



*In the Light of Jesus
we Learn to Shine*

St. Joseph's Catholic Primary School

Attendance and Leave of Absence Policy

Ratified by Governors

Date: 28.03.2022

Reviewed	February 2022
Date of next Review	February 2025
Approval Body	Governing Body
Publication	School Website/Staff Policy folder

We have carefully considered the impact of this policy on equality and the possible implications for pupils with protected characteristics, as part of our commitment to meet the Public Sector Equality Duty (PSED) requirement to have due regard to the need to eliminate discrimination, advance equality of opportunity and foster good relations.



SECTION 1: POLICY

The law states that a pupil is required to attend regularly at the school where he, or she, is a registered pupil.

Regular school attendance and punctuality are extremely important, valuable learning time is lost when pupils are absent or late. Pupils need to attend school regularly if they are to take full advantage of the educational opportunities available to them. The school's ethos demonstrates that children feel that their presence in school is important, that they are missed when they are absent or late. The school will take appropriate action when necessary in order to promote the aims of the policy.

Aims:

- To maximise attendance of all children.
- To provide an environment which encourages regular attendance and makes attendance and punctuality a priority for all those associated at the school.
- To monitor and support children whose attendance is a cause for concern and work in partnership with parents and carers to resolve any difficulty.
- To analyse attendance data regularly to inform future policy and practice.
- To work closely and make full use of the support from the wider community including the Education Welfare Service and multi-agency teams.

SECTION 2: ATTENDANCE GUIDANCE

Responsibilities of Parents and Carers:

By law Parents are responsible for ensuring children attend school regularly and punctually rests with parents¹. However, where school attendance problems occur, the key to resolving these problems is engaging the child through collaborative working between the parent, the school and the Local Authority.

Parents should:

- Ensure their children attend school regularly
- Ensure they are punctual for school.
- Ensure they are appropriately dressed and in a condition to learn.
- Comply with the attendance policy.
- Make sure their child understands the reasons for good attendance and punctuality.
- Make sure appointments are made outside of school hours wherever possible and show evidence of the appointment when it is not.
- Notify the school when their child is absent as soon as possible, preferably on the first day.
- Provide a written explanation for their child's absence on their child's return to school.
- Follow the procedure for term time holidays
- Only allow absence from school for legitimate reasons.
- Work in partnership with the school.

¹ The term parent includes those who have parental responsibility as defined in the Children Act 1989 and as defined in Section 576 of the Education Act 1996. The latter gives parental responsibility to those who may not be the child's actual parents but have day to day care of the child.

Responsibilities of the school

The school will:

- Have a registration system that is accurate, informative and understood.
- Analyse data regularly and identify the actions that need to be taken.
- Follow up unexplained absences promptly.
- Ensure that attendance and punctuality have a high profile in our communications with parents.
- Have clear written guidance for parents.
- Promote good attendance and punctuality for all.
- Work in partnership with families and the Educational Welfare Service.
- Inform parents of their child's attendance regularly during the school year.
- Set and monitor progress towards annual targets for attendance.
- Evaluate the effectiveness of the Attendance Policy

Responsibilities of the Educational Welfare Service

The Education Welfare Service will:

- Monitor registers regularly.
- Identify pupils/families with attendance difficulties.
- Agree time limited action which needs to be taken by the school or education welfare officer.
- Feedback on the progress of cases and exchange of information.
- Issue penalty notices where applicable.
- Provide advice to the school.
- Work in partnership with the school and families.

SECTION 3: SCHOOL PROCEDURES

- The School uses Attendance Manager provided by SIMS to store and monitor it's legal responsibilities in relationship to attendance. This system consists of specialised software.
- Registers are a vital legal document and teachers are required by their contractual duties to take an attendance register at the beginning of both the morning and afternoon sessions. Registers are completed electronically.
- Registers must be completed carefully and accurately, as they provide a record of a pupil's attendance. Failure to complete a register accurately leaves the school vulnerable to complaint from parents or carers and constitutes a risk if an emergency evacuation has to take place.

Absence

Parents and Carers can be taken to court if they don't make sure their child attends school, without reason (as defined in law) and if the child has too many unauthorised absences.

Lateness

All parents are responsible for their child's travel arrangements to school and to ensure their child arrives on time. Even pupils coming from some distance are therefore expected to be on time. Pupils are marked late if they are in school before the end of registration but were not present when their name was called.

School hours are from 8.45 am until 3.15 pm (KS1) and 3.20 pm (KS2) Monday to Friday. The school does not take responsibility for pupils on site prior to 8.45 am. Pupils must not stay on site after 3.45pm, unless they are taking part in an organised school activity.

