considering an application for leave:

- Will leave at this point in time be detrimental to the pupil's education?
- Will he/she miss any national tests or examinations?
- Is his/her attendance a cause for concern?
- Is the proposed absence during the month of September or any other transition period?
- Has he/she already had leave during term time this year?
- Did he/she have leave of absence during term time in the previous school year(s)?
- Does he/she have any absences which have been recorded as unauthorised this year?

If work commitments are stated as an exceptional reason for requesting leave, parents will be asked to provide employer details and any additional evidence which shows why leave cannot be taken during the school holidays.

Parents/Carers who need to request leave during term time should put their request in writing for the attention of the headteacher. The Headteacher will consider the request and advise within 5 days whether the absence will be authorised or not. Where concerns exist the Headteacher will request a meeting with parents before any period of leave is authorised.

Rights, Roles and Responsibilities

St Joseph's Catholic Primary School believes that it is important that Parents and Carers, Pupils, School Staff and Governors all work in partnership to encourage good attendance for

all pupils. The following is a summary of the rights, roles and responsibilities for individual groups of stakeholders.

Absence Procedures:

Parents and Carers

If your child is absent you must:

- Ensure the child(ren) in their care attend school regularly and punctually.
- If the child(ren) is/are absent to inform the school office or class teacher on the first day of absence and provide a reason for the absence.
- If the child(ren) is/are absent for more than 1 day, to inform the school office of the continued absence and update as to the reason for the absence regularly.
- On the day the child(ren) return/s to school to provide a written note to the class teacher or school office confirming the reason and length of absence.
- To avoid holidays in term time wherever possible. Where this is not thought possible, to write to the school as soon as possible prior to the first requested day of absence to request authorisation.
- To advise the school, by contacting the school office, immediately if they become aware of problems with attendance.
- To co-operate with the school in promoting and improving attendance e.g. attending meetings, participation in Parenting Contracts and supporting the school in agreed intervention/action plans if deemed necessary.

Telephone numbers:

There are times when we need to contact parents about lots of things, including absence, so we need to have your contact numbers at all times. So help us to help you and your child by making sure we always have an up to date number - if we don't then something important may be missed. There will be regular checks on telephone numbers throughout the year.

Pupils

- Attend school regularly and punctually.
- Adhere to systems for late registration, signing out and signing in.
- Acknowledge behaviour needed out of school to ensure good attendance e.g. early bedtimes and getting uniforms ready the night before.

School Staff

If your child is absent we will:

- Telephone/text you on the first day of absence if we have not heard from you;
- Invite you in to discuss the situation with the Headteacher if absences persist;
- Refer the matter to the Local Authority School Attendance Team where appropriate as per Local Authority protocol.

However, St Joseph's Catholic Primary School believes that all staff have responsibilities and a role to play in promoting good attendance by:

- Providing a welcoming atmosphere for children.
- Providing a safe learning environment.
- Ensuring an appropriate and responsive curriculum.
- Providing a sympathetic response to any pupil's concerns.
- Being aware of factors that can contribute to non-attendance.
- Being aware of the role all staff can play in ensuring attendance is seen as important for all pupils.
- Adherence to the systems and procedures in place within school to promote good attendance and highlighting any concerns to the Headteacher.
- Participation in training regarding school systems and procedures.
- Willingness to communicate with children and parents about attendance.

Governors

- Adopt an Attendance Policy and review it annually.
- Agree statutory targets for attendance at St Joseph's Catholic Primary School.
- Ensure that they receive reports from the Headteacher regarding school attendance as part of the school monitoring or school profiling exercise.
- Where the school is not meeting its attendance target, or when the Governors believe there is cause for concern, to require a review of the systems and procedures in place to promote good attendance.
- To promote the strong link between attendance and educational attainment to parents and pupils where appropriate and ensure that the school attendance policy and procedures are communicated effectively.

Procedures

Registration

Morning Registration is between 8.55am and 9.10am

Afternoon Registration is between 1.10pm and 1.20pm

Each class teacher or their nominated representative is responsible for marking children present in the register at morning and afternoon registration. The registers must be completed by 9.10am and 1.20pm to avoid discrepancies between classes. The class teacher must ensure that the marked register, plus any notes received regarding absence, is returned to the school office by 9.15am/1.25pm.

The school office is responsible for entering attendance on the electronic register and for inputting absence codes on a weekly basis.

Late Registration

School doors are locked at 9.05am. Pupils requiring admittance to the school after these times must go to the front door and request entry via the school office.

The school office is responsible for maintaining a signing in/out book. This must contain details of name, class, time admitted/time released, reason for lateness/absence and supervising adult (for signing out). After 9.10am/1.20pm an entry must be placed in the signing in book before a late pupil is admitted.

In accordance with current guidance, the attendance registers are closed at 9.30am. This means that any pupil who arrives after the registration period (9.10am) but before the registers are closed (9.30am) will be given a late mark (L) in the register. This code is classed as a present mark, but displays that the pupil arrived late for school. Any pupil who arrives after the registers have closed (9.30am) but before the end of the morning session will be given a "late after registers closed" mark (U) in the register. This code is classed as an unauthorised absence but displays that the pupil was physically present in school for part of the session. In addition to using the U code in this instance, office staff will also use the facility within the SIMS attendance module to record the number of minutes late for each pupil, on each occasion. This facility will allow school staff to monitor and manage developing patterns of lateness more effectively. The fact that the U code is classed as an unauthorised absence means that when it is used pupils are likely to be missing significant amounts of schooling; putting their educational progress at risk. For this reason the use of this code will be considered as serious as any other unauthorised absence and will attract the interest of external agencies, including consideration of the use of legal sanctions, in just the same way.

