



# St Joseph's Catholic Primary School

## Attendance Policy

### School's Mission Policy and Aims:

Empowered by the example of Christ, St. Joseph's Catholic Primary School strives to promote the education and development of our children in an atmosphere of love and mutual respect.

- ✘ by encouraging each person to see themselves as a valued member of a wider community who can act independently and make a positive contribution for the good of all.
- ✘ by fostering a sense of awe and wonder in God and in creation by giving opportunities to take a full conscious and active part in Christian celebration.
- ✘ by creating self-discipline through an awareness of the consequences of our actions, so as to nurture positive behaviour, secure in the knowledge of forgiveness.
- ✘ by providing each child with access to all areas of the curriculum and supporting them to fulfil their individual level of achievement and acquire a thirst for knowledge
- ✘ by imparting a joy and value to the treasured gift of learning.

### Introduction

The Governors have established this policy in consultation with parents, children and staff in order to promote best attendance at St. Joseph's School. The policy was further revised following Government statutory guidance coming into force in September 13.

The school, alongside the Local Authority, firmly believe that all pupils benefit from regular school attendance. To this end we will do all we can to encourage parents/carers to ensure that the children in their care achieve maximum possible attendance and that any problems that prevent full attendance are identified and acted on promptly.

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 each absence is always required, preferably in writing.

**Authorised absences are mornings or afternoons away from school for a good reason like illness or other unavoidable cause.**

**Unauthorised absences are those which the school does not consider reasonable and for which no "leave" has been given. This includes:**

- **Parents keeping children off school unnecessarily (i.e. birthday treat, shopping trip etc.)**
- **Truancy before or during the school day**
- **Absences which have never been properly explained**
- **Children who arrive at school very late without good cause (very late 45 minutes after the session begins)**
- **Holidays in term time (please see guidance below)**

## **Expectations**

### *We expect that all children will:*

- attend school every day;
- attend school punctually;
- attend school appropriately prepared for the day;
- discuss promptly with their class teacher, any problems that deter them from attending school.

### *We expect that the child's family will:*

- make sure their child arrives at school and is collected at the appropriate times;\*
- make sure their child arrives healthy, dressed in school uniform and properly equipped for school;\*
- not take holidays during term time;\*
- contact the school on their child's first day of absence and notify the cause of absence in writing on their return to school;\*
- encourage regular school attendance and be aware of their legal responsibilities;
- contact the school promptly whenever any problem occurs that may keep the child away from school.

\*These statements are taken from the Home School Agreement that Parents are asked to sign when joining the school.

### *We expect that school staff will:*

- keep regular and accurate records of attendance for all pupils, at least twice daily;
- monitor every pupil's attendance;
- contact parents as soon as possible when a pupil fails to attend where no message has been received to explain the absence;
- follow up all unexplained absences to obtain notes authorising the absence,

- encourage good attendance
- provide a welcoming atmosphere for children; provide a safe learning environment; provide a sympathetic response to any pupil's concerns
- make initial enquiries of parents/carers of pupils who are not attending regularly, express their concern and clarify the school's and the LEA's expectations with regard to regular school attendance;
- refer irregular or unjustified patterns of attendance to the Education welfare.

## Holidays

The school holiday dates are published in advance of the school year and we strongly advise parents/carers to book their family holidays during those school holidays. In line with Government guidance holidays in term time will not be granted authorised absence.

## Encouraging Attendance

Children may sometimes 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 better 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 may make things worse.

St Joseph's School encourages regular attendance in the following ways:

- by committing to and reviewing its Mission Statement;
- by responding promptly to a child's or parent's concerns about the school or other pupils;
- by marking registers accurately and punctually during morning and afternoon registration. If pupils arrive at school after the close of the register without a written explanation, the lateness will be recorded. An unauthorised absence will be given to children arriving 45 minutes after the beginning of a session. The late pupil's name recorded in the register by admin staff as late in case of a fire drill;
- by publishing attendance information with children's reports and on the website;
- by celebrating good and improved attendance;
- by monitoring pupils, informing parents/carers in writing of irregular attendance, arranging meetings with them if necessary and referring the family to the Education Welfare Service if the irregular attendance continues.

## Leave of absence

**All leave of absence should be requested in writing on the Application for Leave of Absence Form which is available on the school website under Office-Absence.**

Absence will only be authorised in exceptional circumstances, which may include compassionate grounds such as attendance at a funeral, a medical appointment or family wedding. An event associated with compassionate leave cannot be combined with a holiday.

Where a child is taking part in an educational activity such as a drama production or major sporting event then absence will only be authorised for a reasonable absence and via a licence obtained through the local authority. The expectation would be that the organising body is approved and recognised by the Local Authority.

Absence for Education off site such as a visit to a new school may be organised through the school office. Education off site is strictly limited to official activities; it does not include activities that parents may deem to be educational such as a family visit to cultural site or a joint activity with relatives from abroad.

Absence for a medical appointment may be arranged through the school office. Provision of an appointment card or letter is advisable.

## **Responding To Non-Attendance**

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

- On the first day of absence, if no note or telephone call is received from the parent/carer by 11 a.m. the school will endeavour to contact them that day. If the family are not on the telephone, a letter will be sent.
- If there is no response, the school will continue to try to contact the parent/carer. If by the end of the second day, there has still been no contact made, (third day if waiting for a response to a letter), the school will send a letter of concern to parents/carers or invite them into school to discuss their concerns. The school will tell parents that if the absence persists that a referral will be made to the Education Welfare Officer (EWO).
- Failure to comply with the expectations set by the EWO may result in further action, an application for an Education Supervision Order, or court prosecution.

## **Changing schools**

It is important that if families decide to send the child/children in their care to a different school that they inform St Joseph's school staff as soon as possible. A pupil will not be removed from this school roll until the following information has been received and investigated:

- the date the pupil will be leaving this school and starting the next;
- the address of the new school;
- the new home address, if it is known.

The pupil's school records will then be sent on to the new school as soon as possible. In the event that the school has not been informed of the above information, the family will be referred to the Education Welfare.

## **School Organisation**

In order for the school's Attendance Policy to be successful, every member of staff must make attendance a high priority and convey this to the pupils at all times. Parents/carers need to support these views in the home to ensure that children are receiving corresponding messages about the value of education.

In addition to this, the School has the following responsibilities:

### **Head Teacher, Governors and admin team to:**

- adopt the whole policy;
- ensure that the registration procedures are carried out efficiently and that appropriate resources are provided;
- maintain a scheme for contacting parents on the first day of absence;
- consult and liaise closely with the EWS on a regular basis and take responsibility for ensuring appropriate pupils are identified and referred without delay;
- to work in close collaboration with the EWS during their termly/half termly register analysis;
- institute an attendance award scheme with assemblies, certificates and rewards;
- monitor and evaluate attendance with the EWS.

### **Class teachers:**

- to complete registers accurately and punctually at least twice daily;
- to follow up any unexplained non-attendance;
- to record all reasons for absences in the register;
- to inform the admin team and Headteacher of concerns;
- to be alert to early signs of disaffection which could culminate in non-attendance and to report these concerns as soon as possible to appropriate staff (i.e. Headteacher, SENCO, Chaplain etc).

**Review Date Sept 2019**