- Pupils arriving after the register has been closed at 9.05 am, will be considered as late.
- Pupils arriving after 9.05 am must report to the School Office so that their attendance can be recorded.
- Pupils arriving after 9.25 am will be officially absent for the morning session. This will be considered an un-authorised absence unless a satisfactory reason is given, for example a medical appointment.
- Lateness is monitored.
- Action to address lateness will be taken in line with the school's strategy to improve punctuality.
- We expect parents and carers to collect their child promptly at the end of the school day as it is upsetting for children if they do not. Children who are not collected within 15 minutes of the end of the school day are brought to the school office and their names are recorded and parents are contacted. Where children are collected late from school persistently, parents will be asked to meet with the Headteacher.

Illness

- Parents/carers are asked to contact the school on the first day of absence to provide the reason for the absence.
- Where Office Staff are not made aware of the reason for a child's absence they will, wherever possible, contact parents/carers by telephone on the first day of absence.
- If any member of staff is concerned about a reason for absence, the Headteacher, Deputy Headteacher or a member of SLT should be informed.
- In the event of continued sickness, parents are advised to provide information from a relevant practitioner. This keeps pastoral and attendance staff informed of the pupil's needs and appropriate support can then be arranged where necessary.

Medical or Dental Appointments

Pupils must not leave the school premises during the school day without permission from the Head teacher in consultation with the parents. Routine medical or dental appointments are discouraged in school time because of the disruption that they cause. However, where appointments in school time are absolutely necessary, pupils are encouraged to attend school for part of the day depending on the time of the appointment.

- Absence from school due to a medical or dental appointment will be considered as an authorised absence. Parents should inform the school in advance and show the letter or appointment card as evidence.
- Parents/carers are encouraged to make all medical appointments out of school hours.

Missing Physical Activities

Permission to be excused from PE or Swimming should be made in writing to the teacher concerned and should only be for medical reasons. An explanatory note from a medical professional may be required should the class teacher see it as necessary to confirm and endorse the request.

SECTION 4: LEAVE OF ABSENCE POLICY for SCHOOLS

Holidays during Term Time

The Education (Pupil Registration) Regulations 2006 have been amended and come into force from 1st September 2013. The amendments remove references to 'holiday' from school and extended leave of absence as well as the statutory threshold of ten school days. **Headteachers may not grant any leave of absence during term time unless there are exceptional circumstances.**

Requests for leave of absence should not normally be granted for the purposes of a holiday. The law does not give any entitlement to parents to take their child on holiday during term time. Headteachers have the discretion to authorise leave of absence in **exceptional** circumstances and it is only for the Headteacher to determine what is truly exceptional. School days are precious; children only attend school 190 out of 365 days. There are 175 days a year which parents can use for any activities other than school.

Leave of absence will not be authorised in the following circumstances:

- Pupil's attendance is less than 97% in the previous 12 months
- During SATs years (Year 2 and Year 6)
- In a transition year
- At the beginning of any academic year
- Retrospectively – requests received after leave has been taken
- If there are any other academic concerns such as poor punctuality, pupil's ability to catch up on the work missed etc
- If leave of absence has already been taken in the same school year

We will also take into account the following:

- The pupil's general absence/attendance record, e.g. unauthorised absence
- Proximity of SATs and public examinations
- Amount of time requested
- Age of the pupil
- Length of the proposed leave – no more than 5 days
- Pupil's ability to catch up on the work
- Pupil's educational needs
- General welfare of the pupil
- Circumstances of the request
- Purpose of the leave
- Frequency of the activity; and
- When the request was made

Applications for Leave of absence

Requests must be made in advance or the absence cannot legally be authorised. All requests must be made at least two weeks in advance to the Headteacher by completing the school application form. A parent/adult with whom the child resides with must make the application even though the pupil may not be taking the proposed leave with them. The form must be fully completed and you will receive a written response confirming if the request will be authorised or not (**appendix 1**).

If leave is granted and you are travelling abroad you will need to supply the school with confirmation of your return flight tickets, such as bringing a copy of the flight tickets into the school reception for us to copy.

Unauthorised Absence

If you take your child out of school without the school's prior authorisation the absence will be recorded as unauthorised (which is illegal) and noted in your child's school records. Leave of absence can only be authorised by the Head teacher.

Where a parent/carer has taken their child on leave of absence during term time for 5 consecutive school days or more, without the Headteacher's authorisation, Luton Local Authority will issue a Penalty Notice. In these circumstances a warning will not be given. Penalty Notices are per parent, per child as appropriate, so if there are 2 parents both will need to pay the fine. From 1 September 2013 penalty notices will need to be paid within 21 days at £60 or £120 within 28 days. Unpaid Penalty Notices will result in prosecution for the absence in the magistrate's court and an increased fine.

