



EMMAUS CATHOLIC MAC

Attendance Policy

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Post Holder Responsible for Review:	MAC School Improvement Lead/CEO



Commitment to Equality:

We are committed to providing a positive working environment which is free from prejudice and unlawful discrimination and any form of harassment, bullying or victimisation. We have developed a number of key policies to ensure that the principles of Catholic Social Teaching in relation to human dignity and dignity in work become embedded into every aspect of school life and these policies are reviewed regularly in this regard.

This Attendance Policy has been approved and adopted by Emmaus Catholic Multi Academy Company on 12th August 2024 and will be reviewed again in July 2025.

Signed by Director of Emmaus MAC: *J Griffin*

Signed by CEO for Central Team: *S Horan*

Schools to which this policy relates:

Signed by Principal for – Hagley Catholic High School:

Signed by Principal for – Our Lady of Fatima Catholic Primary School:

Signed by Principal for – Our Lady & St Hubert's Catholic Primary School:

Signed by Principal for – St Ambrose Catholic Primary School:

Signed by Principal for – St Francis Xavier Catholic Primary School:

Signed by Principal for – St Gregory's Catholic Primary School:

Signed by Principal for – St Joseph's Catholic Primary School, Stourbridge:

Signed by Principal for – St Mary's Catholic Primary School:

Signed by Principal for – St Philip's Catholic Primary School:

Signed by Principal for – St Wulstan's Catholic Primary School:

From 1 September 2024:

Signed by Principal for – Our Lady Queen of Peace Catholic Primary School:

Signed by Principal for – St George's Catholic Primary School:

Signed by Principal for – St Joseph's Catholic Primary School, Droitwich:

Signed by Principal for – St Joseph's Catholic Primary School, Warndon:

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1. Vision and Purpose

At Emmaus Catholic Multi Academy Company (MAC), we have a clear vision for attendance for all learners. We will work together, as a community of parents/carers/teachers and pupils/students to promote attendance.

We believe that good attendance means attending school on time, every day, unless the reason for absence is absolutely unavoidable.

Valuable learning time is lost when learners are absent or late. Learners should be at school, on time, every day the school is open, unless the reason for the absence is unavoidable. Staff and families must be aware that attendance at school is linked to pupil/student achievement but is also a key safeguarding trigger, which is why they should be vigilant and rigorous in following protocols.

We recognise our vocation to educate our young people to enable them to take their place in society as children of God, made in His image and likeness. We will work together, as a community of Directors, Local Governing Bodies, parents/carers, staff and pupils/students to promote attendance and will work consistently towards a goal of 100% attendance for all.

This is a common Emmaus MAC policy which will be contextualised to reflect the setting of each MAC school. This policy has been contextualised for St Joseph's Catholic Primary School

The purpose of this policy is:

- To ensure staff and parents/carers are aware of their responsibilities.
- To advise parents/carers on their duty regarding pupil/student absence and relevant practices to report absence.
- To advise on practices and protocols in place to monitor, track and resolve pupil/student absence from school.
- To ensure that the monitoring and tracking of pupil/student absence and its safeguarding significance is clear.
- To ensure 'good-outstanding' school attendance remains a part of the ethos and culture of the school.

2. Aims and Ethos

St Joseph's Catholic Primary School will ensure that every pupil/student has access to full time education and will act as early as possible to address unacceptable levels of absence. As a school, we recognise that patterns of attendance for all pupils/students have been disrupted because of the pandemic. Never has there been a more pressing time to reinforce the expectations we have for 'good' (96-100%) pupil/student attendance at school and we will work closely with parents/carers, pupils/students and stakeholders to realise this.

To improve school attendance, we recognise that building positive relationships with parents/carers is vital; it is only through clear lines of communication and an understanding of each individual context that progress can be made and we accept that this can take time. We aim to remove any barriers and build strong and trusting relationships. Promoting and ensuring excellent attendance is everybody's business within our school and community. Poor attendance can be symptomatic of a variety of issues and Emotional Based School Avoidance (EBSA) is on the rise.

This policy will be applied fairly and consistently, considering the individual needs of our pupils/students and their families who may have specific barriers to attendance. We have considered our obligations under the Equality Act 2010 and the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child.

Permitting absence from school without a good reason is an offence by the parent or carer. Under section 7 of the Education Act 1996, parents/carers and carers are responsible for making sure that their children of compulsory school age receive efficient full-time education that is suitable to the child's age, ability and aptitude and to any special educational needs the child may have.

3. Safeguarding and Attendance

The policy is part of the Safeguarding suite of policies. The school will inform the Local Authority of any pupil/student being deleted from the admission and attendance registers if they:

- Are being educated from home.
- Transfer in-year to another school.
- No longer live within a reasonable distance of the registered school.
- Have an authorised medical note.
- Are in custody for a period of more than four months and the proprietor does not reasonably believe they will be returning.
- Have been permanently excluded.

The school track and monitor all types of transfer, from transition to in-year transfers, to ensure the process adheres to the 5-day window as specified by the DfE (Department for Education). This file is managed by the Principal.

St Joseph's Catholic Primary School will also monitor trends and patterns of absence for all pupils/students as a part of our standard procedures. However, we are aware that sudden or gradual changes in a pupil/student's attendance may indicate additional or more extreme safeguarding issues. In line with government guidance Keeping Children Safe in Education we will investigate and report any suspected safeguarding cases to the relevant authorities.

