

# St Jerome's Catholic Primary School

## Attendance and Punctuality Policy

### Introduction

St Jerome's is committed to providing excellence for pupils of all abilities. High attendance and good punctuality is essential for pupils to work to their potential, be successful and benefit from the opportunities available to them at the school. For our children to gain the greatest benefit from their education it is vital that they attend regularly.

Achieving high attendance is a necessity in preparing pupils for future working life as an adult. Pupils should be in school, **on time and every day** that the school is open, unless the reason for the absence is unavoidable.

It is very important therefore, that parents and carers, recognise the responsibility and obligation to make sure that pupils attend regularly and are punctual. This policy sets out how the school, its partners and parents/carers can work together to achieve this

### 1.1 The Importance of Regular Attendance:

Any absence affects the pattern of a child's schooling and regular absence will seriously affect their learning. Any pupil's absence disrupts teaching routines so may affect the learning to others in the same class.

Ensuring pupil's regular attendance at the school is the **legal responsibility of parents**.

**By law, all children of compulsory school age must attend school.**

Poor attendance not only undermines a child's education and future life chances, it sometimes puts children at risk, encouraging anti-social behavior. Permitting absence from the school without a good reason creates an offence in law and may result in prosecution.

### 1.2 Promoting Regular Attendance:

Helping to create a habit of regular attendance is everybody's responsibility parents, pupils and all members of school staff.

**To maintain a focus on this the school will:**

- Report to parents once each term on how their child is performing at the school. This will include information about their attendance and punctuality
- Celebrate good attendance in assemblies each year
- Reward good attendance through certificates for 100% attendance

## 2.0 Absence Procedures

### 2.1 If a pupil is absent parents/carers should:

- Contact the school by 9.00 am ideally on the first day of absence; the telephone number is 01704833211
- Parents/carers may also call into the school and speak to office staff to report an absence.

### 2.2 If a pupil is absent the school will:

- Telephone or message parents/carers on the first day of absence if a message [that does not explain the absence] has not been received
- Invite parents/carers in to discuss the situation with the Attendance Officer and Head Teacher, if absences persist.

### 2.3 Telephone numbers:

- There are times when the school will need to contact parents/carers on a range of issues, including absence, so it is essential that the school has up to date contact numbers at all times. There will be regular checks on telephone numbers each year.

### 3.0 Lateness

Poor punctuality is not acceptable. If a pupil misses the start of the day they can miss work and do not spend time with their class teacher getting vital information and news for the day. Late arriving pupils also disrupt lessons. Persistent poor punctuality will result in sanctions being applied e.g. an attendance or punctuality contract between the school and home.

#### 3.1 How we manage lateness:

- From 8.50 am gates are open
- Pupils are expected to go directly into class
- Registers are taken at 9.00 am
- At 9.00 am classroom doors are closed, pupils must go through the main entrance
- Reason for lateness is recorded in a separate attendance and punctuality diary
- At 9.30 am registers are closed.

If a pupil has a persistent late record, parents/carers will be asked to meet with the Attendance Officer and Head Teacher to resolve the problem. Parents/carers can approach the school at any time if they experience problems getting their child to school on time.

### 4.0 Understanding Types of Absences

Every half-day absence from the school has to be classified by the school, as either **Authorised** or **Unauthorised**.

Registers are taken twice a day by staff to record attendance marks for pupils. Registers are legal documents so the school staff is obliged to complete them accurately. Information about the cause of any absence is always required from parents/carers either by telephone, in person or in writing.

#### 4.1 Authorised

Authorised absences are mornings or afternoons away from the school for a good reason such as illness, medical/dental appointments which unavoidably fall in school time, emergencies or other unavoidable causes.

#### 4.2 Unauthorised

Unauthorised absences are those which the school does not consider reasonable and for which no 'leave' has been given. This type of absence can lead to the school and authority using sanctions and/or legal proceedings. The types of unauthorised absence include:

- Parents/carers keeping children off unnecessarily
- Truancy during the school day
- Absences which have never been properly explained
- Pupils who arrive at the school too late to get a mark. **Registers close at 9.30 am**
- A child arriving late after that time will be recorded as U [unauthorised]
- Shopping, looking after other children or birthdays
- Day trips and holidays in term time which have not been agreed
- Oversleeping
- Confusion over term dates
- 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 a child is reluctant to attend, parents/carers should not condone their absence or to give in to pressure to excuse them from attending as this gives the child the impression that attendance does not matter.

### 5.0 Exceptional Leave in Term Time

There is no automatic entitlement in law to time off during school term time to have exceptional leave. Any period of leave taken without the agreement of the school, or in excess of that agreed, will be classed as unauthorised and may attract sanctions such as a penalty notice.

## 5.1 Holiday during Term Time

It is the school's general policy not to grant holidays in term time. The Head Teacher will consider requests for leave and will have the final decision.

## 5.2 Exceptional Leave

Pupils have a total of 13 weeks holiday a year so parents should only request that they be able to take their child out of school **under exceptional circumstances**. This is known as exceptional leave and must be applied for in writing to the head teacher. In this letter parents/carers should make clear the reasons why it is necessary to take their child out of school. Taking holidays in term time will affect a pupil's education and is **not acceptable**. All application letters for exceptional leave must be made two weeks in advance. In making a decision the head teacher will consider the circumstances of each application individually, including any previous pattern of leave in term time.

## 6.0 Persistent Absenteeism [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 will do considerable damage to any child's educational prospects. The school expects parents/carers full support and co-operation to tackle this. All absence is monitored thoroughly. Any case that is seen to have reached the PA mark or is at risk of moving towards that mark is given priority. Parents/carers will be informed of the concern immediately. PA pupils are tracked and monitored carefully by the Attendance Officer and Head Teacher.

## 7.0 Penalty Notice Proceedings

Parents/carers will be issued with a 'Warning Penalty Notice Letter' from the Local Authority if there are;

- 10 incidents of lateness to school after registers have closed or
- 10 sessions of unauthorised absence.

The warning letter sets out 15 school days [3 weeks] during which **no unauthorised absence should be recorded**. If an unauthorised absence is recorded during this period a penalty notice and fine will be issued [one per parent/carer per child]. Where a penalty notice is not paid within 42 days of issue the Local Authority may instigate court proceedings.

Where a penalty notice has been served regulations state that the penalty of £120 must be paid within 42 days. This figure reduces to £60 if paid within 28 days.

## 8.0 The Role of Parents and Carers

Parents/carers are expected to contact the school at an early stage and to work with the staff in resolving any problems together. This is nearly always successful. The school will also try to resolve the situation by agreement but, if other ways of trying to improve the child's attendance have failed and unauthorised absences persist the case will be referred to the Local Authority who will invite the parent to a School Attendance Panel. It is here that they will receive a formal warning in relation to their child's attendance at school.

## 9.0 Children Missing in Education

No child will be removed from roll without consultation between the Head Teacher or Deputy Head Teacher and the Attendance & Welfare Service. Where a child is missing from education with prolonged absences that are unexplained or if a family move away from the area but do not register with another school, the school will alert the Local Authority who will then take action according to the Child Missing in Education Policy and Procedures. Movement of children between Local Authorities and schools is tracked nationally.

## 10. Publication of Attendance Figures

The school has a legal duty to publish its absence figures to parents and to promote attendance. Equally, parents have a duty to make sure that their children attend. All school staff are committed to working with parents and pupils as the best way to ensure as high a level of attendance as possible. St. Jerome's has excellent annual attendance for the pupils overall and we always aim to support parents and children in every way we can to ensure maximum attendance for every child.

**Review: September 2023**