



Saint Joseph's Catholic Voluntary Academy

Attendance Policy

St Ralph Sherwin CMAT vision:

“We are a Catholic family of schools, working as one, transforming every individual, their family and our Trust community through the building of God’s Kingdom, caring for our environment, today rather than tomorrow.”

School’s vision:

“Saint Joseph’s is a place of learning, where we grow in faith and feel safe, loved and encouraged each day.

We value everyone, knowing that we are stronger when we work together.

Through the virtues, we show care and respect for our families, friends, neighbours and our Common Home.”

Introduction

Punctuality and regular attendance are crucial to a pupil’s achievement at school. The foundation of securing good attendance is that school is a calm, orderly, safe, and supportive environment where all pupils want to be and are keen and ready to learn. Saint Joseph’s Catholic Academy is committed to work in collaboration with parents and children to ensure that all pupils benefit from regular attendance. Good attendance is celebrated as part of our vision and values. All staff communicate to pupils that their contribution to the school community is valued and respected; furthermore staff endeavour to make school a fruitful and enjoyable place to be so that a positive attitude to school and learning is fostered: through this, we aim to ensure that pupils want to attend school regularly. However, some pupils find it harder than others to attend school and therefore at all stages of improving attendance, we will work collaboratively with pupils and parents to remove any barriers to attendance by building strong and trusting relationships and working together to put the right support in place.

Attendance and safeguarding

The safeguarding of all pupils is of utmost importance. School provides a protective environment for those who attend. Schools are well placed to identify safeguarding issues early and regular attendance is vital for this. For those who don't attend regularly, and where all avenues of support have been facilitated, and the appropriate educational support has been provided but the unauthorised absence continues, it is likely to constitute neglect. Schools should be especially conscious of any potential safeguarding issues in these cases and where these remain, request that a full children's social care assessment is conducted. When a pupil is absent and no reason has been given for the absence, the school will prioritise the safety of these pupils.

The law on school attendance and right to a full-time education

The law entitles every child of compulsory school age to an efficient, full-time education suitable to their age, aptitude, and any special educational need they may have. It is the legal responsibility of every parent to make sure their child receives that education. Where parents have registered their child at school, they have an additional legal duty to ensure their child attends that school regularly. This means their child must attend every day that the school is open, except in a small number of allowable circumstances such as being too ill to attend or being given permission for an absence in advance from the school

Working with families and partners

School is committed to successfully treating the root causes of absence and removing barriers to attendance, at home, in school or more broadly. This requires local partners to work collaboratively with families.

School will work collaboratively to:

- Identify patterns of poor attendance (at individual and school level) as soon as possible so all parties can work together to resolve them.
- Ensure aspiration to high standards of attendance from all pupils and parents by building a culture where all can, and want to, be in school and ready to learn by prioritising attendance improvement across the school.
- Listen to families to understand barriers to attendance and agree how all partners can work together to resolve them.
- Remove barriers in school where practically able and help pupils and parents to access the support they need to overcome the barriers outside of school.
- Escalate concerns where the voluntary support is not having an impact by explaining the consequences of non-attendance clearly and ensuring support is also in place to enable families to respond.
- Enforce attendance through statutory interventions or prosecution to protect the pupil's right to an education where support is not having an impact or not being engaged with.

Schools' overall approach takes these six graduated stages:

1	Expect	High expectations that all children will attend well
2	Monitor	Closely monitor the attendance of all pupils to spot problems early
3	Listen/Understand	Work with pupils and parents to understand any barriers to good attendance
4	Facilitate support	Remove barriers in school and help pupils and parents overcome the barriers outside of school
5	Formalise support	Formalise support where informal, voluntary approaches are not working
6	Enforce	If all else fails, enforce attendance through statutory intervention and prosecution

Why regular attendance is so vital

There is a clear and proven link between attendance and achievement. The pupils with the highest attainment have higher rates of attendance than those achieving lower grades. Pupils who miss a substantial amount of school, fall behind their peers, and struggle to catch up as most of the work they miss is never made up, which can lead to big gaps in their learning. Poor attendance often starts at primary school, and children who fall into this pattern are likely to underachieve at secondary school. Friendships can be negatively affected by absence, too: it can be hard for a child who misses lots of school to form relationships with their peers. For the most vulnerable pupils, regular attendance is also an important protective factor and the best opportunity for needs to be identified and support provided. Research has shown associations between regular absence from school and a number of extra-familial harms. This includes crime and serious violence.

