**St Joseph’s Catholic Primary School**



**School Attendance**

**Information for Parents**

**Background**

We at St Joseph’s want to provide the best possible education and experience for your children in order to set them up with skills for life, a love of learning and provide them with opportunities to develop their interests and passions so that they can be the best they can be. This can only happen if your children are regularly in school.

As part of our commitment to improve the attainment of the pupils in our school, we monitor attendance and punctuality on a regular basis. We are starting to notice attendance figures dropping in some cases, and so thought this booklet would serve as a helpful reminder of our systems and policies, as well as your responsibilities as parents to ensure good school attendance.

**??** Did you know **??** – Research has shown that children with poor school attendance tend to achieve less in both primary and secondary school. To put it in context, it has been shown that for every 17 school days missed in a year = 1 GCSE Grade drop

**What is the expected attendance?**

The Education Act 1996 places a legal duty on parents to ensure that their children of compulsory school age who are registered at school **attend regularly.** As a general rule, we would aim for an overall attendance percentage figure of at least 96%.

The Law also requires all schools to have an admissions register and attendance register. All pupils must be placed on both registers. If a pupil fails to attend, the school must establish the reason for the absence and mark the attendance register accordingly.

**??** Did you know **??** – School is open for 190 days per academic year. 96% attendance would mean being in school for 184 days. 6 days absence takes you to 96%. More than 6 days, and that figure drops further…

**Working together to secure good attendance**

I would ask all parents to familiarise yourselves with the following systems and information in operation at our school.

**Illness**

It is essential that you contact the school before 9.00am on the day that your child will be absent due to illness. We have a designated phone option so you can leave a message – 0151 652 6781, then press option 1. Please leave a message for each day of absence relating to the illness.

Any repeated absences may result in a request that you obtain medical evidence from your doctor and agree a plan for the management of your child’s education during any periods of absence resulting from ongoing medical conditions.

Please note that if your child is absent and we have not been informed of the reason, our Attendance coordinator, Miss Finnegan, will call you to establish the reason.

On the note of absences relating to illness, we of course do understand that children can often pick up ‘bugs’. If your child is ill and has been vomiting, diarrhoea etc., in order to prevent further contamination across the school, we ask that you do keep your child off for 24 hours to allow any potential infections to clear.

**??** Did you know **??** – 90% attendance is Ok isn’t it?

90% = half a day missed each week. That’s 4 weeks over a year and that over 5 years = Half a school year missed!!

**Medical Appointments**

Time off school to attend medical appointments will be authorised on production of evidence such as an appointment card or letter. If your child has an appointment, please bring the letter to the school office where a copy can be placed on their file as proof of the authorised absence. We urge parents to make all non-urgent appointments such as dental checks and routine vaccinations outside of school hours.

**Collecting early**

We have recently had a number of parents coming to the office to collect their children early for a variety of reasons. Please note that unless you can provide evidence of a medical appointment, permission for early collection will not be given and you will be asked to wait until the end of the day.

**Requests for leave during term time**

Following the Amendments to the Education (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2013. **The amendments make clear that Head teachers may no longer grant any leave of absence during term time unless there are exceptional circumstances.** Head teachers should determine the number of school days a child can be away from school if the leave is granted.

**Holidays in term time will not be authorised unless there are exceptional circumstances. This would be very rarely authorised**. Examples may include leave from armed services, immediate family needs for a few days etc.

Please note that holidays booked by other family members will not constitute ‘exceptional circumstances.’ We understand that family weddings and events take place but would only authorise 1-2 days leave for such events.

We also recognise that some parents have restricted leave due to work restrictions. In these cases, we ask for a letter from the employer and will consider requests for leave in exceptional circumstances.

If you do wish to apply for a leave of absence, forms are available through the school office.

**Punctuality and Lateness**

For F2-Y6 the school doors open at 8.50am. The doors remain open until 9.00am. After this time, please come through the front office. Registers are taken by 9.10am, so if you arrive later than 9.10am you must sign your child in using our visitor system.

**??** Did you know **??** – The start of the day is often when teachers do ‘quick’ but important sessions such as handwriting, spelling and mental calculation. If your child arrives regularly after 9.10am, they are potentially missing out on specific aspects of their development.

**If attendance drops**

As a school, we have a responsibility and duty to tackle poor attendance from individual and groups of children. All attendance and absence data is analysed and reported to Governors, the Local Authority, The Department for Education and Ofsted.

The target is to have 96% attendance as a minimum. Anything below 90% is a cause for concern, and is classified by the Department for Education as ‘Persistent Absence’. Any child with attendance below 90% will be monitored, and if the figure does not improve, you may be asked to attend a formal meeting with the Headteacher to discuss the matter. The Educational Social Welfare Officer may also attend the meeting. If it drops below 85%, this becomes a Significant Concern and you will be asked to attend a meeting with the ESW Officer.

School may also inform and request that the LA issue a Fixed Penalty Notice. A Fixed Penalty Notice is £60 if paid within 21 days and £120 if paid after this time but within 28 days.

A Fixed Penalty Notice can be issued in cases of unauthorised absence or when an excluded pupil is found in a public place.

Penalty Notices may be considered appropriate in the following circumstances:

* Attendance below 90% with at least 10 days lost due to unauthorised absence\*. These do not need to be consecutive.
* 5 days or more unauthorised absence due to holidays in term time.
* A pupil arrives late after the registers are closed on 10 or more separate occasions
* The presence of an excluded pupil in a public place during school hours

\*Unauthorised absences are those absences for which the school receives no reason/explanation or if the school has good reason to doubt the explanation given. Only the school, within the context of the law, can approve absence, not parents, and it is a statutory requirement for the Headteacher to decide with every absence whether it is authorised or unauthorised.

Whilst I appreciate that some of this information may sound harsh, it is the law and it is important that you understand the legal responsibilities schools must uphold. I am sure you agree that we all want the best for the children, and that in order to benefit from the educational and experiences school provides, they must attend regularly.

I thank you for working with us to ensure your child has good levels of attendance and punctuality.

