

# ST JUDE'S CATHOLIC PRIMARY SCHOOL

## ATTENDANCE POLICY



### **Our Mission:**

*We live, love and learn together joyfully in Jesus' name.*

### **INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND**

**St Jude's Catholic Primary School recognises that positive behaviour and good attendance are central to raising standards and pupil attainment.**

This policy is written with the above statement in mind and this policy underpins our school ethos to:

- promote children's welfare and safeguarding;
- ensure every pupil has access to the full time education to which they are entitled;
- ensure that pupils succeed whilst at school; and
- ensure that pupils have access to the widest possible range of opportunities when they leave school.

For our children to gain the greatest benefit from their education it is vital that they attend regularly and be at school, on time, every day the school is open unless the reason for the absence is unavoidable.

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

Ensuring a child's regular attendance at school is a parental responsibility and permitting absence from school without a good reason creates an offence in law and may result in prosecution.

### **PROMOTING REGULAR ATTENDANCE**

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

**To help us all to focus on this we will:**

- Give parents/carers details on attendance in our newsletters

- Report to parents/carers at parent consultation evenings on their child's attendance
- Contact parents/carers should their child's attendance fall below 90%
- Celebrate good attendance by displaying individual and class achievements;
- Reward good or improving attendance through class competitions, certificates and outings/events.

## **UNDERSTANDING TYPES OF ABSENCE**

Every half-day absence from school has to be classified by the school (not by the parents), as either AUTHORISED or UNAUTHORISED. This is why information about the cause of any absence is always required.

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

We would prefer parents to make medical appointments out of school hours. However, where this is not possible, a note may be sent to the school prior to the day of absence. Where this occurs, school will request sight of an appointment card or medical note. Where possible, children should attend school either side of the appointment.

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 Authority using sanctions and/or legal proceedings. This includes:

- parents/carers keeping children off school unnecessarily
- truancy before or during the school day
- absences which have never been properly explained
- children who arrive at school too late to get a mark
- shopping, looking after other children or birthdays
- day trips and holidays in term time

Whilst any child may be absent from 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 at the earliest possible opportunity. If a parent thinks their child is reluctant to attend school then we will work with that family to understand the cause.

## **PERSISTENT ABSENTEEISM (PA)**

A pupil becomes a 'persistent absentee' when they miss 10% or more schooling across the school year for whatever reason. This remains a constant challenge at our school. Absence at this level is doing considerable damage to any child's education and we need parent's fullest support and co-operation to tackle this.

We monitor all absence and the reasons given thoroughly. Any case that is seen to have reached the PA mark or is at risk of moving towards that mark is given priority and we will inform the parents/carers immediately of our

concerns and the parents/carers will be asked to a meeting with the head teacher.

PA pupils are tracked and monitored carefully we also combine this with academic tracking where absence affects attainment.

All our PA pupils and their parents will be subject to intervention and plans will include:

- Use of Early Help Strategies using the Right Service, Right Time model.
- allocation of additional support through the School Nurse, Pastoral Manager and the SLT
- individual targets and participation in group activities around raising attendance.

## **ABSENCE PROCEDURES**

**If a child is absent the parent/carer must follow the following procedures:**

- Contact school as soon as possible on the first day of absence before 9.30am. The school has an answer phone available to leave a message if nobody is available to take the call
- call into school and report to reception.

**If a child is absent we will:**

- Telephone or text the parent / carer on the first day of absence if we have not heard from them;
- Invite parents / carers in to discuss the situation with our Pastoral Manager or Deputy Headteacher if absences persist.

## **THE PASTORAL MANAGERS**

Parents are expected to contact school at an early stage and to work with the staff in resolving any problems together. This is nearly always successful. If difficulties cannot be sorted out in this way, the school may refer the child/family formally to our Pastoral Manager.

**The Pastoral Manager will also try to resolve the situation by agreement but, if other ways of trying to improve the child's attendance have failed and unauthorized absences persist, we may resort to legal proceedings as part of the Fast Track project (see Appendix 2). Full details of the options open to enforce attendance at school are available from the school or the Local Authority. The most up to date letters are available here:**

**[https://www.birmingham.gov.uk/downloads/download/1839/school\\_attendance\\_and\\_absence\\_-\\_fast\\_track\\_information\\_for\\_schools](https://www.birmingham.gov.uk/downloads/download/1839/school_attendance_and_absence_-_fast_track_information_for_schools)**

Alternatively, parents or children may wish to contact the SLM themselves to ask for help or information.

## **LATENESS AND LEAVING EARLY**

### **Lateness**

Poor punctuality is not acceptable. If a child 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, can be embarrassing for the child and can also encourage absence. Good time keeping is a vital life skill which will help our children as they progress through their school life and out into the wider world.

### **How we manage lateness:**

The school day starts at **9.00 am** and we expect our children to be at school and in the class room before this time ready to start the days work.

Registers are marked by **9.00am** and your child will receive a late mark if they are not in by that time.

At **9.30am** the registers will be closed. In accordance with the Regulations, if your child arrives after that time they will receive a mark that shows them to be on site, but this will not count as a present mark and it will mean they have an unauthorised absence. This may mean that you could face the possibility of a Penalty Notice if the problem persists.

If your child has a persistent late record (3 lates or moreover a half-term) you will be asked to meet with the Pastoral Manager or the Deputy Headteacher to resolve the problem, but you can approach us at any time if you are having problems getting your child to school on time.

We will encourage good punctuality by being good role models to our children and celebrate good class punctuality.

### **Requests to leave early**

We will only allow children to leave the school early with a valid appointment. If it is an emergency for a parent/carer or child then we would ask the parent/carer to prove at a later date that they did in fact attend an appointment. This could be with an appointment card, or a prescription if one was issued. Without this an unauthorised absence would be recorded.

