



ATTENDANCE POLICY

September 2019

**Good attendance at school is very important.
*If you are not here, you can't learn!***

Introduction

Our aim at St Joseph's Catholic Primary School is for every child and young person to aspire, learn and achieve. For our pupils to gain the greatest benefit from their education it is vital that they attend regularly and arrive at school, on time, every day the school is open unless the reason for the absence is unavoidable.

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 the best way to ensure as high a level of attendance as possible and that every child's welfare and life opportunities are promoted.

Parents and carers should make sure that their child attends regularly and this policy sets out how parents/carers and the school will work together to achieve this.

Why Regular Attendance is so important:

Learning

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 so may affect the learning of others in the same class.

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

Safeguarding

A child may be at risk of harm if he or she does not attend school regularly. Safeguarding the interests of each child is everyone's responsibility and within the context of this school, promoting the welfare and life opportunities for every child encompasses:-

- Attendance

- Behaviour Management
- Health and Safety
- Access to the Curriculum
- Anti- bullying

Failing to attend school on a regular basis will be considered as a safeguarding matter.

Promoting Regular Attendance

Helping to create a pattern of regular attendance is everybody's responsibility, parents, pupils, governors and all members of school staff.

To help us all to focus on this we will:

- Give all parents and carers details on their child's attendance via school progress reporting methods.
- Report to parents and carers if their child's attendance becomes a cause for concern.
- Celebrate good attendance by displaying and rewarding individual and class attendance achievements.

The Law Relating to Attendance

Section 7 of the Education Act 1996 states that '*the parent of every child of compulsory school age shall cause him/her to receive efficient full time education suitable:-*

(a) to age, ability and aptitude and

(b) to any special educational needs he/she may have

Either by regular attendance at school or otherwise.

Section 444 of the Education Act 1996, makes it a criminal offence for a parent to fail to secure their child's attendance at the school at which they are registered, where that absence is not authorised by the school.

The Law Relating to Safeguarding

Section 175 of the Education Act 2002 places a duty on local authorities and governing bodies to have regard to guidance issued by the Secretary of State with regard to safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children and pupils under the age of 18.

Understanding Types of Absence:

Every half-day absence from school has to be classified by the school (***not by the parents***), as either AUTHORISED or UNAUTHORISED. This is why information about the cause of any absence is always required, by phone call, text message or in writing.

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

Whilst any child may be absent from school because they are ill, sometimes a child can be reluctant to attend school. Any problems with regular attendance are best sorted out between the

school, the parents and the child. If a child is reluctant to attend, it is never in that child's interests to cover up their absence or to give in to pressure to excuse them from attending. This gives the impression that attendance does not matter and usually make things worse.

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 sanctions and/or legal proceedings. This includes:

- Parents/carers keeping children off school unnecessarily during the school day.
- Absences which have never been properly explained.
- Shopping, looking after other children or birthdays.
- Day trips and holidays in term time that have not been agreed by the Headteacher.

Leave of Absence from School

Amendments to the **Education (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2006**, in force from **1 September 2013**, make clear that Headteachers may not grant any leave of absence during term time unless there are exceptional circumstances. In exceptional circumstances, when leave of absence is granted, the Headteacher will determine the number of school days a child or young person can be away from school.

Parents must write to the Headteacher requesting leave of absence, where possible, at least 4 weeks in advance of the start of the requested absence. Any appeals must be addressed to the Headteacher.

The following will not be deemed to be exceptional circumstances:

- Family holiday
- Availability of less expensive holiday
- Availability of holiday accommodation
- Overlap with the beginning or the end of a term or a half term
- Parent/Carer's working commitments

Taking holidays in term time will affect a child's schooling as much as any other absence and we expect parents to help us by not taking children away in school time.

There is no entitlement in law, for time off in school time to go on holiday.

Pupil Absence

When a pupil is absent a telephone call should be made on the first day of absence to the school office and each day thereafter. A record of the call must be kept by the school.

Absence will not be authorised on the first or last day of any half term if medical evidence is not provided.

The Attendance Team, Family Support Worker and Educational Welfare Service will support the Headteacher in dealing with persistent and long term absences.

Pupils having medical or dental appointments must bring a card or note from their parent/carers, which should be authorised by a member of the Attendance Team. Appointments during school time will only be authorised if a letter, text message or appointment card is provided from the medical practice or hospital. Where possible, every effort should be made to arrange appointments outside of core school hours, especially for ongoing treatment.

Absence Procedures; Guidance for Parents:

If your child is absent you must:

- Contact school as soon as possible on the first day of absence;
- Send a note in on the first day they return with an explanation of the absence – you must do this even if you have already telephoned us;
- Or, you can call into school and report to the school office, who will arrange for a member of staff to speak with you.

