

# St. Joseph's Catholic Primary School

## Attendance Policy



This policy should be read in light of our Mission Statement that states:

**'At St. Joseph's, we live, love and learn by the example of Jesus'**

### **AIMS**

The Policy of St Joseph's School is to educate children and enable them to reach their full potential, spiritually, intellectually, socially, and emotionally. We aim to:

- maximise attendance rates in order to ensure that the children are able to take full advantage of the learning experiences available to them
- establish a commitment to work which will be carried forward into adulthood

### **STATUTORY FRAMEWORK**

Every child is required by law to attend school regularly at the school where he/she is registered.

The school is obliged by law to differentiate between authorised and unauthorised absence. A letter or message from a parent does not in itself authorise an absence. Only if the school is satisfied with the validity of the explanation offered by the letter/message will the absence be authorised.

### **RIGHTS AND RESPONSIBILITIES**

Promoting good attendance at St Joseph's School is the responsibility of everyone in the school community - parents, children and all the school staff.

**Parents** are responsible for ensuring that their child attends school regularly and punctually.

**Children** are expected to make every effort to attend school and to be prompt in their arrival.

All **staff** (teaching and non-teaching) will endeavour to encourage good attendance and punctuality through a range of strategies including personal example. The marking of registers must be meticulous and consistent.

### **REGISTRATION**

There is an attendance register for each class which must be marked at the beginning of each morning and afternoon session, and then returned to the office.

School will begin at 8.50am. Children are recommended to arrive in the playground between 8.40 and 8.50am.

Registers will be taken on entry to classrooms and will close at 9.00am. If a pupil arrives after registers close, the register will be amended to read absent/late. If pupils are persistently late parents will be contacted to address the problem.

Parents are reminded that if a child arrives in school after the register has closed, and an acceptable explanation is not forthcoming, the pupil has to be recorded as 'unauthorised absent' for that session.

The Attendance Codes, as shown on the list kept in each register, should be used to indicate attendance or absence, and any reasons for absence provided by parents.

### **AUTHORISED AND UNAUTHORISED ABSENCE**

An absence is authorised by a written note, an e-mail, a telephone message or a verbal message. Parents are encouraged always to send a written note. If no message has been sent, an 'Absence from School' letter should be sent. All letters explaining the reason for absence should be kept a special folder in the classroom for the remainder of the school year.

The teaching staff use the following criteria when deciding whether or not to authorise an absence. If there is any doubt the headteacher is consulted.

Absence can be **authorised** if:

- the child is ill
- the child had to attend the doctor's surgery, hospital, dentist or any other medical consultation
- for a day set aside for religious observance by the religious body to which the child's family belongs
- for a family holiday of up to ten working days if this has been agreed with the headteacher prior to the holiday
- for an exceptional special circumstance such as a family bereavement, to attend a family wedding or to take an examination.

Absence is **unauthorised** if:

- no explanation is forthcoming
- the headteacher is dissatisfied with the explanation
- the child stays at home to look after other children
- the child is shopping
- the child is absent for unexceptional special occasions (eg a birthday treat)
- the child is on a family holiday for longer than two weeks
- the child is on a family holiday without prior permission.

## **REQUESTS FOR HOLIDAY ABSENCE**

Parents are urged to arrange family holidays during school holidays. However, we do recognise that this is not always possible and parents are able to request leave of absence for their child for up to ten working days in one year. Parents do not have an automatic right to withdraw their child and permission must be requested in advance. An application form for this purpose is available in the school office.

If parents remove a child from school during term time they must accept that the child will miss the work being covered. We do not routinely give work for a child to take on holiday, or save work for a child to do on their return.

## **OTHER REQUESTS FOR ABSENCE**

Any other requests for absence should be made to the headteacher in writing. Permission cannot be assumed.

A note to the child's teacher will suffice for absence for religious observance, preferably before the occasion.

## **FOLLOWING UP ABSENCE**

If a child is persistently absent or late the class teacher should inform the headteacher, who will contact the parents.

If the school's efforts to effect an improvement are unsuccessful, the matter will be referred to the Education Welfare Officer.

The number of unauthorised absences must be reported annually to the DfES.

## **STRATEGIES FOR PROMOTING ATTENDANCE**

- St Joseph's School will offer an environment in which pupils feel valued and welcomed. We will endeavour to demonstrate to pupils that their presence in school is important and that they will be missed when absent/late, and that follow up action will be taken.
- A broad and balanced curriculum will be offered to all pupils. Every effort will be made to ensure that learning tasks are matched to pupil's needs.

- Parent will be reminded (via newsletters, school prospectus, parent's consultation evenings etc) of the importance of good attendance.
- Pupils who are absent through sickness for any extended period of time will (when appropriate) have work sent home to them, and will be welcomed back upon their return to school.
- The Head Teacher will have regular meetings with the school's Education Officer, in order to identify and support those pupils who are experiencing attendance difficulties.
- Requests for absence for annual leave during term time are required to be made in writing on a proforma.
- Children who have particularly good attendance are provided with certificates provided by the Education Welfare Department, as follows:
  - full attendance - an 'excellent attendance' certificate
  - very good attendance - a 'special achievement' certificate

This policy was approved by the full governing body 1<sup>st</sup> December 2008.

Date of review: December 2009

The policy is also available in the following formats, on request to the headteacher: email; enlarged print version; other formats by arrangement.