These tables show the impact of absence on a child's education across a school year:

Overall attendance level	Number of days lost each year	Impact on child's education
97%+	5 days or less	These children have every chance to make really strong progress at school
95%	10 days	These children benefit from strong overall attendance and are well placed to make good progress at school. We aim for every child to have at least 97% attendance overall
90%	19 days	Children in this group are missing a month of school per year; it will be difficult for them to achieve their best
85%	29 days	Children in this group are missing six weeks of school per year; there is a real risk that this lower attendance will hinder a child's progress. Absence below 90% is considered to be persistent absenteeism.
80%	38 days	Children in this group are missing a full year of school over five years of education. They are not benefitting from their right to be educated. Parents/carers of young people in this group could be issued with a penalty notice.

Minutes late per day =	Days of learning lost per year
5	3.2
10	6.5
15	9.5
20	12.5
30	19

Monitoring attendance / punctuality and responding to concerns

All staff have a duty to informally monitor the children's attendance / punctuality and to report any concerns that they may have about a pupil. In this way, pupil attendance is being monitored in the schools at all times. Concerns can then be triangulated with any other information held about the pupil such as child protection issues, mental health difficulties, SEND, caring responsibilities etc. and appropriate support can be put in place. Best practice is that attendance is dealt with proactively using strong links with the families.

Attendance and punctuality will be monitored formally using data from registers and from the information held on our Management Information System for the purpose of providing effective interventions to improve whole school, specific cohort and individual attendance and punctuality.

Our school attendance monitoring procedures are:

- The class teacher and attendance lead will monitor attendance daily.
- The Headteacher will analyse attendance data weekly and will follow the process if attendance / punctuality is identified as an area for improvement.
- Different cohorts of pupils will be analysed to identify any patterns and allow the school to effectively respond with appropriate support.
- Levels of persistent absenteeism will be scrutinised for school and individual responses.

Expectations for punctuality and attendance

Schools will actively discourage late arrivals and will be alert to any patterns of late arrival in order to start an early discussion with the family to provide appropriate support. Registers start at 8.45am and close at 9am for morning sessions and start at 1pm and close at 1.15pm for afternoon sessions. It is the expectation that all pupils will arrive in time for morning and afternoon registration. If a pupil arrives after registers close, but within 30 minutes, they will be marked as 'late arrival' (L) If a pupil arrives after this time, they will be marked as 'unauthorised absence' (U) or another more appropriate attendance code.

All pupils will be expected to attend school on every day that it is open. If an unexpected absence occurs, there are expectations that relate to pupil safety. A parent **MUST** notify the school on 01629 583616 by 9.00am on the first day of the absence detailing the pupil's name and nature of absence. If the absence is prolonged, there is an expectation that the parent will notify the school by 9.00am at the latest on each day of absence.

Appointments during the day

Parents must avoid arranging appointments for their child during the day. However, if it is unavoidable, parents must notify the school of the appointment details. A child should only be taken out of school for their own appointment, not because another family member has an appointment. This includes collecting a child early so a family member can attend an appointment.

Pupils with medical needs and/ or SEND

Saint Joseph's Catholic Academy understands that some pupils face greater barriers to attendance than their peers. These can include pupils who suffer from long term medical conditions or who have special educational needs and disabilities. However, their right to an education is the same as any other pupil and therefore our attendance ambition for these pupils will be the same as they are for any other pupil. Although our ambitions are the same for all pupils, we are mindful of the unique barriers that these pupils may face and we are committed to putting support in place where necessary to help them access full time education. Parents of pupils with medical needs and / or SEND who are struggling to attend school should contact the school 01629 583616 as soon as they can in order for the school to understand the support required. This could include making reasonable adjustments or having individual healthcare plans. In some cases, advice and support may be sought from external partners such as health services. Our work with families in these instances is crucial to ensuring specific support approaches, including supporting home routines and encouraging external professionals to schedule appointments outside of the school day.

Where the school is not notified of an absence

Pupil safety is the priority for the systems in place to follow up on non-notified absences. Schools will use their knowledge of families to identify pupils who may be more vulnerable when absent and these families will be contacted first. These pupils will be communicated to staff so that all can be aware of their additional vulnerability pertaining to absence / punctuality.

Process for following up on unexplained absence

- If no contact is received by the school by 9am, a phone call will be made to the primary contact detailed on the pupil's files.
- If there is no answer, contact will be attempted with other contacts detailed on the pupil's file.
- If no contact can be made by 9.15am, the school will take every reasonable step to satisfy themselves that the pupil is safe. This may include contacting sibling's schools, contacting Social Care / Early Help if a worker is involved with the family, making a home visit and, in some cases, informing the police.
- The school should be satisfied with every absent child's safety by 10.00am at the latest.

