

St Joseph's Catholic Primary School

School Attendance Policy and Guidance



'We are all God's children and will try to live, love, work and
serve as Jesus taught us.'

Approved by the staff and Governing Body: January 2024

Review Date: Autumn 2025

Aims

St Joseph's Catholic Primary School recognises that good attendance and pupils' enjoyment of school are central to raising standards and pupil attainment. We know that parents value their child's education and have high aspirations for them; hence we are keen to work with you to ensure that your child has good attendance in order for them to do well at school.

This policy is written with our Mission Statement in mind and this policy underpins our school ethos to:

- ensure that pupils reach their full potential whilst at school;
- promote children's welfare and safeguarding;
- ensure every pupil has access to the full time education to which they are entitled and;
- ensure that pupils have access to the widest possible range of opportunities when they leave school.

For our children to gain the greatest benefit from their education, it is vital that they attend regularly and be at school, on time, every day the school is open, unless the reason for the absence is unavoidable.

Any absence affects the pattern of a child's schooling and regular absence will seriously affect their learning. Any pupil's absence or late arrival disrupts teaching routines and so may affect the learning of others in the same class. Ensuring a child's regular attendance at school is a parental responsibility and permitting absence from school without a good reason creates an offence in law and may result in prosecution.

Staff actively promote and encourage good attendance for all pupils. In order for our pupils to reach their full potential we aim for every child to have attendance of 97% and above; our aspiration is for a large proportion of children in school achieving the ultimate of 100% attendance.

Good attendance is celebrated in a variety of ways; through assemblies, class certificates, individual certificates for 100% attendance, as well as certificates acknowledging improved attendance.

Absence

8:45 – 8:55am School gates open.

8.55am School gates closed.

Before 9:15am Parents contact school office on 01202 485976 leaving a message with a valid reason for the absence and specific details of any illness. If, for any reason, the school is unsure of the reason for absence, we will call parents/carers to clarify the situation. Please phone every day of your child's absence. For more detailed support about your child's absence please contact our Pastoral Care Officer, Mrs Richards, through the school office.

9:15am The school office will contact any parent who has not informed us of reasons for an absence via a phone call or Parentmail. If there has still been no contact with parents by this time, the absence will be noted as unauthorised.

If there is no response from a parent/carer we will contact the next emergency contact on the list. This is to ensure the safety of all children. In addition, school staff will follow safeguarding procedures to ensure that our school is doing all it can to safeguard the children within our school community. If we cannot ascertain the safety or whereabouts of a child we may pay a home visit to check on the child's welfare and we will inform other agencies such the BCP Inclusion Team.

Lateness

After 8.55am Children who arrive after 8.55am must be signed into school at the school office. They will be marked as late.

9:15am Children arriving after 9:15 will be marked as an unauthorised late which will count as an absence.

Registers

Morning Register: Opens 8.55
Closes: 9.15am

Afternoon Register: Opens 1pm
Closes 1.05pm

End of school day: 3.15pm

How can parents help?

Parents are the key to ensuring that a child attends school.

- Do not let your child stay at home unless you are certain that they are genuinely ill. School staff are happy to check a child's temperature if you are unsure.
- Join with school in stressing to your child the importance of good attendance and punctuality at the start of the day.
- Avoid making dental or doctor's appointments during school time unless it is absolutely necessary. Under new government guidelines pupils away for such treatment are considered absent. We do require to see evidence of any appointments.
- If your child does have to have an appointment during school time, do not keep them away for the whole day – only for the time necessary for the appointment. Remember - there are separate attendance marks for morning and afternoon sessions.
- It is particularly important that children in Year 6 have full attendance, as this is when Statutory Assessment tasks / tests (SATs) take place.
- Talk to your child about their school work, to make sure they do not have worries which may stop them wanting to come to school. All staff at school are very approachable and willing to discuss any concerns you may have about your child. This includes our Inclusion Team and School Nurse.

- Make a careful note of term dates and day closures from the weekly newsletter or the website.
- Contact your child's teacher or the Inclusion Team if you have any concerns about your child's attitude to school.

