



## The Law relating to safeguarding

Section 175 of the Education Act 2002 places a duty on local authorities and governing bodies to have regard to guidance issued by the Secretary of State with regard to safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children and students under the age of 18.

### Promoting Regular Attendance:

Helping to create a pattern of regular attendance is everybody's responsibility - parents and carers, pupils and all members of school staff. To help us all to focus on this we will:

- Give you details on attendance in our regular newsletter and at assemblies;
- Report to you each term on how your child is performing in school, what their attendance and punctuality rate is and how this relates to their attainment and progress;
- Celebrate good attendance by sharing class achievements;
- Reward good attendance by rewarding an Attendance trophy each week to the class with the best attendance; and
- Reward good or improving attendance through certificates and prizes at the end of each term.

### Understanding types of absence:

Every half-day absence from school has to be classified by the school (not by the parents/carers), as either AUTHORISED or UNAUTHORISED. This is why information about the cause of any absence is always required by telephone call and preferably in writing.

**Authorised absences** are mornings or afternoons away from school for a good reason like illness, medical/dental appointments which unavoidably fall in school time, emergencies or other unavoidable cause.

**Unauthorised absences** are those which the school does not consider reasonable and for which no leave has 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.
- Truancy before or during the school day
- Absences which have never been properly explained.
- Late arrival after the closure of register.
- Shopping, day trips, looking after other children or birthdays.
- Holidays in term time.

Whilst any child may be off school because they are ill, sometimes they can be reluctant to attend school. If there are any problems with regular attendance, it is advisable it is dealt with between the school, the parents and the child. If your child is reluctant to attend, it is inadvisable 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 can create further problems. **St Joseph's** offers an open door policy to solving problems, however small and the headteacher affirms this in every newsletter.

### Persistent Absence (PA):

A pupil becomes a 'persistent absentee' when they miss 10% or more schooling for whatever reason. Absence at this level is doing considerable damage to any child's education and we need parents' fullest support and co-operation to tackle this.

### **Attendance at 95% or below**

We monitor all absence thoroughly. When a child attendance has reached the 95% or below for any reasons, including only genuine absences, the headteacher will write to parents to alert them and offer support. Attendance below 95% 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 93% or below**

When a child has reached the 93% attendance or below 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 93% 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. There are consequences of unauthorised absence detailed below. Please note this only applies for the period until your child's absence reaches above 93%.

### **Attendance at 90% or below**

When a child's attendance falls to 90% 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.

**Our school works with an Attendance Consultant. If between the school, attendance consultant and the parents / carers we are unable to resolve persistent absence issues these will be referred to Dudley Council Education Investigation Service for consideration of a fixed penalty notice fine or legal action if unauthorised absence continues to occur.**

### **Absence Procedures:**

If your child is absent you must:

- contact us as soon as possible on the first day of absence, ideally by 9.15am;
- or call into school and report to a member of the staff

### **If your child is absent we will:**

- telephone you on the first day of absence if we have not heard from you;
- invite you in to discuss the situation with the Head Teacher, Deputy Headteacher or Attendance Consultant if absences persist;
- refer the matter to our Attendance Consultant and / or the Local Authority if attendance falls below 90%

### **Telephone numbers:**

There are times when we need to contact parents/carers about lots of things, including absence, we need to have at least two emergency contact numbers at all times. Help us to help you and your child by making sure we always have an up to date number – if we don't then something important may be missed. There will be regular checks on telephone numbers throughout the year.

## **Lateness:**

Poor punctuality is not acceptable. If your child misses the start of the day they can miss work and do not spend time with their class teacher getting vital information and news for the day. Late arriving pupils also disrupt lessons. This can be embarrassing for the child and can encourage absence.

## **How we manage lateness:**

The school day starts at 9.00am and we expect your child to be in class at that time. We open our doors at 8.45am.

Registers will be marked at 9.00am and your child will receive a late mark if they are not present in the class.

The register will be closed 30 minutes after school's start time. In accordance with the Regulations, if your child arrives after that time they will receive a mark that shows them to be on site, but this will not count as a present mark and it will mean they have an unauthorised absence. This may mean that a referral is made to the Local Authority and you could face the possibility of a Fixed Penalty Notice issued per parent per child if the problem persists.

If your child has a persistent late record you will be written to or may be asked to meet with a member of school staff and/or Attendance Consultant to resolve the problem. If you are having problems getting your child to school on time you can approach us at any time to discuss issues.

## **Holidays in Term Time/Leave of Absence:**

We politely request that parents are open and honest with school when taking leave of absence and do not cover up their child's leave of absence. Taking holidays in term time can affect your child's schooling as much as any other absence and we expect parents to help us by not taking children away in school time.

Remember that any savings you think you may make by taking a holiday in school time are offset by the cost to your child's education.

**There is no automatic entitlement in law to time off in school time to go on holiday** and the government made an amendment to the Education (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2006 in September 2013 to reflect this.

Leave of absence shall not be granted unless –

- (a) an application has been made in advance to the proprietor by a parent with whom the pupil normally resides: and
- (b) the proprietor, or a person authorised by the proprietor in accordance with paragraph (1), considers that leave of absence should be granted due to the **exceptional circumstances** relating to that application.

In line with the Pupil Registration Regulations, St Joseph's Catholic Primary School will only grant leave where parents can prove exceptional circumstances.

