

St Joseph's Catholic Primary School

Attendance Policy



‘Walking in the footsteps of Jesus, loving and serving together’

Aims

St Joseph's is committed to ensuring that all pupils have full access to a broad and balanced curriculum. We believe that it is only possible for pupils to make the best progress and fulfil their educational potential if they attend school regularly and punctually. We also believe that regular attendance contributes towards pupils feeling fully included in the school community and developing a positive attitude towards education which should continue through their whole lives.

Policy Statement

We believe there are two main reasons why we should strive for maximum attendance and punctuality:

1. Every lesson in school is important in ensuring that our children achieve their potential
2. Attendance and punctuality are valuable life skills

At St Joseph's Catholic Primary School, we are committed to providing high quality, engaging experiences and learning opportunities which enable all pupils, no matter what their strengths, to achieve their potential. In every lesson, every day, we aim to develop pupils' skills and understanding, carefully building on their prior knowledge and giving them the tools to succeed. Absence from any one of these lessons or experiences can cause anxiety for the child, as they feel that they have fallen behind, and may have an impact on a child's ability to succeed in the task that has been set. Frequent absence, or absence for blocks of time, will have a long lasting effect through the learning 'gaps' that are created in a child's understanding.

Furthermore, at our school we believe that attendance and punctuality are life skills which demonstrate an individual to be reliable, responsible and organised. It is the responsibility of the school and parents in partnership to prepare our children for the future and we believe that attitudes to attendance and punctuality developed at school will resonate throughout our children's life and chosen careers. The school is committed to equality of opportunity for all its pupils and will work alongside pupils and parents to enable all children to maximise their attendance and their access to the curriculum.

Aims of this policy

- To ensure that children and young people make the best use of their educational opportunities by attending school regularly, punctually and in a state of readiness for learning.
- To set out the legal framework and to explain the roles and responsibilities of the Local Authority (LA) and the Education Welfare Service (EWS)
- To ensure that everyone within the school community understands their responsibilities in promoting excellent attendance and punctuality.
- To outline procedures for parents when absence is unavoidable.
- To outline procedures for parents when requesting an ‘authorised absence’.
- To outline procedures for the school when absence is not explained.
- To outline procedures for the school when a child’s attendance / lateness is a cause for concern.

The Legal Framework

- This policy is written in the light of guidance from the DfE ‘School Attendance: Guidance for maintained schools, academies, independent schools and local authorities’ (November 2016) which in turn is informed by national legislation and therefore reflects the school’s statutory duties. It also reflects the guidance contained in the Wiltshire LA Attendance Policy (Revised June 2017)
- The school recognises the responsibilities of the Educational Welfare Service and supports them in the discharging of the statutory duty of the Local Authority in respect of non-attendance at school.
- Under section 7 of the Education Act 1996, parents must ensure their children are educated. For most parents/carers this means registering their child at a school and ensuring their regular attendance. Failure to do so can result in the issue of a Penalty Notice or being prosecuted.
- By law schools are required:
 - o To take an attendance register twice a day: at the start of the morning session and once during the afternoon
 - o To report to the LA pupils who fail to attend regularly or who are absent for ten school days or more without known reason
- By law the attendance register must show for every session, whether a pupil is present, absent, attending approved educational activity or unable to attend due to exceptional circumstances.
- Authorised absence is where the school has given approval in advance for a pupil of compulsory school age to be away, or has accepted an explanation offered afterwards as a satisfactory justification for the absence. All other absences are unauthorised.

Roles and responsibilities

Parent Responsibilities

Under Section 7 of the Education Act 1996, parents/carers who have chosen to have their child educated at school have a legal responsibility to ensure their child’s regular attendance.

