

# *St Joseph & St Theresa Catholic Primary School*



## *Attendance Policy*

**Approved and adopted by the Governing Body:** *October 2023*

**It will be reviewed:** *October 2024*

**Signed by Chair of Governors:** *Kay Greene*

**Signed by Headteacher:** *I Walker.*

## Principles

Regular school attendance is the key to enabling children and young people to maximise the educational opportunities available to them and become emotionally resilient, confident and competent adults who are able to realise their full potential and make a positive contribution to their community. Good attendance in school is pivotal in pupils achieving their potential. Therefore, all children should be in school, on time, every day the school is open, unless the reason for the absence is unavoidable or due to exceptional circumstances (see below).

Promoting excellent attendance is the responsibility of the whole school community. Parents are asked to ensure that their child is punctual for school. If a child arrives in school after the registers are closed, he/she will be marked as late. If this is after 9.30am, this is recorded as unauthorised absence.

The day is split into two sessions:

	<b>Morning session</b>	<b>Afternoon Session</b>
<b>EYFS Nursery</b>	8:45am – 11:45am	12:15pm – 3:15pm
<b>EYFS Reception</b>	8:45am – 11:40am	12:30pm – 3:15pm
<b>Key Stage 1</b>	8:45am – 12:10pm	13:00pm – 3:15pm
<b>Year 3 &amp; Year 4</b>	8:45am – 12:10pm	13:00pm – 3:15pm
<b>Year 5 &amp; Year 6</b>	8:45am – 13:00pm	13:45pm – 3:15pm

**Registration closes at 9.10am and subsequent arrivals are recorded as late.**

An attendance register is taken twice a day and this shows whether the child is present, engaged in an approved educational activity off-site, or absent. If a child of compulsory school age is absent, every half-day absence from school has to be classified by the school, as either AUTHORISED or UNAUTHORISED.

**Only school can authorise the absence, not parents.** This is why information about the cause of each absence is always required, either in writing, via ParentMail, by email or telephone message.

In exceptional circumstances, absences may be authorised by the Head Teacher. Absences are considered by the Head Teacher on a case-by-case basis at the request of the parent. Please see supporting appendices for further details.

Unauthorised absences are those which school are not able to code as 'authorised'. This includes:

- parents keeping children off school unnecessarily
- absences which have never been properly explained (see section 2)
- children who arrive at school too late to get a mark, after registers have closed

*Please see supporting appendices for further details.*

This Policy should not be seen in isolation but is a strand that underpins all other policies related to the wellbeing of children including safeguarding, behaviour, bullying, and support for children with medical needs.

## School Responsibilities

- We will promote positive behaviour and attendance through our use of curriculum and learning materials and will recognise good attendance appropriately
- We will work with parents to resolve problems which may affect a child's attendance and will involve representatives of other agencies that work with the school such as the School Nurse or representatives of the Local Support Team such as Education Welfare Workers where required in order to ensure all

children can benefit from consistently good punctuality and attendance. We will use the Early Help Assessment process to support this.

- We will be proactive in encouraging attendance for all pupils through ensuring parents and pupils receive information on the importance of good attendance and punctuality and will react swiftly to intervene to improve attendance of individual children should this become a concern.
- The Headteacher is responsible for reviewing the systems for monitoring attendance and deciding whether to authorise an absence.
- The administrative staff in the school office are responsible for the day-to-day management of attendance and the maintaining of correct information in the school registers.
- The class teachers are responsible for completing the register in accordance with this policy.

### **Parent/Carers Responsibilities**

- Parents/carers have a legal duty to ensure that their children of compulsory school age attend school regularly
- Inform school straight away if your child cannot attend school and give the reason
- Where possible, make medical, dental or other appointments outside the school day
- Ensure the school is aware of any circumstances at home that may be likely to affect their attendance
- Encourage good routines at home which promote a healthy lifestyle, including enough sleep
- Talk to your child about school and let the school know if your child is worried about any issues
- DO NOT book holidays in term time – this will only be authorized in exceptional circumstances
- Seek advice from your G.P. if you are not sure how long to keep your child off school with an illness
- Ensure school has all your up-to-date contact details
- Encourage your child to enjoy school and make the most of all the opportunities available to them

### **The importance of good attendance and its link to attainment**

The Department of Education has published research into the effect that missing time from school can have on chances of succeeding in tests and exams. [February 22<sup>nd</sup> 2015 Department of Education](#). The research is based on data from all schools in England going back several years. The results are very clear – missing even small amounts of time from school can have a significant effect on achievement. At primary school level, where pupils missing up to just 14 days of school in key stage 2 (normally age 11) are a quarter less likely to achieve expected or above in reading, writing or mathematics tests than those with no absence.

