



Sacred Heart
Catholic Primary School

Attendance Policy

This policy was reviewed:	Summer 2024
This policy will be reviewed again:	Summer 2024
Governor Committee Responsibility:	Behaviour, Attitudes and Personal Development
Statutory policy	Yes
Source:	Governing Body



Sacred Heart Primary School

Attendance Policy

Introduction

Regular and punctual school attendance is important. Pupils need to attend school regularly if they are to take full advantage of the educational opportunities available to them by law. Sacred Heart Primary and Nursery School fully recognises its responsibilities to ensure pupils are in school and on time, therefore having access to learning for the maximum number of days and hours.

Our policy applies to all children registered at this school and this policy is made available to all parents/carers of pupils who are registered at our school on our school website.

This policy has been written to adhere to the relevant Children Acts, Education Acts, Regulations and Guidance from the Department for Education in addition to guidance from the Local Authority in relation to attendance.

Although parents/carers have the legal responsibility for ensuring their child's good attendance, the Headteacher and Governors at our school work together with other professionals and agencies to ensure that all pupils are encouraged and supported to develop good attendance habits. Procedures in this policy are followed to ensure this happens.

Children who are persistently late or absent soon fall behind with their learning. Children who are absent from school frequently develop large gaps in their learning which will impact on their progress and their ability to meet age-related learning expectations.

A child whose attendance drops to 90% each year will, over their time at primary school, have missed two whole terms of learning.

Aims and Objectives

The purpose of this policy is to set out the requirements for attendance and punctuality and explain how attendance and punctuality is monitored.

This attendance policy ensures that all parents, staff and governors in our school are fully aware of and clear about the actions necessary to promote good attendance.

Through this policy we aim to:

- Improve pupils' achievement by ensuring high levels of attendance and punctuality.
- Ensure an minimum of 95% attendance for all children, apart from those with chronic health issues.
- Create an ethos in which good attendance and punctuality are recognised as the norm and seen to be valued by the school.
- Raise awareness of parents, carers and pupils of the importance of uninterrupted attendance and punctuality at every stage of a child's education.
- Ensure that our policy applies to Nursery and Reception aged children in order to promote good habits at an early age.
- Work in partnership with pupils, parents, staff and the Education Welfare Service so that all pupils realise their potential, unhindered by unnecessary absence.
- Promote a positive and welcoming atmosphere in which pupils feel safe, secure, and valued, and encourage in pupils a sense of their own responsibility.
- Establish a pattern of monitoring attendance and ensure consistency in recognizing achievement and dealing with difficulties.
- Recognise the key role of all staff, but especially class teachers, in promoting good attendance.

We maintain and promote good attendance and punctuality through:

- Raising awareness of attendance and punctuality issues among all staff, parents and pupils.
- Ensuring that parents/carers have an understanding of the responsibility placed on them for making sure their child attends regularly and punctually.
- Equipping children with the life skills needed to take responsibility for good school attendance and punctuality appropriate to the child's age and development.
- Maintaining effective means of communication with parents, pupils, staff and governors on school attendance matters.
- Developing and implementing procedures for identifying, reporting and reviewing cases of poor attendance and persistent lateness.
- Supporting pupils who have been experiencing any difficulties at home or at school which are preventing good attendance.
- Developing and implementing procedures to follow up non-attendance at school.

This policy should be read in conjunction with our:

- Relational Policy
- Keeping Children Safe (Safeguarding and Child Protection) Policy

Definitions

Authorised absence

- 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 carer. For example, if a child has been unwell and the parent telephones the school to explain the absence.
- Only the school can make an absence authorised. Parents do not have this authority; consequently, not all absences supported by parents will be classified as authorised.
- **Religious observance** - Absence will be authorised when it is due to religious observance. The day(s) must be exclusively set apart for religious observance by the religious body to which the parents belong. Where necessary, the school will seek advice from the parents' religious body about whether it has set the day(s) apart for religious observance.