This means:

- to work in partnership with the school to take an active interest in their child's school career, to reinforce school policies/arrangements on homework, behaviour and approach to learning, to attend parents' evening and other meetings where necessary
- ensuring that their child arrives at school on time (not before 8:25am and not after 8:40am) and that they are collected on time from Reception and KS1 at 3:05pm and from KS2 at 3:15pm).
- ensuring that their child arrives appropriately dressed and in a 'condition to learn' (i.e. not too tired or too hungry)
- to avoid arranging medical or dental appointments during school hours
- where there are problems with attendance and punctuality, parents/carers are expected to work in partnership with the school, and any other agencies (as appropriate) to help to resolve the problems relating to non-attendance and
- to acknowledge receipt of the school's Attendance Policy

Procedures for reporting absences:

- In the event of illness or any other reason for absence, parents/carers will telephone the school office before 9.00am on the first day of the absence.
- where practicable, for parents/carers to provide the school with more than one emergency contact number (for two different adults) for their child/children and for the parent/carer with whom the child/children reside for the majority of the time to be responsible for ensuring those numbers are kept up to date
- Parents/carers should provide an explanation for the absence, which should then be confirmed in writing when the child returns to school.
- If the absence is to continue for more than one day, parents/carers should telephone the school on subsequent days, again before 9.00am, unless they are able to give an exact length of time on the first day of absence. There is a dedicated telephone line to report absences that can be accessed 24 hours a day by calling 01225 755242 and selecting the absence line. It is also possible to report an absence by email to absence@grove.wilts.sch.uk
- Parents/carers need to inform the school if a child's absence is due to some traumatic event which the school needs to deal with sensitively so that the school can respond appropriately to the emotional needs of the child on their return to school.
- Where the school has not been notified of a child's absence, parents/carers will be telephoned to confirm that a child is absent and the reasons for that absence.
- Where the school has not been notified and it is not possible to contact parents/carers to establish the reason for absence, the school is obliged to mark the child's absence as 'unauthorised'.
- Parents/carers should ensure that they sign their child in or out if they arrive at school outside normal hours or are taken out of school before the normal end of the day, giving the reason for lateness or early withdrawal from school. This book is kept in the main school office.
- Parents are asked to ensure that their child is fully aware of the procedures they must follow in the event that they are late for school

Procedures for requesting 'authorised absence' from school

- Parents/carers must seek permission from the Head Teacher (or authorised representative) by submitting a written application, detailing the 'exceptional circumstances' for the request, in advance of any request for leave of absence. Each

request will be considered individually and should meet the circumstances of being 'exceptional'.

- Leave of absence is made by completing the 'Leave of Absence Request Form' which can be obtained from the school office. Please note that family holidays will not count as a reason to authorise absence in term time, with the exception of the children of the armed forces personnel on leave from active service. Leave of absence requests must be made at least 5 days in advance.

'Exceptional Circumstances' Criteria

- Exceptional family circumstances, such as bereavement/religious observance/wedding of an immediate family member/family emergency;
- Unavoidable medical/dental appointment (although it is the school's expectation that every effort should be made to secure routine doctor/dentist appointments out of school hours or during the holidays);
- Absence, within reason, for an external exam such as ballet and music and to attend elite events (e.g. National Youth Orchestra or a representative sporting event).

Parents should note that holidays during term time can only be authorised if there are exceptional circumstances. Where there are no exceptional circumstances it is important to be aware that the school position is clear. Holiday absence during term time:

- WILL affect your child's learning
 - WILL put additional pressure on class teachers and support staff
 - WILL impact negatively on the school during an Ofsted
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- Inevitably there will be occasions when absence is unavoidable or justifiable, these will include:
 - o illness
 - o bereavement
 - o medical/dental appointments
 - o days of religious observance
 - o visits to other schools (secondary transfer, entrance exams)
 - o education at another establishment (e.g. referral unit)
 - o approved sporting activity / performance
 - o annual family holiday in exceptional circumstances
 - Where an absence is unavoidable or unplanned, then parents/carers are asked to follow the procedures for reporting absences as outlined above.
 - Where an absence is for anything else apart from an annual holiday (in exceptional circumstances), the school needs to be informed in writing.

