

THE HOLY FAMILY CATHOLIC PRIMARY SCHOOL

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Attendance Policy



OFSTED July 2019

'Pupils feel safe in school and believe that the adults take good care of them.'

'The quality of teaching, learning and assessment in the school is strong.'



**CATHOLIC SCHOOLS
INSPECTORATE**
THE NATIONAL FRAMEWORK FOR THE INSPECTION OF CATHOLIC SCHOOLS, COLLEGES AND ACADEMIES

Catholic Schools Inspection February 2023

'The visitor is left in no doubt that this is a loving Catholic school that prides itself on a genuine, warm welcome.'

'Staff provide the highest level of pastoral care; there is a deep commitment to the most vulnerable.'

'Prayer is central to life in Holy Family.'

At The Holy Family School we are committed to Safeguarding Children

'As a family we live, love, learn and celebrate with Jesus.'

Vision

We believe that children cannot learn if they are absent from school. Therefore, we aim to ensure that all our children and young people take full advantage of the educational opportunities available to them and to raise standards by promoting regular attendance and punctuality of pupils. We believe that children's mental health and wellbeing are positively supported through regular school attendance.

Aims

Through this Policy we aim to:

- Create an ethos in which good attendance and punctuality are recognised as the norm and seen to be valued by the school.
- Demonstrate that good attendance and punctuality is valued by the school.
- Maintain and develop effective communication regarding attendance between home and school.

Leadership & Management will:

- Offer a clear vision for attendance, underpinned by high expectations and core values, which are communicated to and understood by staff, pupils and families.
- Make sure staff, pupils and families understand that absence from school is a potential safeguarding risk and understand their role in keeping children safe.
- Expect good attendance and punctuality from all members of the school community and make sure that pupils understand its importance.
- Convey clear messages about how absence affects attainment, wellbeing and wider outcomes. Empower staff to take responsibility for attendance.
- Recognise attendance as an important area of school improvement. Make sure it is resourced appropriately (including through effective use of pupil premium funding) to create, build and maintain systems and performance.
- Have a designated attendance champion in the senior leadership team with clearly assigned responsibilities which are identified within the attendance policy, escalation of procedures and school improvement plan.
- Make sure staff receive professional development and support to deploy attendance systems effectively.
- Governors should have an accurate view of school attendance and engage in escalation procedures where appropriate.

Role of the Head teacher

The Head is responsible for ensuring:

- The implementation of the policy.

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- Every member of staff knows and understands their responsibilities for attendance.
- Agreeing whether an absence should be authorised. The power to authorise an absence rests with the Headteacher or delegated person within the school, and not with parents or the local authority – see Appendix A for circumstances under which an absence will be authorised;
- Working actively to maximise attendance rates, both in relation to individual pupils and the pupil body as a whole.
- Having clear policies in place to address persistent absence.
- Ensuring that all staff adopt a consistent approach in dealing with absence and lateness.
- Monitoring trends.
- A system for parents to report a child’s absence.
- Reporting to the Governing Body the attendance figures and progress to achieving the set targets.
- Reminding parents of their commitment to this policy.
- Build respectful relationships with staff, pupils, families and other stakeholders in order to secure their trust and engagement. Make sure there is a welcoming and positive culture across the school.
- Communicate openly and honestly with staff, pupils and families about their expectations of school life and performance so that they understand what to expect and what is expected of them.
- Liaise with other agencies working with pupils and their families to support attendance, for example, where a young person has a social worker or is otherwise vulnerable.

Role of teaching staff

Teachers are responsible for:

- setting an example of punctuality and good attendance.
- implementing the policy;
- ensuring that the registers are taken at the start of the morning session and once during the afternoon session and are accurate and up to-date;
- monitoring class and individual attendance patterns;
- informing the school office of any concerns;
- emphasising with children the importance of punctuality and good attendance.
- Reminding parents of their commitment to this policy.
- Build respectful relationships with staff, pupils, families and other stakeholders in order to secure their trust and engagement. Make sure there is a welcoming and positive culture across the school.
- Communicate openly and honestly with staff, pupils and families about their expectations of school life and performance so that they understand what to expect and what is expected of them.