## **LEAVE OF ABSENCE IN TERM TIME**

### **Leave of absence in term time (holidays, extended leave etc.)**

No term time leave of absence will be given apart from under exceptional circumstances. For example:

- death of parent/carer or sibling of the pupil
- life threatening or critical illness of parent or sibling of the pupil
- parent/carer recuperation and convalescence from critical illness or surgery (leave request to be made within 6 months of recovery and medical evidence required)
- leave for armed forces personnel who are prevented by operational duties to take their leave at any other time
- leave of absence already granted by a previous school or local authority (granted within the last six months and supported by documentation from the previous school)

- Absence for Religious Observance. This is interpreted to mean that if the parent's religious organisation sets the day as a Religious festival then the school will authorise only one day's absence. **Appendix 1.**

The above examples have been given to us by Birmingham Local Authority.

The Headteacher has been given discretionary powers in other circumstances; however, for the Headteacher to grant term time absence the circumstances must be considered as exceptional as those outlined above.

Parents must complete a form notifying school of their intention to take leave, if a parent /carer requests leave and it is refused, and then the child does not come to school, parents/carers will be contacted in the usual way and will be asked to explain their child's absence.

If we do not hear from a parent/carers then we will perform a safe and well check. If we still cannot verify the whereabouts of a child we will ask the police to support in ensuring the safe whereabouts of your child. This is a part of school's safeguarding procedures.

## **PEOPLE RESPONSIBLE FOR THIS POLICY AND ITS IMPLEMENTATION**

Headteacher and the Governing Body.

## **TARGETS**

**St. Jude's Catholic Primary is committed to achieving a 96% attendance figure for each academic year. We are committed to reducing PA by at least 5%**

## **SUMMARY**

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.

Adopted by the Governing Body: 12<sup>th</sup> February 2019

Reviewed: March 11<sup>th</sup> 2021

Approved by Governors: March 25<sup>th</sup> 2021

Signed: ..... Chair of Governors

## Appendix 1

### Request for Leave of Absence on Religious Grounds.

#### St Jude's Catholic Primary School

<b>Child's Name:</b>	<b>Date of Birth:</b>
<b>Class:</b>	<b>Class Teacher:</b>

<b>Date Religious Observance Requested:</b>
<b>Details of Religious Festival:</b>

Religious ceremonies may, or may not, form part of a religious festival. Some important religious festivals may not include ceremonies but may nonetheless require observance; others may not require observance or will be celebrated on the nearest weekend to the due date.

There may be differences in the importance attached to particular ceremonies or festivals between different branches of the same religion. The authority's information is that the following will require observance unavoidably:

- Yom Kippur (Jews)
- Jewish New Year (Orthodox Jews)
- Eid-ul-Fitr and Eid-ul-Adha (Muslims)
- Divali (Hindus)
- either the Birthday of Guru Nanak or Baisakhi/Vaisakhi (according to the particular branch of Sikhism)
- Birthday of Emperor Haile Selassie I (Rastafarians).

The Governors of St Jude's Catholic Primary School recognise the importance of religious observance, we would like to respectfully remind you however that your child is only entitled to one day of leave from school for religious observance. Any student taking more than one day will be marked for the additional day(s) as having unauthorised absence.

Head Teacher Signature .....Date .....

## **Appendix 2. Fast track letter**

Dear Parent

RE: \_\_\_\_\_ D.O.B: \_\_\_\_\_

I am writing to inform you that the attendance rate for your child during this term is \_\_\_\_\_. This is considered to be Persistent Absence.

Government guidelines for attendance are 95%.

Whilst it is appreciated that children may be absent for a variety of reasons, including illness, it is the school's responsibility to monitor each child attends school regularly in order for them to reach their full potential. This is hi-lighted in many ways by the school – in our weekly newsletter, for example. Regular attendance is a major way in which your child's achievement can be improved. It is not only the best way of ensuring greater benefit from education but also the way in which friendships are developed at an early age.

The **legal position** clearly states that it is the **'parents' legal responsibility** to ensure that their child receives appropriate education. Parents who fail to send their children to school regularly, without good reason, are committing a criminal offence which may lead to prosecution under the Fastrack Attendance programme, currently running in school.

**If your child is too ill to attend, it is your responsibility to contact the school as early as possible on the first day of absence, stating the nature of illness. If no message is received, your child's absence will be unauthorised. Only the headteacher of a school has the right to authorise an absence, not the parent.**

**It is also worth considering whether your child is actually too ill to attend on certain days. As a staff, we are very caring towards our pupils and we would always contact you if we felt that they weren't well enough to be in. Often when a child comes in and they are under the weather, they pick up and feel better quickly. Obviously, we don't expect children to come in when they are too ill to attend with sickness or diarrhea, for example.**

**In order to improve your child's attendance, please consider the following:**

- **Avoid making medical or dental appointments in school hours whenever possible.**
- **A letter or slip confirming the time and date of appointment should be handed into the school reception.**
- **Short medical appointments do not warrant a day off.**
- **Treatment of head lice does not warrant a day off.**
- **Avoid holidays during term time, these cannot be authorised any longer.**

- **Absence due to a sibling or parental illness or appointment is not acceptable, and will be unauthorised.**

Schools have a legal responsibility to investigate when pupils are not attending school and will take legal action through the Magistrates Courts if parents fail to meet their responsibilities in respect of school attendance. I am enclosing a Legal Action information sheet for your attention.

Your child's attendance will continue to be monitored closely for the remainder of the year, should you wish to discuss this further please do not hesitate to contact me at school.

Yours sincerely

B M Smith  
Headteacher