

Live, love and learn in a caring Catholic community

St. Joseph's Catholic Primary School



Attendance and Punctuality Policy

Adopted: September 2021
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Attendance and Punctuality Policy: K Dunne

The Attendance and Punctuality Policy at St Joseph's Catholic Primary School forms part of our Safeguarding Policy Portfolio and demonstrates our commitment to safeguarding the wellbeing of all our pupils.

1. RATIONALE

- 1.1. Regular attendance has always been important. Without it, the best efforts of teachers and school will come to nothing. Pupils need to attend school if they are to take full advantage of the educational opportunities available to them. Irregular attendance undermines the educational process and can lead to educational disadvantages. It can place children at risk and in some cases can result in some pupils being drawn into patterns of inappropriate or criminal behaviour.
- 1.2. Under Section 444 of the Education Act of the Education Act a parent, an adult who has parental responsibility or an adult who has care of children of compulsory school age is required to ensure that they receive efficient full-time education. Parents are responsible for ensuring that children attend and stay at school. The school is responsible for supporting attendance and taking seriously any problems that may lead to non-attendance. Parental responsibility extends beyond securing regular school attendance. Parents should ensure that their children arrive at school on time, properly attired and in a condition to learn. Furthermore, they need to see themselves as partners with schools in the education of their children.
- 1.3. This policy is based on the premise of equal opportunities for all.
- 1.4. The purpose of this policy is to state clearly the school's policy and procedures for dealing with absence and to make clear the responsibilities of the parents and school in maximising attendance.

2. REGISTRATION

- 2.1. Registration takes place between 9.00-9.15am and 1.00-1.15pm.
- 2.2. Class teachers complete the online register. Supply teachers are provided with a paper register which is returned to the office when registration closes.
- 2.3. Attendance for each pupil is entered onto SIMS twice daily.

3. MONITORING

- 3.1. Registers are monitored daily and concerns raised with the Senior Leadership Team.
- 3.2. Monitoring of whole school attendance, absence and persistent absence takes place every other week by the Attendance Officer. Pupils with attendance below 95% are tracked and actions taken. Actions could be a letter to parents; an invitation to an Attendance Meeting at school, a referral to the Local Authority.
- 3.3. Our Attendance Officer monitors all school attendance and helps parents meet their responsibilities.

- 3.4. If there is little or no improvement in a child's attendance after support has been offered, Devon Children and Young People's Services can prosecute parents in a magistrate's court. This could result in you and your partner being fined up to £2,500 or sent to prison for up to three months (or both) for each child who is not going to school. Alternatively Children's Services in Devon may have to seek an Education Supervision Order. This means that the court appoints a supervisor to help and give advice to you and your child.

4. LATENESS

- 4.1. If a child arrives at school after 9.00am but before 9.15am or after 1.00pm but before 1.15pm for an afternoon session, they will be marked as 'L' for late. This will not constitute an absence – but a late arrival. If a child arrives at school after 9.15am or 1.15pm, they will be marked as 'U' for unauthorised late. This will constitute an unauthorised absence.
- 4.2. When a child arrives at school after 9.00am, they should report to the school office. The parent should complete the Late Arrival file.
- 4.3. The Late Arrival file is kept in the office to record the date, time and reason for being late.
- 4.4. Where there are exceptional circumstances for lateness, the Admin team will consult with the Assistant Head to determine if the lateness is authorised or unauthorised.
- 4.5. Punctuality is monitored half-termly. Three incidents of late arrival since the previous monitor will result in a Late Letter being sent to parents. If there is on-going concern, the child's parents will be invited to meet with the Attendance Officer to ascertain the problem.

5. ABSENCE

5.1. Reporting an unplanned absence.

- 5.1.1. It is the parents' responsibility to inform the school of the reason for a child's absence on the first day of a child's unplanned absence and every other day after that. Parents should telephone the school by 9.30am each day and leave a message on the absence answer phone, send in a letter with a sibling or speak to the Admin team in the reception.

5.2. First day contact.

- 5.2.1. Guidelines on school attendance stress that the single most effective initiative designed to improve rates of attendance is the implementation of first day response to pupil absence. It has the effect of:
- Showing that the school is concerned about pupil welfare
 - Establishing the reason for absence at an early stage
 - preventing unauthorised absence
 - encouraging communication between parents and school
- 5.2.2. The school operates a first day contact policy as follows:
- Parents alert school of absence by phone or at reception. These are logged by the school admin team on SIMS.
 - Teachers complete registers.

