

# Attendance Policy

## St John Fisher Catholic Academy



*For I know the plans I have for you; plans to give you hope and a future – Jeremiah 29:11*

**Approved by:** [Name]

**Date:** [Date]

**Last reviewed on:** [Date]

**Next review due by:** [Date]

## Contents

1. Aims.....	2
2. Legislation and guidance .....	2
3. School procedures .....	3
4. Authorised and unauthorised absence .....	4
5. Strategies for promoting attendance .....	5
6. Attendance monitoring .....	6
7. Roles and responsibilities .....	6
8. Monitoring arrangements .....	7
9. Links with other policies .....	7
Appendix 1: attendance codes.....	8

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## 1. Aims

St John Fisher Catholic Voluntary Academy aims to meet its obligations with regards to school attendance by:

- Promoting good attendance
- Reducing absence, including persistent absence
- Ensuring every pupil has access to full-time education to which they are entitled
- Acting early to address patterns of absence

We will also support parents to perform their legal duty to ensure their children of compulsory school age attend regularly and will promote and support punctuality in attending lessons.

At St John Fisher, we believe that good attendance and punctuality are of the utmost importance in helping students achieve the best that they can be.

Students should be at school, on time and ready to learn, every day the school is open, unless the reason for absence is unavoidable. All research shows that students who attend well, achieve well.

We do understand that children get ill and are sometime unable to come into school; this is of course, accepted.

However, we do wish to remind parents and guardians that attendance is compulsory and anyone falling below **the school's target of 97%** will be investigated, which may lead to legal action being pursued and taken.

## 2. Legislation and guidance

This policy meets the requirements of the [school attendance guidance](#) from the Department for Education (DfE), and refers to the DfE's statutory guidance on [school attendance parental responsibility measures](#). These documents are drawn from the following legislation setting out the legal powers and duties that govern school attendance:

- [The Education Act 1996](#)
- [The Education Act 2002](#)

- [The Education and Inspections Act 2006](#)
- [The Education \(Pupil Registration\) \(England\) Regulations 2006](#)
- [The Education \(Pupil Registration\) \(England\) \(Amendment\) Regulations 2010](#)
- [The Education \(Pupil Registration\) \(England\) \(Amendment\) Regulations 2011](#)
- [The Education \(Pupil Registration\) \(England\) \(Amendment\) Regulations 2013](#)
- [The Education \(Pupil Registration\) \(England\) \(Amendment\) Regulations 2016](#)
- [The Education \(Penalty Notices\) \(England\) \(Amendment\) Regulations 2013](#)

This policy also refers to the DfE's guidance on the [school census](#), which explains the persistent absence threshold.

### 3. School procedures

#### 3.1 Attendance register

By law, all schools (except those where all pupils are boarders) are required to keep an attendance register, and all pupils must be placed on this register.

The attendance register will be taken at the start of the first session of each school day and once during the second session (after lunchtime). It will mark whether every pupil is:

- Present
- Attending an approved off-site educational activity
- Absent
- Unable to attend due to exceptional circumstances

Any amendment to the attendance register will include:

- The original entry
- The amended entry
- The reason for the amendment
- The date on which the amendment was made
- The name of the person who made the amendment

*See appendix 1 for the DfE attendance codes.*

Every entry in the attendance register will be preserved for 3 years after the date on which the entry was made.

The register for the first session will be taken at 08:55, any child arriving after this time will have a L code applied, this session will be kept open until 09:15, anyone arriving after this time will have a U code applied, which is an unauthorised absence.

The register for the second session will be taken at 12:50 for EYFS/KS1 and 13:15 for KS2.

No late marks will be permitted for this register.

#### 3.2 Unplanned absence

**Parents must notify the school** on the first day of an unplanned absence and any subsequent days – for example, if their child is unable to attend due to ill health – **by 09:00** or as soon as practically possible, this not only keeps the school informed of any illness, which may spread to others, but also saves unnecessary phone calls from school staff. (see also section 6).

*Parents are requested to phone the school office on: 01332 572154 with the following information, child's name, year group and reason for absence and estimated return. These calls will be transferred to the Learning Mentor, who will monitor absences and look for patterns.*

Absence due to illness will be authorised unless the school has: a genuine concern about the authenticity of the illness, or, sent out the 'medical absence and no authorisation Letter' (as part of the EWS intervention

procedure). This will then remain until school notify parents it is no longer required to evidence medical absences.

If the authenticity of the illness is in doubt, the school may ask parents to provide medical evidence, such as prescription, appointment card or other appropriate form of evidence. We will not ask for medical evidence unnecessarily. **It is important that you do not ask the GP for a letter, as this wastes the NHS' valuable time.** An appointment card with the children/s full name, date and time of appointment will be sufficient.

