St John's Catholic Primary School

ATTENDANCE AND PUNCTUALITY POLICY

"Christ is the Centre of our School Community where we live, love and learn together"

Introduction:

This policy has been produced with reference to the statutory guidance ***'Working Together to Improve School Attendance' (Statutory Guidance from August 19, 2024)*** and it demonstrates our commitment to meeting the requirements laid out by the Department for Education.

This is a successful and happy school that recognises the clear link between the attendance and attainment of its pupils. The aim of this policy is to encourage the highest possible levels of attendance and punctuality for pupils to support their learning, attainment and progress.

The importance of attendance and punctuality is underpinned by an awareness of safeguarding. It is important to see our children every day and provide an educationally safe and secure environment.

To gain the greatest benefit from their education, it is vital that all pupils attend regularly and on time. Pupils should attend every day that the school is open. We set a target for all pupils to aim for 100% attendance, with the expectation all pupils achieve at least 97%. ***As a school we define regular attendance as 97% or above.***

We recognise and believe that attendance is a matter for the whole school community and that school staff, parents and pupils all play an important role in contributing to improved attendance and punctuality. This policy sets out how we will achieve this together.

Our attendance policy should not be viewed in isolation; it is a strand that runs through all aspects of school improvement.

People responsible for attendance matters in this school:

Our Attendance Team:

Executive Headteacher:	Mr C Davey
Designated Attendance Lead:	Mrs. K Turner
Link Governor for Attendance:	Mr. A Menezes
Attendance and Punctuality Officer:	Miss C Robinson
Local Authority:	Education Welfare Officer (EWO)

Aims:

- Provide a framework to support building strong relationships with families to ensure pupils have the support in place to attend school.
- Raise the profile of attendance and punctuality amongst the school community.
- Set high expectations for the attendance and punctuality of all pupils.
- Maximise the overall percentage of pupil attendance and punctuality.
- Reduce the number of pupils who are persistently absent (90% or below) or severely absent (50% or below).
- Ensure every pupil has access to a full-time education.
- Provide support, advice and guidance on attendance matters for parents, pupils and staff.
- Have clear procedures for the maintenance of accurate registration for all pupils.
- Ensure a systematic approach to gathering, analysing and acting upon attendance data is in place.
- Ensure there is a proactive whole school approach that embeds a consistency of practice.
- Continue to promote effective partnerships with the Local Authority, Children's Services, School Health and other partner agencies.

Legal Framework

This policy is based on the Department for Education statutory guidance ***'Working Together to Improve School Attendance'***.
The guidance is based on the following legislation:

- The Education Act 1996
- The Education and Inspections Act 2006
- School Attendance Pupil (Pupil registration) Regulations 2023

Roles and Responsibilities

Governance:

The governing board is responsible for:

- Making sure leaders fulfil expectations and statutory duties
- Ensuring that the school has high aspirations
- Regularly analysing attendance data and reviewing the school's performance
- Ensuring all staff receive adequate training on their role in supporting pupil attendance
- Holding the headteacher to account for the implementation of the attendance policy

The Headteacher:

The headteacher is responsible for:

- Implementation of this policy
- Reporting school level performance data to governors
- Ensuring effective communication between school and the local authority
- Ensuring effective communication with parents for all pupils where there are barriers to attendance

The Designated Attendance Lead (Mrs K.Turner):

The designated attendance lead is responsible for:

- Leading attendance across the school
- Offering a clear vision for attendance improvement
- Ensuring all staff are aware of their role in supporting pupil attendance
- Evaluating the effectiveness of the school's process and procedures for managing attendance
- Implementing specific strategies to address poor attendance identified through the analysis of data
- Coordinating targeted intervention and support to pupils and families

Promoting Regular Attendance:

Helping to create a pattern of regular attendance is everybody's responsibility - parents, pupils and all members of school staff.
Our aim is to promote high levels of attendance to best help and support the learning of our pupils.

To help us all to focus on this, we will ensure:

- There is a designated attendance lead (DAL) for championing and improving attendance.
- Effective strategies are in place to support all pupils to arrive on time for school.
- An engaging curriculum is provided.
- High quality teaching and learning is delivered throughout the school.
- Pupils are provided with appropriate support from school and partner agencies to ensure regular attendance at school.

