



St John's Catholic Primary School Attendance Policy

Approving Body	KCSP Board of Directors
Approval Date	July 2018
Review Date	December 2019

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1. Statement of Intent

The Kent Catholic Schools' Partnership is committed to the continuous raising of achievement of all our pupils. Regular attendance is critical if our pupils are to be successful and benefit from the opportunities presented to them. At St John's Catholic Primary School we expect pupils to attend regularly and punctually and we actively promote 100% attendance for all our pupils.

One of our basic principles is to celebrate success. Good attendance is fundamental to a successful and fulfilling school experience. We use a variety of weekly, termly and annual awards to promote 100% attendance and good punctuality.

The Governing Body, Headteacher and Staff in partnership with parents / carers have a duty to promote full attendance at St John's Catholic Primary School. Staff at St John's Catholic Primary School must monitor the attendance of each individual pupil from a safeguarding perspective and it is the legal duty of parents / carers to ensure their child attends school daily.

Our academy will 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 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.

2. Principles

St John's Catholic Primary School will:

- ensure that all staff are aware of the registration procedures when necessary and receive in-service training on registration regulations and education law
- complete registers accurately at the beginning of each morning and afternoon session
- stress to parents / carers/carers the importance of contacting appropriate academy staff early on the first day of absence
- display attendance rates in our newsletter and reward good or improved attendance for pupils
- promote positive staff attitudes to pupils returning after absence
- consult with all members of the school community and the Director of School Improvement in developing and maintaining the whole school attendance policy
- ensure regular evaluation of attendance procedures by senior managers who will report to school governors
- 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
- monitor and investigate any patterns of lateness or absence

3. Procedures

If no contact is received from the parents / carers of an absent pupil by 9.30am on the first day of absence the Family Liaison Officer will:

- contact parent/carer by telephone, or if parent is unavailable, consider sending a standard letter requesting information and/or telephone other contacts held on SIMS

- discuss concerns with St John's Catholic Primary School's Senior Leadership Team (SLT) if no response is received after 2 days of absence. SLT will arrange to contact the parent by telephone or by conducting a home visit in order to ascertain the reason for non-attendance
- when a pupil's attendance percentage reaches 96.1% for primary academies, and a pattern of unauthorised absence is emerging, the following procedures will be implemented:
 - 96.1% primary - send letter 1
 - 95% primary - send letter 2. SLT to contact parent either by telephone or by conducting a home visit
 - 94% primary - send Penalty Notice Warning Letter if there are four or more unauthorised sessions
 - Below 93% attendance:
 - apply for Penalty Notice where there are 10 unauthorised sessions in 100 sessions
 - consider School Attendance Meeting
 - send letter advising of PA threshold also offering support
 - if further unauthorised absence is recorded, SLT to discuss possible prosecution with PIAS
- help the pupil's re-integration where a pupil is returning to school after an absence of longer than two weeks
- notes, records of telephone calls, and medical evidence should be dated, named and initialled by the FLO.

In order to ensure the success of this policy every member of St John's Catholic Primary School staff will convey to the pupils that attendance is a crucial part of their education.

4. Performance

We will review our progress against National Attendance Targets. St John's Catholic Primary School will look at those interventions which have been successful as part of the evaluation process. When evaluating success, the school will consider whether or not:

- attendance has improved
- punctuality has improved
- parental response to absences has improved
- St John's Catholic Primary School has been successful in raising the profile of attendance both within the school, Governing Body and the local community
- pupils are fully aware of the importance of punctuality and regular attendance and the attendance procedures operating within St John's Catholic Primary School
- attendance issues have been included as topics in school assemblies, Personal, Social and Health Education (PSHE) lessons, or as a theme for any other lessons/assemblies.

5. Practice

St John's Catholic Primary School will recognise the importance of good practice by:

- keeping and maintaining registers accurately (see Attendance Codes)
- maintaining a consistent approach to marking registers
- carefully and accurately inputting data into the SIMs Attendance module
- regularly analysing attendance data
- ensuring prompt follow-up action in cases of non-school attendance
- liaising closely with St John's Catholic Primary School's School Liaison Officer (SLO)
- rewarding excellent attendance.

6. Keeping the Register

The Status of the Register

The register is a legal document and must be kept accurately, neatly and, if not linked directly to SIMS, marked in ink if completed by hand. The register (from SIMS Attendance) may be requested in a court of law as evidence in a prosecution for non-attendance. It may also contribute data to pupils' end of term reports, to records of achievement, and to leavers' references. It is vital that pupils are aware that registration is a significant part of the school day. We will ensure that all staff involved with the registration process are aware that the law is very specific regarding the keeping of registers. Marking and keeping the register is of the utmost importance.

