



# **St Joseph's Catholic Primary School, Banbury**

## **Attendance Policy**

## **Introduction**

The new 'Working Together to Improve School Attendance' document which applies from September 2022 states, "The law entitles every child of compulsory school age to an efficient, full-time education suitable to their age...It is the legal responsibility of every parent to make sure their child receives that education...where parents have decided to have their child registered at a 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 school." This policy sets out the process by which we ensure this happens.

## **Aims**

Good attendance is a learned behaviour, and impacts on academic, social and emotional progress, and attainment, therefore this policy aims:

- To provide clear guidelines about how the school promotes and attains high levels of pupil attendance. This will ensure that all stakeholders understand the school's expectations of themselves, and each other, and strive to attain them.
- To explain the process of early intervention that supports the development of good attendance habits

## **Objectives**

1. to achieve a 96% + attendance rate
2. to restrict days taken as holiday, during term time in any one year.
3. to promote partnership between parents and school, working for the benefit of the children's learning
4. to involve other agencies when all possible school based supportive measures have been put in place.

The policy will give clear guidance on expectations and procedures for the following personnel:

- Pupils
- Parents
- Staff
- Governors

## **Procedures for implementation**

### **Expectations of pupils**

- that they will attend school regularly, aiming for an attendance rate of 100%
- that they will arrive on time and appropriately prepared for the day
- that they will inform a member of staff of any problem or reason that may hinder them from attending school.

### **Expectations of parents**

- That they will ensure their child/ren attend school, aiming for a 100% attendance rate
- That they will contact school as soon as it is reasonably practical (e.g. by 9.00am) whenever their child is unable to attend to support the school in safeguarding their child

- That any absence is followed by a written explanation of why the child was absent and for what period of time if it is more than one day
- To ensure that their child arrives in school well prepared for the school day
- To contact the school, in confidence, whenever any problem occurs that may keep their child away from school
- To refrain from taking the child out of school for holidays, or occasional days, unless there are significant exceptional circumstances
- To work with school to facilitate open and honest discussions that enable higher attendance if this is an issue

### **Expectations of school**

- To ensure regular, efficient and accurate recording of presence / absence and share this information with parents regularly
- To make early contact with parents when a child fails to attend to support our safeguarding duty
- To refer to appropriate support agencies as required
- To communicate clear expectations of what is good attendance
- To give clear guidance as to how good attendance is promoted
- To facilitate support for families that enables improved attendance (this may mean sharing information with other agencies)
- To have a designated senior leader with responsibility for championing and improving attendance
- To monitor, review and analyse attendance data regularly and link this to attainment and progress data where applicable
- To ensure that persistent absence is viewed by school through the lens of our safeguarding duty

### **Expectations of Academy Committee members**

- To recognise the importance of school attendance and the impact this has on attainment and progress of all learners
- To monitor the effectiveness of the policy through Head teacher reports
- To support the school in encouraging good attendance through role modeling
- To communicate with parents and other agencies as appropriate
- To nominate members for the attendance panel
- To attend celebration assemblies for good attendance
- To regularly review attendance data

### **School Procedures related to attendance**

#### **Registration**

- registration periods are 8.50am-9.00 am / 1.00 – 1.10pm
- registers will be completed during these periods and returned to the office at the end of registration
- registers will be completed using the codes identified in Appendix A as dictated by Oxfordshire County Council.
- If no information, regarding the absence of a child, has been received by 9.00am, the office will telephone the parent to check the reason for absence
- If there is no initial reason given for the absence, or letter of explanation on the child's return, this will be recorded as unauthorised absence

### **Authorised and unauthorised absence**

The decision to authorise an absence is taken by the Head teacher, following statutory requirements and the school's policy on attendance.

#### **Authorised absence**

- Absence will be authorised if the school has notification from the parents that the child is ill. This should usually take the form of an initial notification at the beginning of the period of absence and each day that the child is absent from school. A note of confirmation on the child's return is also required.
- If the child has a medical appointment with the doctor or dentist that cannot be made outside school hours, this will be considered as an authorised absence. Regular absences for medical reasons will be raised as a concern with parents. Parents must request the period of absence or inform the school in advance, preferably with a copy of any medical appointment documentation.
- If the absence has been requested and approved in line with the school procedures then this will be an authorised absence.

An absence may not be authorised, even if the parents give a reason, if the absences are persistent. In the case of repeated absence due to illness, the school will request confirmation from the GP that the child has a medical condition that seriously impacts on their ability to attend school regularly.

#### **Part-time timetables**

In very exceptional circumstances, school, the family and other agencies that are involved with the family may make the decision that it is in the best interests of the child to reduce the amount of time they are expected to be in school. This is never a long term solution to issues and must only be in place for the shortest time necessary. Where a part-time timetable is in place this will be regularly reviewed with school and the family. Due to this being agreed with school, the time this child is not in school is registered as an authorised absence.

#### **Unauthorised absence**

Absences will not be authorised if the following occur:

- Unexplained absence
- Absence for a shopping trip or looking after a younger child at home
- A trip or holiday that has not been approved by the school in advance
- Any absence that is not considered by the panel to be as the result of extenuating circumstances

#### **Persistent lateness**

If a child arrives after the register has closed at 8.50 am, the absence will be recorded as unauthorised, unless there are exceptional circumstances. If the lateness is persistent or a pattern of lateness is identified, parents/carers will be invited in to school to address this and develop actions to ensure this does not continue. If parents/carers fail to work with school to address the issues, the matter can be referred to the Attendance & Engagement Team, who will offer support. If there is still no improvement, a Penalty Fine could be issued.