As part of our safeguarding duty and our standard procedures, we will inform the Local Authority and/or the Police of the details of any pupil/student who is absent from school when the school has made all reasonable enquiries and cannot establish their whereabouts and is concerned for the pupil/student's welfare and safety.

Our Safeguarding and Child Protection policy and procedures can be found following the link below:

[St Joseph's Child Protection and Safeguarding Policy 2024 25.pdf \(st-jo-st.dudley.sch.uk\)](#)

4. Summary of Changes

From the 19th August 2024, new guidance from the DfE will become statutory. This means that in addition to our ongoing commitment to working with and supporting families, we will also adopt the following measures (in appropriate circumstances):

- Put formal support in place in the form of an Attendance Contract, or an Education Supervision Order. This will be in conjunction with the Local Authority.
- Issue Notices to Improve and/or Penalty Notices where support would not be appropriate or has not been successfully engaged with and is unlikely to change behaviour.

- Intensify support through statutory children’s social care where there are safeguarding concerns, particularly where absence becomes ‘severe’ (below 50%).
- Prosecute parents where all other routes have failed or are not deemed appropriate. This could include making the case for a Community or Parenting Order where the parent is convicted to secure engagement with support.
- Inform the Local Authority where a pupil/student absence reaches or exceeds 15 days.
- Fine for non-attendance due to family holidays: from August 2024, the fine administered by Dudley Metropolitan Borough Council for school absences will be £80 if paid within 21 days, or £160 if paid within 28 days per child, per parent.
- Revisions have been made to attendance codes: The government has also created additional “C” absence codes. While C will be for “exceptional circumstances”, C1 will be for absence for a regulated performance or employment abroad. C2 will be for pupils/students on part-time timetables.
- A new code Q will be for pupils/students “unable to attend the school because of a lack of access arrangements”.
- The current code Y will be split up, as follows:

Y1: Absence due to transport normally provided not being available

Y2: Widespread disruption to travel

Y3: Part of the school is closed

Y4: Unexpected whole school closure (different from code # for planned closures)

Y5: For pupils in the criminal justice system

Y6: Absence due to public health guidance or law

Y7: Any other unavoidable cause

5. Department for Education Guidance

From the 19th August 2024, new guidance titled [Working Together to Improve School Attendance](#) from the DfE will become statutory. We will be guided by the following principles:

Guiding Principles as recommended by the DFE:

Expect

Aspire to high standards of attendance from all pupils and parents and build a culture where all can, and want to, be in school and ready to learn by prioritising attendance improvement across the school

Monitor

Rigorously use attendance data to identify patterns of poor attendance (at individual and cohort level) 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, discuss with pupils and parents to listen and understand barriers to attendance and agree how all partners can work together to resolve them

Facilitate Support

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 persist and voluntary support is not working or not being engage with, patterns should work together to explain the consequences clearly and ensure support is also in place to enable families to respond. Depending on the circumstances, this may include formalising support through an attendance contract or education supervision order.

Enforce

Where all other avenues have been exhausted and support is not working or not being engaged with, 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.

Following this guidance also means that in addition to our ongoing commitment to working with and supporting families, we will also adopt the following measures (in appropriate circumstances) as outlined in Section 4, Summary of Changes.

6. Key Personnel

Attendance Officer: School Office

The Principal Mr A Wilkes is the only person who can authorise leave in 'exceptional circumstances.'

We work with Dudley Metropolitan Borough Council: Education Support Services

7. Legal Framework

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

[Education Act 2011](#)

[Equality Act 2010](#)

[The Education \(Student Registration\) \(England\) Regulations 2006 \(as amended\)](#)

[DfE 'Working together to improve school attendance'](#)

[DfE 'Children Missing Education'](#)

[DfE School behaviour and attendance: parental responsibility measures: statutory guidance](#)

[DfE - The latest version of Keeping Children Safe in Education](#)

8. Definitions

In accordance with the latest version of [Keeping Children Safe in Education](#), we recognise that:

- The term 'Missing from education' has been replaced with 'Absent from education'.
- 'Persistent Absence' means absence of 10% or more.
- 'Severely Absent' means an absence of 50% or more.

The school defines 'absence' as either:

- Arriving at school after the register has closed.
- Not attending school for any reason.

The school defines 'authorised absence' as:

- An absence for sickness for which the school has granted leave.

- Medical or dental appointments which unavoidably fall during school time for which the school has granted leave.
- Religious or cultural observances for which the school has granted leave.
- An absence due to a family emergency.

The school defines ‘unauthorised absence’ as:

- Parents/carers keeping children away from school unnecessarily or without reason.
- Truancy before or during the school day.
- Absences which have not been properly explained.
- Arrival at school after the register has closed.
- Absence due to shopping, looking after other children or birthdays.
- Absence due to day trips and holidays in term time which have not been agreed.
- Leaving school for no reason during the day.

9. How Attendance Impacts Education

Evidence shows pupils/students with excellent school attendance are more likely to reach higher standards of achievement and be at less risk of exposure to crime and other safeguarding risks.