Unauthorised absence

- An absence is classified as unauthorised when a child is away from school without the permission of the school; therefore, the absence is unauthorised. If a child is away from school for a reason that the Headteacher is not able to authorise, even with the support of a parent, the absence is unauthorised.

Expectations

We expect that all pupils will:

- attend school regularly
- attend school punctually
- attend school appropriately prepared for the day
- discuss with their class teacher or Headteacher any problems preventing them from attending school.

We expect that all parents/carers will:

- Encourage regular school attendance and be aware of their legal responsibilities.
- Ensure that the child/children in their care arrive at school punctually, prepared for the school day and have completed any homework they have been given.
- Contact the school by 9.30 am on every day of absence, whenever any problem occurs that may keep the child away from school.
- Contact the school promptly whenever any problem occurs that may keep the child away from school.

- Although we understand that this can sometimes be difficult, make every effort to arrange medical and dental appointments outside school hours.
- It is expected that children with pre-planned medical appointments should attend school before and/or after their appointment.

We expect that school staff will:

- Keep regular and accurate records of attendance for all pupils, at least twice daily.
- Monitor every pupil's attendance.
- Contact parents/carers as soon as possible when a pupil fails to attend and where no message has been received to explain the absence.
- Encourage good attendance.
- Provide a welcoming atmosphere for children, a safe learning environment and a sympathetic response to any pupil's concerns.
- Make initial enquiries to parents/carers of pupils who are attending irregularly, expressing the school's concerns and clarifying the school and the local authority's expectations regarding regular school attendance.
- Refer irregular or unjustified patterns of attendance to the Headteacher for referral to the school's attached Education Welfare Officer (EWO).

Encouraging Attendance

At Sacred Heart, we encourage regular attendance in the following ways:

- By providing a caring and welcoming learning environment.
- By responding promptly to a child or parent's concerns about the school or other pupils
- By accurate and punctual completion of registers during morning and afternoon registration (see lateness).
- By publishing attendance statistics.
- By celebrating good and improved attendance.
- By monitoring pupils, informing parents/carers in writing of irregular attendance and arranging meetings with them if necessary and referring the family to the Education Welfare Officer (EWO) if the irregular attendance continues.
- By the EWO attending school meetings with parents when necessary, to address attendance issues by identifying barriers and agree actions to support improvement in both attendance and punctuality.

Procedures

Our school will undertake to follow the following procedures to support good attendance:

- To maintain appropriate registration processes.
- To maintain appropriate attendance data.
- To communicate clearly the attendance procedures and expectations to all staff, governors, parents and pupils.
- To have consistent and systematic daily records which give detail of any absence and lateness.
- To follow up absences and persistent lateness if parents/carers have not communicated with the school
- To inform parents/carers what constitutes authorised and unauthorised absence.
- To strongly discourage unnecessary absence through holidays taken during term time
- To work with parents to improve individual pupils' attendance and punctuality
- To refer to the Educational Welfare Service any child whose attendance causes concern and where parents/carers have not responded to school initiatives to improve.
- To report attendance statistics to Richmond LA and the DfE where this information is requested

All staff should be aware that they must raise any attendance or punctuality concerns to the Headteacher, who has the responsibility for monitoring attendance.

Registration

All the school doors open at 8.45am until 9.00am. This time is sufficient for all pupils to come into their classroom.

Each class teacher has the responsibility for keeping an accurate record of attendance. Any pupil who is absent must be recorded as such at the beginning of the morning and afternoon session. The attendance register must be completed electronically by the class teacher by 9.05am and by 12.55pm/1.20pm (KS1 and LKS2/UKS2). (Attendance for pupils who are present in the morning and afternoon, respectively.)

All attendance records are documented using Integris software, which is supported by the Local Authority. Attendance registers are legal documents and these must be kept secure and preserved for a period of three years after the date they were last used.

Lateness

Once the doors are closed at 9.00am, the only way to get into school is via the school office. Any pupil who comes into school this way from 9.00am will be marked as late in the attendance record. Records are kept of those pupils who are late; this is documented on the electronic register for each pupil (Attendance code L). Any child who arrives for school later than 9.30 will be marked as having an unauthorised absence for the morning (Attendance code U).