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- Liaise with other agencies working with pupils and their families to support attendance, for example, where a young person has a social worker or is otherwise vulnerable.

Model respectful relationships and appropriate communication for staff and pupils. This will help relationships between pupils and staff to reflect a positive and respectful culture. All staff members should:

- treat pupils with dignity
- build relationships rooted in mutual respect and observe proper boundaries
- take into consideration the vulnerability of some pupils and the ways in which this might contribute to absence handling confidential information sensitively
- understand the importance of school as a place of safety where pupils can enjoy trusted relationships with staff and pupils particularly for children with a social worker and those who have experienced adversity
- communicate effectively with families regarding pupils' attendance and well-being

Role of Parents/Guardian's

Parents are responsible in law for ensuring that their children of compulsory school age receive an efficient education suitable to their age, ability, aptitude and any special educational needs that they may have. Most parents fulfil this responsibility by registering their children at a school.

Parents whose children are registered at a school are responsible for ensuring that their children attend and stay at school. Parents are responsible for:

- Ensuring that their children are punctual and know the importance of good attendance.
- Instill in their children an appreciation of the importance of attending school regularly.
- Impressing upon their children the need to observe the school's code of conduct.
- Informing the school on the first day of absence, by 9.30 am at the latest. **Should parents fail to notify the school of their child's absence before 10.30am and the school are unable to make contact with a family member to explain their children's absence, members of the senior leadership as a matter of safeguarding may make a welfare visit the same day to the home address.**
- Providing the school with an explanation for the absence.
- Informing the school of any changes to their contact details.
- Taking an active interest in their children's school career, praising and encouraging good work and behaviour and attending parent's evenings and other relevant meetings.
- Working in partnership with the school to resolve issues which may lead to non-attendance.
- Avoiding arranging medical/dental appointments during school hours.
- Not booking holidays during term-time.
- Treating staff with respect
- Actively supporting the work of the school
- Calling on staff for help when they need it

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- Communicating as early as possible circumstances which may affect absence or require support

Encouraging Good Attendance

The School encourages good attendance by:

- Using clear and consistently applied systems and processes to improve, reward and incentivise attendance and address absences. Makes sure these systems are inclusive and appropriate for all pupils.
- Publicising good attendance via newsletters, social media and the termly report to the Governing Body.
- Awarding certificates annually when pupils have achieved 100% attendance.

Dealing with Lateness

The office staff monitor lateness and inform:

- The Head/SLT/Teachers of patterns of lateness.
- Parents of the school's concerns and arrange a meeting so that the problem can be addressed.
- The School gates are opened at **8.40am** and pupils are then expected to enter the school premises and make their way to their classroom.
- Children who arrive after **8.45am** must be signed in by school by the adult dropping the child off for purposes of emergency evacuation and safeguarding.
- Pupils who arrive between **8.45am and 9am** will be marked as 'late' but counted as present for that session (Code L).
- Pupils who arrive after the register has closed at **8.45am** and the parent provides a satisfactory explanation will be marked as 'authorised absent' for that session.
- Pupils who arrive after **9am** and parent fails to provide a satisfactory explanation will be marked as 'unauthorised absent' for that session (Code U).

Pupils who are persistently absent

Persistent absence occurs when a child's attendance falls below 90%. Absenteeism at this level will considerably damage a pupil's educational prospects and the school will work alongside parents/carers to tackle this issue by:

- establishing robust escalation procedures which are initiated before absence becomes a problem, for example by:
 - sending letters to parents and carers
 - meeting with the head teacher to discuss absences
 - engaging with local authority attendance teams and/or independent attendance organisations
 - using fixed penalty notices
 - engaging with children's social care staff, including Virtual School Heads and social workers where appropriate
 - establishing a range of evidence-based interventions to address barriers to attendance

Absence

Holidays during term time – *changes to legislation which came into force in September 2013 made clear that Headteachers may not grant any leave of absence during term time unless there are **exceptional circumstances**. If there are exceptional circumstances behind your request you should discuss these with the Headteacher.*

See letter from Jo Fisher, Director of Children's Services on HCC Grid when considering a term-time holiday –

<https://thegrid.org.uk/admissions-attendance-travel-to-school/attendance/holidays-in-term-time>

Religious Observance – absence is authorised for *recognised* religious observance.