The school make the decision as to whether the request of leave should be granted or not and the Local Authority make the decision to impose a penalty for this.

Failure to return to school on the date expected

If there is a reason which delays the pupil in returning to school the parent/guardian must inform the school immediately. The school will require evidence of this issue and will then decide whether the absence will be authorised. For any travel arrangements outside of the UK we require proof of return flights, prior to the leave being taken. This may prevent you from receiving unauthorised absence for your child and being fined if they are unable to return on the date expected. Each case will be assessed individually and medical evidence from abroad will not be accepted routinely as evidence that a pupil was unable to attend school.

Roll Removal

A Pupil can be removed from roll in either of these circumstances:

- If you take your child on leave of absence which has been authorised by the school but your child fails to return on the agreed date, any extra time absent from school will be counted as unauthorised. If your child fails to return within ten days of the expected date of return then the school may remove your child from the school roll and notify the Local Authority accordingly.
- Or, if your child has 20 days continuous unauthorised absence.

Other Absence

Other absence from school will be considered on an individual basis and a decision will be made to authorise or un-authorise the absence.

SECTION 5: MONITORING AND REPORTING ATTENDANCE

Attendance is monitored regularly,

- The Attendance Officer will attempt to telephone families whose child is absent on the first day of absence where no reason has previously been given.
- Teachers must inform the Headteacher when they notice patterns of absence.
- Attendance data will be collected monthly to establish patterns of irregular attendance. This will include children with incomplete weeks; Monday and Friday absences; lateness; periods of extended absence; periods of un-authorised; and all children with attendance below 90%. This data will be discussed with the EWO as part of the fortnightly meetings.
- The Headteacher and EWO will discuss the impact of the School's Attendance Policy, attendance target and the strategies used to promote good attendance annually and the Headteacher will recommend an attendance target to the Governors.
- The Governors will set an annual target of attendance and unauthorised absence and review this annually at its first meeting.

Reporting Attendance

To Parents

All absences both authorised, unauthorised absence and lateness will be reported to the parents twice a year, during the Lent term at Parent Consultation meetings and at the end of the academic year with their child's annual report. The Attendance Officer produces these reports using the SIMS attendance module.

In order to give parents/carers a benchmark to their child's attendance to other children in the school and nationally the following grades will be used:

100%	Excellent
98% - 99.9%	Very Good
94% - 97.9%	Good
90% - 93.9%	Satisfactory
Under 90%	Unsatisfactory

Parents are able to make an appointment with the Family Worker or Headteacher to discuss any concerns they have.

Parents are given information about whole school attendance through letters, in newsletters and at annual Parent meetings (**Appendix 2 – Attendance Fact sheet**)

To Educational Welfare Service

The Attendance Officer provides an attendance print out of 95% and below to assist the Educational Welfare Officer with their register check. This report is shared with the Educational Welfare Service.

To the Department for Education

Three times a year the Attendance Officer completes the FORVUS return as per guidelines.

To the Governing Body

The Head teacher reports on attendance each term.

Promoting and Rewarding Good Attendance

The class with the best weekly attendance overall (KS1) is awarded a school attendance certificate and has an attendance chart prominently displayed in the classroom.

The class with the best half termly attendance overall (KS1 and KS2) is awarded the school attendance cup and has an attendance chart prominently displayed in the classroom.

Children who achieve 100% attendance are presented with a certificate at the end of each term.

Children who achieve 100% attendance at the end of the year are presented with a certificate and participate in an attendance activity.

The rewards system is regularly reviewed and amended to continue to encourage good attendance particularly for poor attendees.

Improving Poor Attendance and Punctuality

The regular monitoring and analysis of school registers enables patterns and trends to be identified.

Step 1

Where poor attendance or punctuality is identified the parent is advised that their child's attendance/punctuality is being monitored for the next term. Parents are able to meet the Family Worker, Attendance Officer or Headteacher to discuss this.

Step 2

Where the concern persists the Family Worker will invite the parents to a meeting to discuss the reasons for the absence or punctuality difficulties. The purpose of this meeting is to plan for improvement. The school will continue to monitor the child's attendance each week.

Step 3

Where no improvement has been made the Educational Welfare Officer will be informed and parents will be invited to a second meeting.

The aim throughout this process is to ensure all children have the best attendance possible. The school will work in partnership with parents and take into account individual circumstances, applying the process accordingly.

A visit to families at home will be arranged if necessary.

Policy Implementation

The policy and associated guidance will be discussed with staff and governors.

A copy of registration guidance will be given to supply staff working in the school.

Families will be informed of the attendance procedures via the school prospectus/website, school induction meetings and newsletters.

This policy was ratified by governors 28.03.2022.

It will be reviewed in February 2025, or sooner if regulations change.