Growing and Achieving Excellence, Inspired by Faith

St Joseph's Catholic Primary School

Attendance Policy 26/27

Approved:	**Spring 2026**
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Signed: (Headteacher)	**Lorraine Flower**
Signed: (Chair of Governors)	

Introduction:

Good attendance at school is essential for establishing a positive working ethos early in life. Attendance has a direct link to attainment, and we firmly believe that every pupil deserves the right to a well-rounded education.

As a school, St Joseph's aim for 96% attendance which we believe gives the pupils the best chance to make the most from their school life and education as a whole.

Aims of the policy:

To promote regular attendance through a positive whole school ethos and build good relationships with our school parents and carers.

Objectives of the policy:

- Support pupils to meet the attendance record as set out above, ensuring pupils are in school for the maximum number of days.
- Create a clear procedure which is understood by parents and carers and supported by our school governors.

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Why does attendance matter?

Supporting pupils with school attendance is a shared responsibility of St Joseph's, including our Attendance Champion, Attendance Officer, the wider staff network, our Parent/Carers and the local authority, Kingston-Upon-Thames. Schooling and regular attendance helps pupils establish a positive working ethos early in life and sets up good routines ready for their next step into secondary school. It has been proven that there is a direct link between a pupil's school attendance and their attainment, therefore at St Joseph's we strive for all our pupils to obtain the 96% attendance mark to allow our pupils the opportunity to gain the most out of their education.

If a child misses	That equals…	Which is…	And over 13 years of school that is…
1 day a fortnight (90% attendance)	19 days a year	4 weeks a year	Nearly 1 ¼ years
1 day a week (80% attendance)	38 days a year	8 weeks a year	Over 2 ½ years
2 days a week (60% attendance)	76 days a year	16 weeks a year	Over 5 years

3 days a week (40% attendance)	114 days a year	24 weeks a year	Nearly 8 years

The law on school attendance:

Section 7 of the 1997 Education Act states that every child of compulsory school age has the right to, and receives a full-time education suitable to their age, ability, aptitude and any special educational need that they may have. It is the parents/carers legal responsibility to ensure that their child receives full-time education by regular attendance at a school, or by a registered education otherwise at a school. Through the uptake of your child's school place with St Joseph's, you, the parent/carer have a legal duty to ensure that your child attends school every day that the school is open, with the exception of a small number of circumstances in which your child is too unwell to attend school or being granted permission for absence in advance from school.

How we support our families:

We have a whole school approach to supporting good school attendance which means our Attendance Champion Mrs Flower, Attendance Officer Mrs Andrews the Senior Leadership Team, Wellbeing Lead, and Teaching staff work closely with our families to help remove barriers which prevent St Joseph's pupils from good attendance. Working collaboratively, St Joseph's are able to identify families who may need support at times, signpost and refer to other organisations as necessary and set up action plans which assist families and allows their children to attend regularly.

Responsibilities:

School's Responsibilities:

- To communicate clearly the attendance policy and expectations of our school.
- Maintain accurate and appropriate attendance data.
- Have an appropriate daily registration process in place. Registers to be taken twice daily at the start of morning and afternoon sessions.
- Follow up with absences and lateness if parents/carers have failed to communicate with school, initially with a first-day absence telephone call.
- Inform parents/carers of what constitutes authorised and unauthorised absences.
- To maintain systematic and consistent daily records which monitor absence and lateness.
- Liaise with our Wellbeing Lead and / or report to the EWO (Education Welfare Officer) their work with pupils as necessary.
- Meet half termly with EWO (Educational Welfare Officer) to discuss patterns of absence and/or lateness.

· Escalate non-attendance or lateness as appropriate and communicate this with our parents/carers.

· Report attendance data to the Government twice yearly.

· To promote good attendance and consistently administer the attendance procedure.

Parent/Carer's Responsibilities:

· To have children in class ready for the morning session by 8:50am.

· To inform school via telephone or email on every day of any absence by 9:15am.

· To make applications of term time leave requests as far in advance as possible using the "Application of Leave Request Form". Please note that the school does not authorise term time holiday absence.

· To work with St Joseph's and the EWO to improve lateness and attendance.

· To ensure medical and dental appointments are made outside of the school day where possible.

The Governing Body's Responsibilities:

· To monitor and evaluate the attendance in their schools.

· To request school attendance figures to be presented to the Governing Body on a termly basis.

If parents/Carers are experiencing issues or are worried about your child's attendance, they should;

· Talk to their child; it may be something simple that your child needs help resolving.

· Talk to your child's class teacher in the first instance. Our School Home Support worker will also be happy to help.

· Talk to the school office/attendance officer. They will be able to sign post you to accept further support as necessary.

Absence:

There are two main categories of absences. These are:

· *Authorised Absence:* The school has accepted the explanation/reason for your child's absence as satisfactory justification for such absence.

· *Unauthorised Absence:* The school has not received a valid reason or justification for your child's absence, has not approved a child's absence following a parents/carers request, or the school does not accept the reason being offered and therefore not approved your child's absence.