Pupils/students who attend regularly are more likely to achieve better results than their peers that do not, both at Key Stage 2 tests in the Primary phase, and in Key Stage 4 tests in the Secondary phase.

Excellent attendance enables pupils/students to be part of the school community and develop a sense of belonging. This further supports each young person’s development socially, morally, and ethically, enhancing personal well-being.

Attendance during one school year	Equivalent Days Absent	Equivalent Sessions Absent	Equivalent Weeks Absent
100%	0 days	0 sessions	0 weeks
95%	9 days	18 Sessions	2 weeks
90%	19 days	38 Sessions	4 weeks
85%	29 days	58 Sessions	6 weeks
80%	38 days	72 Sessions	8 weeks
75%	48 days	96 Sessions	10 weeks
70%	57 days	114 Sessions	11.5 weeks
65%	67 days	134 Sessions	13.5 weeks

10. Supporting Pupils/Students to Attend School

At St Joseph’s Catholic Primary School, we will 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.

We want our pupils/students to attend school every day. We believe that children who attend school regularly are more likely to feel settled in school, maintain friendships, keep up with their learning and gain the greatest benefit from their education. We want all our pupils/students to enjoy

school and grow up to become emotionally resilient, confident and competent adults who are able to realise their full potential. Regular attendance and punctuality are essential requirements in the workplace and children who are used to attending school on time, and on every occasion unless they are too unwell to attend, will be better prepared for the world.

In April 2017 the Supreme Court clarified the definition of regular attendance to be attendance “in accordance with the rules prescribed by the school”. Therefore, if an absence is not authorised by the school, the pupil/student’s attendance is deemed to be irregular.

The school will take all opportunities to promote good attendance including regular communication with parents/carers; attendance as a regular agenda item for Senior Leadership, meetings; assemblies and appropriate rewards. Rewarding students who have consistently excellent attendance and those pupils/students with significantly improved attendance deserve to be recognised and celebrated. This may take the following forms: attendance certificates; attendance trophy, shared in the school newsletter any other appropriate initiative sanctioned by the Principal.

11. Barriers to Attendance

The DfE have outlined that the level for persistent absence is 10% and therefore a young person who has an attendance percentage of 90% or below will be treated in accordance with our persistent absence procedures and will be closely monitored by The Principal and the school office

We anticipate that a young person will have received several supportive interventions before reaching the persistent absence threshold which may include meetings with parents; mentoring; academic review; therapeutic support; referrals for external or internal early help. This list is not exhaustive, and we will aim to tailor our approach where practicable, to the needs of the individual child.

Where persistent absence does not decrease, or a young person has unauthorised absences, the school is legally entitled to make referrals to the local authority for a penalty notice or legal proceedings to be issued. The school and the Local Authority are committed to working together to raise attendance levels. This could take the form of Parenting Contracts, Education Supervision Orders, prosecution, Parenting Orders, or fixed penalty notices (as decided by the nature of the case)

We also recognise the growth in Emotional Based School Avoidance (EBSA) and Severe Absence (those pupils/students missing 50% or more) and acknowledge that a variety of safeguarding related issues may impact upon high absence. Poor mental health, concerns around bullying, peer relationships and challenging home lives all influence a pupil/student’s ability and desire to attend. We will address each unique situation as such and work with young people and their families to facilitate happy and productive returns to school.

12. Staff Training on Attendance

Improving attendance requires knowledge of guidance and regulations but also expertise in working with families to remove barriers to attendance and safeguard pupils/students. Just as those barriers are regularly evolving, so too is the training that school staff require to address them. The school therefore will facilitate training for all staff to understand:

- the importance of good attendance and that absence is almost always a symptom of wider circumstances.
- the law and requirements of schools including on the keeping of pupil/student registers,

- the school/MAC's strategies and procedures for tracking, following up and improving attendance.
- processes for working with other partners to provide more intensive support for pupils/students who need it.
- identifying potentially at-risk pupils/students as part of their inductions and annual refresher training.
- that increased absence from school could indicate a safeguarding concern and know how such concerns should be managed.

For staff with specialist attendance responsibilities, they will receive training to include the necessary skills to interpret and analyse attendance data and any additional training that would be beneficial to support pupils/students experiencing attendance challenges.

13. School Procedures

13.1 Contents of the Admissions Register

The admission register (sometimes referred to as the school roll) must contain specific personal details of every pupil/student in the school along with the date of admission or re-admission to the school, information regarding parents and carers, and details of the school last attended. The school will enter pupils/students on the admission register at the beginning of the first day on which the school has agreed with, or been notified by the parent, that the pupil/student will attend.

A pupil/student's name can only lawfully be deleted from the admission register if a reason set out in regulation 8 of the Education (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2006, as amended, applies.

It is vital that the admission register is kept up to date. Therefore, we encourage parents to inform the school of any changes whenever they occur and ensure the admission register is amended as soon as possible.

13.2 Contents of Attendance Register

In addition to the admissions register the law makes it clear that schools must take an attendance register at the start of the first session of each school day and once during the second (afternoon) session. On each occasion the school must record whether each pupil/student is:

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

Effective and timely use and sharing of register data is critical to improve attendance and is supported by the use of our Management Information System (MIS) to record attendance information. Reasons for absence and lates are recorded on our MIS system in school with details of times as necessary.

