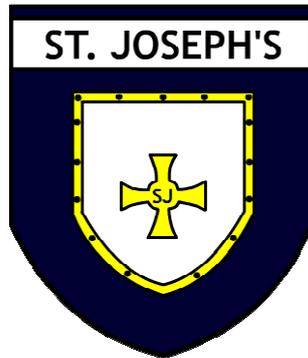


St Joseph's Catholic Primary School

SCHOOL ATTENDANCE POLICY



'We are all God's children
and will try to live, love, work and
serve as Jesus taught us.'

Approved by the staff and Governing Body on 24th September 2013

SCHOOL ATTENDANCE MATTERS

St Joseph's Catholic Primary School recognises that good attendance and pupils' enjoyment of school are central to raising standards and pupil attainment. We know that parents value their child's education and have high aspirations for them; hence we are keen to work with you to ensure that your child has good attendance in order for them to do well at school.

This policy is written with our Mission Statement in mind and underpins our school ethos to:

- ensure that pupils reach their full potential whilst at school;
- promote children's welfare and safeguarding;
- ensure every pupil has access to the full time education to which they are entitled and;
- ensure that pupils have access to the widest possible range of opportunities when they leave school.

For our children to gain the greatest benefit from their education it is vital that they attend regularly and be at school, on time, every day the school is open unless the reason for the absence is unavoidable.

Any absence affects the pattern of a child's schooling and regular absence will seriously affect their learning. Any pupil's absence or late arrival disrupts teaching routines and so may affect the learning of others in the same class. Ensuring a child's regular attendance at school is a parental responsibility and permitting absence from school without a good reason creates an offence in law and may result in prosecution.

Attendance - How can parents help?

Parents are the key to ensuring that a child attends school.

You can help your child by following these suggestions:

- Never let your child stay at home unless you are certain that they have a genuine reason for doing so.
- Join with school in stressing to your child the importance of good attendance and punctuality at the start of the day.
- Always let the school know why your child is away, on the first day of absence. Please telephone between **8.45am and 10.30am**. A telephone message can be left if phoning earlier. If you are bringing other children to school, please come into the school office and inform the admin staff of your child's absence or leave a message with the member of staff on the door. You can also inform the school of a reason for absence by e-mail if more convenient.
- Avoid making dental or doctor's appointments during school time unless it is absolutely necessary. Under government guidelines pupils away for such treatment are considered absent, unless the school is notified in advance. When necessary to take children during the school day please provide the appointment card to the school reception desk.
- If your child does need an appointment during school time, do not keep them away for the whole day – only for the time necessary for the appointment. Remember, there are separate attendance marks for morning and afternoon sessions.

- **Leave of absence in term time will not be authorised unless there are exceptional reasons which prevent holidays being taken during school breaks**, as they cause serious disruption to learning and make it very difficult for a child to catch up. Consequently any un-agreed holiday will be recorded as unauthorised and could lead to legal action. Please refer to the section below on exceptional circumstances.
- Make sure your child arrives at school on time every day. School registration is at **8.55 am** and lessons begin promptly thereafter. Children arriving after 9am, under government guidelines, will be marked late. Any child who arrives after **9.15am**, the final deadline set for registration, may be deemed absent for that session. Children are supervised in class from 8.45am.
- Make a careful note of term dates and day closures from the school newsletter. These dates are also available on our website.
- Talk to your child about their friendships and school work, to make sure they do not have worries, which may stop them wanting to come to school. All staff at school are very approachable, and willing to discuss any concerns you may have about your child.
- Contact your child's teacher or the headteacher without delay if you have any concerns about your child's attitude to school.

What does the law say?

Parents are legally obliged to ensure that their child attends school whenever possible. The minimum acceptable level of attendance for each child is 90% and should be considerably higher. Any child whose attendance is lower than 90% will be considered an active cause for concern by the school and Education Welfare Services.

There are two types of absence – AUTHORISED and UNAUTHORISED. Please note that it is the school and not the parent who authorises the absence. Absence can be authorised when there is considered to be a good reason for the pupil to be away. Absence will not be authorised when no reason has been given or if the reason supplied is considered unacceptable.

Penalty Notices

The Local Authority (LA) has Penalty Notices that it can issue (Section 23 of the Anti-Social Behaviour Act) as an alternative to prosecution under Section 444 of the Education Act 1996. It is hoped that Penalty Notices will prove to be a suitable intervention in circumstances of parentally condoned truancy.

More information on current government procedures can be found on the Department for Education website or from the school office.

AUTHORISED absences

Acceptable reasons for authorising an absence are as follows:

- Child's own illness
- A medical/dental appointment early in the morning
- Religious observances
- Family bereavements
- Exclusion from school

UNAUTHORISED absences

The law does not allow the following as acceptable reasons for absence:

- Truancy
- Shopping trips during school hours (even if it is for the child)
- Personal appointments such as visiting the hairdresser
- Birthdays or similar family celebrations
- Visits (Day trips/ theatre visits/pop concerts)
- Parents / carers are not well

Exceptional Circumstances

Absences during term time

Under the regulations, approval for a child to be taken out of school during term time can only be granted by the headteacher in exceptional circumstances. Government statutory guidance states that “*Only exceptional circumstances warrant an authorised leave of absence...Leave is unlikely, however, to be granted for the purposes of a family holiday as a norm*”. Parents should not therefore expect any request for leave for a family holiday to be approved and in most cases such requests will be refused by the headteacher.

Requesting leave from school

Any request for leave during term time must be made in advance, using an application for leave form* available from the school office, to the headteacher by the parent with whom the pupil normally resides. The request **must** include an explanation for the reason for the absence. The headteacher will only approve the request if there are exceptional circumstances relating to the application and will determine the number of days the child can be away from school if the leave is granted. All applications will be treated in confidence.

What are ‘exceptional circumstances’?

The fact a holiday is cheaper during term time cannot to be considered as ‘exceptional circumstances’. ‘Exceptional’ circumstances are much more likely to be unique and/or one-off situations e.g. where there has been a trauma or bereavement in the family or a family wedding. Ultimately, however, it is for the headteacher to decide if the circumstances are ‘exceptional’.

Unforeseen Circumstances

An exceptional absence may be authorised by the headteacher for unforeseen circumstances e.g. a sudden hospitalisation of a parent etc. Each case needs to be notified in advance, if possible, in writing or by discussion with the headteacher, or, in an emergency, by a phone call on the day. The circumstances of each case will be considered individually. Government statutory guidance states that retrospective approval of an absence cannot be given.

* see Appendix