Children who have attended a dentist or doctor's appointment due to a pre-existing condition or notified request and subsequently come to school later than 9.05am will have the absence recorded as a medical absence (Attendance code M).

Children who are persistently late miss a significant amount of learning, often the most important aspect, as the beginning of the day is where the teacher explains the learning and what each child is expected to achieve.

Where there have been persistent incidents of lateness, parents/carers will receive a letter advising them of the concerns, and the school will provide opportunities for parents/carers to seek support and advice to address these issues.

Absences

Parents/carers should contact the school on the first, and each subsequent, day of their child's absence. When parents/carers notify us of their child's absence, it is important that they provide us with details of the reason for their absence.

All absences are recorded as either authorised or unauthorised absences on the computer.

It is important that we receive accurate information from parents with reasons for the child's absence. This information is used to determine whether the absence is authorised or unauthorised.

The Headteacher has the responsibility to determine whether absences are authorised or unauthorised.

Where a reason has not been received for a child's absence, the school will ring the parent/carer to request these details. If a reason is not provided, the absence will be recorded as an unauthorised absence (Attendance code O).

First Day Contact

Where a child is absent from school and we have not received any verbal or written communication from the parent, we initiate a first day contact process.

Office staff check all of the registers from 9.00am to 9.30am on a daily basis to identify those pupils who are absent. There are occasions when we are unaware of the reason for the child's absence and we will contact the parent to check the reasons.

Illness

When children have an illness that means they will be away from school long term, the school will do all it can to send material home so that they can keep up with their school work.

Where, over the course of an academic year, a child has repeated periods of illness, the school will write to parents to ask them to provide medical evidence for each future period of illness-related absence. This evidence could be a doctor's note, appointment card or copy of a prescription. We may seek written permission from you for the school to make their own enquiries or to make a referral to our school nurse.

Parental Request for Absence from School for Holiday

With effect from September 2013, the government abolished the right of Headteachers to authorise absence specifically for holidays of up to 10 days per year, if special circumstances existed.

The school holiday dates are published a year in advance. We ask parents to take due consideration of these prior to booking a holiday to ensure their child does not miss out on education during term time.

If a family feels leave during term time is unavoidable due to special circumstances, then a letter must be written directly to the Headteacher explaining the reason for the request prior to the leave date and preferably at least two weeks before. The Headteacher will then decide whether or not to grant leave of absence.

The school can no longer authorise absences for holidays and all such requests will be unauthorised. In addition, any absence from school for holiday for longer than a period of 5 school days will from September 2019 be automatically referred to the EWO for follow up.

Parents are not entitled to leave of absence for their children as a right; each request will be considered separately and a decision made based on the reasons for the absence. A letter will be sent to parents informing them of the decision.

Leave of absence for medical appointment will only be considered when supported by an official letter such as a hospital letter or where a pre-condition has been identified.

Addressing Attendance Concerns

The school expects attendance of at least 95%.

It is important for children to establish good attendance habits early on in their primary school career.

It is the responsibility of the Headteacher and the governors to support good attendance and to identify and address attendance concerns promptly.

In primary schools, we rely upon parents to ensure their child attends school regularly and punctually; therefore, where there are concerns regarding attendance, parents are always informed of our concerns.

The Education Welfare Officer (EWO) visits half termly to check and monitor attendance. He/She carries out regular register checks to identify children with low attendance (usually below 90%) and those with patterns of absence.

Initially, concerns about attendance are raised with parents via discussions at Parent Teacher meetings. There will be opportunities for the parent/carer to discuss reasons for absence and support to be given by the school with the aim to improve attendance.

Where a child's attendance record does not improve over a period of time, then letters which are sent home. If attendance continues to not improve over a period of time, the school will raise the issue at the half termly attendance monitoring sessions and a second letter will be sent.

If despite support, attendance remains an issue, a formal referral to the Educational Welfare Service will be made and following this the parent/carer may be invited to a Legal Attendance Meeting. The aim of this meeting is to identify barriers to attendance and agree an action plan to improve school attendance and punctuality.

