

**ST JOSEPH'S
CATHOLIC PRIMARY SCHOOL**

Love Jesus



Love Learning

Love Life

Pupil Attendance Policy

Mission Statement

As a Catholic School it is our mission to provide a safe caring environment in which to educate our children to lead full lives as Christians; to instil a love of learning, of self and of others; enabling all to recognise their God given gifts and to realise their potential.

Introduction:

To achieve our Mission Statement at St Joseph's Catholic Primary it is essential that children attend school whenever they can. We aim for an environment which enables and encourages all members of the community to reach out for excellence. We need to be sure that our children are safe. For our children to gain the greatest benefit from their education it is vital that they 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 parents make sure that their child attends regularly and this policy sets out how, as school and family 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.

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

Promoting Regular Attendance:

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

- Celebrate high levels of attendance through termly rewards such as high attendance pencils or the 99 club where each child with a percentage attendance of 99% or more is rewarded with an ice-cream or similar treat
- Send home termly attendance certificates showing the record of attendance for each child
- Ensure the school is a clean, safe environment where spreading of infectious illnesses is minimised. This will include asking parents to keep children away from school if they could be the cause of infections spreading.

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.

Understanding types of absence:

Every half-day absence from school has to be classified by the school (not by the parents), as either AUTHORISED or UNAUTHORISED. This is why information about the cause of any absence is always required, 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 Plymouth City Council 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 a mark
- shopping, looking after other children or birthdays
- 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 make things worse.

Persistent Absenteeism (PA):

A pupil becomes a 'persistent absentee' when attendance drops below 90% schooling across the school year for whatever reason. Absence at this level is doing considerable damage to any child's educational prospects and we need parent's fullest support and co-operation to tackle this.

We monitor all absence thoroughly. Any case that is seen to have reached the PA mark or is at risk of moving towards that mark is given priority and you will be informed of this immediately. PA pupils are tracked and monitored carefully through our assessment data to identify where absence affects attainment.

All PA cases are automatically made known to the Plymouth Education Welfare Officer.

Absence Procedures:

If your child is absent you must:

- Contact us as soon as possible on the first day of absence (preferably by 9.30am);
- Or, you can call into school and report to reception.

If your child is absent we will:

- Telephone you on the first day of absence by 10.30am if we have not heard from you;
- Refer the matter to the Plymouth City Council Education Welfare Officer if attendance moves below 90%.

Telephone numbers:

There are times when we need to contact parents about lots of things, including absence, so we need to have your contact numbers at all times. So 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.

The School Attendance Officer/Education Welfare Officer (EWO):

Parents are expected to contact school at an early stage and to work with the staff in resolving any problems together. This is nearly always successful. The Plymouth City Council Education Welfare Officer visits the school regularly and monitors the absence of any child who has dropped below 95%. If a child is causing particular concern (eg below 90%) the EWO will offer advice to try to resolve the situation by agreement. However, if other ways of trying to improve the child's attendance have failed and unauthorized absences persist, these Officers 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 school or PCC. Alternatively, parents or children may wish to contact the EWO themselves to ask for help or information. They are independent of the school and will give impartial advice. Their telephone number is available from the school office or by contacting PCC.

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 arrival of pupils also disrupts lessons, can be embarrassing for the child and can also encourage absence.

How we manage lateness:

The school day starts at 8:50 am and we expect your child to be in school at that time.

Registers are marked by 9:00 am and your child will receive a late mark if they are not in by that time.

At 9.15 am the registers will be closed. 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 sent a letter and may be asked to meet with the Headteacher and/or Attendance Officer to resolve the problem, but you can approach us at any time if you are having problems getting your child to school on time.

Term Time Absence

As from the 1st September 2013, all schools are unable to authorise any requests for absence relating to holidays being taken in term time. This has been brought about by an amendment to the Education (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2006, which has removed reference to holidays and the ten day period. The amendments make it clear that Head Teachers may not grant leave of absence during term time unless there are exceptional circumstances.

Taking time out of school during the school term has a detrimental effect on children's learning beyond the time they are actually absent. Information about what does, and does not, count as exceptional circumstances can be found on the absence request form available at http://www.plymouth.gov.uk/absence_request_form.pdf

These changes to the law reinforce the government's view following the "Taylor Report" on attendance, that regular school attendance is vital and that pupils should only be granted authorised absence by the school, in exceptional circumstances, e.g. illness, exclusions or due to other unavoidable causes. Parents/Carers need to be aware that, irrespective of previous attendance, any unauthorised absence resulting from holiday taken in term time may well result in Plymouth City Council instigating parent responsibility measures which could lead to a penalty notice, or a fine being issued. This takes the form of a £60 fine, per parent, per child, rising to £120 if not paid in the first 21 days.

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.

Attendance in the year 15-16 was 96.3%. We aim to improve this figure by 0.5% by 2018

Through the school year we monitor absences and punctuality to show us where improvements need to be made.

Children Missing in Education:

When children are registered at and attend regularly at a school their level of safety can be monitored. If a child leaves a school without beginning attendance at another school, or fails to attend school regularly then safeguarding concerns are raised. We will liaise with the EWO and follow the advice for schools in the Statutory Guidance for Local Authorities 'Children Missing Education' September 2016 whenever a child has an unexplained absence of five days or more.

Summary:

The school has a legal duty to publish its absence figures to parents and to promote attendance. Equally, parents have a duty to make sure that their children attend. All school staff are committed to working with parents and pupils as the best way to ensure as high a level of attendance as possible and that every child's welfare and life opportunities are promoted.