ST JOSEPH'S
Catholic Primary School

Attendance Policy

Aims of the Policy

St Joseph's School aims to promote, among pupils and their parents, a high level of awareness of the need for regular and prompt attendance. Success at school starts by being present and punctual if children are to obtain maximum benefit from the many opportunities the school provides. Research clearly demonstrates the link between regular attendance and educational progress and attainment. Absences can also affect a child's relationship with other children and his or her ability to form lasting friendships. It can affect a child's confidence to attempt new work and work alongside others.

We will work with parents to ensure that all pupils achieve maximum possible attendance and that any problems that impede full attendance are identified and acted on as soon as possible.

The parent of a child of compulsory school age registered at a school and failing to attend regularly is guilty of an offence punishable in law. In the event of regular unauthorised absences, a penalty notice may be issued by the Educational Welfare Department. An offence is not, however, committed if it can be demonstrated that:

- The pupil was absent with agreement of the school.
- The pupil was ill or prevented from attending by any unavoidable cause.
- The absence occurred on a day exclusively set aside for religious observance by the religious body to which the pupil's parent belongs.

Only the school, within the context of the law, can approve absence, not parents. The fact that a parent has offered a note (or phone call, or personal contact) in explanation does not in itself oblige the school to accept it as a valid reason for absence. If, after investigation, doubt remains then the absence must be treated as unauthorised.

Educational Welfare Service

Local Authorities are charged in law with enforcing school attendance where pupils of compulsory school age are concerned. It is important that Local Authorities are informed of attendance problems. Educational Welfare Officers (EWOs) should be consulted where schools are experiencing difficulties in determining whether absences are justified.

Expectations

We expect that all pupils will:

- Attend school every day.
- Attend school punctually.
- Attend appropriately prepared for the day.
- Tell their class teacher or the school office of any problem that may hinder them from attending school.

We expect that all parents/carers will:

- Ensure their child attends daily and on time.
- Keep the school fully informed on all matters that might affect attendance and/or their child in school.
- Telephone the school on the first day of any absence by 9:15am to inform the school of the reason for absence.
- If attendance becomes a problem – work with the school to ensure an improvement.

- Give serious consideration to whether it is appropriate or necessary to request term time absence.
- Complete a request for absence form for any term time leave of absence prior to proposed absence dates.

The Governing Body will:

- Be responsible for the monitoring of overall attendance, ensuring that the school's attendance figures remain high.
- Ensure the policy is carried out effectively.

The Head Teacher will:

- Monitor attendance each term, and contact parents if attendance is causing concern
- Consider requests for authorised absences
- Ensure action is taken in response to any difficulties reported which impact on attendance (e.g. bullying/behaviour)
- Ensure parents are advised of the school's expectations during the induction meetings for new parents
- Remind parents regularly in newsletters of the importance of good attendance and timekeeping.
- Celebrate good attendance in assemblies with a Top Class Weekly Certificate and an attendance section in the monthly newsletter.
- Reward attendance with over 97% and 100% attendance certificates each term.

The Attendance Officer will:

- Print official registers.
- Make calls to parents when first day absence contact has not been made by parents.
- Record attendance data accurately using agreed codes.
- Record late arrivals and reasons.
- Ensure reasons for absence are recorded accurately.
- Prepare standard letters to inform parents when a child's attendance is giving cause for concern and is thus being monitored.
- Meet with the Head Teacher reporting attendance issues and taking the agreed action.
- Provide attendance reports when requested and ensure DfE attendance returns are accurate.
- Oversee day to day attendance where there is cause for concern, working closely with the Education Welfare Officer to improve pupil attendance.
- Investigate reasons for absence.

Class Teachers will:

- Prepare and deliver stimulating and enjoyable learning for all pupils
- Register pupils at the start of each morning and afternoon session
- Alert the SLT of any children demonstrating an unsettled pattern of attendance
- Report percentage attendance at parent consultations
- Ensure all absence notes are passed to the Attendance Officer.
- Work with the Senior Leadership Team to agree and implement strategies to re-engage pupils with emerging attendance issues

Understanding types of absence

Every half-day absence must be classified by the school as either authorised or unauthorised. This is why information about the cause of each absence is always required.

Examples of Authorised Absence:

- Illness.
- Hospital/dental/doctor appointments for the pupil which can't be made outside school hours.
- Visits to prospective new schools.
- External exams or educational assessments.
- Attendance at funerals of close family members/bereavement.

Examples of Unauthorised Absence

- Holidays.
- Shopping/day trip/visit to a theme park.
- A birthday treat.
- Children who arrive at school too late to get a mark.
- Looking after other children/family members.
- Medical appointments for other family members.
- Truancy.
- Parents keeping pupils off school unnecessarily.
- Absences that have never been properly explained.

Holidays during Term Time

Amendments to the 2006 Government regulations make it clear that the current law does not give any entitlement to parents to take their child for a family holiday or extended leave during term time. Any application for leave must be in 'exceptional circumstances' and the Head Teacher must be satisfied that the circumstances warrant the granting of leave. As a school we are bound by this guidance and the Head Teacher is no longer able to authorise any holiday during term time.

Exceptional Circumstances

The school defines the term "exceptional" as an occasion that cannot be planned for, so anything that can be planned e.g. all family holidays, weddings, family birthday parties or surprise trips booked by relatives, etc. will not be authorised.

If you decide to allow your child to be absent without authorisation this will be recorded as an unauthorised absence and a fixed penalty of £60 (or more) may be issued by the Local Authority.

