

St John's Cathedral Catholic Primary School – Attendance Policy



School Attendance Policy

Name of Head Teacher	Mrs Laura Park
Name of Chair of Governors	Dr Vivienne McCabe
Date	May 2024
Next review date	May 2027

School Attendance Policy

At St John's Cathedral Catholic Primary School our mission is to educate the whole child through the Gospel values of Christ.

Section 1 – Introduction

We are fully committed to helping every child reach their full potential and this requires a close partnership between school and parents in which school attendance and punctuality is truly valued.

We believe that pupils need to attend school regularly if they are to take full advantage of the educational opportunities available to them by law.

Legal Responsibilities

Under the education Act 1996, section 7, parents of children of compulsory school age are required to ensure that their children receive regular full time education. We consider this to be not less than 95% but always aim for 100%.

DFE Attendance guidance (2014) requires that:

Schools – promote good attendance and reduce absence

- Ensure that every child has access to fulltime education
- Act early to address patterns of absence
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Parents/Carers – must ensure that children of compulsory school age who are registered to a school, attend regularly

Pupils – attend lessons punctually

Section 2 - Roles and Responsibilities

The Head Teacher, supported by the Bursar and Office Administrator shall:

- Direct and coordinate the school's work in promoting regular and improving attendance
- Ensure that the attendance policy is applied consistently and fairly throughout the school
- Ensure that attendance data is recorded and reported accurately
- Ensure that attendance data is analysed regularly to identify attendance concerns or patterns of absence
- Ensure that attendance issues are identified and addressed at an early stage so that support and intervention can be put in to place
- Consider requests for absence fairly and in line with this policy
- Notify parents/carers of any issues with attendance
- Follow up concerns with persistent and severe attendance with the School Nurse and/or Local Authority to look for wider support and effective strategies

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School Staff shall:

- Ensure that registers are taken promptly and accurately
- Liaise with the Head Teacher on matters of attendance and punctuality
- Promote good attendance with the pupils
- Follow up all unexplained absences with parents/carers

Pupils shall:

- Attend school every day unless they are ill or have an authorised absence
- Arrive in school on time – by 8.55am
- Attend appropriately prepared for the school day

Parents shall:

- Ensure that their child attends school daily unless ill or have an authorised absence and arrive by 8.55am
- Inform the school by 9.30am on the first day of absence
- Make sure that all absence is accounted for and the school is informed by telephone or Study Bugs
- Discuss with the Head Teacher, well in advance, of any planned absence
- Support the school in aiming for 100% attendance each term
- Only request absence for exceptional circumstances
- Provide evidence of any appointments during school time

Our school commitment

The Senior Attendance Champion at St John's, Mrs Park, can be contacted through the school office.

Parents and carers are welcome to discuss attendance concerns with the office staff, class teachers and members of the Senior Leadership. Appointments can be made through the school office.

The home school agreement sets out what is expected in terms of attendance and punctuality.

The attendance policy is available on the school website and from the school office.

We encourage team work by having an attendance cup which is presented each term to the class with the best attendance.

We recognise that individual pupils and families may sometimes face challenges in this area but we aim to actively pursue the goal of regular attendance by

- discouraging lateness
- expecting an explanation from parents/carers for absence
- being alert to emerging patterns of absence
- promoting regular attendance
- working closely with the School Attendance Team to promote attendance

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Section 3 - Recording Attendance

Registration

Registers are raised weekly using the Arbor Management Information System
Pupils are marked present or absent on the attendance register at the beginning of each session, morning and afternoon.

Registers will be retained for a period of 3 YEARS (by the Administration Officer)

N.B. Registers are LEGAL DOCUMENTS and may be used in evidence in cases where parents are being prosecuted for attendance offences.

Every term the LA requires unauthorised absence figures from each school. The Administration Officer will access this information using the Arbor Management Information System

Section 4 – Understanding Categories of Absence

Categorising Absence

Absence is authorised when:

- the pupil is absent with leave, defined as leave granted by the governing body (responsibility delegated to the Head Teacher) i.e. LEAVE OF ABSENCE FORM and limited to exceptional circumstances such as the funeral of a close relative.
- the pupil is ill or prevented from attending by any unavoidable cause.
- absence is exclusively for religious observance.

The school follows Portsmouth Local Authority guidelines for absence.