- Pupils who experience difficulties in attending school are provided with effective support at the earliest opportunity and attendance is monitored rigorously.
- Effective partnerships with parents are encouraged through regular contact and communication.
- Parents are kept informed of pupil attendance and punctuality through our school's attendance procedures, termly parents' evenings and reports, individual attendance letters and meetings when required.
- Good attendance and punctuality are rewarded through regular individual pupil incentives.
- Attendance and punctuality are regularly discussed with children in assemblies.
- Attendance roles and responsibilities are clearly defined and all staff should ensure these are followed.
- Individual and whole class attendance reward systems are put in place by class teachers.
- Attendance ambassadors are identified in each class to promote attendance in their class and have regular meetings with the Designated Attendance Lead and Attendance Officer.

As outlined in ***'Working Together to Improve School Attendance' (Statutory Guidance from August 19, 2024),*** improving attendance is everyone's business and requires us all to work together to improve it. All partners should work together to:

Expect – Our school aspires to high standards of attendance from all pupils and parents and builds a culture where all can, and want to, be in school and ready to learn by prioritising attendance improvements across the school.

Monitor – We will rigorously use attendance data to identify patterns of poor attendance as soon as possible so all parties can work together to resolve them before they become entrenched.

Listen and Understand – When a pattern is spotted, our school will discuss this with pupils and parents and will listen to and understand the barriers to attendance and agree how all partners can work together to resolve them.

Facilitate Support – In St.John's, we will remove barriers in school and help pupils and parents to access the support they need to overcome the barriers outside of school. This might include an early help or whole family plan where absence is a symptom of wider issues.

Formalise Support – Where absence persists and voluntary support is not working or not being engaged with, we will work together to explain the consequences clearly and ensure support is also in place to enable families to respond.

Enforce – Where all other avenues have been exhausted and support is not working or not being engaged with, we will enforce attendance through statutory intervention: a penalty notice in line with the National Framework or prosecution to protect the pupil's right to an education.

Safeguarding

A child not attending school, persistent lateness, or children missing from education may be considered a safeguarding issue if this places the child at risk of harm. Therefore, information about the cause of any absence from school is required.

To safeguard all the children in our care, it is important that parents provide the school with their current contact details and provide additional contact numbers in case of an emergency.

More information on safeguarding and the protection of children can be found in our school Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy.

Attendance Expectations and Absence Procedures

Expectations of Parents:

- Ensuring your child's regular attendance at school is a parent/carer's legal responsibility (Section 444 of the 1996 Education Act) and permitting absence from school that is not authorised by the school creates an offence in law.
- Ensure your child arrives for school on time.
- Telephone school if your child is to be late.
- Routine non-emergency medical and dental appointments should be made, whenever possible, outside of school hours. Confirmation of the appointment should also be provided.
- Contact school by 9am on the first day of absence if your child is unable to attend, giving an indication of the expected duration and return date to school.
- If a text message/phone call is made by the school due to your child's absence, it is important that you respond to ensure your child is appropriately safeguarded.
- Contact school and ask to speak to the Designated Attendance Lead if the reason for absence requires a more personal discussion.
- In case of emergency, we must have up-to-date contact numbers at all times so please ensure you inform us of any changes especially to mobile telephone numbers (as a school we request a minimum of three emergency contact details be provided).
- Requests for exceptional circumstances leave of absence must be in writing to the Headteacher and can only be authorised by the Headteacher. Reasons such as a close family bereavement or taking part in a significant religious event would be acceptable for short absences. Unacceptable reasons for missing school include general holidays, weddings, shopping, concerts and birthdays.

Absence Procedures:

If a pupil is absent, we will:

- Telephone and/or text parents or any named persons on the data collection sheet on the first day of absence if we have not heard from them by 9am.
- If we are unable to make contact and no response is received to confirm the

reason for the absence, a member of school staff may conduct a home visit or a home visit may be made by the Local Authority EWO.