13.3 Present at School (and Lateness)

Pupils/students are marked present if they are in school when the register is taken. If a pupil/student leaves the school premises after registration, they are still counted as present for statistical purposes.

It is the duty of parents to ensure that children attend school on time. This encourages habits of good timekeeping and lessens any possible classroom disruption.

The Principal, will meet with parents of those children who are frequently late arriving at school to investigate reasons and suggest solutions to enable more punctual attendance.

13.4 Lateness

The register, at all Emmaus Catholic MAC schools, will close 30 minutes after the start of registration.

If a pupil/student arrives after the register has closed, they will be marked with the unauthorised absence code “Late after registers close” (U) which is an unauthorised absence mark. However, if the pupil/student is late arriving due to a valid reason such as an unavoidable medical appointment, the absence will be authorised and coded accordingly.

Summary of morning and afternoon registration closure times are as follows:

Year Group(s)	Morning Registration starts at:	Morning Registration closes at:	Afternoon Registration starts at:	Afternoon registration closes at:
Years 5 and 6	08.55	09.25	13.20	13.50
Years 3 and 4	08.55	09.25	13.20	13.50
Year 1 and 2	08.55	09.25	13.10	13.40
Reception	08.55	09.25	12.50	13.20

See DfE guidance [Working Together to Improve School Attendance](#).

Effects of Late Arrival at School

When a pupil/student arrives late to school, they miss important events such as assembly, **morning task**, teacher instructions and introductions. Children can often feel embarrassed having to enter a classroom late.

The table below indicates how frequent lateness can add up to a considerable amount of learning being lost. This can seriously disadvantage children and disrupt the learning of others:

Minutes late per day...	Equates to days of teaching lost in one year...	Which means this number of lessons have been missed...
5 mins	3 Days	18 Lessons
10 mins	6 Days	36 Lessons
15 mins	9 Days	54 Lessons
20 mins	12 days	70 Lessons
30 mins	18 days	108 Lessons

13.5 Authorised Absence

'Authorised absence' means that the school has either given approval in advance for a pupil/student of compulsory school age to be away from the school or has accepted an explanation offered afterwards as justification for absence.

The following information outlines the main circumstances where absence may be authorised by the school:

Illness

The NHS has produced a helpful guide for parents regarding childhood illness and school: [Is my child too ill for school? - NHS \(www.nhs.uk\)](http://www.nhs.uk)

In most cases, absences for illness which are reported by parents/carers following the school's absence reporting procedures will be authorised. That is unless the school has a genuine concern about the authenticity of the illness.

The school follows Department for Education guidance [Working Together to Improve School Attendance](#) which states that if the authenticity of the illness is in doubt, the school may ask the parent to provide medical evidence, such as a prescription, appointment card, or other appropriate form of evidence.

We will not ask for medical evidence unnecessarily. In some exceptional circumstances, the school may ask the parent to obtain a letter from a GP, or the school may seek parental permission to contact the pupil/student's GP directly to help support the needs of the individual pupil/student.

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

Where a pupil/student has a high level and/or frequency of absence, the school may require medical evidence of some description in order best support the child or young person and to be able to authorise any future medical absences. If this is the case, the school will make the parent/s aware of this expectation in advance.

The reporting of absence due to illness remains the responsibility of the parent. Absences due to illness which have not been reported to the school by the parent on the first day of absence may not be authorised.

Parents should report their child's absence via **the school office 01384 431980 by 9.15am**

If a child is absent for more than one day, the parent should contact the school on each day to provide an update on the child's condition, unless otherwise agreed by the school.

Mental Health and Well-being

Our school supports pupil/student mental health and wellbeing following [Mental health issues affecting a pupil's attendance: guidance for schools - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](#)

Parents who have concerns about their child's mental wellbeing can contact **the Vice Principal Mrs R Mitchell (SENDCO)**

Online Mental health support and advice can be accessed: [Children's mental health - Every Mind Matters - NHS \(www.nhs.uk\)](#)

Parents can also contact their GP or the NHS Helpline by telephoning 111 for advice if they are concerned. In case of emergency parents should dial 999.

Pupils/students taken ill during the school day

If a pupil/student needs to be sent home due to illness, this should be by agreement with an appropriately authorised member of school staff. In such circumstances, the pupil/student must be collected from the school office by a parent or another authorised adult and signed out on InVentry. No pupil/student will be allowed to leave the school site without parental confirmation.

Medical/Dental Appointments

As far as possible, parents/carers should attempt to book medical and dental appointments outside of school hours.

Where appointments during school time are urgent or unavoidable, advance notice, via a note and appointment card should be presented to the school – only then will the absence be authorised.

If the appointment requires the pupil/student to leave during the school day, the pupil/student must be signed out by a parent/carer via InVentry. No pupil/student will be allowed to leave the school site without parental confirmation.

Pupils/Students must attend school before and after the appointment wherever possible and every effort to should be made to keep lost learning time to an absolute minimum.

Young Carers

The school understands the difficulties young carers face and will endeavour to identify young carers at the earliest opportunity, as well as throughout their time at the school.

The school takes a caring and flexible approach to the needs of young carers and each situation will be examined on a case-by-case basis, involving other agencies if appropriate.

