

ST JOSEPH'S CATHOLIC PRIMARY SCHOOL, BRIDGWATER

ATTENDANCE POLICY

The Government, through the Department for Education (DFE), has stated in its guidance (July 2008) that "Schools must remember that they can only approve absence for family holidays if they consider that there are special reasons which warrant the holiday."

The Standard Policy

The standard policy, which comes into immediate effect, states

All holiday requests will be considered to be unauthorised leave of absence. Any appeal will be heard by the Governing Body, whose decision will be final. All other requests for leave will be considered on a case by case basis by the Governing Body that may, at its discretion, delegate some decisions to the Headteacher. Again, the decision of the Governing Body will be final.

St Joseph's Catholic Primary School, along with other local schools and Somerset County Council, firmly believe that all pupils benefit from regular school attendance. Full and regular attendance at school is crucial for a child's future life chances and establishes a positive work ethic early in life. To this end we will do all we can to encourage parents/carers to ensure their children achieve maximum possible attendance and that any problems that prevent full attendance are identified and acted on promptly. Pupils will be expected to achieve 100% attendance but when absence is unavoidable, parents/carers will be required to inform the school at the earliest opportunity.

Parents/carers, whose children are of compulsory school age (5 to 16) and are registered at a school, are responsible for ensuring that their children attend school regularly. If they do not do so they may be committing an offence under the Education Act 1996 and could be liable to prosecution or to be served with a penalty notice.

In line with the Education Regulations (Pupil Registration) Regulations 2006, all unexplained absences of 10 consecutive days or more are required to be reported to the Local Authority, although schools may wish to discuss such an absence sooner with their EWO if the absence is unauthorised, parents cannot be contacted or there are other concerns. Schools are required to report all absence figures to the local authority and the DFE and to ensure they are recorded on a child's annual report. Rates of absence are also taken into account by Ofsted as part of a school's inspection.

Commitment to Attendance

The staff of St Joseph's Catholic Primary School are committed, in partnership with the parents/carers, students, governors and the Local Authority, to building a school which serves the community and of which the community is proud.

Regular attendance is key to achieving the five outcomes of Every Child Matters: staying healthy, enjoying and achieving, keeping safe, contributing to the community, and social and economic well-being. Research clearly demonstrates the link between regular attendance and educational progress and attainment. We are committed to encouraging and supporting parents in ensuring their children achieve maximum possible attendance and that any problems that prevent this are identified and acted on promptly.

Parent Responsibility and The Law

The Education Act 1996 Part 1, Section 7 states:

The parent of every child of compulsory school age shall cause him to receive efficient full-time education suitable-

[a] To his age, ability and aptitude and

[b] To any special needs he may have.

either by regular attendance at school or otherwise.

For educational purposes the term parent is used to include those that have parental responsibility and/or those that have the day to day care of the child.

The legislation that appertains to children who are of compulsory school age and are registered at school is contained within this Act.

Part V1 Section 444 contains the details of when an offence is committed if a child fails to attend school.

Registers

Under the provision of the Education Act 1996 (s434) and the Student Registration Regulations 1995 the school must keep an attendance register.

Any child who is absent from school at the morning or afternoon registration period must have their absence recorded as being authorised, unauthorised or as an approved educational activity [attendance out of school]. Only the Headteacher or a member of staff acting on their behalf can authorise absence. If there is no known reason for the absence at registration, then the absence must be recorded in the first instance as unauthorised.

Categorisation of Absence

Any pupil who is on roll but not present in the school must be recorded within one of these categories.

1. Unauthorised absence

This is for those pupils where no reason has been provided, or whose absence is deemed to be without valid reason. This includes:

- Parents/carers keeping children off school unnecessarily
- Absences which have never been properly explained
- Shopping, looking after other children or birthdays
- Excessive illness without medical evidence.

2. Authorised absence

This is for those pupils who are away from school for a reason that is deemed to be valid under the Education Act 1996.

3. Approved Educational Activity

This covers types of supervised educational activity undertaken off site but with the approval of the school.

Note: Pupils recorded in this category are deemed to be present for attendance returns purposes.

This would include:

- Field trips and educational visits
- Sporting activities
- Link courses or approved education off site
- Most types of dual registration

Registration & Lateness

The school day begins at 08:55 am.

