

St. Joseph's R.C. Primary School

Pupils' Attendance Policy



Reviewed: Autumn 2025

Next Review: Autumn 2028

Introduction

For our students to gain the greatest benefit from their education it is vital that they attend school regularly and punctually and this policy sets out how we together will achieve this.

In order for any attendance and punctuality policy to be effective it must be consistently applied throughout the whole school, by its staff, pupils, parents and carers following the statutory DFE Working together to improve attendance guidance from 19th August 2024.

Why regular attendance is so important

Any absence affects the pattern of a child's schooling and regular absence will seriously affect their learning. Any pupil's absence disrupts teaching routines which may affect the learning of others in the same class.

Ensuring your child's regular attendance at school is your legal and parental responsibility. Permitting absence from school without a good reason is an offence in law and may result in a Penalty Notice being issued or Court action/prosecution.

Research has shown that regular attendance and good punctuality are key factors in students achieving their full potential at school. For every drop in 10% attendance there is an average drop of one grade at GCSE.

EVERY SCHOOL DAY COUNTS

Although being absent cannot always be helped, as we all become ill from time to time, please take a look at the table below to show you exactly what your child is missing.

365 DAYS IN A YEAR	190 SCHOOL DAYS IN TOTAL	ABSENCE
100% attendance	190 days	0
95% attendance	180 days	2 weeks
90% attendance	171 days	4 weeks
85% attendance	161 days	6 weeks
80% attendance	152 days	More than half a term
75% attendance	143 days	9 + weeks

Promoting regular attendance

Helping to create a pattern of regular attendance is everybody's responsibility – parents, pupils and all members of staff.

To help us all to focus on this we will:

- Give you details on attendance on our website via the weekly newsletter
- Reward good attendance through certificates, and end of year prizes
- Good attendance is awarded and recognised in Awards assemblies.

Safeguarding

The safeguarding of every child is everyone's responsibility and within the context of this school, promoting the welfare and life opportunities for your child encompasses attendance, behaviour management, health and safety, access to the curriculum and anti-bullying.

Failing to attend this school on a regular basis will be considered as a safeguarding matter.

The Law relating to attendance

Section 7 of the Education Act 1996 states that 'the parent of every child of compulsory school age shall cause him/her to receive efficient full time education suitable:-

- (a) To age, ability and aptitude and
 - (b) To any special education needs he/she may have
- Either by regular attendance at school or otherwise'

Under The Education Act 1996 section 444 point F3 and F5, it is the parents responsibility to provide medical evidence or proof:

It is a defence for a person charged with an offence under subsection (1A) to prove that he had a reasonable justification for his failure to cause the child to attend regularly at the school.]

[F5(2A)The child shall not be taken to have failed to attend regularly at the school by reason of his absence from the school at any time if the parent

proves that at that time the child was prevented from attending by reason of sickness or any unavoidable cause.]

Failure to ensure regular and punctual school attendance may result in the issuing of a penalty notice under Anti-Social Behaviour Act 2003 and/or prosecution under section 444 of the Education Act 1996.

Understanding types of absence

Every half-day absence from school has to be classified by the school (not by the parents), as either AUTHORISED or UNAUTHORISED. This is why information about the cause of any absence is always required, preferably in writing via email.

Authorised absences are mornings or afternoons away from school for a legitimate reason such as illness, medical or dental appointments, which unavoidably fall in school time, emergencies or other unavoidable causes.

Unauthorised absences are classified as absences that the school consider not to be reasonable. This includes:

- Parents/carers keeping children off school unnecessarily
- Keeping your child off school when their parent or carer is unwell
- Truancy before or during the school day
- Absences which have never been properly explained
- Children who arrive at school too late to get a mark (After 9.30am)
- Shopping, looking after other children or birthdays
- Day trips and holidays in term time

Unauthorised absence can lead to the Local Authority issuing Penalty Court Notices (PCN) and/or legal proceedings.

Whilst any child may be off school because they are ill, sometimes they can be reluctant to attend school. Any problems with regular attendance are best sorted out between the school, the parents and the child. If your child is reluctant to attend, it is never better to cover up their absence or to give in to pressure to excuse them from attending. This gives the impression that attendance does not matter and usually makes things worse.

Term Time Absences

Holidays in Term Time:

Holidays in Term Time will not be permitted and will not be authorised.