**All applications must be made in writing to the Head Teacher at least 10 school days prior to the requested leave date.**

**Any period of leave taken that has not been granted, nor has the school received prior notice, school have been informed or have been made aware leave has been taken without notice, or the leave is in excess of that agreed with school, will be classed as unauthorised leave of absence. This unauthorised absence will then be referred to Dudley Council, Education Investigation Service for consideration of a fixed penalty fine up to £120 per parent per child or further legal action.**

## **Children Missing Education**

If a pupil does not return to school after the leave of absence return date or there is no explainable reason for absence, school and the Attendance Consultant will investigate and try to establish contact with parent/s carer/s which may include a home visit. If we are still unable to establish any contact we will follow the Local Authority child missing education procedure and may remove my child's name from the school register under Regulation 8, 1 (f) of The Education (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2006.

## **Penalty Notice Fines issued by the Local Authority**

Parents/carers are expected to contact school at an early stage and to work with the staff and our Attendance Consultant in resolving any problems together. This is nearly always successful. If difficulties cannot be sorted out in this way, the school may refer the child to the Education Investigation Service at the Local Authority.

The Education Investigation Service at the Local Authority may issue a Penalty Notice Fine of up to £120 (per parent/per child) or instigate legal proceedings in the Magistrates Court in the following circumstances:

- Where an excluded child is identified in a public place in the first 6 days of an exclusion,
- Where a Formal Warning Notice has previously been issued regarding unauthorised absence and further unauthorised absence is accrued,
- Where there is recorded unauthorised term time leave of absence/holiday leave.

Further information regarding Penalty Notice Fines and other enforcement proceedings relating to school attendance can be obtained from the Education Investigation Service (01384 813417).

## **School targets, projects and special initiatives:**

The school has targets to improve attendance and your child has an important part to play in meeting these targets.

The minimum target level of attendance for this school is 97% and we will keep you updated regularly about progress to this level and how your child's attendance compares.

Our ambition is to achieve better than this because we know that good attendance is the key to successful schooling. Through the school year we monitor absences and punctuality to show us where improvements need to be made.

Information on any projects or initiatives that will focus on these areas will be provided in our newsletters and we ask for your full support.

## **People responsible for ensuring good attendance:**

Mr Hinton, Executive Headteacher  
Mrs S Chapman, Head of School  
Mrs M Asrar, School Administrator  
Mrs K Lemm, School Administrator  
Mrs E O'Sullivan, Attendance Consultant

## **Summary:**

The school has a legal duty to publish its absence figures to parents/carers and to promote attendance. Equally, every parent/carer has a duty to make sure that their child/ren attends.

All school staff are committed to working with parents/carers and pupils as the best way to ensure as high a level of attendance as possible.

It will be reviewed as part of the school's cycle for reviewing policies. Its success should be judged by answers to the following questions:

Have we reached our attendance target of 97%?

Did all the classes reach their attendance target?

Is everyone aware of the procedures to be followed?

Do class teachers and children have high expectations of themselves and others?

Are forms and records regularly completed?

Do newsletters include updates?

Has the trophy been allocated?

**This policy was reviewed in February 2020 and will be reviewed annually**

## **Covid-19 Annex to St Joseph's Catholic Primary Attendance Policy**

The Government states that *“Eligible children – including priority groups – are strongly encouraged to attend their education setting, unless they are self-isolating or they are clinically vulnerable”*.

The welfare and safety of our pupils and staff remain paramount. We understand that this transition period of pupils returning to school will be difficult for all. Whilst children return, we will be following strict hygiene measures and consistent groups to reduce the rate of transmission of Covid-19. Further guidance for parents/carers can be found GOV.UK *Opening schools and educational settings to more pupils from 1 June: guidance for parents and carers*.

### **Communication**

School will still try to contact you regarding whether you will be sending your child or not. *(Schools have a ‘duty of care’ to ensure the safety and well-being of all children on roll.)*

School will communicate with parents/carer if your child is in an eligible or vulnerable group to see whether your child will be attending. **Please help us by ensuring school has up to date contact details and emergency numbers.**

You should notify school if your child is unable to attend school as early as possible. School will continue to follow up with any parent or carer whose child has been expected to attend and subsequently does not.

### **Safeguarding**

Safeguarding children remains a priority. If school are concerned or unable to establish contact with parent/carer our Attendance Support Officer may try to establish contact via a safe and well visit or other means of communication. School will continue to inform Social Workers where children with a Social Worker do not attend.

### **Attendance**

The eligible groups to attend currently are children of Key Workers, Vulnerable Children, Early Years, Reception, Year 1 and Year 6.

We are here to support you and your child in the transition to returning to school and understand this can be a worrying time for all. If you have any concerns or your child is worried please contact school to discuss such barriers.

If your child has any of the Covid-19 symptoms, please **do not** send them into school. You should inform school about the reason for absence and contact the relevant medical establishment for advice.

We would not expect you to send your child if they or someone in your household is extremely clinically vulnerable. They should have received a letter advising them to shield or have been told by their GP or hospital clinician (refer to GOV.UK guidance on shielding and protecting people who are clinically extremely vulnerable from Covid-19)

Children should only attend if stringent social distancing can be adhered to, and the child is able to understand and follow those instructions.

Parents will **not** be fined for non-attendance at this time however school still have a duty to contact parents/carer about absence and will continue to follow up any welfare or safeguarding concerns.

## Registers

From the 1<sup>st</sup> of June School must submit a daily return to the Government and registers are to be marked for pupils eligible and not eligible to attend.

- X – if a child is **not eligible** to attend and do not fall into the key groups/advised year groups to return.
- Y – eligible to attend but self-shielding
- I or M – eligible to attend but are ill or have a medical appointment
- C – not attending but eligible to attend
- D – at a PRU
- B – host school on a temporary basis e.g. If their home school cannot accommodate them

Date of Review: 1<sup>st</sup> June 2020

Date of Next Review: July 2020