Morning registration will take place at 08:55 am. The registers will remain open for 20 minutes and any child who arrives after the register has been taken but during the 20 minutes will be marked late (L).

Any pupil who arrives after the registers close at 9:15 am should sign in with the office and will be marked as late after close of registers (U), which statistically counts as an unauthorised absence. If a reason is given for the late arrival, for example, attending an early morning medical appointment, the appropriate authorised absence code will be entered. (See Appendix 1)

The afternoon registration will be taken at 1:15 pm.

In cases of persistent late arrival to school, parents will be invited to a meeting with the Headteacher.

Escalation Process

If a child is absent for any reason, it is the responsibility of the parent to notify the school. However if the child is absent and no reason has been provided the following procedure will apply:

First Day Absence

The school will contact the parent to request reason for absence if the parent has not contacted the school to explain the reason. School will note any reason given for absence and will categorise it as authorised or unauthorised. A message will be left where no contact can be made.

For a child on the 'At Risk Register or defined a 'Child in Need', the school will consider how soon contact with Social Care and/or Education Welfare should be made.

Second Day Absence

The school will contact the parent to request reason for absence if the parent has not contacted the school to inform of further absence. It is the responsibility of the parent to contact the school each day if their child is absent. School will note any reason given for absence and will categorise it as authorised or unauthorised. A message will be left where no contact can be made.

Third Day Absence

The school will contact the parent to request reason for absence. School will note any reason given for absence and will categorise it as authorised or unauthorised. If no response is received the school will send a letter and the attendance lead will be informed.

Ten Days Absence

Any pupil who is absent without an explanation for 10 consecutive days will be notified to the Local Authority, by submitting a referral to Education Welfare Service. This is a legal requirement. The school will include details of the action that they have taken. A child missing from education form will be completed if necessary.

Frequent Absence

Whilst any child may be off school because they are ill, sometimes they can be reluctant to attend school. Any problems with regular attendance are best sorted out between the school, the parents and the child. If your child is reluctant to attend, it is unhelpful to cover up their absence or to give in to pressure to excuse them from attending. This gives the impression that attendance does not matter and usually makes things worse.

Education Welfare meets with school staff on a termly basis to discuss attendance concerns.

In cases where a pupil begins to develop a pattern of absences, the school will try to resolve the problem with the parent/s by:

1. Phone call to parent by class teacher and issues discussed with student within school.
2. Letter sent to parents stating concerns.
3. Meeting at school with teacher and member of Senior Leadership team.

If this is unsuccessful the school will refer to Education Welfare.

Persistent Absence (PA)

A pupil becomes a 'persistent absentee' when they miss 10% or more schooling across the school year for whatever reason. Absence at this level is considerably damaging a child's educational prospects and we need parent's fullest support and co-operation to tackle this.

We monitor all absence thoroughly. Any case that is seen to have reached the PA mark or is at risk of moving towards that mark is given priority and you will be informed of this immediately.

PA pupils are tracked and monitored carefully through our pastoral system and we also combine this with academic mentoring where absence affects attainment.

Parents will be notified by a letter if their child becomes a persistent absentee and be invited to a meeting where an action plan will be drawn up to address the issues identified.

Exceptional Leave of Absence

There is no automatic entitlement in law to time off in school time to go on holiday.

School will only authorise leave of absence in term time in exceptional circumstances.

Where a parent wishes to request a leave of absence, a formal request must be made, in writing, to the Head Teacher who will consider the application on behalf of the Governors. Consideration will then be given to the student's previous school attendance and that the time requested does not exceed 10 school days in any one academic year.

If a holiday is taken without prior authorisation by the school, it will be recorded as an unauthorised absence, Education Welfare will be notified and the parent may be liable to a Penalty Notice.

Penalty Notices

The Education Welfare Service, acting on behalf of Somerset County Council may issue a Penalty Notice as an alternative to the prosecution of a parent/carer for their

child's unauthorised absence from school and requires the recipient to pay a fixed amount.

The amount payable on issue of a Penalty Notice is £60 if paid within 21 days of receipt of the notice, rising to £120 if not paid after 21 days but within 28 days.

If the Penalty Notice is not paid within 28 days, the Local Authority must prosecute the parent/carer for failing to ensure regular school attendance under Section 444 Education Act 1996.