If your child is absent we will:

- Telephone or text you on the first day of absence if we have not heard from you;
- Invite you in to discuss the matter with our Family Support Worker, if absences persist;
- Request medical evidence if there is persistent absence due to illness;
- Complete registers accurately and in a timely fashion to ensure safeguarding of all pupils;
- Refer to the Educational Welfare Service for legal advice, if attendance deteriorates.

St Joseph's Catholic Primary Attendance procedures:

The following actions will be taken if a pupil is absent:

- On first day of absence the Family Support Worker will telephone the pupil's parent/carer if no contact has been made with the school.
- The class teacher will notify the Attendance Team of any persistent or long-term absence in their class.
- The Attendance Team will monitor attendance weekly, half termly and termly and feedback to the parents, carers and class teachers.
- The Headteacher and Family Support Worker will meet regularly to monitor attendance.
- Class Attendance will be celebrated each week in the school newsletter to promote positive attitudes.

Telephone numbers

There are times when we need to contact parents about school issues/events, including absence, so we need to have your current contact numbers at all times. Please help us to help you and your child by making sure that we always have an up to date number – if we don't, then something important may be missed. You can update your information using by contacting the school office on 01606 288044.

Monitoring Absence

It is the duty of both parents/carers and teachers to see that pupils attend regularly and see the benefit of attending regularly. Where pupils have irregular attendance the Family Support Worker, class teacher or Headteacher will meet with parents/ carers and pupils to help improve their attendance; if necessary legal action will be taken.

Attendance is monitored each week by the Attendance Team.

It is expected that pupils will attend every day throughout the academic year unless they are unwell. Parents/carers must take annual holidays during the school holidays. If there is a need for a pupil to take time off during term time then the pupil's parents/carers should request the absence in writing to the Headteacher. Appeals should be directed to the Headteacher who will decide whether leave should be granted. The school will only grant leave during term time in exceptional circumstances, in line with statutory regulations.

Fixed Penalty Notices

Under the Anti-Social Behaviour Act (2003) the local authority and schools have statutory powers to tackle poor school attendance and/or unauthorised absences. An unauthorised absence is any absence that the Headteacher has not given permission for or where a satisfactory explanation has not been provided by the parent/carer. If your child accrues 10 sessions of unauthorised absence you may be liable for a penalty notice (one days absence equals two sessions and a five day absence is equal to 10 sessions).

Fixed Penalty Notices will be used as a deterrent to prevent a pattern of unauthorised absences developing. They will be issued by post directly to the home of a parent after possibly just one warning, or in the case of absences without acceptable cause, warnings may not be given. This includes pupils caught on truancy sweeps, persistent late arrival after the close of registration or absence that has not been authorised as an absence from school for exceptional circumstances. In these cases the written warning will be given on the Headteacher's reply letter. Fines are issued by the Local Authority for unauthorised absence of 5 or more days and each school day is divided into 2 registration periods.

For example if your child is absent for one day this equals 2 sessions and a five day absence is equal to 10 sessions.

If a request is declined and the child is still taken out of school, **each parent/carer** within the household may be issued with a £60 penalty notice for **each child** that has been taken out of school. If a penalty notice remains unpaid after 21 days it will increase to £120. If after 28 days it remains unpaid parents/carers may be summonsed to appear before Magistrates to explain why their child has unauthorised school absences and may be liable for a fine of up to £1000.

Persistent Absenteeism (PA):

A pupil becomes a 'persistent absentee' when they miss 10% or more 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. Any case that is seen to have reached the PA mark or is at risk of moving towards that mark is given priority and you will be informed of this immediately.

All PA pupils are tracked and monitored carefully through our school system. Some acute PA pupils and their parents are subject to an Action Plan or Contract of Expectations. All PA cases are also automatically made known to the Attendance Team.

Pupil Punctuality

Punctual arrival at registration in the morning and afternoon, is important as this instils good working practices in the pupil both inside and outside of the school. It also portrays a serious approach to studying and making the greatest use of opportunities available to them.

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 peers and class teacher getting vital information and news for the day. Late arriving pupils also disrupt lessons, can be embarrassing for the child and can also encourage absence.

- All pupils should arrive in classrooms from 8.45am each day to be ready to start their lessons at 9.00am.
- Anyone arriving after 9.10 am will receive a late mark (L).

At 9.20am the registers will be closed. In accordance with the Regulations, if your child arrives after that time they will receive a mark that shows them to be on site, but this will **not** count as a

present mark (U) and it will mean they have an unauthorised absence. This may mean that you could face the possibility of a Fixed Penalty Notice if the problem persists.

If your child has a persistent late record you will be asked to meet with the Headteacher or Family Support Worker to resolve the problem, but you can approach us at any time if you are having problems getting your child to school on time.

Winsford Education Partnership Policy

Adopted by The Governing Board of St Joseph's Catholic Primary School