**St Joseph’s Catholic Primary School**

**Attendance Policy**



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

# Aims

At St Joseph’s we are committed to meeting our obligation with regards to school attendance through our whole-school culture and ethos that values good attendance, including:

* Promoting good attendance
* Reducing absence, including persistent and severe absence
* Ensuring every pupil has access to the full-time education to which they are entitled
* Acting early to address patterns of absence
* Building strong relationships with families to ensure pupils have the support in place to attend school

We will also promote and support punctuality in attending lessons.

**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.

# 2. Legislation and guidance

This policy meets the requirements of the [working together to improve school attendance](https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/working-together-to-improve-school-attendance) from the Department for Education (DfE), and refers to the DfE’s statutory guidance on [school attendance parental responsibility measures](https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/parental-responsibility-measures-for-behaviour-and-attendance). These documents are drawn from the following legislation setting out the legal powers and duties that govern school attendance:

* Part 6 of [The Education Act 1996](https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/1996/56/contents)
* Part 3 of [The Education Act 2002](https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2002/32/contents)
* Part 7 of [The Education and Inspections Act 2006](https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2006/40/contents)
* [The Education (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2006 (and 2010, 2011, 2013, 2016 amendments)](https://www.legislation.gov.uk/uksi/2006/1751/contents/made)
* [The Education (Penalty Notices) (England) (Amendment) Regulations 2013](https://www.legislation.gov.uk/uksi/2013/757/regulation/2/made)

This policy also refers to the DfE’s guidance on the [school census](https://www.gov.uk/guidance/complete-the-school-census) which explains the persistent absence threshold.

* 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

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# The governing board

The governing board is responsible for:

* Promoting the importance of school attendance across the school’s policies and ethos
* Making sure school leaders fulfil expectations and statutory duties
* Regularly reviewing and challenging attendance data
* Monitoring attendance figures for the whole school
* Making sure staff receive adequate training on attendance
* Holding the headteacher to account for the implementation of this policy

The headteacher

The headteacher is responsible for:

* Implementation of this policy at the school
* Monitoring school-level absence data and reporting it to governors
* Supporting staff with monitoring the attendance of individual pupils
* Monitoring the impact of any implemented attendance strategies
* Issuing fixed-penalty notices, where necessary
* Leading attendance across the school
* Offering a clear vision for attendance improvement
* Evaluating and monitoring expectations and processes
* Having an oversight of data analysis
* Devising specific strategies to address areas of poor attendance identified through data
* Arranging calls and meetings with parents to discuss attendance issues
* Identifying targeted intervention and support to pupils and families
* Benchmarking attendance data to identify areas of focus for improvement
* Providing regular attendance reports to school staff and reporting concerns about attendance to the designated senior leader responsible for attendance and the headteacher
* Working with education welfare officers to tackle persistent absence

Class teachers

Class teachers are responsible for recording attendance on a daily basis, using the correct codes, and submitting this information to the school office by 9.00am every morning and 1.05pm every afternoon.

Office staff

School office staff will:

* Take calls from parents about absence on a day-to-day basis and record it on the school system
* Transfer calls from parents to the headteacher in order to provide them with more detailed support on attendance

Parents/carers

Parents/carers are expected to:

* Make sure their child attends every day on time
* Call the school to report their child’s absence before 8.50am on the day of the absence and each subsequent day of absence, and advise when they are expected to return
* Provide the school with more than 1 emergency contact number for their child
* Ensure that, where possible, appointments for their child are made outside of the school day

Pupils

Pupils are expected to:

* Attend school every day on time

# Recording attendance

Attendance register

We will keep an attendance register, and place all pupils onto this register. We will take our attendance register at the start of the first session of each school day and once during the second session. It will mark whether every pupil is:

* Present
* Attending an approved off-site educational activity
* Absent
* Unable to attend due to exceptional circumstances

Any amendment to the attendance register will include:

* The original entry
* The amended entry
* The reason for the amendment
* The date on which the amendment was made
* The name and position of the person who made the amendment

See appendix 1 for the DfE attendance codes.

We will also record:

* Whether the absence is authorised or not
* The nature of the activity if a pupil is attending an approved educational activity
* The nature of circumstances where a pupil is unable to attend due to exceptional circumstances

We will keep every entry on the attendance register for 3 years after the date on which the entry was made. Pupils must arrive in school by 8.50 am on each school day. The register for the first session will be taken between 8.50am and 9.00am and will be kept open until 9.05am. The register for the second session will be taken at 1.00pm and will be kept open until 1.05pm.

Unplanned absence

The pupil’s parent/carer must notify the school of the reason for the absence on the first day of an unplanned absence by 8.50am or as soon as practically possible by calling the school office staff.