- The admin Team check absent children on the registers against the reported absence answer phone to determine children whose parents have not reported their absence.
- The admin team will telephone the parents. Reasons for absence will be recorded on SIMS.
- If the admin can't get through, a message will be left to telephone school by 10.00am. If no contact can be established by 10.00am this will be entered on SIMS.
- The school will assess each individual case and, if necessary, arrange for somebody to attend the house to see if the child can be located.
- A record will be made of any such visit and a decision made if further action is required.
- If we still cannot make contact to ascertain why the child is absent, we may ring the PCSO or escalate to the police.

5.3. **Medical appointments**

- 5.3.1. The school discourages medical/dental appointments during the school day.
- 5.3.2. Children are expected to attend school both before and after an appointment where possible.
- 5.3.3. The following statement will be printed in the school newsletter at least once a term –
“Parents are asked not to arrange non-emergency medical/dental or other appointments during the school day.”
- 5.3.4. Although school will generally authorise medical appointments, evidence of the appointment will need to be provided for children whose attendance is below 95%. If no evidence is provided, the absence will be unauthorised.

5.4. **Absence requests**

- 5.4.1. The law does not grant parents an automatic right to take their children out of school during term time.
- 5.4.2. Parents must complete and submit an Absence Request form (S2) available from the school website or office.
- 5.4.3. Requests are considered on an individual basis. Where a decision is made not to authorise a request for leave of absence, the school will write to the parent(s)/carer(s), notifying them of that decision. If parents/carers have not received a written response prior to the date of the proposed absence, the onus is upon them to contact the school to seek confirmation of the decision.
- 5.4.4. If the absence is unauthorised and still taken, the school may request the Local Authority to consider taking legal action against parents/carers which may result in the issuing of a penalty notice or Court proceedings being instigated for an offence of failing to ensure regular school attendance contrary to section 444 Education Act 1996.
- 5.4.5. A Penalty Notice carries a penalty of £60 if paid in full within 21 days or £120 if paid in full after this time but within 28 days. The Local Authority are unable to accept part or late payments and there is no legal right to appeal the Penalty Notice once it has been issued. If a Penalty Notice goes unpaid, this is likely to result in Court proceedings being taken against you for an offence of failing

to ensure regular school attendance contrary to section 444 Education Act 1996. If convicted, you may face a fine of up to £2500 and/or a maximum 3 months imprisonment.

5.4.6. **Please note:** only **one** Penalty Notice will be issued **in any two year period**. This means that if a Penalty Notice is paid, and the child accumulates a further 10 sessions of unauthorised absence (5 school days), this will result in the parent/carer receiving a summons to Court for an offence contrary to s444 Education Act. The matter cannot be dealt with by way of a further Penalty Notice being issued.

6. Penalty Notices are issued per parent, per child. A 'parent' can be any person, whether a natural parent or not, who has care of the child or young person.

6.1. **Authorised absence**

6.1.1. Unavoidable absence from school will be authorised, at the discretion of the Headteacher, if it is for the following reasons:

- Genuine illness
- Unavoidable medical / dental appointments (but try to make these after school if at all possible)
- Days of religious observance
- Seeing a parent who is on leave from the armed forces
- External examinations
- When Traveller children go on the road with their parents for the purpose of work
- Death of a close relative
- Wedding of a parent or close relative

7. **ENCOURAGING GOOD ATTENDANCE**

7.1. Attendance information is on the school website.

7.2. Parents receive regular attendance information in the school newsletter.

7.3. Teachers use Class Dojo to send 'attendance nudges' or to celebrate improved attendance between monitors.

7.4. A weekly award is presented to the class with the best weekly attendance.

7.5. Class teachers use class-based incentives to encourage good attendance.

7.6. End of year certificates are presented to pupils with good and improved attendance.

EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY

This policy has been written and reviewed with due regard to the legal duties set out in the Equality Act 2010, to ensure that no member of our school community suffers discrimination or disadvantage regardless of age, race, gender reassignment, disability, civil partnership, religion and belief (or lack of belief), pregnancy and maternity, gender or sexual orientation.