Marking the Register

- no pupil will be marked present unless actually in the room when the register is called or unless he or she has been given permission to be absent by the registering teacher
- registers are finally closed at an agreed time each day
- where a pupil misses' registration but arrives before 9am with an adequate explanation s/he should be marked as late. Lateness must be explained by a parent/carer when a pupil is marked late in the morning
- where a pupil misses' registration and arrives after 9am s/he should be marked as late after the register i.e. unauthorised absence – U
- pupils must not mark the register under any circumstances
- spaces must not be left on the register
- the data from the registers will be input to SIMs Attendance at the end of each week as a minimum and a percentage attendance report produced and monitored
- the decision to authorise an absence will be made within a maximum of two weeks from the date of the absence.

7. Removal from Roll

Pupils will only be removed from St John's Catholic Primary School's roll and class registers under the following circumstances:

- St John's Catholic Primary School is replaced by another academy / school on a School Attendance Order
- the School Attendance Order is revoked by the local authority
- permanent exclusion
- death of the pupil
- transfer between academies / schools
- pupil withdrawn to be educated outside the school system
- failure to return from an extended family holiday after both St John's Catholic Primary School and SLO has tried to locate the pupil
- in custody for more than four months
- 20 days continuous unauthorised absence and both the school and SLO have tried to locate the pupil.

It is not lawful to remove a pupil from a school roll simply because the pupil has a poor attendance record.

8. Analysis of Attendance Data

Analysis will help to draw attention to deterioration or improvement and target intervention more selectively and help to establish the cause of an absence. Whole school attendance figures should be produced weekly and analysed termly and yearly, this process will indicate factors such as the effect of seasonal attendance e.g. attendance may decline in the colder months and preceding school holidays.

Weekly figures may illustrate:

- the fall in attendance preceding staff development days, half terms, end of terms
- the effect of ending terms on a Monday or Tuesday
- the effect of activity days, day trips, or residential trips
- the effect of pupil holidays in term time.

Reports from SIMs Attendance will indicate these and other patterns of absence.

9. Types of Absence

Authorised absences

Only a school can authorise an absence. Parents / carers and the LA do not have the power to authorise absences.

THE KEY POINTS THAT WE CONSIDER WHEN DECIDING TO AUTHORISE ABSENCE ARE:

- it is a legal requirement that registered pupils of compulsory school age attend regularly and punctually
- schools are not obliged to accept a parental explanation for pupil absence
- headteacher may not grant any leave of absence during term time unless there are exceptional circumstances. Headteacher, in consultation with the SLO should determine the number of school days a child can be away from school if the leave is granted.
- schools should always expect regular and punctual attendance, even when the school is aware of family difficulties. Looking after siblings or a sick parent, shopping or going on a trip will not be acceptable reasons for absence
- medical evidence is required when attendance reaches 95% and if this is not provided by the parent / carer, the absence should be treated as unauthorised
- where absence is authorised, academies should remain vigilant to emerging patterns of non-attendance
- lateness should be actively discouraged and persistent lateness treated in the same way as irregular attendance
- St John's Catholic Primary School has developed a close working relationship with the SLO in order to promote regular school attendance.

Unauthorised absences

Unauthorised absence is absence without approval from an authorised representative of St John's Catholic Primary School and includes all unexplained absences.

If a child is absent with the approval of St John's Catholic Primary School, for whatever reason, no offence is deemed to have been committed.

St John's Catholic Primary School will need to exercise caution in the authorisation of absence. If no medical evidence is provided by parents / carers once attendance has reached 95%, the absence may be further investigated and left unauthorised.

The decision taken by St John's Catholic Primary School to authorise absence or not, is of critical importance in determining the level of involvement of the SLO. If St John's Catholic Primary School has authorised a pupil's absence, in effect leave has been given and there is no case in law for the parents / carers to answer.

Parentally condoned absence

This form of absence is equally as damaging to the pupil's educational experience as any other form of absence. It is essential that, when St John's Catholic Primary School staff feel that a worrying pattern of non-attendance is emerging they inform the Headteacher who will work closely with other staff and the educational, social and health support services to ensure that the most appropriate and effective intervention is available to the pupil and parents / carers. There is a range of specialist support services, which will assist and advise academics and parents / carers on ways forward when these difficulties arise.

