

# St Joseph's Catholic Primary School



## CRC Article 29(goals of education)

Education must develop every child's personality, talents and abilities to the full. It must encourage the child's respect for human rights, as well as respect for their parents, their own and other cultures, and the environment.

All members of the school community are treated with the respect and sensitivity implicit within our Catholic ethos and the practice of a code of equal opportunities and inclusion. Equality of treatment and opportunity operate regardless of background, ability, gender, religion, disability or ethnicity.

This is a hardworking school and your child plays their part in making it so. We aim for an environment which enables and encourages all members of the community to reach out for excellence. For our children to gain the greatest benefit from their education it is vital that they attend regularly and your child should be at school, on time, every day the school is open unless the reason for the absence is **unavoidable**.

It is **very important** therefore that you make sure that your child **attends regularly** and this policy sets out how together we will achieve this.

### Why Regular Attendance is so important:

**Learning:** - Any absence affects the pattern of a child's schooling and regular absence will seriously affect their learning. Any pupil's absence disrupts teaching routines so may affect the learning of others in the same class.

Ensuring your child's regular attendance at school is your legal responsibility and permitting absence from school without a good reason creates an offence in law and may result in prosecution.

**Safeguarding:** - Your child may be at risk of harm if they do not attend school regularly. Safeguarding the interests of each child is everyone's responsibility and within the context of this school, promoting the welfare and life opportunities for your child encompasses:-

Attendance

Behaviour Management

Health and Safety

Access to the Curriculum

Anti- bullying

Failing to attend this school on a regular basis will be considered as a safeguarding matter.

## The Law relating to attendance

Section 7 of the Education Act 1996 states that *'the parent of every child of compulsory school age shall cause him / her to receive efficient full time education suitable:-*

*(a) to age, ability and aptitude and*

*(b) to any special educational needs he/ she may have*

*Either by regular attendance at school or otherwise'*

## 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;
- **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.**

Whilst any child may be off school because they are ill, sometimes they can be reluctant to attend school. Any problems with regular attendance are best sorted out between the school, the parents and the child. If your 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 usually makes things worse.

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 has reached the 95% or below mark **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% 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 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 absence 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 the local authority Education Investigation Service for consideration for legal proceedings, home visits, penalty notices etc.**

## **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 95%

## **Telephone numbers:**

There are times when we need to contact parents/carers about lots of things, including absence, so we need to have your 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 you could face the possibility of a Penalty Notice if the problem persists.**

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

Should school be unable to resolve an ongoing lateness issue we reserve the right to bring forward the close of register. This would mean that your child's lateness would be recorded as unauthorised which could result in the Local Authority considering enforcement proceedings against you. **We will always inform you in writing should this action be necessary.**

### **Holidays in Term Time:**

Taking holidays in term time will 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 light of the changes to 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 without the agreement of the school, prior notice to school and in excess of that agreed with school, will be classed as **unauthorised** and may attract sanctions such as a Penalty Notice or prosecution in the Magistrate's Court.

### **The Education Investigation Service:**

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. This service can use sanctions such as **Penalty Notices** or **prosecutions in the Magistrates Court**. Full details of the options open to enforce attendance at school are available from the **Local Authority**.

Alternatively, parents or children may wish to contact the EIS themselves to ask for advice or information. **They are independent of the school and will give impartial advice in accordance with their statutory duties** Their telephone number is **01384 814317**. Their telephone number is available from the school office or by contacting the Local Authority.

### **Penalty Notice Fines issued by 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 M Hinton, Headteacher

Mrs S Chapman, Deputy Headteacher

Mrs D Davies, Senior Administrator

Miss M Dunn, 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 September 2015 and will be reviewed annually