- If there are safeguarding concerns, contact will be made with the family as soon as possible.
- If a pupil's absence continues, parents will be invited to an attendance meeting in school where they will meet with the Designated Attendance Lead, Attendance Officer and/or the Headteacher to discuss any barriers to the child attending school. From this, support can be put in place to improve attendance. This may include signing an attendance contract/agreement or offering support through Early Help assessment or referral to another appropriate support service.
- If parents do not attend the meeting or engage in any support the school has offered and the pupil has accrued 10 sessions of unauthorised absence in a 10-week rolling period, the parents may be issued with a Notice to Improve, in accordance with the Liverpool City Council's Penalty Notice Local Code of Conduct and in agreement with the Education Welfare Service
- If unauthorised absences persist, the Designated Attendance Lead will discuss actions with the Education Welfare Officer.

Understanding types of absence

Our school must legally record the reason for all individual pupil absence. This is why it is important for parents to directly inform school of the reason for absence, on the first day of absence.

Authorised Absence

This is when the school accepts the explanation offered as satisfactory. If no explanation is received, absences cannot be authorised. It is the Headteacher, not parents, who makes the decision to authorise absence from school.

Unauthorised Absence

This is when the school has not received a reason for absence or has not approved a child's leave of absence following a parental request. This includes but is not exclusive to:

- Parents giving their children permission to be off school unnecessarily, such as for shopping, birthdays, to look after siblings.
- Truancy before or during the school day;
- Absences which have not been explained;
- Pupils who arrive late after the close of registration.

This type of absence may lead to the use of Penalty Notices or other legal interventions from the Local Authority. Our school, in agreement with the Education Welfare Service, may issue a Notice to Improve to parents (in accordance with the National Framework for Penalty Notices and the Local Authority Code of Conduct) where their child has accrued 10 sessions of unauthorised absence in a 10-week rolling period.

The Notice to Improve period will cover 20 school days. If the child has any unauthorised absence during this time, the school will refer the case to the Local Authority requesting a Penalty Notice to be issued.

Persistent Absence (PA)

Pupils are defined as persistent absentees by the Department for Education (DfE) if their attendance falls **below 90%.** This is for any absence whether authorised or unauthorised. The DfE expects schools to intervene early to prevent pupils becoming a persistent absentee (PA).

Our school attendance officer intervenes and issues regular PA letters to parents to inform them if their child is at risk of becoming a PA and will invite them in for a meeting if necessary.

Whilst we understand that pupils can be absent from school because they are ill, sometimes they may be reluctant to attend. If a pupil is reluctant to attend or a parent has concerns, it is important that contact is made with the school at the earliest opportunity to gain support and to work together to gain a resolution. Parents are asked to contact school to speak to the Designated Attendance Lead in the first instance.

Severe Absence (SA)

Pupils who miss 50% or more of school are classified as being severely absent by the Department for Education (DfE). This cohort of pupils are a priority group for our school and additional support may be required from the Local Authority and partner agencies to support your child and improve their attendance. It is essential that parents work in partnership with the school and its partners, to ensure their child receives the support they require to overcome any barriers that are preventing them from attending school.

Why Regular Attendance is Important

Any absence affects education, and regular absence will seriously affect pupils' learning. Pupils who have time off often find it difficult to catch up and do well.

90% attendance is equivalent to a pupil missing one half day per week or approximately 118 lessons per year.

Ensuring your child's regular attendance at school is your legal responsibility and permitting your child to have any absence without a good reason from school is an offence in law (The Education Act 1996) and may result in legal action.

The Education Welfare Officer (EWO)

The Education Welfare Officer (EWO) will work with parents to support their child in overcoming any barriers in attending school. The EWO will always try to resolve any issues by working in partnership with the school and family. If a resolution cannot be achieved to improve the pupil's attendance and where unauthorised absence persists, and the parent has refused or not engaged with support that has been offered, the local authority will be required to consider the instigation of legal proceedings.

Penalty Notices:
Liverpool City Council (LA) on receipt of a request from school, will issue a Penalty Notice to parents for the unauthorised absence of their child.

