

Attendance Policy

St Joseph's Catholic Primary School



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1. Aims

St Joseph's Catholic Primary School is committed to the continuous raising of achievement of all our pupils. Regular attendance is critical if our pupils are to be successful and benefit from the opportunities presented to them. The governors, headteacher and staff in partnership with parents have a duty to promote full attendance at St Joseph's Catholic Primary School.

Our school aims to meet its obligations with regards to school attendance by:

- Promoting good attendance and reducing absence, including persistent absence.
- Ensuring every pupil has access to full-time education to which they are entitled.
- Acting early to address patterns of absence.

We will also support parents to perform their legal duty to ensure their children of compulsory school age attend regularly, and will promote and support punctuality in attending lessons.

The safeguarding of our pupils is paramount when they are in our care. For this reason, the Governing Body's policy on attendance and registration aims to ensure every pupil is accounted for on each of the days school is open and a comprehensive system of attendance is maintained for every pupil on roll.

2. Parental Responsibility

Parents have a legal duty to ensure that their children attend school regularly and arrive on time. Regular attendance is essential to the all-round development of the child and they should be allowed to take full advantage of educational opportunities available to them.

- Gates open at 8:40am and children are expected to be in their classrooms at 8:50am.
- Registers are taken at 8:55pm; children who are not in class when the register is taken will be marked as late.
- The register closes at 9:00am; children still not present at this point are classed as absent.

It is the parents' responsibility to contact the school on each day of their child's absence, preferably by 8:30am. Parents or Carers can contact the school by telephone (01737 765373) or by email (email sent to secretary@stjosephs-redhill.surrey.sch.uk), stating the parent's name, the child's name and the child's class and giving a specific reason for the child's absence (so that we can register the absence accurately). This contact is a safeguarding measure that enables all parties know that the child is safe. Parents must ensure that contact details at school are up to date and that a minimum of 2 emergency contacts are provided.

If a child is absent and the parent has not contacted the school then, as part of our safeguarding policy:

- › The school office will phone parents to ascertain the reason for absence.
- › If there is no answer, the office will try to contact the other emergency contacts. The purpose of this is to check on the safety & wellbeing of the child.
- › If it has not been possible to contact either the parent/carer or emergency contacts the school will give due consideration to making a home visit based on their knowledge of the child. If no contact has been made we will contact the LA for advice.

These procedures have been summarised for parents and can be found in appendix 1.

3. The Role of the School Staff

The Headteacher has overall responsibility for attendance and has to report termly percentages to the local authority. The Deputy Head for Inclusion monitors attendance together with the office admin team.

Class teachers complete a register at the beginning of each morning and afternoon session. Marking the attendance registers twice daily is a legal requirement. Teachers mark pupils present or mark as an 'N' if a child is absent. The office admin team will mark in late or absent children in the morning and telephone the parents/carers of any absent children if they have not already made contact. It is the responsibility of office admin team to ensure:

- › Attendance and lateness records are up to date.
- › Where there has been no communication, the school will contact parents requesting reasons for absence, or will follow up with the above procedures if no contact can be made.
- › When a reason has been provided, the office staff will ensure that the appropriate attendance code is entered into the register.

4. Illness and Medical Appointments

When a child is unwell, parents are expected to contact the school before 8:30am on each day of absence informing the school of the reason for absence.

- › Every effort should be made to arrange medical appointments outside school hours.
- › If it is necessary for a child to be out of school for this reason, the child should be returned to school directly after the appointment.
- › If a child is absent due to vomiting or diarrhea then they should not return to school for the next 48 hours after the last time that the child is sick. This is to reduce the risk of infection to other children and adults at the school.
- › For more than three days of absence or where there is repeated absence due to illness, the school may request medical evidence (this can take the form of an appointment card or a copy of a prescription).
- › Where there are concerns about a child's attendance (particularly when it drops below 90%) the school will request medical evidence for any absence.