We will mark absence due to illness as authorised unless the school has a genuine concern about the authenticity of the illness. If the authenticity of the illness is in doubt, the school may ask the pupil’s parent/carer to provide medical evidence, such as a doctor’s note, prescription, appointment card or other appropriate form of evidence. We will not ask for medical evidence unnecessarily. If the school is not satisfied about the authenticity of the illness, the absence will be recorded as unauthorised and parents/carers will be notified of this in advance.

Planned absence

Attending a medical or dental appointment will be counted as authorised as long as the pupil’s parent/carer notifies the school in advance of the appointment **by completing the leave of absence form.** However, we encourage parents/carers to make medical and dental appointments out of school hours where possible. Where this is not possible, the pupil should be out of school for the minimum amount of time necessary.

The pupil’s parent/carer must also apply for other types of term-time absence as far in advance as possible of the requested absence. Go to section 5 to find out which term-time absences the school can authorise.

Lateness and punctuality

A pupil who arrives late:

* Before the register has closed will be marked as late, using the appropriate code
* After the register has closed, and the child is not on site, will be marked as absent, using the appropriate code

Following up unexplained absence

Where any pupil who we expect to attend school does not attend, or stops attending, without reason, the school will:

* Call the pupil’s parent/carer on the morning of the first day of unexplained absence to ascertain the reason. If the school cannot reach any of the pupil’s emergency contacts, the school may contact the police
* Identify whether the absence is approved or not
* Identify the correct attendance code to use and input it as soon as the reason for absence is ascertained – this will be no later than 5 working days after the session
* Call the parent/carer on each day that the absence continues without explanation to ensure proper safeguarding action is taken where necessary. If absence continues, the school will consider involving an education welfare officer.

Reporting to parents/carers

The school will regularly inform parents about their child’s attendance and absence levels as part of the reports from class teachers.

**Authorised and unauthorised absence**

Approval for term-time absence

The headteacher will only grant a leave of absence to a pupil during term time if they consider there to be 'exceptional circumstances'. A leave of absence is granted at the Headteacher’s discretion, including the length of time the pupil is authorised to be absent for.

We define ‘exceptional circumstances’ as **exceptional family circumstances** such as a bereavement, religious observance, wedding of a close family member or a family emergency, **unavoidable medical/dental appointment** (although it is the schools expectation that every effort should be made to secure routine doctor/dentist appointments outside of school hours or during school holidays), and **absence (within reason) for an external exam or to attend elite events**.

The school considers each application for term-time absence individually, taking into account the specific facts, circumstances and relevant context behind the request.

Any request should be submitted as soon as it is anticipated and, where possible, **at least 5 days in advance** before the absence, and in accordance with any leave of absence request form, available via the school website or from the school office. The headteacher may require evidence to support any request for leave of absence.

Valid reasons for **authorised absence** include:

* Illness and medical/dental appointments
* Religious observance – where the day is exclusively set apart for religious observance by the religious body to which the pupil’s parents belong. If necessary, the school will seek advice from the parents’ religious body to confirm whether the day is set apart
* Travelers pupils travelling for occupational purposes– this covers Roma, English and Welsh gypsies, Irish and Scottish travelers, showmen (fairground people) and circus people, bargees (occupational boat dwellers) and new travelers. Absence may be authorised only when a traveler family is known to be travelling for occupational purposes and has agreed this with the school, but it is not known whether the pupil is attending educational provision

Legal sanctions

The school or local authority can fine parents for the unauthorised absence of their child from school, where the child is of compulsory school age. If issued with a fine, or penalty notice, each parent must pay £60 within 21 days or £120 within 28 days. The payment must be made directly to the local authority.

Penalty notices can be issued by a headteacher, local authority officer or the police.

The decision on whether or not to issue a penalty notice may take into account:

* The number of unauthorised absences occurring within a rolling academic year
* One-off instances of irregular attendance, such as holidays taken in term time without permission
* Where an excluded pupil is found in a public place during school hours without a justifiable reason

If the payment has not been made after 28 days, the local authority can decide whether to prosecute or withdraw the notice.

# Strategies for promoting attendance

High levels of school attendance are promoted regularly through our school newsletter. Additionally, during Parent meetings, attention is drawn to the importance of attendance and during the Welcome Meeting in September. Senior leaders in the school are proactive in promoting attendance by reaching out to families where attendance is below average and work with the families to develop strategies to support.

# Attendance monitoring

As a school we monitor the data termly and contact parents by phone to explain that their child’s attendance is below average. If this does not improve over a 4 week period a letter is issued to arrange a meeting with either the class teacher and/or Headteacher to discuss the concerns and ways to improve their attendance. Reasonable adjustments will be made for children with SEND or medical needs as necessary.