Absence thresholds

All families will receive a letter at the beginning of the school year summarising the school's expectations for attendance and punctuality; how the school is promoting and incentivising good attendance and punctuality and the process for reporting absence and requesting leaves or absence. This policy will also be available on the school's website as well as being sent home at least annually or on update. There is a tiered system to respond to low and/or falling attendance levels. These figures expressed as % attendance levels are intended as a guide. However, a decision may be made to intervene earlier at any stage if there is particular concern about a child's attendance.

Attendance which is below 90%	Attendance at 90% equates to 19 days absence through a year and is therefore a cause for concern. In such circumstances, parents will receive a specific letter which very clearly identifies that the attendance level is a significant cause for concern (except for in exceptional circumstances where the attendance is not a cause for concern, such as known medical conditions). The pupil's attendance will then be monitored for a specified period of time. At the end of this monitoring period, parents will be contacted again to notify them of the outcome and any relevant next steps.
Attendance which continues to decline from below 90%	If there have been exceptional circumstances, such as severe illness or hospitalisation, which have prevented a pupil's absence improving the monitoring period will be extended for a further six weeks. At the end of this parents will be contacted to notify them of the outcome of the extended review and next steps. Where a pupil's absence has not improved, and there are no exceptional circumstances, parents will be requested to attend a meeting, the purpose of which is to explore the reasons for the child's low attendance and agree appropriate support. The content of this meeting will be used to draw up an attendance improvement plan which will be shared with the parents and a review date will be agreed. Participants in that meeting may vary according to the circumstances but may often involve staff such as the allocated lead within the school, class Teacher, SENCo and pastoral staff. The school may also invite the Local Authority Inclusion Lead. At this stage, parents will be informed that school absences cannot be authorised without medical evidence unless there are exceptional reasons which render this inappropriate (for example, a known medical condition); school cannot routinely authorise absence where a child's attendance has reached this level of concern.

Leave of absence

In September 2013 the Education (Pupil Registration) (England) (Amendment) Regulations 2013 came into force. These regulations make it clear that Headteachers should not grant approval for any leave of absence during term-time, including holidays, unless there are

exceptional circumstances. These regulations also state that holidays cannot be authorised retrospectively.

Any requests should be on an official school absence request form and handed into the school office for consideration prior to any holiday/leave arrangements being made.

You may be issued with a Penalty Notice should leave be taken which is not authorised. If unpaid this could lead to prosecution under section 444(1) of The Education Act 1996.

Promoting and Incentivising good attendance and punctuality

Promoting good attendance and punctuality is an integral part of the school's culture. School will visibly demonstrate the benefits of good attendance throughout school life and the curriculum. School improvement strategies for attainment, behaviour, bullying, special educational needs support, supporting pupils with medical conditions or disabilities, safeguarding, wellbeing, and support for disadvantaged students will also consider how to promote good attendance and punctuality. Incentives for good attendance and punctuality may also be used.

Off-site education, alternative provision or specialist provision

Where a child's needs are recognised by the school, and specialist resources not available in school are required, the allocated lead within the school may authorise absence for specific times when such tuition or therapy may be given outside of school. All pupils placed in a more appropriate provision will have full time education and clearly defined outcomes agreed before the placement starts and attendance will be tracked by the provider and the school at which the pupil is on roll. Such pupils will be coded appropriately and, if in attendance at the agreed appropriate provision, will not be marked as absent. Stringent safeguarding checks will be carried out before and during the placement as well as checking safeguarding daily through the daily attendance phone call.

Contacting staff about attendance

The Senior Leader with responsibility for attendance is:	Stacey Carr Headteacher
The attendance admin officer is:	Sally Allen Business Manager
To tell your school that your child is going to be absent, you should:	Please tell us by 9.00am at the latest. Telephone the school on 01629 583616 and leave a message giving your child's name and reason for absence.
If a parent is concerned about their child's attendance, they should:	Speak with the child's teacher in the first instance. You can arrange that by contacting them on ClassDojo If you have already done that and remain concerned, you can speak to Stacey Carr or Sarah Shirley, Pastoral Lead. You can arrange that by contacting the school office.

If you wish to request a leave of absence for your child, you should:	Obtain the 'Request for Leave of Absence form' from the school office. Complete this form and give it to the school as early as possible before the requested absence is due to happen.
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Reviewed and agreed by Governors: Pentecost 2023

To be reviewed Pentecost 2024