Responsibilities of the School

- The Head Teacher is responsible for ensuring that the policy is effectively implemented and communicated to parents/carers and for improving and maintaining good attendance.
- The school will ensure that all parents/carers are made aware of this policy as it forms part of our Home/School agreement, through our Number 1 programme and information that is published weekly in our school newsletter.

- The Senior Management Team/Designated member of staff is responsible for developing coherent whole school systems for improving attendance including supportive interventions involving other agencies if necessary. The member of staff with particular responsibility for monitoring attendance is Mrs Sue Woods, Headteacher.
- The Admin Inclusion Officer responsible for attendance and absence will ensure that data is monitored and circulated regularly and liaises with the Head Teacher, the Deputy Head Teacher and the EWS on any attendance issues causing concern. Agreed procedures will be implemented by the team for pupils whose attendance falls below 90%.
- Teachers are responsible for ensuring that an accurate register is taken at the designated time. All teachers challenge lateness and set high standards of punctuality themselves.
- Where any follow up action is taken by teachers or Inclusion staff, accurate records must be kept and copies placed on pupil records.

Responsibilities of the Governing Body

- The Head Teacher will ensure that the school's attendance figures are reported termly to the Safeguarding Committee who will monitor progress against annual attendance targets and will in turn report figures to the Full Governing Body once per year.

Concerns over attendance, punctuality and 'unauthorised absences'

- Early identification is crucial and communication with parents/carers needs to begin as soon as the problem is detected. Initial concerns will either be communicated in person, by phone or by letter (if in person or by phone this should be followed up by a letter), explaining the actions that might be taken should the problem persist and seeing if the school can offer any support to the parents/carers to resolve the problem.
- We will make every effort to work constructively and sympathetically with parents/carers to respond to their individual circumstances.
- Where appropriate, the school may request that the parents/carers enter into a 'parenting contract' which sets out what is expected of the parents/carers, pupil and school.
- The school is obliged to report any concerns regarding attendance (including persistent late arrival) and absence to the EWS.
- The Local Authority can issue a penalty notice in the following circumstances:
 - o overt truancy
 - o absence from school, either when a parent continually fails to provide an explanation or the school considers the absence to be avoidable.
 - o holidays taken during term time where the absence has not been authorised by the school.
- Penalty Notices are also issued for absence taken during term time where a pupil's overall attendance is less than 90% and the leave of absence has not been unauthorised by the school, or an absence has not been requested in advance and the pupil has had a minimum of 10 sessions (5 school days) lost to unauthorised absence during the previous six months in the academic year and additional unauthorised absence during the previous twelve months up to and including the day the Education Welfare Service is notified.
- A Penalty Notice can also be issued to the parent/carer of an excluded child in the event that their child is present in a public place during school hours on a day which is

one of the first five school days of that exclusions or, where the exclusion is for a fixed period of five days or less, any of the days of that exclusion period.

Policy Review

This policy will be reviewed every 2 years or, as appropriate, with any changes to legislation.

This policy should be read and understood in with reference to the following documents:

- Education Act 1996
- Equality Policy
- Child Protection Policy
- School attendance – Guidance for maintained schools, academies, independent schools and local authorities (November 2016) (Appendix 1)
- School attendance parental responsibility measures (Statutory guidance for local authorities, school leaders, school staff, governing bodies and the police – January 2105) (Appendix 2)
- Local Authority Attendance Policy (June 2017) including Appendix E – Penalty Notice Code of Conduct (Appendix 3)
- Penalty notice for unauthorised leave of absence during term time – Information to Parents and Carers (September 2016) (Appendix 4)
- Leave of Absence Request Form (Appendix 5)
- Form CME1 – referral re ‘Child Missing from Education’ (Appendix 6)

Appendix 1 : Information for Parents and Carers

Wiltshire Council:Penalty notices for unauthorised leave of absence during term time (Updated June 2014)



PENALTY NOTICES FOR UNAUTHORISED LEAVE OF ABSENCE DURING TERM TIME (PREVIOUSLY CALLED HOLIDAY ABSENCE)

**s444A and s444B Education Act 1996
&
The Education (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2006**

Information for Parents and Carers

June 2014

What are s444A and s444B of the Education Act 1996?

