



St Joseph's Catholic Primary School



At St Joseph's we work, learn and grow together guided by Jesus' teachings

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.

Attendance Policy

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, we will adhere to 'Working together to Safeguard Children' (2018), Keeping Children Safe In Education (2020) and our school's Child Protection Policy (2020).

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:-

- to age, ability and aptitude and
 - 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.
- 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, Executive 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

School Attendance Addendum: in relation to coronavirus (COVID-19) **during the 2020 to 2021 academic year**

We look forward to school re-opening to all years and your child/ren returning. These guidelines are in conjunction with the Government and full documents can be obtained on the gov.uk website. Please contact school if you have any concerns as we are here to support you and your children in a safe return to school.

Attendance expectations (Department for Education 2020)

From the start of the autumn term 2020 **pupil attendance will be mandatory** and the usual rules on attendance will apply, including:

- parents' duty to ensure that their child of compulsory school age attends regularly at the school where the child is a registered pupil
- schools' responsibilities to record attendance and follow up absence
- the ability to issue sanctions, including fixed penalty notices, in line with local authorities' codes of conduct

Attendance and marking of the register

There will be some circumstances, related to Covid – 19, where pupils cannot attend. In view of this a new category of non-attendance has been added – 'not attending in circumstances related to Covid-19'. This will be recorded using code X. This code will not count as an absence, authorised or unauthorised, for statistical purposes.

Examples of the circumstance to which this code will apply include:

- Pupils who are required to self-isolate as they, or a member of their household, has symptoms or confirmed Covid-19
- Pupils who are required to self-isolate because they are a close contact of someone who has symptoms or confirmed Covid-19
- Pupils who are required by legislation to self-isolate as part of a period of quarantine
- Pupils who are clinically extremely vulnerable in a future local lockdown scenario only (for example, has cancer)

Please keep in contact with school. Once it is safe to do so school will expect you provide any evidence to help support us in managing the risks to keep children, staff, families and the wider community safe.

Any non-attendance where contact cannot be established will be deemed as a safeguarding matter and school will follow the attendance and safeguarding procedures.

School Census

This will resume in January 2021 to collect data for the Autumn Term 2020. Attendance and absence codes will be collected.

COVID Symptoms and Testing

The most important symptoms of coronavirus (COVID-19) are recent onset of any of the following:

- a new continuous cough
- a high temperature
- a loss of, or change in, your normal sense of taste or smell (anosmia)

If your child has symptoms of Coronavirus you should arrange for them to be tested immediately.

- If the test is **negative** they should return to school as long as they feel well. *(If they feel unwell this will be recorded as illness).*
- If the test is **positive** they should self-isolate for at least 10 days from when the symptoms started and return to school when the symptoms have gone. *(If they continue to have a cough or loss of smell/taste they may return to school because these symptoms often continue for several weeks after the infection has gone.)* Code X should be used for the period of self-isolation until the test. After the pupil tests positive they should be recorded as code I (illness) until they are able to return to school.

If someone in the child's household has symptoms they should arrange to be tested.

- If the test is negative the child should return to school.
- If the test is positive the child should self-isolate for 14 days from the onset of the person's symptoms.

How to get a test

A test needs to be taken **in the first 5 days of the onset of symptoms**. Apply online at **GOV.UK** or ring **119** if you are having problems online.

<https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/coronavirus-covid-19/testing-and-tracing/get-a-test-to-check-if-you-have-coronavirus/>

School should be informed immediately about test results. We will ask for evidence of the test result after it is safe for your child to return to school.

If you have been in close contact with someone who has symptoms or confirmed Coronavirus.

If you are contacted by the NHS track and trace service you will need to self-isolate for 14 days.

Stay at home guidance for households

If you need to self-isolate your household members must stay at home. You should not go to work, school, GP, Pharmacy or public places. Do not use taxis or public transport. Arrange for food and essentials to be brought to you and exercise should be taken in the garden.

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/covid-19-stay-at-home-guidance/stay-at-home-guidance-for-households-with-possible-coronavirus-covid-19-infection>

Shielding

Shielding advice for all adults and children paused on 1 August 2020. Children on the shielding list can return to school, as can those who have family members who are shielding. If local conditions cause this to change you will be notified via a government issued letter. This should be shared with school.

Specialists in paediatric medicine have reviewed the evidence on the level of risk posed to children and young people from COVID-19. The latest evidence indicates that the risk of serious illness for most children and young people is low. (digital NHS)

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/guidance-on-shielding-and-protecting-extremely-vulnerable-persons-from-covid-19/guidance-on-shielding-and-protecting-extremely-vulnerable-persons-from-covid-19#definition>

Leave of Absence/holidays/quarantine

Holidays should be arranged for school holiday periods not term time. Please be aware that you may need to self-isolate if you take a holiday to a destination which requires quarantine.

Remote education

Will immediately be available to those pupils not attending due to Covid-19.

Helpline

Department for Education COVID-19 helpline relating to education and children's social care. Staff, parents and young people can contact this helpline by calling: 0800 046 8687. Opening hours: Monday to Friday from 8am to 6pm.

If you are in self-isolation as a household, struggling as a family and have no other means of support please contact school. We have a variety of internal and external support workers who may be able to help.

