



St John Fisher RC Primary

Attendance and Holidays in Term-Time Policy

MISSION STATEMENT

Love Jesus, love learning,

Inspiring each other to be the best that we can be.

Aims

The key message at St John Fisher RC Primary School is that attendance matters and we aim to encourage high levels of attendance and punctuality to enable all pupils to take full advantage of the educational opportunities offered and by doing so, help them achieve their full potential. Our Mission Statement should be seen in practice and evidenced by our caring approach and acceptance of all pupils.

We believe that there is a strong link between a pupil's school attendance and their attainment. We also believe that good attitudes to attending school all through school life are formed in a child's early years in school. Therefore, we feel we have a responsibility both legally and morally in ensuring all pupils attend school regularly. This policy, therefore, sets out our legal responsibilities and the expectations we have of parents/carers and staff in meeting our aims.

Legal Framework

This policy has due regard to legislation and statutory guidance, including but not limited to:

- Education Act 1996
- Equality Act 1996
- Education (Pupil Registration)(England) Regulations 2006 (As amended)
- Children (Performance and Activities)(England) Regulations 2014
- Children and Young Persons Act 1963
- DfE (2018) - School Attendance
- DfE (2015) - Child performance and activities licensing legislation in England
- DfE (2022) - Keeping Children safe in education
- DfE)2016 – Children missing education

School Attendance and the Law

Under the 1996 Education Act, parents and carers are responsible for ensuring their children attend school regularly and punctually. Failure to do so could result in legal action being taken against them by the Local Authority.

The register is a legal document and schools must, under the Education (Pupil Registration) Regulations 2006 take a register at the start of the morning session, and again during the afternoon session. Since September 2006, schools have been required to use statutory registration codes.

Under the Education (Pupil Registration) Regulations 2006, only the school (and not parents/carers) can authorise an absence. Where the reason for a pupil's absence cannot be established at the time the register is taken, that absence shall be recorded as unauthorised. If a reason for absence is provided by the parent/carer, the school may decide to authorise the absence which must be recorded as authorised using the appropriate national code.

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.

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. Headteachers should determine the number of school days a child can be away from school if the leave is granted.

Roles, Responsibilities and Procedures

School

- Registers are taken by staff at the start of the morning and afternoon sessions. Morning registration takes place at 9.00am and afternoon registration is 1.00pm on SIMS.
- Lateness is recorded as an unauthorised absence when the reason given was avoidable and/if it has occurred after 9.20 am in the morning and 1.10 pm in the afternoon.
- All messages from parents reporting absences are recorded and marked on the electronic registration system (SIMS).
- If a pupil is absent and no message has been received by a parent/carer then the office staff will attempt to make contact with them after 9.30 am on the first day of absence. Attempts and outcomes of contact will be logged on the electronic registration system (SIMS).
- The Headteacher/deputy are responsible for authorising all requests for leave of absence applied to be taken in term time. The office staff will supply parents/carers with the appropriate form and ensure they receive a copy of the outcome.
- The Headteacher/school office will monitor rates of attendance at least half-termly or earlier if an individual matter has been raised by a member of staff. Where there are any issues/concerns, the Headteacher will arrange to speak to the parent/carer so that a solution can be found with the school and home working together. If efforts are not successful then the school may refer the matter to the Local Authority for advice and support.
- School may contact parent via telephone to express a concern about absence.
- School may conduct a home visit to express a concern over absence.
- Letters are sent to parents half termly for those pupils whose attendance is below 95% and 90% to highlight that this is a cause for concern.
- Attendance meetings are held with the Headteacher and/or Education Welfare Officer for parents whose children attendance are a cause for concern.
- Where there is a concern over absence school may request medical evidence from parents.
- Following an absence for a significant period, the school will liaise with the parent/carer to arrange an appropriate re-integration programme which meets the needs of the individual circumstances.

Parents/carers

- Parents are responsible for ensuring their child attends school regularly, punctually, properly dressed and in a fit condition to learn.
- Parents/carers are committing an offence if they fail to ensure that their child is attending school on a regular basis.
- If a child is unable to attend or is late, parents are requested to notify school as soon as possible – by telephone or email.
- Parents/carers are expected to report their child's absence to the school office by 9.30 am on each day of their child's absence by telephone only.
- A pupil's absence from school is considered unauthorised until the parent gives a satisfactory explanation. If a concern arises with regard to a child's attendance or punctuality, a member of staff will speak to the parent to identify the problem and to highlight ways in which the situation might be improved. The school will then work with the parent and child to implement the plan.

- All holidays should be taken during the school's designated periods of closure. Where leave of absence for exceptional circumstances is requested during term time, the application must be on the leave of absence request form, and be made at least two weeks in advance.
- When a pupil is delivered late to school parents must sign the pupil in at the school office and record in a designated file the reason the pupil is late.
- There is an expectation that parents/carers will work with the school to resolve any attendance issues.
- There is an expectation that parents/carers will provide medical evidence for absence when requested to do so.

Pupils

- Expectation that they attend regularly and are on time for registration and lessons.
- Need to answer to their names when the register is taken in the morning and afternoon.
- All pupils arriving after 9.00 am and/or when the doors are closed must report at the school office to register their arrival at school.
- Pupils are encouraged to talk through any problems that may be the cause of any attendance issue(s) and where appropriate/necessary, parents will be contacted.