Before issuing a penalty notice the LA will consider:

- If the national threshold for considering a penalty notice has been met (10 sessions of unauthorised absence in a rolling 10-week period)
- If issuing a penalty notice is the best available tool to improve the attendance of the pupil
- If appropriate support has been put in place
- Consideration of the obligations that the school has under the Equality Act 2010 that would make issuing a penalty notice inappropriate
- Each parent who is liable can be issued with a penalty notice, but this will usually be the parent who allowed the absence
- The first penalty notice issued to a parent in respect of a particular pupil will be charged at £160 if paid within 28 days. This will be reduced to £80 if paid within 21 days
- A second penalty notice issued to the same parent in respect of the same pupil in the rolling 3-year period is charged at £160 if paid within 28 days. There is no opportunity to pay a reduced amount
- A third penalty notice cannot be issued to the same parent in respect of the same child within 3 years of the date of issue of the first. In a case where the national threshold is met for a third time (or subsequent times) within those 3 years, alternative action will be taken. This will often include considering prosecution, but may include other tools such as one of the other attendance legal interventions.

The Local Penalty Notice Code of Conduct is published on Liverpool City Council's website.

Leave of absence in Term Time:

The Law does not give any entitlement to parents to take their child on holiday during term time. Any application for leave in term time must be in only exceptional circumstances and the Headteacher must be satisfied that the circumstances warrant the granting of leave. The Headteacher will determine the number of school days a child can be away from school if the leave is granted.

Parents can receive a Penalty Notice for taking their child on holiday during term time without prior consent from school. Consent cannot be given retrospectively.

Lateness:
Poor punctuality is not acceptable. If a pupil misses the start of the day, they can miss lesson inputs and important work which they may find distressing and thus this can encourage future absence. Late-arriving pupils also disrupt lessons for other children.

How we manage lateness:

The school day starts at **8.45am** and we expect your child to be in at that time. Registers are marked by the class teacher at this time and your child will receive a late mark if they are not in their class by that time.

Late arrival to school following the close of registers is classified as an absence. If a pupil is persistently late after the official close of the register and there are no barriers preventing the child from arriving on time, the school may request the local authority issue a Penalty Notice. The official close of registration for our school is **9.30am.**

If a pupil arrives late to school, parents will receive a text message to inform them of their child's late arrival.

If a parent has any problems getting their child to attend school on time, they should contact the school and request to speak to the Designated Attendance Lead or any member from the Attendance Team, who will offer support to resolve the problem.

Removal from Roll:

From the 1st September 2016, changes were introduced to the Pupil Registration Regulations 2016. These amendments affect all non-standard transitions; this is whenever a child of compulsory school age leaves a school before completing the school's final year.

As a school we are now required to: Inform the LA in ***every*** circumstance when deleting a pupil's name from the admission register. Inform the LA of the pupil's destination school and home address if the pupil is moving to a new school. School must complete an Exit form and submit to the **CME@liverpool.gov.uk** inbox.

All schools must provide information to the LA when registering new pupils, including the pupil's address and previous school.

If your child is leaving our school parents are asked to:

- Provide the Attendance Officer with comprehensive information about their plans, including any date of a move, your new address and telephone numbers, your child's new school and the start date when known. This should be submitted to school in writing.
- If a pupil leaves and we do not have the above information, then your child is considered to be a child missing in education. This requires schools and local authorities to carry out investigations to try and locate your child, which may include liaising with Children's Services, the Police and other agencies. By giving us the above information, these investigations can be avoided.

Summary:

Our school is committed to promoting and encouraging excellent attendance for all. We continue in our efforts to maintain high levels of school attendance and we continue to proactively manage and improve attendance across our school community. By working in partnership with families, we aim to find supportive routes to improving attendance