Request for Authorised Absence:

Requests for any term-time leave must be submitted in advance by completing a 'Request for Authorised Absence' Form and will only be authorised by the Head Teacher in exceptional circumstances. In making a decision, the school will consider the situations of each application individually, including any previous attendance concerns.

Fines for Unauthorised Absences:

Parents who take their children out of school for holidays will be subject to a fine (PCN). Children who have irregular attendance without a legitimate reason will also be subject to a fine. The fine (PCN) structure is as follows:

- £80 per parent, per child, if paid within 21 days.
- £160 per parent, per child, if paid after 21 days but within 28 days.

Penalty Notice Fines will be considered when there has been 10 sessions (5 days) worth of unauthorised absences in a 10-week period.

Enforcement: Failure to pay the fine may result in legal proceedings.

Repeated Fines: In the case of repeated fines, if a parent receives a second fine for the same child within any three-year period, this will be charged at the higher rate of £160. Fines per parent will be capped to two fines within any three-year period. Once this limit has been reached, other action like a parenting order or prosecution will be considered.

Prosecution: If you have already received two fines over a three-year period and if your child is not attending school regularly, or you are taking your child on a term time holiday, the local authority can take you to court and you can be prosecuted under section 444 of the Education Act 1996. This means there has been a failure to safeguard a child's education. You could get a fine of up to £2,500 per parent, per child and end up with a criminal record, which can show on future DBS checks.

Persistent Absenteeism (PA)

A student becomes a 'persistent absentee' when they miss 10% or more schooling across the school year for whatever reason. Absence at this level is doing considerable damage to any child's educational prospects and we need parents fullest support and cooperation to tackle this.

All PA cases are automatically made known to the FEH link manager in Southwark and some cases may lead to a Penalty Notice being issued, per parent, per child, a pre-court conference where a decision may be made to prosecute (under Section 444 of the Education Act 1996) if a child's attendance is of a continuing concern.

Absence procedure for parents and carers

If your child is absent you must:

- Contact the school as soon as possible on the first day of absence
- You can email the school office
- info@stjosephs-georgerow.southwark.sch.uk
- Or call the school on 0207 237 4267
- Provide medical evidence for absences due to medical or dental appointments
- Provide evidence of GP appointments for continued absence due to illness

Reporting Absence Procedure for school

- Initiate first day calling with parents or carers if there has not been any prior contact if a child is absent
- Ensure clearly defined late registration procedures
- Sign post pastoral support and external agencies where needed
- Timetable staff to meet with FEH Link Manager, making best use of FEH Link Manager time
- Pre referral meetings
- Referral to Southwark if you child's attendance is 90% and below
- Report cases to Senior Education Welfare Officer (SEWO) within EIT to implement Penalty Court Notices (PCN) to relevant parents and carers

Contact Details

There are times when the school needs to contact parents about lots of things, including absence, so we need to have your contact details at all times. So help us to help you and your child by making sure we have always got an up-to-date telephone number and email address.

Southwark approach to attendance-

Stage one - Initial attendance action

As soon as a young person's non-attendance becomes persistent in line with a school's attendance policy, the lead professional must ensure that they meet with the parent or carer to highlight concerns around attendance. This should include an explanation of the likely impact of continued absence upon the young person's development, set out clearly the minimum expectations in relation to attendance levels, and clarify the possible consequences if attendance does not improve, including enforcement action.

It's crucial that we're open and transparent with parents regarding attendance or inclusion concerns from the beginning of our support. They must be made aware of the responsibilities of the local authority and the possible consequences of non-compliance, which should be shared in writing. We strongly recommend that practitioners use the leaflet 'Improving School Attendance - Information for Parents and Carers' ([appendix 4](#) (PDF, 193kb)). This clearly sets out the legal responsibilities of the parent or carer and the support and help that the local authority and lead professional can offer. It also explains that, where attendance does not improve despite help and support, the lead professional has a duty to consult with a senior education welfare officer, who may commence enforcement measures.

Finally, it sets out the duty of the lead professional to share information regarding their work with a family to inform this process. Where parents' or carers' first language is not English, all written communication and any agreements must be translated. For parents with literacy or learning needs, the lead professional must ensure that information is shared in a manner that enables the parent or carer to have the fullest understanding of the content possible. In such cases, it's strongly recommended that the lead professional or senior education welfare officer seeks advocacy support for the parent or carer.