Religious Observance

Our school acknowledges the multi-faith nature of the school community and recognises that on some occasions, religious festivals may fall outside of school holidays or weekends. In accordance with the law, the school will authorise one day's absence for a day exclusively set apart for religious observance by the religious body to which the parent belongs. Should any additional days be taken, these will be recorded in the register as unauthorised absence. If necessary, the school will seek advice from the parents' religious body, to confirm whether the day is set apart.

Traveller Absence

The school will authorise the absence of a Traveller pupil/student of no fixed abode who is unable to attend school because they are travelling with their parent who is engaged in a trade or business of such a nature as to require them to travel from place to place. This is subject to certain limits, depending on the child's age and number of sessions absent. The school will discuss cases individually with Traveller parents as necessary. Parents should let the school know of their plans as far in advance as possible. Authorised Traveller absence will be recorded appropriately in the register.

To help ensure continuity of education for Traveller children, wherever possible, the child should attend school elsewhere when their family is travelling for occupational purposes. In such situations the child will be dual registered at that school and this school will remain their 'main' school.

Children from Gypsy, Roma and Traveller communities whose families do not travel for occupational purposes are expected to register at school and attend as all other peers. They are subject to the same rules as other children in terms of the requirement to attend school regularly.

Suspensions

If the school decides to send a pupil/student home due to their behaviour, this will be recorded as a suspension.

The school will follow the current DfE's [statutory guidance](#) on suspension and exclusions.

Any suspension must be agreed by the Principal.

The school will notify the parent of the suspension in writing. If the pupil is a Child in Care, the school will notify the pupil/student's carer, social worker and the Virtual School. In other instances, where a pupil/student is open to Children's Social Care for any reason, the school will also inform their allocated social worker.

The pupil/student must be collected from the school office by the parent or another authorised adult, and signed out on InVentry. No pupil/student will be allowed to leave the school site without parental confirmation.

13.6 First Day of Absence Response

School Office and Principal monitor the Registers.

If the Parent/Carer has not informed school of their child/rens absence, then the school office will phone Parent/Carer and the response will be recorded on Arbor and possibly Safeguard.

Should the school not be able to contact Parent/Carer on first phone call this will be repeated later in the day.

13.7 Leave of Absence Requests - Exceptional Circumstances

The law does not grant parents the automatic right to take their child out of school during term time. In line with DfE expectations only very exceptional circumstances will warrant an authorised leave of absence. The school will review each application individually, considering the specific facts and circumstances and relevant background context behind the request. The request must be made by the parent with whom the child normally lives, and permission must be sought in advance. The school will not grant leave of absence unless there are exceptional circumstances. The school must be satisfied that there are exceptional circumstances, based on the individual facts and circumstances of the case; following consultation with other staff as required, including the Designated Safeguarding Lead and Governors if necessary. If any leave of absence is granted, the school will determine the number of days the pupil/student can be away from school. A leave of absence is granted entirely at the school's discretion.

Circumstances which could be authorised include significant family emergencies or funerals. However, parents will also be aware that, wherever possible, it can be better for children to continue to attend school normally during difficult family times.

Parents should request a Leave of Absence by collecting a leave of absence request form from the school office. The request should be submitted as soon as it is anticipated; and wherever possible, at

least four weeks before the absence. Although such absence may be unauthorised, it is better that we know your child is safe, rather than missing. Please be aware that you may be required to provide us with additional evidence in order to support your request. If we have any concerns about possible safeguarding risks such as risk of FGM or Forced Marriage we will follow the necessary protocols. (Please see our school's Safeguarding Policy for more information).

All term time absence for Children in Care should be discussed at the child's Personal Education Planning (PEP) meeting, in advance where possible, to be considered alongside social care staff and the Virtual School. This permission should be gained before school is approached for approval. The school will contact social care/ the Virtual School in relation to any requests made for term time absence for a child in care.

13.8 Unauthorised Absence

Unauthorised absence is where a school has not been given a reason or is not satisfied with the reasons given for the absence.

Absence will be unauthorised if a pupil/student is absent from school without the permission of the school. Whilst parents can provide explanations for absences, it remains the school's decision whether to authorise an absence or not.

Unauthorised absences may include:

- Absences which have never been properly explained.
- Pupils/students who arrive at school too late to get a mark.
- Absences for shopping, birthdays, day trips.
- Absences whereby parents are stating they are waiting at home for a service or a delivery.
- Long weekends and holidays in term time (unless very exceptional circumstances are agreed in writing, in advance by the school).
- In the case of term time leave - if a pupil/student is kept away from school longer than was agreed, the additional absence is unauthorised.

Unauthorised absences may result in legal sanctions, use of penalty notices or prosecution.

Truancy

Truancy means any absence of part, or of all, of one or more days from school, during which the school has not been notified of the cause behind such absence. This includes inappropriate parentally condoned absence, holidays in term time and persistent late arrival at school.

Immediate action will be taken when there are any concerns that a pupil/student might be truanting.

If truancy is suspected, The Principal will be notified and they will contact the child's parents/carers, to assess the reasons behind the child not attending school.

The following procedures will be taken in the event of a truancy:

- In some circumstances, the school can liaise with the local authority and consider issuing a penalty notice. This may be issued where there is overt truancy.

