

St John Fisher Catholic Primary School



Attendance Policy

August 2024 – August 2027

Statement of Intent

At SJF Primary School we believe that good attendance is essential for all our pupils if they are to gain the maximum benefit from the education that we provide.

School education lays the vital foundations of a child's life, ensuring they are 'school ready, work ready, life ready.'

Research clearly demonstrates the link between regular attendance and educational progress and attainment. Parents and the school staff should work in partnership in making education a success and in ensuring that all children have full and equal access to all that the school has to offer.

As a school we will support families to ensure that their child achieves maximum possible attendance and that any problems that prevent this are identified and acted on promptly. Ultimately it is the parent's responsibility to ensure that their children attend school every day.

Our school expected level of attendance over a school year is 96%.

Aims

Our attendance policy aims to:

- Support pupils and their parents in the establishment of the highest possible levels of attendance and punctuality;
- Ensure that all pupils have full and equal access to the best education that we can offer in order to increase learning;
- Enable pupils to progress smoothly, confidently and with continuity through the school;
- Make parents aware of their legal responsibilities;
- Ensure attendance meets Government and Local Authority targets.

Expectations

We expect that all pupils will:

- Attend school every day
- Attend school punctually
- Attend appropriately prepared for the day
- Discuss promptly with their class teacher or School Office any problems that may affect their school attendance

We expect that all parents will:

- Ensure regular school attendance and be aware of their legal responsibilities
- Ensure that their child arrives at school punctually and prepared for the school day, and ensure that their children are collected at the correct time, and inform school if there is a delay
- Ensure that they contact the school in the event of an absence by 9:00am, or if known in advance, as soon as possible whenever their child is unable to attend school. (E.G. Dental/medical appointment)

- Try to make health appointments outside of school hours, and provide proof of an appointment If the child's absence is due to an appointment with another agency (E.G Health)
- Contact school promptly whenever any problem occurs that may keep their child away from school
- Notify the school of any home circumstances that might affect the behaviour and learning of their child
- Notify school immediately of any changes to contact details

We expect that the school will:

- Provide a welcoming atmosphere
- Provide a safe learning environment
- Provide a sympathetic response to any child's or parent's concerns
- Keep regular and accurate records of AM and PM attendance and punctuality, and monitor individual children's attendance and punctuality
- Contact parents as soon as possible if their child is not in school, and the absence has not been explained
- Follow up all unexplained absences to obtain explanations from parents. (Although parents may offer a reason only the school can authorise the absence. In the case of long term or frequent absence due to medical conditions, verifications from a health professional or other relevant body will be requested)
- School may mark an absence as unauthorised retrospectively if contradictory information is found and will notify parents.
- Encourage good attendance and punctuality through a system of reward and recognition
- When pupils' attendance falls below 95% school will inform parents and advice from the school EWO (Education Welfare Officer) will be sought
- Inform parents of the % attendance of all pupils at Open Evenings across the school year
- Make initial enquiries regarding pupils who are not attending school regularly or who are persistently late
- Meet regularly with the EWO to monitor and support school attendance and punctuality
- Refer irregular or unjustified patterns of attendance to EWO
- Will not accept reasons for absence from pupils or siblings. Reasons for absence must be provided by a parent or carer.

Example absence (authorised/unauthorised)

Authorised absences:	Unauthorised absences:
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Genuine illness of the pupil • Hospital/dental/doctor's appointment for the pupil • Major religious observances • Visits to prospective new schools • External exams or educational assessments • Approved sporting, cultural or competitive activity 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Holidays in term time • Shopping/day trips/weddings • A birthday treat • Oversleeping due to a late night • Looking after other children/other family member • Appointments for other family members

Registers, Punctuality and Lateness

- Punctuality to school is crucial, lateness into school causes disruption to that individual's learning and to that of the other pupils in the class. It is paramount therefore that all pupils arrive at school on time.
- The school doors open at 8:30am and the School Day starts at 08:45am
- By law, schools must take a morning and afternoon register and record the attendance or absence of every pupil.
- Registration takes place at 08:45am and pupils who arrive after this time must enter via the School Office to ensure they are accurately recorded as on the premises
- Children who arrive after registration will receive a late mark. Children arriving between 9-9.30am will receive a late mark.
- Children who have been for a medical appointment and have given school prior notice of their appointment will receive a 'medical' registration mark as such.
- Afternoon registration is taken at 1.00pm for Reception and KS1 and 1.30pm for KS2.
- Persistent lateness by a pupil will lead to referral to the EWO and could result in a fixed penalty notice.