Medical, Dental or Hospital Appointments – *please ensure* these appointments take place out of school time in order not to disrupt your child's education. You will be requested to provide evidence of appointments should you be unable to arrange them outside of school time.

Fixed Penalty Notices (FPNs)

School follows Hertfordshire County Council's Penalty Notice for Truancy Code of Conduct and procedures.

- We expect parents/carers to work with us to address attendance problems.
- If a pupil has at least 15 sessions (half day= 1 session) unauthorised absence in the current and/or previous term (including unauthorised holidays), the Head Teacher may ask the Local Authority to issue a Penalty Notice.
- The penalty is £60 if paid within 21 days of receipt of the notice, rising to £120 if paid after 28 days.
- If the penalty is not paid the Local Authority may prosecute parents/carers for their child's irregular attendance.

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Part time Timetables

- As part of the framework for the inspection of services for children in need of help and protection, children looked after, and care leavers (Ofsted June 2015) local authorities are required to provide detailed data on school age children in their area who are not in receipt of full-time education and schools are similarly expected to maintain data on students of compulsory school age who are on their roll but attending on a part-time timetable.
- The Local authority has published guidance for all maintained school, academies, free schools, studio schools, UTCs, ESCs and PSBs on the use of part-time timetables for pupils of compulsory school age (the term after their fifth birthday to the last Friday in June following their 16th birthday)
- All schools are required to return information on children who are on part-time tables within five days of the pupil starting or ending a part -time timetable.

Headteacher:		Date:	
Chair of Governing Body:		Date:	

Appendix A

Absences will be authorised if:

- The pupil is absent with leave as agreed by the Headteacher.
- The pupil is ill and has not been asked to provide proof of absence.
- The absence occurs on a day exclusively set aside for religious observance by the religious body to which the pupil's parent belongs.
- The pupil is the child of Traveller parents who are known to be travelling for occupational purposes and have agreed this with the school but it is not known whether the pupil is attending alternative provision.
- There is a close family bereavement.
- Leave of absence has been applied for in advance and has been granted because of exceptional circumstances relating to the application (parents cannot expect, as of right, that the school will grant leave of absence).
- Leave of absence to allow a pupil to take part in a performance within the meaning of s37 of the Children and Young Persons Act 1963 © for which a child performance licence has been issued. HCC will not issue a child performance licence where absence is required without the written permission of the Headteacher.

Only the school can authorise an absence. The fact that a parent has provided a note or other explanation (telephone call or personal contact) in relation to a particular absence does not, of itself, oblige the school to accept it, if the school does not accept the explanation offered as a valid reason for absence. If, after further investigation doubt remains about the explanation offered – or when no explanation is forthcoming at all – the absence will be treated as unauthorised and the parent informed.

Definitions

Authorised absence

- An absence is classified as authorised when a child has been away from school for a legitimate reason and the school has received notification from a parent or carer. For example, if a child has been unwell and the parent telephones the school to explain the absence, this should be done on the morning of the first day of absence. They should also provide an explanation for the absence and this explanation should be confirmed - in writing when the child/ren return to school.
- Only the school can make an absence authorised. Parents do not have this authority. Consequently, not all absences supported by parents will be classified as authorised by the school. A doctors certificate or other evidence may be requested. The school reserves the right to request evidence of appointments.

Unauthorised absence

- An absence is classified as unauthorised when a child is away from school without the permission of the school or arrives later than **9am** if the child is late.