

Sacred Heart Catholic Primary School

ATTENDANCE, ABSENCE & PUNCTUALITY POLICY

Introduction

Sacred Heart Primary School is committed to providing a full, varied and challenging education to all pupils and embraces the concept of equal opportunities for all.

We will aim to provide an environment where all pupils feel safe, valued and welcome.

For a child to reach their full educational achievement, a high level of school attendance is essential. We will consistently work towards a goal of over 97% attendance for all children. Every opportunity will be used to convey to pupils and their parents or carers the importance of regular and punctual attendance including e.g. newsletters, website, home reports and end of term reports.

We recognise that staff, pupils and parents have a vital role to play and work hard to establish strong home-school relationships. It is a shared responsibility.

If there are problems which affect a pupil's attendance we will investigate, identify and strive in partnership with parents and pupils to resolve those problems as quickly and efficiently as possible.

School attendance is subject to various Education laws and this school attendance policy is written to reflect these laws and the guidance produced by the Department for Education (DfE).

Each year the school will examine its attendance figures and set attendance/absence targets. These will reflect both national and Oxfordshire attendance targets.

The school will review its systems for improving attendance at regular intervals to ensure that it is achieving its set goals.

This policy will contain within it, the procedures that the school will use to meet its attendance targets.

The school has set a whole school attendance target of 97% and an unauthorised absence of less than 0.3%

School Procedures

1. Any child who is absent from school at the morning or afternoon registration period must have their absence recorded as being authorised, unauthorised or as an approved educational activity (attendance out of school).
2. Only the Headteacher or a member of staff acting on their behalf can authorise absence. If there is no known reason for the absence at registration, then the absence must be recorded in the first instance as unauthorised. The provision of a note of explanation does not automatically authorise absences.

Lateness

1. Morning registration will take place at the start of school from 8.45am and closes at 9.05 am. Any pupil arriving after this time will be marked as having an unauthorised absence (U) unless there is an acceptable explanation i.e. school transport was delayed.
2. In cases for example, where the absence at registration was for attending an early morning medical appointment, the appropriate absence code will be entered. The afternoon registration will be at **1.00 pm** The registers will close at **1.05 pm**
3. Pupils arriving after the start of school but before the end of the registration period will be treated for statistical purposes, as present, but will be coded as late before registers close. If they arrive after the registers close they are recorded as unauthorised.
4. Parents/Carers must inform the school if their child is going to be absent on or before the first day. This must be through a letter or phone call. If no reason is given within 2 weeks the absence will become unauthorised.
5. When making medical/dental appointments, every effort must be made to ensure appointments are outside school hours but we acknowledge that this is not always possible. Medical/Dental appointments must be accompanied by an appointment card or other written confirmation.
6. If a child is late, after the registers close at 9.05am, it has a negative impact on the child's learning and disrupts all the children in the class. To reduce lateness we monitor registers weekly.

If a child is late more than 5 times over a term we will:

- Send a letter to the parent/carer
- Invite parents in to discuss attendance
- Refer to Oxfordshire County Council, Attendance and Engagement Team if there is not an improvement.

Absence from School

• First Day Absence

When a pupil is absent and the reason is known through parental contact, this is passed on to the relevant teacher and recorded by the people in charge of registration in the register. When a pupil is absent and the reason is not known his/her parents/carers will be phoned to ascertain the reason for absence.

• Third Day Absence

If a pupil has been absent for 2 or more continuous days and there has been no parental/guardian contact, the Administration Assistant will send a letter home (see Appendix 2), copies of which are to be filed in the pupil's file.

• Continuing Absence

If there has still been no contact / explanation a further letter is sent home.

- **Ten Day Absence**

Any pupil who is absent without an explanation for 10 consecutive days will be referred to Oxfordshire County Council, Attendance and Engagement Team. The school will include details of the action they have taken.

- **Absence Notes**

Absence notes received from parents explaining absence are kept for the child's duration at Sacred Heart School. If there are attendance concerns about the pupil, that may require further investigation, then the notes may need to be retained for a longer period.

- **Unwell Pupils**

Members of staff will check with the Headteacher or Deputy Headteacher before pupils are sent home.

- **Frequent Absence**

It is the responsibility of the Headteacher and the Admin Assistant to be aware of and bring attention to, any emerging attendance concerns.

In cases where a pupil begins to develop a pattern of absences, the school will try to resolve any concerns with parent/s. The Headteacher will liaise with the Attendance and Engagement Officer to ensure necessary action is taken when incidents of poor attendance and/or punctuality are identified.

Where incidents of poor attendance and/or lateness are identified through monitoring parents/carers will be notified in writing that this is a cause for concern. If this continues, the school will invite parents/carers in to discuss causes and ways forward.

Penalty Notices and Legal Action

The Law

The Education Act 1996 Part 1, Section 7 states:

The parent of every child of compulsory school age shall cause him/her to receive efficient full-time education suitable-

- [a] To his/her age, ability and aptitude and
- [b] To any special needs he/she may have.

either by regular attendance at school or otherwise.

For educational purposes the term parent is used to include those that have parental responsibility and/or those that have the day to day care of the child.