Monitoring attendance

The school will:

* Monitor attendance and absence data half-termly, termly and yearly across the school and at an individual pupil level
* Identify whether or not there are particular groups of children whose absences may be a cause for concern

Pupil-level absence data will be collected each term and published at national and local authority level through the DfE's school absence national statistics releases. The underlying school-level absence data is published alongside the national statistics. The school will compare attendance data to the national average, and share this with the governing board.

Analysing attendance

The school will:

* Analyse attendance and absence data regularly to identify pupils or cohorts that need additional support with their attendance, and use this analysis to provide targeted support to these pupils and their families
* Look at historic and emerging patterns of attendance and absence, and then develop strategies to address these patterns

Using data to improve attendance

The school will:

* Provide regular attendance reports/data to class teachers, and other school leaders, to facilitate discussions with pupils and families
* Use data to monitor and evaluate the impact of any interventions put in place in order to modify them and inform future strategies

Reducing persistent and severe absence

Persistent absence is where a pupil misses 10% or more of school, and severe absence is where a pupil misses 50% or more of school.

The school will:

* Use attendance data to find patterns and trends of persistent and severe absence
* Hold regular meetings with the parents of pupils who the school (and/or local authority) considers to be vulnerable, or are persistently or severely absent, to discuss attendance and engagement at school
* Provide access to wider support services to remove the barriers to attendance

# Monitoring arrangements

This policy will be reviewed as guidance from the local authority or DfE is updated, and as a minimum annually by the Headteacher and approved by the FGB At every review, the policy will be approved by the full governing board.

Links with other policies

This policy links to the following policies:

* Child protection and safeguarding policy
* Behaviour policy

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### Appendix 1: attendance codes

The following codes are taken from the DfE’s guidance on school attendance.

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| **Code** | **Definition** | **Scenario** |
| **/** | Present (am) | Pupil is present at morning registration |
| **\** | Present (pm) | Pupil is present at afternoon registration |
| **L** | Late arrival | Pupil arrives late before register has closed |
| **B** | Off-site educational activity | Pupil is at a supervised off-site educational activity approved by the school |
| **D** | Dual registered | Pupil is attending a session at another setting where they are also registered |
| **J** | Interview | Pupil has an interview with a prospective employer/educational establishment |
| **P** | Sporting activity | Pupil is participating in a supervised sporting activity approved by the school |
| **V** | Educational trip or visit | Pupil is on an educational visit/trip organised, or approved, by the school |
| **W** | Work experience | Pupil is on a work experience placement |

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| --- | --- | --- |
| **Code** | **Definition** | **Scenario** |
| **Authorised absence** |
| **C** | Authorised leave of absence | Pupil has been granted a leave of absence due to exceptional circumstances |
| **E** | Excluded | Pupil has been excluded but no alternative provision has been made |
| **H** | Authorised holiday | Pupil has been allowed to go on holiday due to exceptional circumstances |
| **I** | Illness | School has been notified that a pupil will be absent due to illness |
| **M** | Medical/dental appointment | Pupil is at a medical or dental appointment |
| **R** | Religious observance | Pupil is taking part in a day of religious observance |
| **S** | Study leave | Year 11 pupil is on study leave during their public examinations |
| **T** | Gypsy, Roma and traveller absence | Pupil from a traveller community is travelling, as agreed with the school |
| **Unauthorised absence** |
| **G** | Unauthorised holiday | Pupil is on a holiday that was not approved by the school |
| **N** | Reason not provided | Pupil is absent for an unknown reason (this code should be amended when the reason emerges, or replaced with code O if no reason for absence has been provided after a reasonable amount of time) |
| **O** | Unauthorised absence | School is not satisfied with reason for pupil's absence |
| **U** | Arrival after registration | Pupil arrived at school after the register closed |

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **Code** | **Definition** | **Scenario** |
| **X** | Not required to be in school | Pupil of non-compulsory school age is not required to attend |
| **Y** | Unable to attend due to exceptional circumstances | School site is closed, there is disruption to travel as a result of a local/national emergency, or pupil is in custody |
| **Z** | Pupil not on admission register | Register set up but pupil has not yet joined the school |
| **#** | Planned school closure | Whole or partial school closure due to half-term/bank holiday/INSET day |

**Arrangements for monitoring, evaluation and review**

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| Responsible committee for monitoring & evaluation: | FGB |
| Policy reviewed by: | FGB |
| Policy review & approval date: | October 2022 |
| Next review date: | October 2023 |





**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.

**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 has 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?**

* 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**](http://www.legislation.gov.uk/uksi/2013/756/contents/made) 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**