Section 444A and section 444B of the Education Act 1996 give powers to the Local Authority (LA) to issue Penalty Notices where the parent/carer is considered capable of but unwilling to secure an improvement in their child's school attendance.

Why are these powers available?

Reducing absence from school is a key priority at both national and local level. Missing school reduces a pupil's educational attainment and life chances.

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Wiltshire Council:Penalty notices for unauthorised leave of absence during term time (Updated June 2014)

What is a Penalty Notice?

A Penalty Notice is an alternative to prosecution and is used to try and secure an improvement in a pupil's school attendance without the need to appear in Court. As long as the penalty is paid the Penalty Notice enables parents or carers to discharge their potential liability for prosecution for the period covered by the Penalty Notice.

What are the costs?

Payment of £120 is required within 28 days of receipt of the Penalty Notice; this sum is reduced to £60 if paid within 21 days. If the penalty is not paid in full within 28 days the LA is required to commence proceedings in the Magistrates' Court for the original offence of your child's poor school attendance. If you plead guilty or are found guilty the Courts have a wider range of options which could include a maximum fine of £1000. In addition a Parenting Order could be imposed.

Penalty Notices are issued to each parent for each child and payment is required for each Penalty Notice issued.

Who issues them?

The Local Authority through the Education Welfare Service.

How are they issued?

By post to your home.

Can I be prosecuted if I pay the penalty but my child is still missing school?

Yes. You will not be prosecuted for the period included in the Penalty Notice – payment discharges your liability in this respect. However, legal proceedings might be considered for further periods of poor attendance not covered by the Penalty Notice, depending upon the circumstances.

When are they issued for unauthorised Leave of Absence

Penalty Notices are issued for absence taken during term time where the leave of absence has not been authorised by the school or an absence has not been requested in advance and pupil will have had a minimum of 10 sessions (5 school days) lost to unauthorised leave of absence during the previous six months up to and including the day the Education Welfare Service is notified.

What is unauthorised Leave of Absence?

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- A parent has made a request for leave of absence in term time and this has not been agreed by the school;
- A parent has not applied leave of absence in advance of the absence (the regulations do not allow retrospective approval); or
- If the parents keep the child away from school for longer than was agreed, the extra time is recorded as unauthorised

When can Leave of Absence be authorised?

Amendments made to the 2006 regulations in the **Education (Pupil Registration) (England) (Amendment) Regulations 2013** make clear that headteachers may not grant any leave of absence during term time unless there are **exceptional** circumstances.

Why have I received this leaflet?

This leaflet is sent to parents in Wiltshire to inform them of the extended use of Penalty Notices for unauthorised leave of absence or for parents who have requested leave of absence during term time.

If the leave of absence you have requested is not agreed by the school and your child's total unauthorised leave of absence amounts to 10 or more sessions (5 school days), continuous or aggregated within the previous six months within the current academic year the Education Welfare Service will be notified. The six months includes all unauthorised leave of absence up to the day the Education Welfare Service is notified.

Following this notification from a school that a parental request for a leave of absence in term time has not been authorised and the leave of absence is taken the Local Authority will issue a Penalty Notice to each parent for each child.

What can I do now?

If the leave of absence that you have requested is not authorised you are advised not to take your child out of school.

Who can I discuss this with?

In the first instance talk to your child's school; otherwise the Penalty Notice Officer can be contacted on:

Tel: 01722 438123 Email: PNLO@wiltshire.gov.uk