If the school is not satisfied about the authenticity of the illness, the absence will be recorded as unauthorised and parents will be notified of this.

### **3.3 Medical or dental appointments**

Missing registration for a medical or dental appointment is counted as an authorised absence; advance notice is required for authorising these absences.

However, we encourage parents to make medical and dental appointments out of school hours where possible. Where this is not possible, the pupil should be out of school for the minimum amount of time necessary.

*Parents should inform the school before the day of absence, unless it is an emergency appointment, by showing office staff or the Learning Mentor the appointment card or appointment letter.*

Applications for other types of absence in term time must also be made in advance. Information relating to whether the school can authorise such absences can be found in section 4.

### **3.4 Lateness and punctuality**

A pupil who arrives late but before the register has closed will be marked as late, using the appropriate code.

A pupil who arrives after the register has closed will be marked as U, arrival after the closure of registers.

After one session of unauthorised absence, school's absence reporting procedure will begin, which you will be notified about in writing. As soon as children receive one unauthorised absence then an informal conversation with the pupils about attendance will be carried out by the Learning Mentor.

If there has been 3 or more late marks per half term, then parents will be contacted by school to explain the reasons for this.

### **3.5 Following up absence**

The school will follow up any absences to ascertain the reason, ensure proper safeguarding action is taken where necessary, identify whether the absence is approved or not and identify the correct attendance code to use. If there is no correspondence from parents regarding absence within 10 working days, then this will be marked unauthorised, which will start the EWS investigation process.

### **3.6 Reporting to parents**

Parents will receive reports on attendance three times per year. Firstly, at the Autumn parents evening, the second at the Spring parents evening and finally in the end of year school report.

If at any time attendance becomes of concern, then parents will also be contacted about this and the next steps will be talked through with the Learning Mentor.

## **4. Authorised and unauthorised absence**

### **4.1 Granting approval for term-time absence**

Headteachers may not grant any leave of absence to pupils during term time unless they consider there to be 'exceptional circumstances'.

We define 'exceptional circumstances' as those arising suddenly and out of the control of an individual such as: a death of an immediate family member and parental leave from HM Forces (to name a few).

The school considers each application for term-time absence individually, taking into account the specific facts, circumstances and relevant context behind the request. A leave of absence is granted entirely at the headteacher's discretion.

Valid reasons for **authorised absence** include:

- Illness and medical/dental appointments – as explained in sections 3.2 and 3.3
- Religious observance – where the day is exclusively set apart for religious observance by the religious body to which the pupil's parents belong. If necessary, the school will seek advice from the parents' religious body to confirm whether the day is set apart
- Traveller pupils travelling for occupational purposes – this covers Roma, English and Welsh Gypsies, Irish and Scottish Travellers, Showmen (fairground people) and Circus people, Bargees (occupational boat dwellers) and New Travellers. Absence may be authorised only when a Traveller family is known to be travelling for occupational purposes and has agreed this with the school, but it is not known whether the pupil is attending educational provision

Reasons for **unauthorised absence** include:

- Cheaper holidays in school time
- Children are tired or had a late night
- The car will not start
- No contact made about an absence (as mentioned in section 3.2)

Ways in which we target unauthorised absence are as follows:

- Closely monitoring for patterns
- Initial phone call to ascertain any extra information
- Referral to EWS
- Formal meeting with school

## 4.2 Legal sanctions

Schools can fine parents for the unauthorised absence of their child from school, where the child is of compulsory school age.

If issued with a penalty notice, parents must pay £60 within 21 days or £120 within 28 days. The payment must be made directly to the local authority.

The decision on whether to issue a penalty notice ultimately rests with the headteacher, following the local authority's code of conduct for issuing penalty notices. This may take into account:

- A number of unauthorised absences occurring within a rolling academic year
- One-off instances of irregular attendance, such as holidays taken in term time without permission
- Where an excluded pupil is found in a public place during school hours without a justifiable reason

If the payment has not been made after 28 days, the local authority can decide whether to prosecute the parent or withdraw the notice.

## 5. Strategies for promoting attendance

The learning mentor (Mr Webb) will work with families to support them in ensuring children attend school every day they are able.

Mr Webb will speak to children about their attendance and ask about home life to see if the families would benefit from an Early Help Assessment.

Regular attendance updates to the Senior Leadership Team will highlight children who are achieving the school target and above as well as those who aren't.

## 6. Attendance monitoring

The Mr Webb, attendance officer, monitors pupil absence on weekly basis.

Parents are expected to call the school in the morning if their child is going to be absent due to ill health (see section 3.2).

Parents are expected to phone the school on each day of their child's absence.

If a pupil's absence goes above 3 days, we will contact the parents to discuss the reasons for this.

If after contacting parents a pupil's absence continues to rise, we will consider involving an education welfare officer.