Persistent Absenteeism

A pupil becomes a 'persistent' absentee when they miss 10% or more schooling across the school year for whatever reason. Absence at this level can be doing considerable damage to any child's educational prospects and we need parents' full support and cooperation to tackle this. We monitor all absence thoroughly. Any case that is seen to have reached this mark or is at risk of moving towards this mark is given priority and parents/carers will be informed immediately. These pupils are tracked, monitored and supported carefully by an identified member of the office staff, in consultation with the Head Teacher and Education Welfare Officer. We also combine this with academic monitoring where absence affects pupil outcomes. Meetings are arranged with the parents, the Head Teacher and Education Welfare Officer if attendance does not improve and an action plan is agreed.

Absence Procedures

Our arrangements for the notification of absence and seeking approval for absence:
Reporting absence (with the exception of school holidays)

- On the first day of their child's absence parents are asked to telephone the school on 01708 220277 by 9.15am.
- If it is unclear how long the child will be absent from school parents are asked to Contact the school on a daily basis to record the absence.
- Absences of 5 days or more must have medical evidence.
- If a student is absent prior to or does not return to school after a school holiday (half term, Christmas, Easter or Summer) the parent/carer will need to provide medical evidence to cover the absence. Failure to provide this evidence will result in the absence being marked as unauthorised and as such this will be referred to the Education Welfare Officer.

Illness and Medical/dental appointments

- Every effort should be made to arrange medical appointments outside school hours
- An appointment card or verification by the doctor/dentist/hospital is required
- Parents are asked to inform the school in advance if their child has a medical appointment
- Children should attend school around the appointment wherever possible
- Children will not be allowed to leave the premises unless they are collected by an adult
- If your child is absent due to vomiting or diarrhoea then they should not return to school for the next 48 hours after the last symptom. This is to reduce the risk of infection to other children and adults at the school
- In the case of repeated absences, the school will require a written explanation of why a child has been absent. The member of the school office will request this when it is required

The DfE provides additional advice in its School Attendance Document (October 2014) which states:

'Schools should authorise absences due to illness unless they have genuine cause for concern about the veracity of an illness. If the authenticity of illness is in doubt, schools can request parents to provide medical evidence to support illness. Schools can record the absence as unauthorised if not satisfied of the authenticity of the illness but should advise parents of their intention. Schools are advised not to request medical evidence unnecessarily. Medical evidence can take the form of prescriptions, appointment cards, etc. rather than doctors' notes.'

Responding to Non-Attendance

When a pupil does not attend school, we will respond in the following manner:

- If no note or telephone call is received from parents, we will endeavour to contact parents within the first hour on the first day of absence.
- The first day calling contact book will be completed.
- Subsequent attempts will be made to contact the parent or other family member if no contact has been possible and the absence continues.
- Children's absence will be monitored by the school office and a school letter will be prepared and sent if absence becomes a concern.
- If absence continues to be a concern the parent will be invited in to discuss their child's attendance and they may be referred to the school nurse.
- If the child has persistent absence, the Educational Welfare Service will become involved.

Lateness
Poor punctuality is not acceptable. If your child misses the start of the day he or she can miss work or important information. Late arriving pupils also disrupt lessons and may feel embarrassed. This can encourage absence.

The School Day
The school day starts at 8.55am and the doors open from 8.45am. Registers will be taken at 8.55 am. If your child arrives at school after the doors are closed at 8.55am, you will need to bring them into the school office and sign the late book, putting a reason why your child is late. Lateness is monitored closely.

Pupils arriving after the register has been closed at 8:55am will be marked late. Figures of lateness will appear on school reports. Children arriving one half hour after registration will lose their mark and will be recorded as an unauthorised absence.

The school monitors punctuality closely and will invite parents/carers in for a meeting if children are regularly late. The Education Welfare Service also become involved in cases of persistent lateness.

Registration

All schools must keep an attendance register on which, at the beginning of each morning and afternoon session, pupils are marked present or absent. Registers must show whether an absence of a pupil is authorised or unauthorised.

Accurate registration and the preservation of security of registers are the responsibility of the Head Teacher. Registers may be needed as evidence in court where parents are being prosecuted for school attendance offences and inappropriate authorisation of absences could compromise proceedings.

Registers will usually be maintained and completed in the school data management system, SIMS.net. Should manuscript registers be necessary they must be kept in ink and any corrections made in a way that the original entry, and the correction, are clearly distinguishable.

Leave of Absence

All absences are shown on school reports and attendance information is passed on to secondary schools.

Procedures

Marking Registers Guidance
Registers may be completed via the school data management systems (SIMS.net) in the classroom.

In the event of the need for paper registers please use the following guidance:

- Class lists will be printed and sent to classrooms
- Children who are present should be shown with a forward slash for the morning and a back slash for the afternoon.
- Children who are absent should be shown by writing an N

- Children who arrive after 8.55am should be shown by writing an L

Unavoidable Closures

Unavoidable closures through bad weather, difficulties associated with the premises, elections, etc. should be indicated by writing in the column for the day the word `closure'. All pupils should be counted as present.

Non-Pupil or INSET days

Such days should be left blank in the same way as bank holidays.

Changing Schools

It is important that if families decide to send their child to a different school that they inform St Joseph's School as soon as possible. A pupil will not be removed from the school roll until we are satisfied that an alternative school or alternative provision has been found. The pupil's school records will then be sent to the new school.

If a family is moving abroad, we request that they provide a new home / school address. If a family is unsure of the new school that the child will be attending, we ask that the family provide an email address and contact telephone number.