There may be a small number of occasions in which your child's illness or other circumstances prevent them from attending school. On these occasions, the parent/carer must contact St Joseph's on the first day of the episode of absence via the main school office to report your child as absent. This can be via telephone call or email and contact must be made by 9:15am. Parents/Carers are required to give specific reasoning for their child's absence and we encourage families to provide medical evidence. Please note that reasons such as unwell or ill are not sufficient information and you will be asked to clarify the reason for the absence.

Keeping your child off school with minor ailments such as a headache or slight cough or cold is not acceptable. Please be aware that when a parent/carer provides a reason or information that your child is unable to attend due to illness or other circumstances, this may not be automatically authorised. Factors such as absence patterns, current and previous school attendance will be taken into consideration.

No absence will be authorised the week before and the week following a school holiday without medical evidence.

Reporting your child absent from school:

Telephone: 020 8546 7178

Email: office@stjosephs.rbksch.org

Appointments:

All medical or dental appointments should be made outside of the school day where possible. If this is not possible, or treatment is deemed as urgent, please notify the office in advance and provide evidence of the appointment. Without evidence, the appointment will be marked as unauthorised on the school register.

Where appointments are during a school day, we would expect your child to be in school before or after the appointment. If this is not possible, please contact the office and provide a reason.

The daily process for Monitoring Attendance:

- Children who arrive after 8:50am for school should report to the school office. If your child is late because they have been attending a medical appointment, please provide evidence in the

form of an appointment card or hospital letter. Their absence will be authorised. If your child does not have an evidenced reason for their lateness such as an appointment, they will receive a Late mark or a U mark if arriving after 9:30 am.

- Parents will be contacted by telephone if they have not informed the school of the reason for their child's absence by 9.30 a.m.
- If we cannot make contact with you, by the third day, you may receive a home visit from the Attendance Officer/Wellbeing Lead. Details will also be shared with the Education Welfare Service. If we still can't contact you and we do not hear from you within 5 days, we have a legal obligation to make a referral to Social Services on the 6th day as your child has become a Child Missing from Education [CME].
- When an explanation for absence has not been provided, parents will be asked for proof of absence. Without it, the child's absence will be recorded as unauthorised.

The Attendance Officer will log instances of absences and lateness daily and will discuss bi-weekly with a member of the SLT. Where a pattern is observed, or issues persist the following will be initiated:

Stage 1: Where there are concerns about a possible attendance issue, the school will contact parent/carer.

Stage 2: Once a pupil's attendance record is less than 94% , school will write to parents/carers notifying them of their child's current attendance to make them aware and to invite them to contact school for further support if required. A monitoring period of 4 weeks will begin and school would expect to see an improvement during this time period.

Stage 3: If there is a further decline in the pupil's attendance record or a pupil's attendance is 90% or below, a follow up letter will be sent. A monitoring period of 4 weeks will begin and school would expect to see an improvement during this time period.

Stage 4: If there is no improvement, the school will arrange a meeting between the parent/carer and an Attendance Champion, Attendance officer and or the Wellbeing Lead. At this point a final letter will be issued to parents/carers which will flag that no further absence will be authorised. Parents/Carers will need to provide medical evidence specific for each individual episode of absence for the remainder of the academic year.

Stage 5: If the concerns persist, the school will make a referral to the Local Authority EWO via a SPA (Single Point Access) to deal with ongoing issues, including consideration for the issue of a Fixed Penalty Notice and/or prosecution.

Should concerns persist, the EWO will agree to action (as above) and where necessary meet with the parents/carers. Please note that ultimately the Local Authority can take legal action against a parent for their child's unauthorised absence.

The Role of the Education Welfare Officer:

The Education Welfare Service is provided by Achieving for Children on behalf of Kingston Council. St Joseph's work alongside the Education Welfare Service and undertakes half termly meetings with our assigned Education Welfare Officer. The EWO service has a statutory responsibility under the Education Act 1996 to pursue non-school attendance and persistent lateness.

Section 444 of the Education Act states that "if a child of compulsory school age, who is a registered pupil at a school, fails to attend regularly a school, the parents are guilty of an offence."

The Local Authority's Fast Track framework promotes early intervention and aims to ensure that appropriate action is taken to tackle non-attendance as soon as attended issues become apparent. Fast track involves engaging with parent/carer and specifying what improvements need to be made over a fixed time frame (usually 12 weeks). Where a parent fails in this responsibility and no improvement is brought about within the specified timeframe, legal proceedings are initiated in the Magistrates Court.

Holidays and extended leave - Code G

Holidays and time off during term time will not be authorised, other than in exceptional circumstances at the discretion of the Head Teacher. Parents and carers do not have an automatic right to remove their child from school during term time and should be aware that if their child is absent for 10 days, this will miss 5% of their education that academic year. If term time leave is taken, and is unauthorised, it will be referred to the EWO for legal action, including the consideration for the issuing of a Fixed Penalty Notice and/or prosecution.