The school office is responsible for maintaining records of reason and length of absence.

- Parents/Carers are requested to contact the school office or class teacher on the first day of absence advising of the reason for the absence and expected return date; if known.
- Where information is provided to the class teacher they are responsible for passing this information to the school office.
- Where a verbal message is taken this should be recorded on the school pro-forma, forwarded to the class teacher and kept in the class absence envelope.
- Where a written note is received this should also be kept in the class absence envelope.
- Where the absence is for several days, the Parent/Carer is responsible for informing the school office of the continued absence and updating them as to the reason for the absence on a regular basis.

The school office is responsible for inputting the appropriate absence code on the electronic register. Where they are not certain whether an absence is authorised or not they should seek advice from the Headteacher.

Signing Out

The school office is responsible for overseeing the procedure for releasing children where parents/carers have requested and been granted authorised absence for an appointment in school time.

The child(ren) can only be released to a parent or authorised carer/family member (normally to be authorised in writing by the legal guardian of the child). When an authorised adult is picking up a child within school time the school office is responsible for ensuring that they complete and sign the school signing out book (see above for details of requirements). The school office is responsible for inputting the appropriate absence code on the electronic register.

School targets, projects and special initiatives:

The school has targets to improve attendance and your child has an important part to play in meeting these targets.

The minimum level of attendance for this school is 95% attendance and we will keep you updated regularly about progress to this level and how your child's attendance compares. Our target is to achieve better than this however because we know that good attendance is the key to successful schooling and we believe our pupils can be amongst the best in the area.

Through the school year we monitor absences and punctuality to show us where improvements need to be made.

Information on any projects or initiatives that will focus on these areas will be provided in newsletter and we ask for your full support.

Monitoring, Analysis and Action Planning

The Governors have determined that the Headteacher has overall responsibility for the monitoring, analysis and action planning of school attendance. The Headteacher is also responsible for ensuring that data is returned promptly to the Local Authority and DCSF within deadlines. However, it is expected that the day to day implementation of this will largely rest with the class teachers who take the register and highlight causes for concern and the school office who are responsible for maintaining the school records on attendance and for highlighting causes for concern.

The School Attendance Co-ordinator will review the attendance records with the Headteacher annually to check that there are no outstanding causes for concern and that codes are being applied consistently. In addition the Headteacher will also raise specific concerns with the Early Intervention Team as they arise.

The Headteacher is required to review this Whole School Attendance Policy and Procedure Framework annually and to report on attendance matters to the Governors termly. The Governors will also review the Attendance Policy at least annually to ensure that it continues to meet the school circumstances.

If there is a trend of worsening attendance in a particular group of pupils, discussions should be held with the Headteacher to identify Action Plans to reverse the trend. It should also be reported to the Governors at the next full Governor's meeting.

St Joseph's Catholic Primary School also uses whole school incentive and reward schemes in order to raise the profile of attendance and promote good levels of attendance. These schemes will be reviewed and changed regularly in order to ensure that children remain interested and motivated.

School System for dealing with concerns about Lateness and Absence:

The school office is responsible for advising the Headteacher of pupils who are persistently late or absent as issues arise.

The class teacher is also responsible for raising concerns about lateness or absence of class members to the Headteacher as issues arise.

In addition to this the Headteacher will use electronic systems to monitor the attendance of individual pupils at least once every half term.

Once concerns have been raised:

- The Headteacher will discuss the matter informally with the family (including the pupil).
- The Headteacher will send letters regarding attendance issues to parents of all pupils whose attendance falls below 90%. This will be done on a termly basis.
- Parents and children, if appropriate, will be asked to agree to a parenting contract which will include the setting of targets and will be reviewed regularly.
- If lateness/absence persists, and school procedures fail to provoke the required level of improvement, the Headteacher will contact the PAST Team who will arrange meetings with the family and Headteacher as appropriate and determine whether any interventions are required. These interventions will include consideration of the use of legal sanctions.
- Incentive and reward schemes will be used for individual pupils, as appropriate.

School System for reintegrating pupils who have had long term absence

When a pupil has been absent from school for an extended period due to serious medical conditions, the Headteacher, class teacher and other support services will liaise with the family to ensure that a smooth reintegration is achieved.

Communication of Attendance Policy and Procedure

It is important that the School's Policy on Attendance is communicated to all the stakeholders and parents, pupils and staff know the procedures and systems that are in place to implement it.

The Governors have determined that:

- The Attendance Policy will be placed on the School Website.
- Some details of the Policy will be disseminated as part of the new parent induction process e.g. induction package, talks to new parents.
- Reference to the School Attendance Policy re Holidays during term time and absence is to be made clear when the school calendar of dates is sent out each year.

- The Headteacher will ensure staff receive training regarding their responsibilities re the Attendance Policy and Procedures.
- The Headteacher will provide a summary of attendance and causes for concern at least annually to the *Governors*.

Summary:

The school has a legal duty to publish its absence figures to parents and to promote attendance. Equally, parents have a duty to make sure that their children attend.

All school staff are committed to working with parents and pupils, as this is the best way to ensure as high a level of attendance as possible.

Ratified by *Governors*: July 2013

Policy reviewed: September 2017