The legislation that appertains to children who are of compulsory school age and are registered at school is contained within this Act.

Part V1 Section 444 contains the details of when an offence is committed if a child fails to attend school.

In cases of persistent absenteeism, the school reserves the right to ask the Attendance and Engagement Team to either issue a Penalty Notice Warning which could result in a fine or further legal action through the courts.

A Penalty Notice is a fine that the Attendance and Engagement Team may decide to issue instead of taking legal action through the Magistrates' Court system.

A Parent/Carer can be issued with a penalty notice if:

- they fail to ensure that their child attends school, or other education provision regularly, usually defined as six or more unauthorised absence sessions over a six week period;
- they allow their child to take leave of absence during term time without the school's authorisation;
- they fail to return their child to school on the agreed date after a period of authorised leave of absence;
- their child persistently arrives late for school after registration is closed.

A pupil becomes a 'persistent absentee' (PA) when they miss 15% or more schooling across the school year **for whatever reason** ie when their attendance is 85% or less. Absence at this level is doing considerable damage to any child's educational prospects and we need parents' fullest support and co-operation to tackle this.

The school monitors all absence thoroughly. Any case that is seen to have reached the PA mark **or** is at risk of moving towards that mark is given priority and parents will be informed of this immediately.

PA pupils are tracked and monitored carefully by the school and a parenting contract meeting will be offered between parent, pupil and school to try and help resolve any issues. All PA cases will be referred to the Attendance and Engagement Team and if necessary, they have a range of legal powers open to them to enforce attendance including parenting orders, education supervision orders and prosecutions. **If convicted of an offence a parent could face a fine of up to £2,500 per parent and/or 3 months imprisonment.**

A Welcome Back

It is important that on return from an absence that all pupils are made to feel welcome. This should include ensuring that the pupil is helped to catch up on missed work and brought up to date on any information that has been passed to other pupils.

Promoting Attendance

The school will use opportunities as they arise to remind parents/carers that it is their responsibility to ensure that their children receive their education. The Home/School agreement is a formal way of acknowledging this.

Leave of Absence

As of 1st September 2013, the Headteacher will not grant any leave of absence during term time unless there are **exceptional circumstances**. Parents/Carers should seek permission from the Headteacher prior to the leave of absence period in question.

Exceptional Circumstances include:

- **funerals or weddings of family members**
- **to visit a terminally ill relative**
- **forces staff returning from abroad**
- **parents returning from having to work abroad for a fixed, minimum term period**
- **compassionate leave** (as agreed by Governors – Sept. 2013)

The Headteacher will determine the number of school days a child can be away from school **if** the leave is granted. Parents/carers who remove their children from school without authorisation or do not return their child to school on the agreed date following an authorised period of leave of absence, may face a Penalty Notice Warning which could lead to a fine/prosecution (see Penalty Notices and Legal Action above).

Attendance Targets

The school sets attendance targets each year. It is important to set realistic targets; these targets will try to improve on previous years. When evaluating success the school will consider whether or not:

- attendance has improved
- punctuality has improved
- parental response to absences has improved
- the school has been successful in raising the profile of attendance both within the school, governing body and the local community
- pupils are fully aware of the importance of punctuality and regular attendance
- the attendance procedures operating within school are effective.
- The target for 2017-18 is 97%

PRACTICE

The school recognises the importance of good practice by:

- keeping and maintaining registers accurately
- maintaining a consistent approach to marking registers
- updating attendance data on Integris every Friday p.m.
- fortnightly analysis of attendance data by HT, SENCo and Admin Officer
- ensuring prompt follow-up action in cases of non-school attendance
- liaising closely with the school's Oxfordshire County Council Attendance and Engagement Team.
- Working with other agencies such as Educational Psychologist, Behaviour Support, School Counsellor etc. to encourage attendance with specific pupils.

KEEPING ELECTRONIC REGISTERS

The register is a legal document and must be kept accurately. For all Year Groups, we hold electronic registers through Integris. The register may be requested in a court of law as evidence in a prosecution for non-attendance. It also contributes data to pupils' end-of-term reports.

Full detail of how to complete the register can be found on the electronic site and staff are regularly trained in the accurate completion of registers.

Register and Admission Roll keeping.

The legal requirements regarding register and admission roll keeping can be found in The Education [Pupil Registration] (England) Regulations 2006.

Categorisation of Absence

Any pupil who is on roll but not present in the school at the time of registration must be recorded within one of these categories:

1. Unauthorised Absence;
2. Authorised Absence;
3. Approved Educational Activity

1. Unauthorised Absence

This is for those pupils where no reason has been provided, or whose absence is deemed to be without a valid reason.

2. Authorised Absence

This is for those pupils who are away from school for a reason that is deemed to be valid under the Education Act 1996.

3. Approved Educational Activity

This covers types of supervised educational activity undertaken off site but with the approval of the school. This would include:

- Field trips and educational visits;
- Sporting activities;
- Link courses or approved education off site;
- Most types of dual registration.

Note: Pupils recorded in this category are deemed to be present for attendance returns purposes.

Reviewed by Headteacher:	Jan 2018
Approved by Governing body:	Jan 2018
Next Review Date:	Jan 2020