Pupil Leaving During the School Day

During school hours the school staff are legally in loco parentis and therefore must know where the pupils are during the school day.

- Pupils are not allowed to leave the premises without prior permission from the school and an adult collects them.
- Whenever possible, parents should try to arrange medical and other appointments outside of school time.
- Where a pupil is being collected from the school, within school hours, parents are to report to the School Office to collect their child.
- If a pupil leaves the school site without permission their parents will be contacted. Should the school be unable to make contact with the family it may be appropriate, in certain circumstances, to contact the Police and register the pupils as a missing person.

Leave of Absence

The school holiday dates are published a year in advance and leave of absence (holidays) will NOT be authorised during term time. **All leave of absences must be requested in writing to the school office.**

In line with the DFE document 'Working Together to improve School Attendance Aug 2024

1), holidays during term time will NOT be authorised.

The Headteacher and Governors have determined that:

- In "exceptional circumstances" permission may be granted providing your child has a good and the Headteacher is satisfied that the request complies with the "exceptional circumstances" requirements.
- Exceptional circumstances are considered as one-off situations (once in a life time events). If an event can reasonably be scheduled outside of term time then it is unlikely that the absence will be authorized. Each application will be judged on its own merit.
- If leave (holiday or leave of absence) is taken without prior authorisation by the school, it will be recorded as an unauthorised 'leave' absence and the Education Attendance Officer will be notified.
- School staff are not be expected to provide additional work for the child during the leave period.
- The Governing Body at SJF Primary School has determined that NO holidays taken in term time will be authorised and in accordance with Bexley Local Authority guidance the school will refer for a fixed penalty notice to be issued for unauthorised holidays of 10 or more sessions (2 sessions = 1 day).
- The DFE document 'Working Together to improve School Attendance Aug 2024 makes it clear that Headteachers may not grant any leave of absence during term time unless there are exceptional circumstances.

Extended Leave of Absence

Where a pupil is absent from school for 10 or more consecutive days the school must inform the Local Authority. Extended leave of absence must be requested and risks the child's school place being revoked and filled by another pupil. The school will take the following steps;

- Request sight of travel and or accommodation tickets.
- Agree a return date.
- Inform parents of loss of place after 20 day absence - pupils will be 'off rolled'.
- Parents are expected to contact school if any circumstances change.
- Parents should sign an agreement acknowledging the risk.

Children Missing in Education

The school recognises that children missing education are at risk of underachieving and may be at risk of abuse, neglect or exploitation.

We follow the LA guidelines in monitoring such children.

If a child is apparently "missing", we endeavour to find that child as soon as possible, working with partner agencies, including the Police and Social Care if necessary.

Our EWO works closely with families to support good attendance.

Where there are serious concerns, we work closely with Education Welfare and other agencies to ensure that children are safely in school.

Where a child goes missing, we make every attempt to contact the family by phone, letter and home visits.

Children missing for more than 10 days **MUST** be referred to the LA (or earlier where there are existing safeguarding concerns), who will attempt to trace the family.

Children who do not attend for more than 20 days without notification are removed from the register.

Penalty Notices

Penalty Notices can be issued for unauthorised absence including if there are persistent punctuality issues or if a parent fails to ensure regular school attendance.

The amount payable on issue of a Penalty Notice is as follows

1. £160.00 per parent-per child reduced to £80 per parent-per child if paid in 21 days.
2. 2nd notice within 3 years - £160.00 per parent-per
3. 3rd notice within 3 years - referral to Magistrates Court fined up to £2500.00
4. If a child has 10 or more sessions of absence (5 Days) in a 10 week period the a penalty notice may be issued

Penalty notices are issued to each parent, for each child.

Monitoring and Review Arrangements

The Governing Body has the responsibility of setting down the guidelines and principles with regard to school attendance policy and procedure and ensuring compliance with School Attendance Regulations.

The Governing Body through the Headteacher will monitor and evaluate school attendance levels and review the effectiveness of this policy.