5. Moving School

If a family are moving out of the area there are a number of things we require them to do:

1. Notify us in writing at least 2 weeks in advance, including contact details for where they are moving to and if possible the details of the school their child will be attending.
2. Notify us in writing when the child has started their new school.
3. We will also request an email from the new school in the UK to confirm when the child started.

If we do not hear from the family about their child's new school, we will contact the local authority where they have moved to find out whether the child is in school. If they are on the waiting list or have started school, we will request a confirmation email, and take the child off the school register following this confirmation.

6. Children Missing from Education (CME)

Consultation between the Headteacher and the Inclusion Service at Surrey County will take place if a child has not returned to school, or we have not been informed of their new arrangements.

If no reason has been given for a child's absence, and the school have not been able to contact parents/carers or any emergency contact by the second day, a home visit will be arranged. If a visit takes place and there is no one home the school may contact the police (having sought advice from the LA).

If a child has been absent from school with no reason given, or if they have moved and no new school has contacted St Joseph's Catholic, a referral is made to the CME team.

7. Lateness

At St Joseph's Catholic Primary School, the register is taken at 8:55am and 1:00pm (Reception – Year 2) or 1:30pm (Year 3 – Year 6). Pupils arriving after these times must enter school by the main entrance and sign in at the office. The pupil will be marked as late when registration has closed (Code 'L').

The register will close at 9:00am and 1:05pm (Reception and KS1) or 1:35pm (KS2). Pupils arriving after the register has closed will be marked as late after registration (Code 'L'), pupils arriving after 9:30am will be marked as 'U' which is an unauthorised absence.

Parents will be contacted by the school if their child is late regularly. If punctuality continues to be a concern, staff will meet with parents to discuss any issues which are causing lateness and how things can be improved.

Please note that persistent lateness after 9:30am, when children are marked as 'U' may result in the local authority issuing a fixed penalty notice warning.

Penalty Notices may also be considered where there are 10 or more unauthorised sessions during a 6 week period. Unauthorised sessions may include 'U' codes (see 'Lateness' section of this policy).

8. Leave of Absence

The Headteacher may authorise absence in 'exceptional circumstances', but this must be requested in advance and agreement to each request is at the discretion of the Headteacher, acting on behalf of the Governing Body (Education (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2006). Each case will be judged on its merits and the Headteacher's decision is final. Once the decision not to authorise leave is taken, it cannot be authorised retrospectively.

Absence during term-time interrupts continuity of teaching and learning and disrupts the educational progress of individual children. We recognise there will be occasions where children will be absent from school due to illness and/or unavoidable medical appointments.

The Headteacher is not obliged to accept a parent's explanation, a letter or telephone message from a parent does not in itself authorise an absence. If absences are not authorised, parents will be notified.

A written application must be made to request a leave of absence, the Headteacher will give due consideration to the circumstances and the child's past attendance history. The application for leave of absence must include a return date. Children who return 10 days or more after the expected date will be reported to the local authority as a 'Child Missing in Education' and may be taken off the school roll.

Where leave has been granted this will be marked 'C' in the register, where a family request leave and it is not granted this will be marked as 'G'. Unauthorised holiday of 10 sessions (5 days) or more can result in the local authority issuing a fixed penalty notice.

The following reasons are examples of absence that will not be authorised:

- › Persistent non-specific illness e.g. poorly/unwell.
- › Oversleeping.
- › Confusion over school dates.
- › Medical/dental appointments of more than half a day without very good reasons.
- › Child's/family birthday.
- › Shopping trip.
- › Family Holidays.
- › Absence of child as a result of another member of the family's illness or medical appointment.

9. Time Out During a School day

Medical, Dental Appointments, exams etc.

A letter with regard to these appointments should be handed into the school office or an email sent to secretary@stjosephs-redhill.surrey.sch.uk. A book is maintained by the office staff for the purpose of recording pupils leaving or returning to the site. For attendance purposes and for emergency evacuation, parents must sign in and out for their children.

10. Monitoring Attendance and Lateness

A pupil arriving late disrupts not only his or her continuity of learning but also that of others.

