

St Joseph's Catholic Primary School

20 January 2015

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:

Attendance at 93% or below

We monitor all absence thoroughly. 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. 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. There are consequences of unauthorised absence detailed below.** Please note this only applies for the period until your child's absence reaches above 90%.



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Kind hands, kind words...like Jesus

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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.

Holidays in Term Time

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.

In light of the changes to the Pupil Registration Regulations, St Joseph's Catholic Primary School does not authorise time off for holidays, 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.

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.

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

Yours sincerely

M Hinton
Headteacher