Lateness

A pupil's punctuality is a legal requirement and the parents / carers of a pupil who is persistently late are guilty of an offence. The law treats persistent lateness in the same way as irregular attendance and parents / carers can be prosecuted if late arrival is not resolved. Pupils who arrive late disrupt not only their own education but that of others and being persistently late may also lead to truancy. Poor punctuality may indicate problems within the pupil's home which the pupil may need help to deal with. For some pupils, arriving punctually may be beyond their control. Often lateness is a result of a lack of firm parenting; the child is confused and often left to cope alone, sometimes at a very young age. There needs to be a careful balance struck between being too punitive and too accepting of a pupil's lateness. Once the reasons for lateness have been established, the parents / carers, pupil and St John's Catholic Primary School need to work in partnership to resolve the difficulties.

The register closes at 9am, if a child arrives between 8.45am and 9am they are marked in as 'late'. If they arrive after this time they are marked in as having an 'unauthorised absence'. For Health and Safety purposes, they will be recorded as being on the premises in the Late Book.

Following up Absence

All pupil absence will be followed up as soon as possible (see appendix A for flow chart). The action taken, and the responses received, will always be recorded. Parents / carers are informed in newsletters that a phone call will be made, on the morning of the child's first day of absence. This will immediately be recorded in the office.

Where a child returns and a reason for absence has not been provided by the parent either by telephone or written note the absence will be recorded as unauthorised.

10.The Role of the Headteacher

The Headteacher is responsible for following up absences but may delegate this responsibility to the FLO and another member of the Senior Leadership Team.

The Headteacher:

- delegates the maintenance of weekly running totals to the FLO/Deputy Headteacher
- checks attendance reports regularly
- reports issues regarding absence, including trends of attendance to the Governing Body through Headteacher reports to GB meetings
- reports to other stakeholders and outside agencies when necessary.

11. Family Holidays in Term Time

The Education (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2006

Amendments have been made to the 2006 regulations in the [Education \(Pupil Registration\) \(England\) \(Amendment\) Regulations 2013](#). These amendments, as described below, came into force on 1 September 2013.

Term-time holiday

The [Education \(Pupil Registration\) \(England\) Regulations 2006](#) currently allow headteachers to grant leave of absence for the purpose of a family holiday during term time in “exceptional circumstances” of up to ten school days leave per year. Headteachers can also grant extended leave for more than ten school days in exceptional circumstances.

Amendments to the 2006 regulations remove references to family holiday and extended leave as well as the statutory threshold of ten school days. The amendments make clear that headteachers may not grant any leave of absence during term time unless there are exceptional circumstances. The Headteacher [in consultation with the EWO] should determine the number of school days a child can be away from St John’s Catholic Primary School if the leave is granted.

DfE guidelines clearly state that the reference to exceptional circumstances means that the parent must make a strong case for leave of absence during term time.

The Headteacher will consider each request for leave of absence individually and this must be put in writing addressed to the Headteacher stating the reason for the request. St John’s Catholic Primary School does not operate a ‘blanket approval’ policy for requests. The following factors should be considered when assessing requests - no one factor should be regarded as conclusive:

- the time of year of proposed leave of absence
- the length and purpose of the leave of absence
- the impact on continuity of learning
- the circumstances of the family
- the overall attendance pattern of the child. A 10 day leave of absence in term time reduces overall attendance to 94.7%. This is without taking into account any absence through illness.

Leave of absence for more than two weeks is also seen as exceptional. The Headteacher will carefully explore with parents / carers why such leave of absence is necessary. Where such absences are sanctioned, they will be counted as an authorised absence.

Where parents / carers fail to abide by the agreement reached with St John’s Catholic Primary School and keep a child away from school in excess of the period agreed or, where parents / carers fail to apply for permission, this will be treated as an unauthorised absence.

In order to ensure that the negative impact of leave of absence is minimised, applications for leave of absence will not be considered in the following periods or circumstances:

- During the first term of a new academic year
- In SATs week/s for all KS2 pupils and during SATs week/s for Year 2 pupils (dates will be published in advance)

Religious Observance

The Kent Catholic Schools' Partnership acknowledges the multi-faith nature of British society and recognises that on some occasions, religious festivals may fall outside academy holiday periods or weekends. The regulations around religious observance (coded R) are as follows. St John's Catholic Primary School must authorise any absence where the child or parent/carer's religious organisation sets the day as a religious festival. St John's Catholic Primary School should check the calendar of religious festivals to identify the set days for agreed religious observance, for example the SHAP calendar: www.shapworkingparty.org.uk/. However, absence linked to the religious festival (such as visiting families or travelling) or an absence that is of a religious nature (ceremony or ritual), but is not a calendared festival, such as circumcision or a threading ceremony, is not covered by the R code and is subject to the headteacher or principal's discretion like any other approval for exceptional leave of absence.

