

St Joseph's Catholic Primary School Exmouth



Attendance Policy January 2018

Signed Chair of Committee

Signed Headteacher

Date

RATIONALE: We encourage all those connected with our school to support us in providing a happy, secure and stimulating learning environment where children can receive a high quality education to ensure a sound foundation for their future lives. We believe that if pupils are to benefit from the education we offer and to have a successful school career, good attendance is crucial. As a school, we do all that we can to ensure maximum attendance for all pupils. Any problems that prevent full attendance will be identified and addressed as speedily as possible.

We give a high priority to conveying to parents/carers and pupils the importance of regular and punctual attendance. We recognise that parents/carers have a vital role to play and that there is a need to establish strong home-school links and communication systems that can be utilised whenever there is concern about attendance. If there are problems which affect a pupil's attendance we will investigate, identify and strive in partnership with parents/carers and pupils to resolve those problems as quickly and efficiently as possible. We will adopt a clearly focused approach aimed at returning the pupil to full attendance at all times.

Objectives

- ❖ to encourage full attendance and punctuality
- ❖ to record and monitor attendance and absenteeism and apply appropriate strategies
- ❖ to minimise its occurrence
- ❖ to acknowledge and reward a successful record of attendance
- ❖ to ensure a consistent approach throughout the school

Statutory Duty of Schools

The Education Act 1996 requires parents/carers or guardians to ensure their children receive efficient, full-time education, either by regular attendance at school or otherwise. Schools have responsibility for recording pupil attendance twice a day; once at the start of the morning session and once during the afternoon session. An entry must be made in the attendance register for all pupils of compulsory school age who are on the school's admission roll.

Principles

Parents/carers are legally responsible for ensuring that a child of compulsory school age attends school regularly. This extends to ensuring that students arrive at school on time, properly attired and in a condition to learn.

We will work towards ensuring that all pupils feel supported and valued. We will send a clear message that if a pupil is absent, she/he will be missed. We will consult with all members of the school community and the Education Welfare Service in developing and maintaining the whole school attendance policy.

We will encourage parents/carers to be actively involved in promoting their child's attendance. We will ensure that all staff are aware of the requirements of the registration process. Information will be sent to parents/carers, governors and pupils informing them of attendance rates and related issues. Consistent and vigorous monitoring and evaluation procedures are in place to ensure any concerns are identified at the earliest opportunity.

Absence definitions

An absence is classified as authorised when a child has been away from school for a legitimate reason and the school has received notification from a parent or guardian. For example, if a child has been unwell, the parent writes a note or telephones the school to explain the absence. Only the school can make an absence authorised. Parents/carers do not have this authority. Consequently, not all absences supported by parents/carers will be classified as authorised. For example, if a parent takes a child out of school to go shopping during school hours, this will not mean it is an authorised absence. Therefore, the absence is unauthorised if a child is away from school without good reason, even with the support of a parent.

The Education Welfare Officer (EWO) & School Attendance

The EWO is part of the Devon Local Authority (the LA), its aim is to ensure that every child has the opportunity to benefit from a full time education by attending school regularly. The EWO can help and advise parents/carers who may be experiencing difficulties that prevent this. It is the responsibility of parents/carers to ensure that their child attends school regularly and the EWO expects parents/carers to do all that is necessary to make sure this happens. The EWO makes regular visits to the school to monitor attendance and the school can contact the officer if there are attendance concerns.

What happens if your child does not attend school regularly (and their attendance is not authorised)

It is a criminal offence for a child not to attend school regularly, and, as the parent, this is your responsibility. A penalty notice may therefore be issued requiring you to pay a fine of currently £60.00 per parent/carer, per child if paid within 21 days (and up to £120 per parent/carer, per child if paid within 28 days) if their attendance is below an acceptable level. In certain circumstances you may be prosecuted and be required to attend the Magistrates Court where you could face up to 3 months imprisonment and/or a fine of up to £2500. You will be given every opportunity to improve your child's attendance and you will receive a written warning before any legal action is taken.

Statutory Attendance Responsibilities

There is a legal responsibility to have a morning and an afternoon registration mark for every student at the school.

The School Will

- a) Record and monitor attendance and Absence
- b) Record and monitor the punctuality of all students and, where necessary, inform parents/carers of persistent lateness and apply appropriate consequences.
- c) Only authorise pupil absence in exceptional circumstances where absence is unavoidable.
- d) Maintain strong home-school liaison to inform and support parents/carers with their child's attendance.
- e) Work closely with the school Education Welfare Officer and other appropriate agencies where there are concerns regarding attendance.
- f) Help to investigate, identify and resolve any issues with children and their families which prevent full attendance at St Joseph's and will do everything possible to help return students to full attendance.
- g) Promote the importance of attendance through celebrating students who achieve 100% attendance.
- h) Inform parents/carers of all children whose attendance falls below 95%.

