

St Joseph's Catholic Primary School

25 April 2013

Dear Parents

Important Letter - Our attendance and absence procedures

In recent years we have worked very hard to improve attendance levels in our school, resulting in our attendance levels now being in the top 20% of all schools in the country. As we have steadily improved attendance we have also improved the standards reached by our children, proving the link between good attendance and good progress.

We have an attendance policy that we follow. Our policy was produced with expert advice from our attendance consultant and the Education Investigation Service. As part of our policy we write to parents when their child's attendance reaches 93%, 90% and 85% or below.

In order to be fair to everyone, we send letters out to parents even if we know the absences are completely genuine. It is our duty to alert parents if their child's attendance is falling below targets for any reason. We cannot make exceptions to the policy otherwise it is not fair. We also send these letters by post as we need to prove we have sent them – we cannot do this by sending letters home with the children.

We understand that if you receive a letter through the post about your child's attendance this can be upsetting, especially if you know your child's absences were all genuine and unavoidable. We do not want you to feel upset or offended. We ask you to understand that we cannot differentiate who we send a letter to or not – the policy has to be uniform and fair. We also reassure you that we do realise some absence is unavoidable and necessary – but it is still our duty to keep you informed. In cases of genuine absence we usually find that once the child is better and back to school, their attendance improves by when we monitor absence in the next month.

Below is the section from the policy that explains when we send letters to parents and when we make referrals to the local authority:

Kind hands, kind words...like Jesus



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INVESTOR IN PEOPLE

Attendance at 93% or below

When a child has reached the 93% or below mark **for any reasons, including only genuine absences**, the headteacher will write to parents to alert them and offer support if they would like it. Attendance below 93% is regarded as heading towards persistent absence and the headteacher may ask to see parents in order to draw up an attendance action plan.

Attendance at 90% or below

When a child has reached the 90% or below mark **for any reasons, including only genuine absences**, the headteacher will write to parents to alert them and notify them that until their child's attendance improves to above 90% **no further absences will be authorised unless evidence is provided**. Evidence includes appointment cards, evidence of medicines being prescribed by a doctor or evidence of the circumstances necessitating the absence from school. **If evidence is not provided then any absence will be unauthorised**. Please note this requirement for evidence only applies for the period until your child's absence reaches above 90%.

Attendance at 85% or below

When a child's absence falls to 85% or below we will have already been in contact several times and offered every support possible. The headteacher will write to parents to inform them that their child's attendance has been referred to the Education Investigation Service who have legal powers to prosecute, issue penalty notices and make home visits. The EIS is independent of the school and is part of the local authority.

Unauthorised Absence

Unauthorised absences are those which the school does not consider reasonable and for which permission has not been given. This type of absence can lead to the Local Authority using sanctions and/or legal proceedings. This includes:

- parents/carers keeping children off school unnecessarily;
- absences which have never been properly explained;
- **children who arrive at school too late to get an attendance mark** in the register;
- shopping, looking after other children or birthdays; and
- day trips and holidays in term time **which have not been agreed**.

Our lateness procedures

If your child is regularly late for school we will write to you to alert you and offer support if you would like it. We will do everything we can to help you avoid your child being persistently late.

If there is no improvement and your child is persistently late we will write to you to let you know that we will **no longer authorise the lateness**. **Unauthorised lateness** counts as **unauthorised absence**. Unauthorised absence can be reported to the Education Investigation Service who have legal powers to **prosecute** or issue **penalty notices**. The EIS are independent of the school and are part of the local authority.



Keeping in contact with the school is essential

Sometimes there are situations and circumstances that require compassion and special consideration such as bereavements, serious illness, family difficulties and so on. If your child's attendance or timekeeping is likely to suffer for a short period for a genuine reason it is essential that you let the headteacher, deputy headteacher or attendance consultant know, in the strictest confidence. If we are made aware of situations we can help you – if we are not we will not be aware of the circumstances surrounding absence or lateness and cannot provide support or special consideration.

Please understand the reasons why we need to follow a policy, issue letters and make referrals – we do not want you to be upset or offended.

It is our duty to provide the best education we possibly can. We cannot provide a good education to children if they are not regularly in school and on time. We have a duty to promote good attendance and parents have a **legal responsibility** to make sure their children attend school regularly and on time.

Please do not be offended if your child's absence is genuine and you receive a letter

In this letter we have made it clear that we send letters through the post to **all** parents whose child's attendance falls to 93%, 90% and 85% or below whatever the reasons. The letter is for your information and will help you to monitor your child's attendance. If you are frequently receiving absence letters this could indicate a potential problem and it would be a good idea to contact the school to discuss the matter.

Yours faithfully

M Hinton
Headteacher