Where the lead professional role is not held by the school, the school must be included in all decisions relating to enforcement. The lead professional should work collaboratively with the family and other professionals to try to understand the reasons for low attendance (ideally using the mapping

approach set out in [appendix 11](#) (PDF, 266kb)) and carefully consider what types of help and support are best placed to address these issues. Interventions may include further assessment of or support with special educational needs (SEN), referral for targeted intervention, including to FEH for 'whole family' outreach support, evidence-based parenting programmes or Early Help CAMHS support.

Where the child or young person is open to a FEH practitioner for whole family support, a YJS officer for prevention or statutory intervention, or a Southwark social worker as part of a child in need (CIN) or child protection (CP) plan, as lead professional the case responsible officer will assume responsibility for attendance action at stage one and two.

Any relevant assessment and plan should include analysis of the reasons for low attendance, a clear target in relation to the expected minimum attendance and the actions to be taken to support the young person and family to improve attendance levels. This must always be done in collaboration with the family as far as possible and in close partnership with any existing professional network. If the family is not subject to early help, youth offending or children's social care plan, the school should consider whether it would be appropriate to convene a team around the family meeting in order to inform the child or young person's plan. Any stage one assessment and plan should include, at minimum, the following components:

1. Evidence that a TAF has been convened with the family, other professionals including health, SEN and other agencies where appropriate.
2. A record evidencing that concerns regarding attendance have been raised with the parent/carer.
3. Identification of the likely reasons for poor attendance.
4. Actions to be taken by family, school and professionals to improve attendance, including referrals to other agencies for support and actions to address unmet SEN needs.
5. The target for improvement and the period in which attendance will be monitored and reviewed.
6. The consequences if attendance does not improve, including the possibility of prosecution where a parent/carer is deemed culpable for persistent non-attendance.

Stage two - Formal attendance action

Where attendance has not improved following stage one attendance action, the lead professional, in line with any agreed plans agreed at stage one, will

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proceed to formal action. Stage two attendance action would usually be the threshold for consultation with a Senior Education Welfare Officer (SEWO) within EIT.

A consultation can be sought by sending a request to the FEH inbox at earlyhelp@southwark.gov.uk or calling the EIT duty line on 0207 525 1922. The parent should be invited to an attendance and inclusion team around the family meeting, ideally held at the child's school.

Stage two action is appropriate in circumstances where parents remain willing to work with schools and the local authority to improve attendance, but may not have engaged fully at the informal stage. The purpose of a stage two meeting is to enter into a formal agreement with the parent via an attendance contract.

Although such a contract is voluntary, it should be explained clearly that such an agreement is in the parent and child's interest with the clear aim of preventing further escalation. [Download a notice to improve letter template](#) (docx, 30kb). For local authority social workers and family practitioners, the contract can be completed as an embedded document from the start menu in Mosaic.

The meeting and attendance contract should:

1. Review the initial attendance plan, considering in partnership with parents the reasons that the stage one plan has not had the desired impact.
2. Update the analysis of patterns of absence and review the factors underpinning poor attendance (mapping), considering whether current support is sufficient and appropriate. And if not, what other action is needed to address these needs, who will take this action and what timescales may need to be changed?
3. Clearly record how progress is to be monitored and contact with the parent maintained during the duration of the contract.
4. Set out the action to be taken if any party does not adhere to the contract
5. Inform parents of the consequences of non-compliance with the contract including statutory enforcement action, and the legal implications of this for the parent.
6. Specify when and how the contract will be reviewed.

At this stage, the SEWO will be able to advise whether it would be appropriate to issue a a penalty notice or [notice to improve](#) (docx, 30kb) to the parent of carer indicating that they're at risk of legal action.

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For more information of issuing notices to improve and penalty notice please refer to the [education penalty notices section](#) of this guidance.

If at this stage a parent consistently declines to take reasonable steps to agree a contract or work constructively with the school and lead agency to improve attendance, the lead professional should progress to stage three immediately.

Stage three - Statutory attendance action

Where attendance has not improved following initial and formal attendance and inclusion action, the lead professional must review whether the threshold has been met for statutory enforcement action. If an attendance and inclusion consultation has not taken place with a member of EIT at stage two, it must take place at the earliest opportunity after determining that improved school attendance cannot be achieved by voluntary agreement with the parent/carer.

Lead professionals, as officers of this council, can inform parents that any final decision to prosecute or take other enforcement action will not be theirs; nor will they be responsible for determining the outcome of a stage three attendance intervention. However, they should be open and transparent regarding their duty to inform EIT of cases that have progressed through stages one and two without progress and provide objective evidence in relation to work at stages one and two to engage the parent to improve attendance.