13.9 Persistent Absence

The DfE have outlined that the level for persistent absence is 10% and therefore a pupil/student who has an attendance percentage of 90% or below *for whatever reason* will be treated in accordance with our persistent absence procedures and the pupil/student will be closely monitored by the School Office and The Principal.

We monitor all absence thoroughly. Any pupil/student that is seen to have reached the Persistent Absence thresholds or is at risk of moving towards that level, will be prioritised by school. Parents will be informed accordingly.

We anticipate that a pupil/student will have received several supportive interventions before reaching the persistent absence threshold which may include meetings with parents; mentoring; academic review; pastoral support; referrals for external or internal early help. This list is not exhaustive, and we will aim to tailor our approach where practicable, to the needs of the individual child.

In line with DfE expectations reduced timetables will only be used in exceptional circumstances, for a limited period, to support pupils/students to reintegrate back into education and access full time provision.

Where persistent absence does not decrease, or a pupil/student has unauthorised absences, the school is legally entitled to make referrals to the local authority for a penalty notice or legal proceedings to be issued. The school and the Local Authority are committed to working together to raise attendance levels. This could take the form of Parenting Contracts, Education Supervision Orders, prosecution, Parenting Orders, or fixed penalty notices (as decided by the nature of the case).

13.10 Approved Educational Activity

When pupil/students are attending educational activities off the school site, that have been approved by the school, the register will be marked to show this is the case.

If a pupil/student is attending an alternative education provider such as another school, or Pupil Referral Unit, for part or all of their education, our school will arrange for the pupil/student to be dual registered at the other setting and mark our registers accordingly.

If a pupil/student is attending an alternative education provider, which is not a school or Pupil Referral Unit, for part or all of their education, we will mark the sessions which the pupil/student attends the alternative setting as code B (off-site educational activity). We will liaise regularly with alternative providers to ensure we become aware of any attendance concerns as soon as possible and take follow up action as necessary. Attendance updates will be provided on a weekly basis, with the alternative setting.

Any attendance concerns will be followed up by us, in conjunction with the Alternative Provision setting.

13.11 Unable to attend due to exceptional circumstances (as set out in DfE attendance guidance)

In accordance with DfE school attendance guidance, our school will record pupils/students as 'Unable to attend due to exceptional circumstances' in the following circumstances (such circumstances are not recorded as absences):

- Our school site, or part of it, is closed due to an unavoidable cause.

- The transport provided by our school or the Local Authority is not available and the pupil/student's home is not within statutory walking distance. (See the DfE's 'Home to school travel and transport' guidance document, or ask the school for a printed copy).
- A local or national emergency has resulted in widespread disruption to travel which has prevented the pupil/student from attending school.
- The pupil/student is in custody, but still on the school roll. (If the school has evidence that the pupil/student is attending educational activities, we can record those sessions as 'present at approved educational activity').

13.12 Following up Unexplained Absences

Where no contact has been made with the school, the school will contact parents by text, email, telephone or letter to try and establish the reason for a child's absence. When we establish the reason for the absence, we will mark it as authorised or unauthorised depending on the reason for the absence. If we are unable to establish the reason for absence within 3 school days, we will make the absence as unauthorised, using the O code. If we are concerned about a pupil/student's absence and are unable to contact the parent/s, we may contact the pupil/student's emergency contacts and/or other professionals or contacts of the family who we reasonably expect may be able to advise us of the pupil/student's whereabouts and safety.

14. Support for Poor School Attendance (other than unauthorised term time leave)

Sometimes pupils/students can be reluctant to attend school. We encourage parents and pupils/students to be open and honest with us about the reason for the pupil/student's absence. If a child is reluctant to attend, it is never better to cover up their absence or for a parent to give in to pressure to let the child stay at home. This can give the impression to the child that attendance does not matter and can make things worse. As a school, we need to understand the reasons why a pupil/student is reluctant to attend in order to be able to support pupils/students and parents in the best way.

When we have concerns about the attendance of a pupil/student, we will do our best to make the parent/s aware of the concerns about their child's attendance and give them the opportunity to address this. However, if parents do not make use of the support offered and improve their child's attendance to an acceptable level, this may result in legal sanctions. Where there are no genuine reasons for the absences, parents may be asked to meet with The Principal to discuss the matter. In some cases, this may result in a formal attendance action plan or parenting contract being drawn up.

If our school is unable to work in partnership with parents to overcome any barriers preventing regular attendance we may refer a case of poor school attendance to the Local Authority for legal sanctions. We will show all the steps we have taken to support parents and pupils/students and that we have warned the parent/s that they are at risk of receiving a Penalty Notice or other legal sanction. This will be evidenced via the sending of a warning letter and school records will be shared with the Local Authority.

We will not usually request legal sanctions from the Local Authority in cases where poor attendance is symptomatic of complex family circumstances. In such circumstances our school will take a holistic, early help approach to the issue and will involve other agencies if deemed necessary. The exception to this will be where parents fail to accept or engage with support offered by the school and/or other

agencies, or, fail to implement the suggested changes. Again, when referring for legal sanctions, we will show that we have warned the parent/s that they are at risk of receiving a penalty notice or other legal sanction.

If our school has safeguarding concerns about a pupil/student who is absent, we will share information with other agencies as we deem necessary.