Should attendance still not improve, the parent may face a fine.

Responding to Non-Attendance

When a pupil does not attend school we will respond in the following manner:

- On the first day of absence, if no note or telephone call is received from the parent/ carer by 9.30am, the school will endeavour to contact them that day by phone, text message or email.
- If there is no response, the school will continue to try to contact the parent /carer and make enquiries as to the whereabouts of the child.
- The school will inform parents that, if the absence persists a referral will be made to the EWO.
- Following this, if parents have still not contacted school by day 5, school will make a referral to the Educational Welfare Service as the child is judged to be a Child Missing Education.

Deletion from Registers

If parents request their child to be absent for more than 20 days they should be aware that their child's name may be removed from the school roll, effective from the date of the first day of absence. Parents will then need to re-apply for a place at the school on their return however, due to demand for places this may not be possible.

Changing Schools

It is important that if families decide to send the child in their care to a different school that they inform the Headteacher as soon possible. A pupil will not be removed from the school roll until the following information has been received and investigated:

- the dates the pupil will be leaving the school and starting the next
- the address of the new school
- the new home address, if it is known
- the reason for the change of school

School staff will then confirm with the parents the leaving date for their child. Following this date, the pupil's school records will be sent on to the new school as soon as possible and within ten days of the child leaving.

The Local Authority will also be sent appropriate information within five days of anyone leaving or joining the school. If no notification is received from a new school, then the child's name will not be removed from the school roll until after an investigation by the Education Welfare Service.

Elective Home Education

It is important that if families decide to Electively Home Educate their child that they inform the Headteacher as soon possible.

At this time the school is required to refer the decision to the Educational Welfare Team, who may then visit the family to discuss the decision.

A pupil will not be removed from the school roll until the school is informed by the Educational Welfare Team that it is clear to do so.

School Organisation

In order for the school's Attendance Policy to be successful, every member of staff must make attendance a high priority and convey this to pupils at all times. Parents/carers should also need to support these views in the home to ensure that children are receiving corresponding messages about the value of education.

In addition to this, the school has the following responsibilities:

Headteacher and Governors will:

- Adopt the whole policy.
- Ensure that the registration procedures are carried out efficiently in line with current legislation and that appropriate resources are provided.
- Set whole school attendance targets.

Headteacher will:

- Initiate a scheme for contacting parents/carers on the first day of absence.
- Liaise and follow-up work with EWO an appropriate access to attendance data.
- Consult and liaise closely with the EWO on a regular basis and take responsibility for ensuring appropriate pupils are identified and referred without delay.
- To work in close collaboration with EWO during their termly/half termly register analysis.
- Monitor and evaluate attendance with the EWO.

Office staff will:

- Oversee the registration process and ensure that registers are completed accurately and punctually.
- Liaise with Education Welfare regularly.
- Reinforce good practice.
- Share any concerns expressed about attendance or disaffection that might lead to non-attendance with the Headteacher.
- Manage the school's scheme for contacting parents/cares on the first day of absence.
- Taking and recording messages from parents regarding absence.
- Ensuring the Late Book is completed and absences recorded on Integris.
- Contacting parents of absent children where no contact has been made by those parents.
- Recording details of children who arrive late or go home prior to the end of the school day.

- Keeping an overview of class and individual attendance, looking particularly for either poor overall attendance, anomalies in patterns of attendance and/or unusual explanations for attendance offered by children and their parents/carers and reporting concerns to the Headteacher.
- Sending out standard letters regarding attendance under the direction of the Headteacher.

Class teachers to:

- Complete registers accurately and punctually at least twice daily.
- Record all reasons for absences and lateness in the register.
- Inform the Headteacher or Deputy Headteacher of their concerns.
- Be alert to signs of disaffection that may lead to non-attendance and report them to the Headteacher.

Monitoring and evaluation:

This policy is reviewed every two years and will be monitored by the Behaviour, Attitudes and Personal Development (BAPD) Committee.

Date of approval by governing body:

June 2024

Date of next review:

June 2026