Our expectation is that a child's attendance is 100% at the end of the school year. The school closely monitors attendance and lateness to try to minimise poor attendance and punctuality through:

- › Staff speaking to parents and carers as and when concerns arise.
- › The School Attendance Team contacting families whose attendance is below average to try to find ways to improve.
- › The school writing to parents when attendance or punctuality does not improve.

The school monitors children's attendance closely. A series of letters is sent when attendance causes concern or does not improve after the school has raised concerns:

- › **Letter 1** - advising parent or carer that attendance has dropped and alerting them to the impact the absence will have on their child's learning. Parents will need to work closely with the school to improve the situation. The child's attendance will be monitored closely and further contact will be made if improvement is not seen.
- › **Letter 2** – raising concerns that attendance has not improved and setting the expectation that all future absences need to be accompanied by medical evidence.
- › **Letter 3** – Alerting parents of either a meeting with Deputy Head for Inclusion to review attendance or an attendance panel meeting with the LA Attendance and Inclusion Officer (see below). If a child's attendance does not improve following intervention at this level, next steps may include a penalty notice and possible legal proceedings – for more details see below.

11. Support from the school

At every stage it is our aim to work in partnership with parents and support them to ensure their child reaches their full potential. The school understands that from time to time situations may arise which make it difficult for parents to ensure their child is in school. For example:

- › Housing issues.
- › Health issues.
- › Children's behavioural issues.
- › Financial issues.

Please let us know if there are issues which are affecting your child's attendance.

12. Local Authority Action

When there are concerns about a child's attendance and it does not appear to be improving, the school will refer to the local authority attendance service who may consider the following:

Local Authority Inclusion Officer Actions

This may include:

- › Invitation to Attendance Panel meeting.
- › Home visits.
- › Multi agency meetings
- › Sign posting to supportive agencies e.g. Child and Adolescent Mental Health Service, Social Services and Family Group Conference Service.
- › Recommendation to issue penalty notice.

Penalty Notices for Poor Attendance

- › Penalty Notices are issued in accordance with the Attendance Service Code of Conduct.
- › The Attendance Service issue a warning letter setting out 15 school days during which no unauthorised absence is to be recorded.
- › If unauthorised absence is recorded during the 15 day period a Penalty Notice will be issued (one per parent per child)

Penalty Notices will be issued in the following circumstances:

- › Truancy.
- › Parentally-condoned absences.
- › Persistent lateness after the register has closed.
- › Being present in a public place without reasonable justification during the first 5 days of any fixed term or permanent exclusion.

Where Penalty Notices are imposed, the regulations state that the penalty will be £120 to be paid within 28 days, reduced to £60 if paid within 21 days. Penalty notices are issued to each parent of each child. Failure to pay the penalty in full by the end of the 28 day period may result in prosecution by the Local Authority.

13. Other Linked Policies

- › Safeguarding Policy

14. Addendum

Due to COVID-19 this policy is subject to change

Children who are self-isolating due to suspected or confirmed cases of Coronavirus will not be penalised, the appropriate code will be used on the register

Appendix 1: summary

Protocol for contacting parents or carers of children absent from school.

- It is the school's expectation that parents contact the school before the start of each day if their child is going to be absent preferably by 8:30am.
- Parents or Carers should contact the school by telephone (01737 765373) or by email (email sent to secretary@stjosephs-redhill.surrey.sch.uk), stating the parent's name, the child's name and the child's class and giving a specific reason for the child's absence (so that we can register the absence accurately).
- It is school policy that if a child is off for more than 3 days then medical evidence must be provided in order to authorise the absence.
- If a parent/carer does not contact school when their child is absent, the school office will phone the parents/carers to ascertain the reason for absence.
- If there is no answer, the office will try to contact the other emergency contacts. The purpose of this is to check on the safety & wellbeing of the child.
- If it has not been possible to contact either the parent/carer or emergency contacts the school will give due consideration to making a home visit based on their knowledge of the child. If no contact has been made we will contact the LA for advice.

Appendix 2: school attendance codes

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

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
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