15. Penalty Notices and Prosecutions

Parents have a legal responsibility to ensure that their child attends school on a regular basis. It is a criminal offence under Section 444 of the Education Act 1996 to fail to secure regular attendance of a registered pupil/student at the school. This applies to both resident and non-resident parents who may both be subject to legal sanctions if their child fails to attend school regularly. It also applies to others who may not be the parent but may have day to day care of the child.

Unauthorised absence from school can result in a number of different outcomes for parents and children. Each case is considered individually.

Under section 444 of the Education Act 1996, if a child of compulsory school age, who is a registered pupil/student at a school, fails to attend regularly at the school his/her parent(s) are guilty of an offence. Parents with more than one school aged child need to be aware that each child's irregular attendance is dealt with as a separate matter.

The school will refer cases of unauthorised absence that meet the threshold for a penalty notice to the Local Authority for legal action unless there are reasonable grounds for not doing so. The outcome of a referral to the Local Authority may be a penalty notice or prosecution.

Penalty notices are intended as a sanction for low level offences and a tool to support improved school attendance, for example in circumstances associated with an unauthorised holiday taken during term time. They are an alternative to prosecution and may not be issued if prosecution is considered to be a more appropriate response to a pupil/student's irregular attendance.

See DfE's statutory guidance on [School attendance parental responsibility measures](#) for more information.

Penalty notices and prosecution proceedings are issued to each parent with responsibility for the child and are issued for each child with irregular attendance. For example, in the case of Penalty Notices, if two siblings had irregular school attendance, and there were two parents with responsibility for the children, four Penalty Notices would be issued. Penalty Notices cannot be paid in instalments.

16. Children Missing Education (CME)

Our school will add and delete pupils/students from roll in line with Regulation 8 Education law. The school will use Dudley's School Attendance & Education Support Services to report any children leaving our school, on part time timetables, attending irregularly, or joining the school outside of usual transition phases. If we have any CME related concerns we will contact ChildrenMissingEducation@dudley.gov.uk

17. Reporting to Parents

Attendance is shared with parents termly via parents evening and school reports. Where necessary attendance may be shared with parents more frequently. In all cases, this gives parents the opportunity to look at their child's attendance certificate and come back to you with any queries.

Where a child's attendance falls below expectation and is concerning, for whatever reason, our school will contact parents to highlight this, unless there is a good reason not to.

18. Roles and Responsibilities

At St Joseph's catholic School everyone is responsible for monitoring attendance. We work relentlessly as a team to ensure that children are happy to attend school.

Attendance is monitored by Principal and we work with children and families with any attendance concerns.

The Attendance Team work together to:

- Follow-up action-plans for pupils/students with low attendance.
- Make referrals to outside agencies.
- Monitor attendance data across school and individual pupil/student level.
- Reports concerns about attendance to the Principal/attendance lead/ Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL) as appropriate.
- Arranges calls, home visits and meetings with parents to discuss attendance issues.
- Co-ordinates requests for Term-time Leave of Absence (this includes liaison with the Attendance/DS Leads and Safeguarding Team) and advises the Principal as requested.

The Local Governing Body (LGB):

- The LGB is responsible for monitoring attendance figures for the whole school on a termly basis and through regular sharing of attendance figures and subsequent actions half termly with the Attendance/Safeguarding LGB Link Governor.
- They should also support the promotion of regular attendance and provide support and challenge holding the Principal to account for the implementation of this policy.

The Principal:

- The Principal is responsible for ensuring this policy is implemented consistently across the school, and for monitoring school-level absence data and reporting it to the LGB.
- The Principal also supports other staff in monitoring the attendance of individual pupils/students and requests fixed-penalty notices, where necessary.

The Vice Principal:

- The Vice Principal supports the Principal in implementing the policy and monitoring attendance. This includes championing attendance across the whole school, interrogating attendance data by group, such as pupils/students entitled to Free School Meals, Pupil Premium pupils/students, pupils/students with SEND, Children in Care, attendance by Ethnicity and Language (English/EAL), as well as being part of the attendance escalation process within the school, and chairing formal attendance meetings etc.

Staff:

- Registers should be taken by staff within 10 minutes of the lesson starting (periods 1 - 4 inclusive). Pupils/students who are absent where they have been previously present (i.e. absent for p3 there they were present for p2) should be immediately reported to the office. The office will then inform the on call SLT, who will search for the pupil/student. Appropriate action to be taken with regard internal truancy (See behaviour policy).
- The school will use the national attendance codes to enable the school to record and monitor attendance and absence in a consistent way. The codes to be used can be found in Appendix 1.

Pupils/Students must:

- Ensure that their attendance and punctuality is maintained at the highest level.
- Arrive at school at all lessons on time, equipped and ready to learn.