Authorised

Illness

Unavoidable family crises (e.g. a death in the family).

Child in contact with infectious illness (e.g. meningitis).

Urgent dental, medical appointments.

Religious observance.

School exclusion.

Unauthorised

Illness of parent or other member of family.

Inadequate clothing.

Absence with collusion of parent/carer (e.g. child-minding, birthday treats, Christmas treats).

School refusal (phobia).

Truancy.

Caring for others.

Problems with transport (e.g. no money for bus fare, car not starting).

Non urgent medical or dental treatment.

Child used as an interpreter.

Holidays.

Family weddings or baptisms.

Only the school, not the parents/carers, can approve absence.

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Section 5 –Absence Due to Illness

Parents/carers must use Study Bugs, phone or e-mail the school office by 9.30am on the first day of absence. The absence sheet will be filled in by administration staff. **The absence must be followed up by a letter explaining the absence.**

If a pupil returns to school with no explanation of his/her absence a letter requesting reason for absence should be sent immediately by the Administrative Officer, and followed up until a reply is received. Prompt action by vigilant class teachers and Administrative Assistants often prevents children from drifting into frequent and/or prolonged absence.

Medical and Dental Appointments

Absence for urgent appointments is authorised where confirmation has been received from the parent **in advance** (in writing, phone call or verbal message) or on production of an appointment card.

When a pupil is present for registration but then has to attend an appointment:

The parent/carer calls at the School Office, after having informed them in advance, and records that he/she is taking the child off site (Administration Staff will collect child from the classroom or the Class Teacher will ensure that the child will arrive at the office at the appointed time. The parents signs the child out on inventory to record the child has been taken out of school.

When the child returns to School he/she must be signed in at the office.

We discourage parents/carers from arranging appointments during the school day as it is disruptive to children's learning. We do however acknowledge that it may not always be possible to avoid this and do expect children to attend school as soon as possible following appointments.

Section 6 –Leave of Absence

Leave of Absence Form

A leave of absence form may be collected by parent/carers from the School office to request time off in **exceptional circumstances**.

Please note that holidays, weddings, baptisms and other family events are not considered exceptional circumstances.

The completed form should be returned to the School Office by teacher, parent/carer or child.

The Office will assess the form and pass it to the Head teacher for approval (as delegated by the Governing Body). The Head Teacher may then request evidence as well as a meeting with the parent/carer to discuss the request.

The information will then be put into the class register for teacher acknowledgement.

The form is then kept in a designated file.

Until you receive approval for the request, no bookings or arrangements should be made.

Section 6 –Persistent Absenteeism

Persistent Absenteeism

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A pupil is classed as a 'Persistent absentee' if their attendance falls below 95%. Each half term, the Administrative Officer will make the Head Teacher aware of any children that fall in to this category and they will be contacted to make them aware of our concerns. If necessary, a meeting will need to be arranged with the Head teacher and/or outside agencies. It is always our aim to act swiftly and offer early support to help a family address issues with attendance.

In cases where intermittent or persistent absence continues, parents are contacted by telephone and letter to discuss the issues. School support is offered and a meeting arranged with the Head Teacher. Referrals can be made to the School Nurse/SENCo for support or other support agencies signposted. If the problem persists a home visit from the Head Teacher may be appropriate

Section 7 –Penalty Notices and Other Legal Measures

If a child has 5 days or more, in an academic year, due to an unauthorised leave of absence then a penalty notice may be issued. The issuing of a penalty notice is generally considered appropriate in the following circumstances.

- following 5 days (10 sessions) of unauthorised absence in a term.
- parentally condoned absences
- unauthorised leave of absence in term time
- late arrival at school after the register is closed

Each parent is individually responsible for the child's attendance and commits a separate offence if the child does not attend school on a regular basis. The charges for this penalty notice are:

£60 payable within 21 days per parent

£120 payable between the 22nd and 28th day per parent

Section 8 –Punctuality

Lateness

The school actively discourages lateness.

An explanation and apology from the child is expected but we are careful not to victimise the child for events that are outside of their control.

Lateness is recorded on inventory and on the weekly SIMS printout.

It will be recorded as unauthorised if a child arrives half an hour late or more.

If a child is regularly late for school, the School Office will inform the Head Teacher who will make further enquiries.