Parents/carers should

- a) Ensure their children arrive on time to school with the correct equipment and full uniform.
- b) Be aware that any person who has the care of a child or who has parental responsibility is responsible for ensuring good attendance.
- c) Ensure they are fully aware of school procedures

Reporting Absence

- a) It is the responsibility of the parents/carers to inform the school of the reason for a student's absence by 9.00am on the day of absence.
- b) The school will operate a Safe to School system and the parents/carers of every absent student will be contacted by a member of the Office staff.
- c) Any absence where a reason is NOT provided will be followed up with contact from the School Office in the first instance then a letter from the Headteacher.
- d) Where there has been an absence of more than 4 consecutive days and parents/carers have not made contact or cannot be contacted by school, the EWO will be informed.
- e) In the case of 5 or more days of illness, the school should be notified so that the teachers can set work. Medical evidence will need to be provided to the school in order for the school to authorise the absence. The EWO will be notified if the absence is unauthorised.

Methods or Reporting Absences

In any case of absence, parents/carers should contact the school by one of the following methods.

- a) By phone - there is an answer machine for absences to be reported during out of hour's times.
- b) In person
- c) If unable to contact the school office, a parental note explaining the absence must be passed to the School Office on the first day back at school.

Authorised Absence

Absence from school may be authorised if it is for the following reasons:

- Sickness
- Unavoidable medical/dental appointments
- Days of religious observance
- Exceptional circumstances, such as bereavement
- Seeing a parent who is on leave from the armed forces
- External curricular examinations
- When Traveller children go on the road with their parents/carers

Parents/carers should note that even if the reason for requesting absence falls within the exceptional circumstances listed above, the Head teacher will still consider the following before making a decision on whether the request will be authorised:

- If your child has an attendance level below 95% calculated over the previous twelve months.
- In the first two weeks of the school year (this is a crucial time when all children should be settling in to their new classroom routines and missing this time is detrimental to forming new relationships and routines in a new class)
- During key assessment points within the school year such as SATs (this is a time when it is important that all Year 6 children are in school as it is a week of examinations organised by the Department for Education and these tests cannot be taken at any other time).

Absence from school will not be authorised for:

- Family holidays or celebrations
- Any type of shopping
- Looking after brothers, sisters or unwell parents/carers (an exception to this might be where a child is looking after a disabled parent)
- Minding the house
- Resting after a late night
- Relatives visiting or visiting relatives

A parent must complete an Absence Request Form from the school office or school website when asking for absence to be authorised. School will always put the education of the child first when deciding whether or not to authorise an absence. In doing so, school will also take into account the child's age, stage of education, internal assessment weeks and educational progress when making a decision.

When Attendance Causes Concern

Our attendance target is 96.2% and we expect all pupils to achieve this or above.

- a) Staff will work with parents/carers to encourage good attendance and address concerns
- b) Contact will be made with parents/carers to advise them of poor attendance.
- c) A referral will be made to EWO and you may be contacted by the EWO with regard to your child's attendance. You could be asked to attend either an attendance meeting or legal meeting in school to look at how the issue can be resolved

Punctuality

It is the responsibility of the parents/carers to ensure their child attends full time education and arrives on time. Punctuality is monitored by the school. If a child persistently arrives after the registers close cases will be referred to the EWO who may issue a penalty notice. Registration is at 8.55am. A child arriving between 8.55am and 9.10am will be marked as late. A child who arrives after 9.10am will be marked with a 'U' code (late after registration closes).

Attendance Intervention Thresholds

Parents/carers, pupils and staff are to be made aware of the importance of good attendance including distribution of Local Authority generated information where appropriate.

Pupils are to be constantly reminded of the importance and value of good attendance.

Parents/carers of pupils whose attendance falls below 95% may be invited in to school by the head teacher to discuss strategies to improve their child's attendance.

Structured meetings will be held at appropriate times with the schools Education Welfare Officer in order to identify and support those pupils whose attendance/punctuality is a source of concern [persistent absence] Pupils whose attendance falls below 85% will be referred to the Education Welfare Officer. The school aims to offer an education and working environment appropriate to each individual pupils needs regardless of their race, colour, ethnic or national origins, gender, sexuality, disability or religious beliefs

Conclusion: We believe that if pupils are to benefit from the education we offer and are to have a successful school career, good attendance is crucial. We will work with parents/carers, pupils and the Educational Welfare officer, as appropriate, to promote good attendance of all pupils.

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