### **Admissions Registers**

Registers are legal documents. We use the ScholarPack database to record attendance. It contains the full names and address of every child, in alphabetical order, the date that each child joined the school and their personal details including those of their parents and of their previous school. Details for pupils are checked annually, through the sharing of data collection sheets, parents are responsible for reporting any changes to the school office.

All schools must keep a record of attendance register entries for at least 3 years and inform their local authority of any pupil who is going to be deleted from the admissions register. A pupil can lawfully be deleted from the admission register on the grounds prescribed in regulation 8 of the Education (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2006 where they:

- Have been taken out of school by their parents and are being educated outside the school system e.g. home education (see below on home educated children);
- Have ceased to attend school and no longer live within reasonable distance of the school at which they are registered;
- Have a medical condition certified by the school medical officer that the pupil is unlikely to be in a fit state of health to attend school;
- Are in custody for a period of more than four months due to a final court order and the proprietor does not reasonably believe they will be returning to the school at the end of that period; or

- Have been permanently excluded.

## **Elective Home Education**

If school receives written notification from parents that they wish to home educate their child then we will inform the Local Authority via [electivehomeeducation@staffordshire.gov.uk](mailto:electivehomeeducation@staffordshire.gov.uk) of the decision to remove the child's name from the admissions register. Whilst school will not seek to prevent parents from choosing to electively home educate their child, neither will they seek to encourage them to do this – particularly as a way of avoiding exclusion or due to a poor attendance record.

## **School Specific Procedures**

### **1. Reporting absences**

Parents should contact school **on the first and each day** of their child's absence from school, **before 9:30am**. The reason for absence should be explained so that school can decide whether to issue a code to authorise the absence. This can be in writing, via the absence tab on ParentMail, via email ([office@st-joseph-st-theresa.staffs.sch.uk](mailto:office@st-joseph-st-theresa.staffs.sch.uk)), or a phone call to the school office (01543 227220). An answer phone message can be left if the phone is busy and a member of staff will return any calls if necessary. On the child's return to school we ask parents, who haven't already done so, to confirm the reason for their child's absence in writing.

### **2. Unexplained absences**

School administrative staff will contact parents during the morning of any day which a registered pupil of compulsory school age is absent without explanation. This will initially be by phone call to the first person on the child's contact list; if there is no response this will be followed up by consecutive phone calls to the contacts named on the child's data collection form. Through this contact school ensures the parent is aware their child is not in school, enabling the parent where necessary to establish their child is safe. Parents are responsible for ensuring contact information is up to date.

Those staff responsible for attendance matters in this school are: Miss R Palmer, Mrs L Vickers and Ms I Walker.

If the school has not received a reason for absence on the child's return to school, then a reminder letter will be sent out to parents for them to provide a written reason for the absence within 7 days. If no response is received the absence will automatically be recorded as unauthorised absence.

### **3. Unexplained absence following a known absence**

When a pre-planned absence is known about (whether authorised or not authorised) a return date will be specified. Should a child fail to return to school on the specified day, parents must report the absence as in section 1 and in the event of no communication from parents, school will investigate the absence in line with section 2.

### **4. Planned absences (medical)**

Planned absences in school time should be avoided; this includes routine dental and medical appointments. Parents should arrange all routine appointments to take place after school or during school holidays. If the appointment relates to ongoing medical or dental issues, parents are asked to provide proof by means of a medical appointment letter, in advance of the absence. See supporting appendices for further details.

### **5. Planned absences (Other)**

If an absence relates to a legal or educational matter, written details must be provided in advance in order for the absence to be recorded and a decision to be made whether the absence can be authorised.

### **6. Procedures related to Lateness**

Morning register: Children arriving after the register closes at 9:10am will be recorded as 'L code' indicating late. Children arriving after 9:30am will be recorded as 'U code' unauthorised absence

Afternoon register: Children arriving after the register closes at 1pm for KS1 and 1:45pm for KS2 will be recorded as 'L code' indicating late. Children arriving after 1:15pm for KS1 and 2pm for KS2 will be recorded as 'U code' unauthorised absence.

## **7. Monitoring and Promoting Attendance**

The school promotes excellent attendance and punctuality celebrating this through 95%+ attendance certificates and improved attendance certificates. This helps to maintain attendance as a high priority and give the children an incentive for excellent attendance.

The headteacher and staff responsible for attendance at school analyse attendance data termly in order to follow up concerns with individual children and identify trends for individual classes and year groups.

Each term, letters of concern are sent to parents whose child's attendance is below 95% indicating the current level of attendance and punctuality to highlight their child's attendance. In addition, letters of concern are sent to parents whose child's attendance is below 90% indicating the current level of attendance and punctuality, including if any follow up action is required. A senior member of staff may meet with parents in cases where the percentage falls below 90% (or is at risk of falling below 90%) in order to have a discussion about a referral for external support from the Education Welfare Worker (EWW).