To proceed to stage three, the lead professional must be able to evidence a minimum of 6 contacts with the parent in relation to promoting the child or young person's attendance at school.

In conjunction with the lead professional and team around the family, the SEWO will complete a review of the evidence in the case, including interventions previously offered, their outcomes, the wishes and feelings of the parent and child and provide a final analysis and recommendation for the next steps.

At this stage, the SEWO and the lead professional must consider whether it is in the best interests of the child or young person to extend the period of the parenting contract with the aim of avoiding legal proceedings, or whether education legal planning should be initiated.

SEWOs will work closely with professionals to make robust decisions with regard to whether there's sufficient evidence to indicate that legal intervention has become the most appropriate course of action, and whether a parent or carer has potentially committed an offence under the [terms of the Education Act 1996](#)

Education legal planning meetings

Once the lead professional in conjunction with a SEWO has agreed that the threshold is met to initiate legal action, the SEWO will convene an education legal planning meeting (ELPM) to consider whether the local authority should proceed with enforcement action in relation to attendance.

At the meeting, the SEWO will review the evidence provided by the referring school or lead professional, taking into account the previous support and assistance provided to the young person and the parent or carer, the extent to which they have cooperated with this help, and whether sufficient progress has been made.

Although the decision to move to an ELPM is a significant escalation, such meetings will continue to be based around the core principles of attendance and inclusion work set out above using a team around the family approach.

The meetings will maintain a strong focus on the voice of the child and provide an opportunity for parents and carers to set out their position with clarity, including any concerns they may have with regard to the process leading to this point, and provide their own solutions to challenges around attendance.

The meeting should include, where possible, all of the following:

1. The local authority lead professional
2. The school
3. The parent(s)
4. The child (if age appropriate)
5. Any professional from other agencies or services that have relevant involvement with the family and whose view would assist in making decisions and delivering upon the attendance and inclusion plan

Even at this stage, the SEWO will aim to seek solutions that avoid the need for legal intervention and divert parents and carers from prosecution through agreeing a parenting contract, or reviewing and updating an existing agreement. Detailed guidance in relation to education legal planning, including information on the full range of parental responsibility measures available, is included later in this guidance.

Any decisions made at panel (particularly when a further period or review of test of compliance with a parenting contact is agreed) must be subject to strict review with clear agreement in relation to which professional is responsible for monitoring progress and taking further action if an improvement in attendance is not secured.

The evidence required of the school or lead professional in advance of the ELPM is detailed in the Education Legal Planning Guidance section of this handbook. This evidence should be provided to the SEWO chairing the meeting no less than 5 days prior to the scheduled date by completing the report to the ELPM included in [appendix 7](#) (PDF, 186kb).

Lateness

Poor punctuality is not acceptable. If your child misses the start of the day, they can miss work and time with their class teacher giving vital information and news for the day. Late arriving students also disrupt lessons, can be unsettling for the child and can also encourage absence.

How we manage lateness

The school day starts at 8:55am and we expect your child to be in class at that time.

Any child arriving after 9:00am will receive a late mark in the register.

At 9:30am the registers will be closed. In accordance with the regulations, if your child arrives after that time they will receive a mark that shows them to be on site, but will not count as a present mark. It will mean they have an unauthorised absence. This may mean you could face the possibility of a Penalty Notice or court action if the problem persists.

If your child has a persistent late record you will be initially asked to meet with the Headteacher to resolve the problem. You should approach us at any time if you are having problems getting your child to school on time.

EVERY MINUTE COUNTS

Being absent from school often may also affect your child's development, being late also has a big effect. Please look at the table below.

Lateness = Lost Learning (figures below are calculated over a school year)	
5 mins late each day	3 days lost
10 mins late each day	6.5 days lost
15 mins late each day	10 days lost
20 mins late each day	13 days lost
30 mins late each day	19 days lost

The school has targets to improve attendance and punctuality and your child has an important part to play in meeting these targets.

The minimum level of attendance and punctuality for this school is 90% and if your child falls below this we will contact you.

Summary

The school has a legal duty to publish absence figures to parents and to promote attendance.

Equally, parents have a duty to make sure that their children attend school.

All school staff are committed to working with parents and pupils and the best way to ensure as high a level of attendance as possible, making sure that every child's welfare and life opportunities are promoted to realise his/her full potential.