Appendix 1
Attendance and Punctuality Roles and Responsibilities

Daily

When	Whom	Actions Expected
DAILY	Pupils	• Arrive on school site by 8.45am • Be in class on time for registration at 9am
	Class Teacher	• Registers are completed on the MIS system each day on time • Ensure attendance has a high profile in classroom • Discuss absence with pupils returning to school • Welcoming long-term absentees back into the class • Use daily class reward systems to promote attendance • Ensure attendance ambassador has a key role within the classroom
	Attendance and Punctuality Officer	• Ensuring staff have completed AM/PM registers • Ensuring input of accurate attendance marks in the register via MIS • Identify pupils who are absent from school without reason • Log on MIS, parental voicemails, text messages and emails regarding student absences • Ensure all Late arriving pupils are spoken to and their attendance is entered on to MIS • MIS in touch messages sent to parent who have failed to contact regarding their child's absence and also pupils who arrive late • First day absence phone contact with parents, following up unexplained absences where no text message/phone call has been returned. • SLT and class teachers contacted with specific attendance queries and necessary follow ups required • Supporting staff with registration queries. • Logging attendance of all pupils going out /in school for medical or dental appointments or visits • Daily liaison with other settings for pupils educated off site to ensure AM and PM registers are provided within set time parameters and pupils who fail to attend with reasons unknown are followed up through the first day contact systems • Daily Late process, log and send actions for relevant staff. • Daily Attendance report sent to DSL for attendance. • Home visits on school mini bus for any families where no contact can be made. • Inform parents of their child's attendance % when contacting them regarding their child's absence that day

	EWO	• Safeguarding home visits as required • Focused casework interventions with severely absent and persistently absent pupils and families • Phone call contact with pupils/parents • Home visits • Instigation of legal proceedings • Tracking of actions and interventions and feedback to school staff responsible for attendance matters
	Designated Attendance Lead	• Monitoring and tracking of staff not completing registers in line with safeguarding requirements. • Liaison with EWO, Attendance and Punctuality Officer and Curriculum Lead regarding support work with identified pupils. • Home visits with Attendance and Punctuality Officer if required. • Daily liaison with the Attendance and Punctuality Officer to monitor absences closely and to determine and monitor appropriate use of attendance codes.

Weekly:

When	Whom	Actions Expected
WEEKLY	**Class teacher**	• Ensure all members of the class know the school target and their current attendance • Monitor/follow up identified pupil absence by contacting parents where appropriate. • Update information on attendance displays in classroom, if applicable
	Attendance and Punctuality Officer	• Informing SLT and EWO of pupil patterns of absence • Provide weekly pupil attendance figures for DAL for attendance, class teachers and pupil rewards • Discuss punctuality issues with identified pupils and parents • Provide weekly attendance and punctuality data for the DAL • Update whole school attendance board with each class attendance % for the week • Organise coins for class attendance piggy banks for the whole school weekly assembly • PA letters sent weekly following PA report • 'At risk of becoming a PA' letters sent out regularly throughout the week when required • Liaise with EWO in weekly meeting to share information and agree joint actions regarding SA/PA pupils or any other pupils causing concerns

	Curriculum Lead	• Organise support for pupils to catch up on missed work due to prolonged absence
	Designated Attendance Lead	• Monitoring and tracking of staff not completing registers in line with safeguarding requirements • Liaison with EWO, Attendance and Punctuality Officer and curriculum lead regarding support work with identified pupils • Determine priority actions for the following week

Half Termly:

When	Whom	Actions Expected
HALF TERMLY	Designated Attendance Lead	• Maintain a high profile of attendance as a significant contributor to pupil achievement • Analyse attendance data half termly for all groups of pupils and report to Governors • Use attendance data to identify and act to improve the attendance of vulnerable pupils • Ensure that all teaching staff focus on attendance in planning and pedagogy • Determine priority actions for the next half term
	Attendance and Punctuality Officer	• Monitor and track attendance SA /PA Action Plans • Liaise with EWO to share information and agree joint actions regarding SA/PA pupils or any other pupils causing concern

Termly:

TERMLY	**Designated Attendance Lead**	• The importance of attendance is underpinned by awareness of safeguarding issues for all pupils both in school and those attending off site provision • School attendance review alongside the EWO • Ensure that attendance is given a high profile as a key driver of school improvement and provide support and guidance to SLT, for plans to raise attendance • Ensure that the attendance policy is implemented across the school and that systems are operating effectively. • Report to SLT and governors on attendance matters • Ensure school prospectus, parents' welcome booklet and school newsletters promote attendance • Ensure that attendance features at parents' evenings and is discussed with parents during this • Determine priority actions for the next term
	Headteacher	• Ensure that attendance maintains a high profile as a key driver of school improvement through close monitoring and scrutiny of attendance data in conjunction with SLT and Governors