Parents whose children are experiencing difficulties with attendance or punctuality should contact the school at an early stage and work together with staff in resolving any problems. Parents may wish to contact the Education Welfare Worker, (EWW) themselves to ask for help or information.

Involving other agencies – the Local Authority must be informed of the absence of any child for a continuous period of 10 days or more without school's permission but school should involve the Local Support Team and take due regard of safeguarding procedures where absence of a particular child is less than 10 days but presents a cause for concern.

In the event that attendance concerns are ongoing, school will consider whether to make a referral to Local Authority. Parenting contracts may also be agreed and targets may be set. Following further monitoring, any unresolved issues could result in parents/carers receiving a Penalty Notice or ultimately a prosecution under the Education Act 1996 s.444. Schools have a duty in law to refer any absence concerns to the Local Authority Education Welfare Service.

Attendance and punctuality will be reported termly to Governors through the safeguarding report and policies and procedures will be reviewed by governors annually.

### **School Data**

School Data 2020-21:

- Whole school attendance level of 96.05%
- Authorised absence 3.68%
- Unauthorised absence 0.27%
- Persistent Absentee 17.35%

School Data 2021-22:

- Whole school attendance level of 97.47%
- Authorised absence 2.18%
- Unauthorised absence 0.35%
- Persistent Absentee 9.21%

School Data 2022-23:

- Whole school attendance level of 96%
- Authorised absence 3.2%
- Unauthorised absence 0.8%
- Persistent Absentee 5.21%

The school has adopted the following attendance targets:

- To maintain a whole school attendance level of 96%+
- To reduce the level of unauthorised absence to less than 0.5%
- To maintain the number of Persistent Absenteeism to less than 10%

*Persistent absentees are defined as those pupils missing around 10% or more of the typical amount of possible sessions across a given period.*

### **Penalty Notice and Prosecution**

**Section 444A of the Education Act 1996** (as inserted by section 23 of the Anti-Behaviour Act 2003) **empowers designated Local Authority (LA) officers, head teachers and the Police to issue Penalty Notices in cases of unauthorised absence from school.**

The Education Penalty Notices (England) Regulations 2007

The Education and Inspections Act 2006.

The issuing of Penalty Notices must conform to all requirements of the Human Rights Act 1998 and the Equality Act 2010.

Section 444 of the Education Act 1996 makes it an offence if a parent fails to secure their child's regular attendance at school at which they are registered, if that absence is not authorised by the school. Penalty Notices supplement the existing sanctions currently available under s444 Education Act 1996 or s36 Children Act 1989 to enforce attendance at school where appropriate.

As a maintained school we are committed to working with the Local Authority on the matter of issuing penalty notices for persistent absence and for unauthorised absences. Currently penalty notice charges are set at £60 per child per parent (if paid within 21 days) payment between 22<sup>nd</sup> and 28<sup>th</sup> day is £120 per child per parent. Non-payment will trigger fast track prosecution process under the provisions of section 444(1) of the Education Act 1996.

### **Penalty Notice for leave of absence (holiday) in term time**

From 1 January 2018 any period of unauthorised leave will result in you as a parent receiving a penalty notice fine. Your head teacher will continue to be the only person able to authorise leave in term time, but this will apply only in exceptional circumstances. Any unauthorised absence will be referred by your head teacher to the local authority.

### **Penalty Notice for persistent lateness**

A pupil who obtains 10 unauthorised late marks could be issued with a penalty notice warning; late marks do not have to be one after the other in order for the penalty notice to be issued.

### **Period of time used to measure persistent absence and lateness**

If your child has had 10 days unauthorised absence or is late 10 times over a twelve-week period, you may receive a penalty warning notice and also potentially a fine.

Further information about attendance is available from:

<http://www.staffordshire.gov.uk/education/welfareservice/Attendance/home.aspx>

### **Legal Frameworks**

- The Education Act 1996 ;
- The Education (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2006 and amendments 2010, 2011 and 2013
- The Education (School Day and School Year) (England) Regulations 1999;
- The Education Act 2002; and The Changing of School Session Times (England) (Revocation) Regulations 2011. ;
- Crime and Disorder Act 1998;
- The Anti-social Behaviour Act 2003;
- The Education Act 2005;
- The Education and Inspections Act 2006;
- The Education (Parenting Contracts and Parenting Orders) (England) Regulations 2007;
- The Education (Penalty Notices) (England) Regulations 2007 and amendments; and
- The Education and Skills Act 2008.
- The Equality Act 2010

### **Appendices:**

- [Staffordshire Code of Conduct](#) for Issuing Fixed penalty notices
- Department for Education [Guidance –Pupil Attendance](#) including use of national codes to record attendance or reasons for absence in registers
- [Elective home education overview - Staffordshire County Council](#)