When there is Concern about Attendance

An audit of attendance is carried out half termly by the office staff, School Leadership Team and Inclusion Team. The school will analyse the reasons and days taken as absence and will make a decision on the next steps. The following could take place after the audit:

- The child's class teacher or the Inclusion Team may speak to the parents directly.
- A standard letter may be sent to any parent/carers whose child's attendance has dropped just below 95%.
- If attendance does not improve, a more targeted letter may be sent to parents/carers via post, clearly identifying the cause for concern and stating what is expected from parents/carers. This can include being asked for evidence for any absences thereafter. Alternatively, parents/carers may be invited to a meeting in school with the School Leadership Team or Inclusion Team.
- During these meetings any agreed action will be recorded. Again, this could include requesting medical evidence from the date of the meeting onwards, and if necessary, a review date specified.
- Vulnerable children are monitored on a daily basis and referrals made where appropriate.

The above procedures are reviewed during a joint audit between the Office Staff, Inclusion team and the BCP Inclusion Team on a regular basis. At any time during the academic year, school can contact the BCP Inclusion Team if there is particular concern about a child's attendance.

Record Keeping to Aid Response to Absence

A record is kept of all absences and the reasons for absence.

A record is kept of all contact, including letters and contracts with parents/carers over absence.

Requests for Leave of Absence During Term Time

Our school will not automatically authorise requests for leave of absence. **There is not an automatic entitlement for any family holidays or leave of absence during term time.**

The Headteacher will consider each request on its merits but will usually only agree to leave in **exceptional and unavoidable circumstances**.

Exceptional means rare, significant and short. **Unavoidable** means that the event could not reasonably be scheduled at another time.

The most important considerations are:

- Whether the leave of absence could be taken during periods of normal school holidays. ➤ Whether due consideration has been given to the timing of the leave of absence, e.g. at the start of a new term.
- No authorised absence will be given during Year 2 or 6's SATs periods; this will include all siblings within the family.

Leave of absence during term time will be authorised for up to 5 days in one rolling 12-month period for any child who has a parent living with them, who is in the Armed Forces and has returned from overseas duty or 'held at readiness to move'. Evidence of the overseas duty or 'held at readiness to move' may be requested.

Leave of absence during term time to attend a wedding will only be authorised if the child's parent is getting married and will be for a maximum of 2 days.

Parents/carers must complete the 'Request of Leave in Term Time' form and return it to the school office **at least three weeks** in advance of the planned leave of absence. These forms are available from the school office. Once the request has been considered the form will be returned to the parent/carer indicating whether or not the period of leave has been agreed. Parents may be asked to come into school to meet with members of staff before a final decision is made.

When a leave of absence is requested for siblings in different schools parents should be aware that schools will liaise prior to a decision being made for any leave of absence requests.

PLEASE NOTE: Any requests for leave of absence that have not been agreed by the school, but are subsequently taken or there are unauthorised absences during term time of at least 10 sessions (5 school days) overall within a 10-week period, will result in a Fixed Penalty Notice or prosecution.

Rewarding Good Attendance

Promoting good attendance and punctuality is an integral part of the school's culture. Our school visibly demonstrates the benefits of good attendance throughout school life and the curriculum. Our staff workss towards making sure that school is an enjoyable place to be and we use the following strategies to positively promote and recognise good attendance:

- Class competitions (weekly class certificates for best attendance and most improved);
- Good attendance certificates to pupils;
- Rewards for good attendance (eg. Mufti days).

Strategies for reducing persistent and severe absence

- Consistent monitoring
- Open communications with parents
- Meetings with parents to reduce absence
- Attendance contract
- School incentives for good attendance
- Pastoral support in school
- Signposting parents/carers to appropriate wider support services

CME (Child Missing in Education) Reporting

Any child that has failed to attend school and no reason has been given for their absence after reasonable enquiries, the school will report this to BCP.

Appendix

Links to BCP and Government Documents

Example of Attendance Letter

Examples of Certificates

Please remember ‘School Attendance Matters’!