Authorised/Unauthorised Absence

All absences must be explained by a parent via phone call or email via the school office. Once an absence has been explained the school will decide whether or not to authorise the absence. Some absences may be followed up with a first day phone call.

Absences for the following reasons will be authorised:

- Sickness
- Unavoidable dental/medical appointments
- Religious reasons
- Exceptional family circumstances e.g. a bereavement, sibling graduation
- The pupil is the child of traveller parents and the conditions as stated in the Education Act 1996 are met
- Pupil is attending a Pupil Referral unit.

An unauthorised absence is:

- Any absence from school that the school has not permitted or cannot give permission for
- Persistent late arrival at school.

In these circumstances, a formal letter of warning will be issued advising parents that a Penalty Notice may be issued. This warning letter will include details of the child's absences. This is an opportunity for the parents to work with the school to improve the child's attendance and avoid the need to issue a Penalty Notice. If there is no improvement, a Penalty Notice will be issued.

Requests for Leave of Absence (Exceptional Circumstances)

Where leave of absence for exceptional circumstances is requested during term time, the application must be on the leave of absence request form, and be made at least two weeks in advance.

The Headteacher/deputy are responsible for determining if requests for leave of absence, applied to be taken in term time, are deemed as exceptional. The definition of 'Exceptional circumstances' is that they are rare, significant, unavoidable and short.

At St John Fisher RC Primary School, the Governors acknowledge that 'exceptional' circumstances do not occur regularly, by definition. The following circumstances would generally not be considered as 'exceptional':

- Relatives coming to visit;
- Cheaper holidays in England and abroad;
- Family day trips;
- Visiting family/friends who have different half terms or holidays;
- Shopping;
- Birthday treats;
- Availability of cheap holidays/flights;
- Availability of desired accommodation;
- Poor weather experienced in school holiday periods.

Parents sometimes wish to request leave of absence for their child which would not be classed as holidays. In general, only one day of absence will be authorised for attendance at the event. In the past, these have included:

- Attendance at weddings or funerals;
- Attending graduation ceremonies for close family members;
- Taking part in a recognised sporting competition (e.g. competing for Greater Manchester schools football team);
- Attending special award ceremonies with parents;
- Celebrating religious events (e.g. Eid).

It would not be expected that 'exceptional' circumstances would occur more than once during a child's time at our school.

It is an offence for a parent to allow their child to be absent from school for 10 or more school sessions during a school term (5 school days) without permission or for 10 or more school sessions over a period of two consecutive half terms (5 school days) without permission. An unauthorised absence is:

- Any absence from school that the school has not permitted or cannot give permission for (holidays in term time)
- Persistent late arrival at school

In these circumstances a formal letter of warning will be issued advising parents that a Penalty Notice may be issued. This warning letter will also include details of the child's absences. This is an opportunity for the parents to work with the school to improve the child's attendance and avoid the need to issue a Penalty Notice. If there is no improvement then a Penalty Notice will be issued.

A Penalty Notice will be issued without warning for the deliberate taking of a holiday in term time without/against school permission where it can clearly be demonstrated that the parent understood that permission would not have been granted and where this has created a period of unauthorised absence of at least 5 days in the past two half terms.

Parents must, from 1 September 2013, pay £60 within 21 days or £120 within 28 days.

Procedures for Following up Absence/Lateness

Checking up on absences is critical to improving attendance. When a pupil returns to school after a period of absence and the explanation offered for the absence is unsatisfactory, the school will contact the parent(s). If a child is absent without explanation a member of staff from school will attempt to contact the parents. Registers are monitored on a monthly basis to ensure correct procedures are being followed and to monitor pupil attendance and punctuality. Any child displaying a pattern of frequent absence or lateness will be identified and monitored. Such patterns may include:

- One day off each week
- Absence on the same day e.g. long weekend

- Lateness on the same day each week

If a child is identified for absence / lateness patterns a member of staff will speak to the parent in an encouraging manner. If no improvement is seen a letter will be sent to the parent. If there is still no improvement in attendance and punctuality it may then be necessary to refer the matter to the Education Welfare Officer.

Strategies for Promoting Attendance/Punctuality

St John Fisher RC Primary School will offer an environment in which pupils feel valued and welcome. The school's ethos demonstrates that pupils feel that their presence in school is important, that they will be missed when they are absent/late.

- Attendance data will be collected regularly and analysed in order to help identify patterns, set targets, correlate attendance with achievement and support and inform policy/practice.
- Pupils whose attendance is a cause for concern will be monitored and if appropriate referred on to the appropriate specialist agency.
- Parents will be reminded regularly that attendance matters via newsletters, parents evening etc.
- Pupils who are absent through sickness for any extended period of time will have work sent home to them when appropriate and will be re-integrated into school upon their return.
- Attendance is reported to Governors via the Headteacher Report to the Full Governing Board on a termly basis.

Monitoring Procedures

The school monitors attendance and punctuality throughout the year.

- Class teachers monitor the attendance of their own class highlighting any concerns to the Headteacher.
- The school office will highlight any concerns in attendance or lateness.
- Governors receive termly reports of attendance issues at the Curriculum Committee meeting.

Document history

Date	Amendments
October 2022	Reviewed and updated
September 2024	Reviewed