St John's Catholic Primary School will submit a request to the Local Authority to issue a Penalty Notice for unauthorised absence from school for any families taking holidays in unauthorised periods, or for ten or more school sessions (equivalent to 5 school days).

12. Referral to the School Liaison Officer

The vast majority of referrals to the SLO are made on the basis of non-attendance and are made when:

- a) a pattern of irregular attendance has developed
- b) a period of non-attendance has been established
- c) letters sent by the school have met with little or no response
- d) there is a lack of co-operation in ensuring the child's regular attendance
- e) a parent/carer withdraws a pupil without securing the means of alternative provision
- f) a pattern of persistent lateness develops
- g) there are child protection concerns
- h) there are specific welfare issues which are preventing a pupil from accessing education
- i) a pupil is withdrawn from school by parents / carers who are moving to a new area and the school does not receive a request for the pupil's records from a school in that area.

Referrals will be made to the Kent LA PRU, Inclusion and Attendance Service by the Headteacher where necessary.

13. Children Missing from Suitable Education

The Education and Inspections Act 2006 places a new duty on schools in England and Wales to make arrangements to identify children of compulsory school age who are deemed to be missing education. Pupils who are deemed to be missing education will be referred to the School Liaison Officer within five school days. This process does not replace any of the Child Protection Procedures. Existing safeguarding procedures and mechanisms for reporting and recording child protection concerns are to be observed at all times.

14. Timing of the School Day

Start of school day 8.45am

End of school day 3.15pm

If St John's Catholic Primary School wishes to change the timing of the beginning and end of the school day, the Headteacher will seek and follow guidance given by the LA.

15. Penalty Notices for Unauthorised Absence

Penalty notices for absence from school have been issued since April 2005. Following consultation on a Code of Conduct, it was agreed that Penalty Notices would be issued by the PRU, Inclusion and Attendance Service based on requests from the school or police.

If issued, the penalty will be £60 if paid within 21 days, rising to £120 if paid after 21 days but within 28 days. Failure to pay the penalty in full by the end of the 28 day period may result in prosecution by Kent County Council. **Please note that a Penalty Notice is issued to each parent for each child.**

The following circumstances will be considered as appropriate reasons for the issuing of penalty notices:

- where an excluded child is found in a public place during school hours during the first five days of exclusion
- overt truancy (including truancy sweeps)
- parentally-condoned absence
- holidays in term time
- delayed return from extended holidays without prior school agreement
- persistent lateness after the register has closed.

A pupil has to be absent from school in one, or a combination of these circumstances for at least ten sessions in any 100 sessions before the issuing of a penalty notice can be considered. (10 sessions is equivalent to 5 days).

Following a request for the issuing of a penalty notice a check is made that the request meets the conditions of the Code of Conduct. A warning letter from the Attendance Service will then be sent to the parents / carers explaining that unless their child attends full time for the 15 day monitoring period, a penalty notice will be issued.

For cases of unauthorised holiday during term time, the Headteacher will write to the parent advising them that the holiday will not be authorised. A warning letter is not issued by the PRU, Inclusion and Attendance Service for term time holidays.

St John's Catholic Primary School will inform individual parents / carers, where attendance is a concern that they are at risk of a referral for a penalty notice.

Appendix A – Absence Flow Chart



Appendix B – Religious Observance Examples

Religious Observance Examples

Example 1

If a family want to travel to visit other family members to celebrate Eid then the two days for the Eid festival would be approved and coded R, but the headteacher does not need to approve any travel or holiday time with family, nor do they have to approve absence as a result of fasting. They would instead consider the child and the request and use their discretionary powers to consider whether to approve any further days, other than the two days for religious observance.

Example 2

A Jewish Orthodox family request to remove their child from school to attend a Jewish conference in America and request to keep their child at home during the last week of term so they can avoid participating in any Christian Christmas celebration. St John's Catholic Primary School should consider the request to attend the Jewish conference as they would any other leave of absence request, as although the event itself is religious the conference is not a day of religious observance set aside within the Jewish Orthodox calendar. In terms of the child being removed from St John's Catholic Primary School to avoid participating in any Christmas festival, parents/carers do have a right to withdraw the child from a celebration or an act of worship not of their religion, so it would be important for St John's Catholic Primary School to discuss with the parents/carers where there are activities that their child is withdrawn from and St John's Catholic Primary School should provide an alternative activity. Where there are usual learning activities and classes going on up to the end of term, then parents/carers do not have the right to withdraw them and any absence would be unauthorised and a Penalty Notice would be considered.