Circumstances when a Warning Penalty Notice may be issued

A Warning Penalty Notice may be issued to parents/carers who are failing to secure their child's regular school attendance and are failing to engage with supportive measures to improve attendance proposed by the school.

Penalty Notice

Where a child is taken out of school for a holiday during term time for 5 days or more without the authority of the head teacher, **each parent** is liable to receive a penalty notice for each child. In these circumstances, a warning will not be given where it can be shown that parents had previously been warned that such absences would not be authorised.

Pupils identified by police and education welfare officers engaged on Truancy Patrols and who have incurred unauthorised absences.

Late arrival after the close of registration on 5 occasions during a half term where the pupil's attendance falls below 85%. The lateness will be recorded in accordance with the 'Registration and Lateness' section of this policy.

With the exception of unauthorised holidays taken in term time, parents will be sent a formal warning of their liability to receive such a notice before it is issued.

The Education Welfare Officer

Education Welfare monitors the attendance of all children on a termly basis. The Education Welfare Officer (EWO) will work with school staff and parents to promote good attendance and investigate reasons for absence.

If attendance problems cannot be resolved by school then the school will make a referral to Education Welfare. The EWO will try to resolve the situation but if attempts to improve attendance have failed, and unauthorised absence persists, the EWO can use sanctions such as parenting contracts, penalty notices and prosecution.

Failure to ensure regular school attendance, under section 444 of the Education Act 1996, could result upon conviction in a magistrate's court, to a fine not exceeding £2500 or a term of imprisonment not exceeding three months, or both.

Rewards

Certificates will be awarded for 100% attendance, termly and throughout the year.

Student's attendance will be celebrated in regular assemblies.

Roles & Responsibilities

All staff are expected to:

- Encourage good attendance and punctuality.

Class teachers are responsible for:

- Keeping a register of attendance for each lesson and raise attendance concerns with their Head of Department.
- Provide pastoral support to address attendance issues.

School Secretary:

- Will ensure morning and afternoon registers are taken and are up to date.
- Contacts parents and requests reasons for absence.
- Collates daily attendance records and, together with the head, puts in place agreed procedures to monitor and respond to poor attendance and punctuality.

Headteacher:

- Monitors and reviews the attendance policy on an annual basis.
- Monitors and reviews the attendance procedures and works with the attendance office and Education Welfare to ensure reasons for absence are identified and interventions are put in place.

- Identifies and monitors attendance of PA students.
- Promotes the attendance policy within the school and ensures that it is implemented effectively.

The Governing Body:

- Agrees appropriate absence targets on an annual basis. (See appendix 2)
- Plays an active role in ensuring targets are met.

Appendix 1 – Attendance Codes

All students must be given a registration mark each day. There are two sessions that require a registration mark.

The following national codes will be used to record attendance information.

CODE	DESCRIPTION	MEANING
/	Present (AM)	Present
\	Present (PM)	Present
B	Educated off site (NOT Dual registration)	Approved Education Activity
C	Other Authorised Circumstances (not covered by another appropriate code/description)	Authorised absence
D	Dual registration (i.e. pupil attending other establishment)	Approved Education Activity
E	Excluded (no alternative provision made)	Authorised absence
F	Extended family holiday (agreed)	Authorised absence
G	Family holiday (NOT agreed <u>or</u> days in excess of agreement)	Unauthorised absence
H	Family holiday (agreed)	Authorised absence
I	Illness (NOT medical or dental etc. appointments)	Authorised absence
J	Interview	Approved Education Activity
L	Late (before registers closed)	Present
M	Medical/Dental appointments	Authorised absence
N	No reason yet provided for absence	Unauthorised absence
O	Unauthorised absence (not covered by any other code/description)	Unauthorised absence

P	Approved sporting activity	Approved Education Activity
R	Religious observance	Authorised absence
S	Study leave	Authorised absence
T	Traveller absence	Authorised absence
U	Late (after registers closed)	Unauthorised absence
V	Educational visit or trip	Approved Education Activity
W	Work experience	Approved Education Activity
X	Untimetabled sessions for non-compulsory school-age pupils	Not counted in possible attendances
Y	Enforced closure	Not counted in possible attendances
Z	Pupil not yet on roll	Not counted in possible attendances
#	School closed to pupils	Not counted in possible attendances