Parents wishing to take their child on leave during term time must send a written request to the Headteacher in advance and at least two weeks before the date of leave. This application must be made on our "Application for leave" form which can be found on our website or via the school office. This must detail the dates of leave, return date to school and reasons for absence. Retrospective requests will not be considered and will be recorded as unauthorised. Each request will be considered on an individual basis and will take the following factors into account:

- Previous requests for leave during term time
- The child's attendance over the current academic year
- Timing of such requests in terms of curriculum needs (e.g. SAT's)
- Extenuating circumstances

Parents/carers may request absence due to exceptional circumstances such as a close relative wedding or funeral, cultural need and family circumstance.

All requests, submitted for absence will receive a letter detailing the headteacher's decision which will be issued within 5 working days. This decision letter will confirm the following:

- Whether the leave is authorised or unauthorised
- If unauthorised, that the circumstances may be referred to the EWO
- Child's expected date of return to school
- Instructions that parents/carers must contact the school should delays occur

If a pupil fails to return and contact with the parents/carers has not been made or received, the school will refer the matter to Single Point of Access (SPA) for further investigation.

Lateness

Punctuality is essential for obtaining good routines which will go towards ensuring a positive work ethos and transition into secondary school. Lateness is disruptive to the class and can cause children to have an anxious start to their day.

Pupils must be in class by 8:50am each day. Registers will be taken as soon as possible after that time. The school gates are closed at 8:55am and pupils will be marked late if they arrive at school after this time. Pupils that arrive once the school gates are locked must enter via the main office where they will be entered into the late book.

If a pupil is not present in the classroom when the register is taken, the pupil will receive an "N" code – no reason given. The attendance officer checks the registers daily between 9:00am and 9:30am and updates the registers with late pupils and contacts the parents/carers who have not reported their child as absent.

If a pupil is late to school due to a medical appointment, they will receive an authorised absence coded "M" once they have provided the school with evidence of the appointment.

If a pupil arrives after 9:30 am, they will receive a "U '' code which is an unauthorised absence for the session.

Lateness is monitored by the school attendance officer and when this becomes a regular occurrence or if there is a developing pattern of lateness the following procedure will be followed:

Stage 1: Where there are concerns about lateness, the school will issue a reminder letter to the parents/carers and set out the expectations which St Joseph's has for all its pupils.

Stage 2: Following the issue of this letter, the pupil's punctuality will be monitored for a period of four weeks. If there is no improvement in the pupil's punctuality, the parents/carers will be invited in for a meeting with the attendance officer and member of SLT.

Stage 3: If concerns persist further the attendance officer will refer to the Education Welfare Officer.

Penalty Notices:

The code of conduct:

Under Section 444A and 444B of the Education Act 1996, local authority officers, headteachers and the police are empowered to issue penalty notices (FPNs) in cases of unauthorised absence from school.

The Education (Penalty Notice) Regulations 2007 set out the details of how the penalty notice scheme must operate. Every local authority must draw up and publish a Code of Conduct for issuing penalty notices and Achieving for Children (AfC) who act on behalf of Kingston and Richmond local authority have done just this. Their Code of Conduct can be found here:
FPN_Short_version_24h_November_21.pdf (rackcdn.com)

The code of conduct is set out to ensure that the powers are applied consistently and fairly. The school will consider the issuing of Penalty Notices appropriate where the Educational Welfare Service has failed to affect a return to school and in the following specific circumstances:

- At least 10 sessions (5 school days) lost due to unauthorised absence in any six week period
- Parentally condoned absence

- Unauthorised holidays in term time
- Unauthorised delayed return from extended holidays
- Persistent late arrival at school (after register has closed) equivalent to 10 sessions in any six week period

Payment of a Penalty Notice:

From August 2024, a Fixed Penalty Notice will incur a charge of £80 per charge, per child if payment is made within 21 days. After 21 but before 28 days is £160 per parent, per child for the offence period. No reminders for this payment will be sent.

If the penalty payment is not received within 28 days, the local authority can consider whether to start prosecution. If the fine remains unpaid after 28 days, the presumption is that the local authority will issue summons and proceed to court.

Repeated Fines

If a parent/carer receives a second fine for the same child within any three year period, this will be charged at the higher rate of £160.

Fines per parent are capped to two fines within any three year period. Once this limit has been reached, other actions such as a parenting order or prosecution may be considered.

Promoting Good Attendance:

We want all pupils at St Joseph's to enjoy coming to school and feel supported and welcome. As with all achievements, we will celebrate good levels of attendance and punctuality.

Our newsletter is updated monthly with the attendance figures for that month.

How can we celebrate attendance?

- Awarding the class for best attendance and punctuality each week during assembly.
- Bronze award - 100% for attendance between September and Christmas break, Silver award 100% for attendance between September and the Easter break, and Gold award for 100% attendance or above by the end of the academic year.