Parents/Carers must:

- Support the ethos that school attendance is of paramount importance.
- Notify the school attendance officer by telephone on 01384 431980 if their child is unwell or unable to attend school for any reason as soon as possible on the first day of any absence but by 9.15am at the latest and on the morning of every additional day.
- Arrange appointments for their child outside normal school sessions and collect their child from school for any appointment that is unavoidable during school time.
- If appointments are to be taken in school time every effort should be made to ensure a pupil/student is in school by 9.30am or before 9.30am or the appointment is after 1pm.
- Arrange to collect their child from school whenever the child is deemed unfit to remain during the school day.
- Will keep requests to remove their child from school during term time to a minimum as the Principal can only authorise leave of absence in exceptional circumstances and if the leave request is granted, the Principal will determine the length of time that the learner can be away from school. However, leave is unlikely to be granted for the purposes of a family holiday.
- Parents/carers must provide accurate and up-to-date contact details.
- Parents/carers are responsible for updating the school if the details change.
- Parents/carers must provide the school with more than one emergency contact number.
- We expect parents/carers to fully cooperate with the attendance processes in place. A range of legal interventions may be put into place once all other avenues have been exhausted.

19. Policy Monitoring Arrangements

This policy will be reviewed and updated annually by The Principal, or more frequently if there are changes to legislation and guidance. At every review, the policy will be shared with and ratified by the Board of Directors.

20. Links with other policies/procedures

This policy is linked to the following policies and procedures:

- Anti-Bullying Policy
- Behaviour Policy
- Inclusion Policy
- Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy
- Early Help Offer
- SEND Policy and Information Report

- Supporting Pupils with Medical Conditions Policy

Appendix 1: Attendance Codes

Attendance Codes	
/	Present in the morning
\	Present in the afternoon
L	Late arrival before the register has closed
C	Authorised absence
C1	Absence for a regulated performance or employment abroad
C2	Pupils on part time timetables
E	Suspended/Excluded but no alternative provision made
H	Authorised holiday
I	Illness
M	Medical or dental appointments
R	Religious observance
B	Off-site educational activity
G	Unauthorised holiday
O	Unauthorised absence
U	Arrived after registration closed
N	Reason not yet provided
X	Not required to be in school
S	Study leave
T	Gypsy, Roma, and Traveller absence
W	Work experience
V	Educational visit or trip
P	Participating in a supervised sporting activity
J	At an interview with prospective employers or another educational establishment
D	Dual registered – at another educational establishment
Y	Exceptional circumstances
Y1	Absence due to transport normally provided not being available
Y2	Widespread disruption to travel
Y3	Part of the school is closed
Y4	Unexpected whole school closure (different from code # for planned closures)
Y5	For pupils in the criminal justice system
Y6	Absence due to public health guidance or law
Y7	Any other unavoidable cause.
Z	Student not on admission register
Q	Unable to attend due to lack of access arrangements.

Appendix 2: Summary of Intervention Waves

Wave	Lead	Attendance Percentage (2 marks are taken each day – AM and PM)
1	Form Tutor	93 - 96%
2	Head of Year	90 - 93%
3	Attendance Officer	Below 90% = Serious Cause for Concern/Persistent Absence

Appendix 3: Protocol for Waves of Intervention

Wave 1: 93 - 96%	Office Staff/Class Teacher
<p>1. The Office staff issues data to Principal. They will then allocate the Class Teacher pupils/students who fall into the 93 - 96% cohort.</p> <p>2. The Class Teacher and Office Staff are responsible for intervention at this stage. This intervention will be ongoing, including communication with home. There will be an automated letter (AL1). Depending on the pupil/student and their needs, the Class Teacher may carry out mentoring during assembly time.</p> <p>3. As pupils/students move out of the group, the Principal may then allocate the Class Teacher further pupils/students to monitor. If pupil/student attendance improves then the teacher will correspond with home, congratulating the pupil/student and their improvement. The Principal will share successes during briefings. If attendance declines, then the pupil/student will move to the next wave of intervention.</p>	
Wave 2: 90 - 93%	Principal with SLT Support - Attendance Watch
<p>The Principal will be responsible for managing and monitoring attendance related intervention for a maximum of 10 pupils/students per half term as identified from the information provided by the Office Staff. The group will be chosen in accordance with absence patterns (a slow decline or levels of absence hovering around this percentage for a significant amount of time).</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. The Principal/SLT to work together to prepare an intervention plan (see Appendix 1). 2. AL2 to be sent out to parents/carers, outlining the agreed plan. 3. Office Staff to ensure the agreed plan is uploaded on Arbor. 4. Principal/SLT to monitor for 4 weeks. <p>If attendance improves, this will be communicated home.</p> <p>If attendance declines, the Leadership Team will arrange a meeting with parents/carers where the Attendance Intervention Plan will be updated with time bound actions. Further intervention will be dependent upon the issues raised at the meeting and may require other professional intervention. This will be uploaded on the linked document section of MIS. Where pupils/students move from this group, other pupils/students may be identified and assigned. This group will be on an official 'Attendance Watch' and any issues preventing an improvement in attendance will be reported to the SLT Lead/DSL.</p>	
Wave 3: - 90%	Attendance Officer (Principal/SLT support)
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Attendance Officer to analyse data and identify target group of pupils/students. 2. Attendance Officer to add names to the spreadsheet and log any interventions so far. 3. Attendance Officer to prioritise the cross referencing against the Vulnerable Pupil/Student list. 4. Create User Defined group in Arbor. 5. Prepare names for half termly S.A.R.M (Pupil/Student Attendance Review Meeting). 6. AL3 (notification of a S.A.R.M meeting) to be sent to parents/carers. It is expected that the Principal and relevant SLT representative will attend the meeting. 	

AL1 & AL2 Letters - [Attendance Letters.pdf](#)