#### **Leave of absence**

There is no automatic right to leave being granted. Only exceptional circumstances warrant authorized absences.

- Under no circumstances will leave be authorised if attendance is below 96%
- Requests for absence during term time will be reviewed by the Head teacher and will only be considered if there are exceptional circumstances. Parents will be expected to attach a letter outlining these circumstances with the absence request form. Issues such as parents' employment conditions related to non-negotiable holiday dates, the time of year and level of previous attendance will be taken into consideration.

If the school refuses a leave of absence request, but the child is still taken on holiday, the absence will be recorded as unauthorised and parents will receive a letter confirming this.

On return from an unauthorised absence a penalty notice may be issued. If a Penalty Notice is issued, it carries a fine of £60 for each child, per parent. i.e. 3 children x £60 = £180 for each parent, so the total amount for a family with two parents and three children would be £360.

### **Response to non-attendance**

- If a child is absent, and contact is not received from the parents, the parents will be contacted by telephone.
- Where there has been no response, or explanation, the school will mark the child's absence as unauthorised. Home visits will take place when there has been an unexplained absence of 3 days – this is to ensure the child is safe as is our safeguarding duty.
- Where there has been no response and an absence has persisted for 4 days and the child is not open to services, the Early Intervention Hub will be contacted and the absence reported as a safeguarding concern.
- If a child is open to services then any unexplained absence is immediately referred to the child's social worker as a matter of urgency.
- Where there continues to be no response to the school intervention, and the absence has persisted without explanation, the school will refer the issue to the Attendance & Engagement Team
- If a child's attendance slips below 96%, the school will:
  - initially write to parents/carers stating that the child/ren's attendance is now subject to daily monitoring.
  - Where this does not lead to an improvement in attendance a second letter inviting parents to an attendance meeting will be issued.
  - Should there be no improvement in attendance after this meeting, parents/carers will be invited in to create a parenting contract with school and any other agencies involved with the family.
  - If the situation does not improve, external agencies will become involved in the attendance issue.
- If a child is repeatedly late, the school will:
  - initially write to parents expressing concerns about late arrival and offering support if required.
  - If the situation does not improve, the designated lead for attendance will invite parents/carers to a meeting to discuss support for the family.
  - If punctuality still does not improve, parents/carers will be invited to create a parental contract with school and external agencies may be called on to support the family in ensuring their child/ren are at school on time.
- In extreme circumstances, where the issue cannot be resolved between school and parents, with the support of the Attendance & Engagement Team, the school will refer the matter to other services e.g Social Care or the Early Intervention Hub

### **Parenting Contracts**

Parenting contracts are drawn up with families based on their particular circumstances and in view of their child/ren's attendance issues. It is an opportunity for schools to further develop relationships with parents/carers to reduce barriers to attendance and develop agreed expectations and plans for attendance moving forward. This is a voluntary process that supports everyone present at the meeting to work together to improve attendance. The key actions agreed at this meeting will be reviewed 6 weeks after the meeting and if there has been no improvement further action e.g. referrals to Social Care, Early Intervention Hub or the Attendance and Engagement Team.

Pupils may be involved in these meetings to discuss what further support they may need to improve their attendance.

Contents of a parenting contract include:

- Details of what parents are expected to do
- A statement from the parents agreeing to the terms outlined in the contract e.g. time periods and actions specified
- A statement from school and/or Attendance and Engagement Team detailing support they will give to parents

### **Legal proceedings**

The Education Act 1996, Section 444 and the Anti Social Behaviour Act 2003, Section 23, gives powers to the Local Authority to initiate a range of legal procedures if parents/carers fail to ensure an appropriate education for their child/ren. These procedures include a Penalty Fine, an Education Supervision Order, Parenting Order or prosecution which could result in a fine, unpaid work in the community and in extreme cases a term of imprisonment.

### **Incentives for good attendance**

- Attendance data will be checked termly (six times) by the Senior Leadership Team (SLT) to identify any issues
- Attendance will be discussed at regular staff meetings where staff have the opportunity to express any concerns and identify aspects of progress and attainment that are impacted by attendance
- A certificate for 96% attendance through to 100% attendance will be given out at the end of terms 2, 4 and 6 with an additional certificate for the whole year at the end of term 6.
- Reasons for regular attendance and arriving on time, well prepared for school will be raised in assemblies and RSE, SCiB and Mental Health and Wellbeing sessions
- Incentives are in place for whole school attendance.
- A Class cup is awarded weekly for high attendance achievement.
- Parents will receive reports on their child's level of attendance at Parent consultations in February and July.

### **Monitoring and evaluating effectiveness**

- The SLT will analyse attendance data at the end of each of the six terms to identify issues and trends
- The school will work closely with the Attendance & Engagement Team in their monitoring of the attendance and registration procedures in the school
- The school will evaluate the success of the procedures by measuring the annual attendance % against their target at the end of the year, and their progress towards attaining the target in February.

### **Summary**

Through the implementation of the policy, the following will be achieved:

- a 96% + attendance rate
- a positive partnership between parents and school, working for the benefit of the children's learning
- clear and transparent procedures and expectations understood by all stakeholders

**Clare Smith: Headteacher**

**Mary Cronin: Chair of Academy Committee**

**Date of review: July 2022**

**Next review: September 2023**

Appendix 1

Attendance issues that are not resolved can lead to referrals to external agencies eg Social Care, MHST or CAMHS