The persistent absence threshold is 10%. If a pupil's individual overall absence rate is greater than or equal to 10%, the pupil will be classified as a persistent absentee.

For reference about the absence procedure:

Letter 1 - Whole School Attendance Letter

Letter 2 – Headteacher concerns letter

Letter 3 – Medical evidence/request letter (dependent on the absence trends)

Letter 4 – Invitation to a School Attendance Review Meeting (SARM)

Letter 5 - Formal Warning Notice

At each stage, the school will keep Derby City Education Welfare Service up-to-date, they may also get into contact with parents regarding their child/ren's attendance.

Pupil-level absence data is collected each term and published at national and local authority level through the DfE's school absence national statistics releases. The underlying school-level absence data is published alongside the national statistics. We compare our attendance data to the national average, and share this with governors.

## 7. Roles and responsibilities

### 7.1 The governing board

The governing board is responsible for monitoring attendance figures for the whole school on at least a termly basis. It also holds the headteacher to account for the implementation of this policy.

### 7.2 The headteacher

The headteacher is responsible for ensuring this policy is implemented consistently across the school, and for monitoring school-level absence data and reporting it to governors.

The headteacher also supports other staff in monitoring the attendance of individual pupils and issues fixed-penalty notices, where necessary.

### 7.3 The attendance officer – Mr Webb

The attendance officer:

- Monitors attendance data at the school and individual pupil level
- Amends any N code in the registers to the appropriate code
- Reports concerns about attendance to the headteacher
- Works with EWS to tackle persistent absence
- Arranges calls and meetings with parents to discuss attendance issues
- Advises the headteacher when to issue fixed-penalty notices

#### **7.4 Class teachers**

Class teachers are responsible for accurately recording attendance twice a day, using the correct codes, and submitting this information to the school office on time.

The codes teachers are to use are: / Present or N no reason yet provided. The Learning Mentor will amend all N codes to the appropriate code once the absence has been investigated with the parents.

#### **7.5 Office staff**

Office staff are expected to take calls from parents about absence and record it on the school system, produce attendance reports at the request of the SLT, attendance officer, update any missing marks with new information given to them by parents or guardians.

### **8. Monitoring arrangements**

This policy will be reviewed yearly by the head teacher and the attendance officer. At every review, the policy will be shared with the governing board.

### **9. Links with other policies**

This policy is linked to our child protection and safeguarding policy

## Appendix 1: attendance codes

The following codes are taken from the DfE's guidance on school attendance.

Code	Definition	Scenario
/	Present (am)	Pupil is present at morning registration
\	Present (pm)	Pupil is present at afternoon registration
L	Late arrival	Pupil arrives late before register has closed
B	Off-site educational activity	Pupil is at a supervised off-site educational activity approved by the school
D	Dual registered	Pupil is attending a session at another setting where they are also registered
J	Interview	Pupil has an interview with a prospective employer/educational establishment
P	Sporting activity	Pupil is participating in a supervised sporting activity approved by the school
V	Educational trip or visit	Pupil is on an educational visit/trip organised, or approved, by the school
W	Work experience	Pupil is on a work experience placement

Code	Definition	Scenario
<b>Authorised absence</b>		
C	Authorised leave of absence	Pupil has been granted a leave of absence due to exceptional circumstances
E	Excluded	Pupil has been excluded but no alternative provision has been made
H	Authorised holiday	Pupil has been allowed to go on holiday due to exceptional circumstances
I	Illness	School has been notified that a pupil will be absent due to illness
M	Medical/dental appointment	Pupil is at a medical or dental appointment



<b>R</b>	Religious observance	Pupil is taking part in a day of religious observance
<b>S</b>	Study leave	Year 11 pupil is on study leave during their public examinations
<b>T</b>	Gypsy, Roma and Traveller absence	Pupil from a Traveller community is travelling, as agreed with the school
<b>Unauthorised absence</b>		
<b>G</b>	Unauthorised holiday	Pupil is on a holiday that was not approved by the school
<b>N</b>	Reason not provided	Pupil is absent for an unknown reason (this code should be amended when the reason emerges, or replaced with code O if no reason for absence has been provided after a reasonable amount of time)
<b>O</b>	Unauthorised absence	School is not satisfied with reason for pupil's absence
<b>U</b>	Arrival after registration	Pupil arrived at school after the register closed

<b>Code</b>	<b>Definition</b>	<b>Scenario</b>
<b>X</b>	Not required to be in school / Covid-19 code	Pupil of non-compulsory school age is not required to attend
<b>Y</b>	Unable to attend due to exceptional circumstances	School site is closed, there is disruption to travel as a result of a local/national emergency, or pupil is in custody
<b>Z</b>	Pupil not on admission register	Register set up but pupil has not yet joined the school
<b>#</b>	Planned school closure	Whole or partial school closure due to half-term/bank holiday/INSET day