



Attendance Policy

St John's Catholic Comprehensive School

OUR MISSION STATEMENT

Excellence for All
Service to Others
Inspired by Christ

This Policy was adopted by the Strategy Team

Statement of Intent

St John's Catholic Comprehensive School is committed to the continuous raising of achievement of all our pupils. Regular attendance is critical if our pupils are to be successful and benefit from the opportunities presented to them.

- Receiving a full-time, suitable education is a child's legal entitlement - it is a parent's/carer's legal responsibility to ensure this happens.
- Attending school regularly aids intellectual, social and emotional development and is essential if children are to benefit fully from their school life.
- Attending school regularly safeguards the welfare of children while they are not in the care of their parents.
- All children whose attendance is irregular will be considered vulnerable.

In accordance with Department for Education (DfE) advice to schools, St John's Catholic Comprehensive School will:

- Actively promote 100% attendance while attempting to reduce absences (including persistent absence) by liaising with parents and Kent County Council (KCC) liaison officers.
- Actively promote the importance of punctuality both to school and to lessons.
- Ensure every child has access to full-time education.
- Act early to address patterns of absence and poor punctuality.
- Use a variety of weekly, termly and annual awards to promote outstanding attendance and punctuality.

The governors, headteacher and staff in partnership with parents have a duty to promote 100% attendance and high standards of punctuality at St John's Catholic Comprehensive School.

Aims of Attendance Policy

- To ensure that all children attend school regularly and punctually, in order to maximise their educational achievement and social development.
- To safeguard pupils to the best of the school's ability.
- To ensure that all those responsible for children's education, including parents, carers, staff and governors understand and accept their responsibilities in relation to attendance.
- To minimise absence from school, thereby reducing levels of persistent absence.
- Any pupil with attendance below 90% is classed by the DfE as a 'Persistent Absentee' (PA). Schools are required to identify all PA pupils and report to the DfE at regular intervals during the academic year.
- To improve the life chances of the children attending school and prepare them to be fully contributing citizens when they reach adulthood.

Parental and Student Responsibility

The term 'parent' includes all-natural parents, any person who has parental responsibility and any person who has day to day care of a child. Ensuring a child's regular attendance at school is a parent/carer's legal responsibility under **Section 444 of the 1996 Education Act** and permitting absence from school that is not authorised by the school may create an offence in law.

Regular attendance is essential to the all-round development of the child and they should be allowed to take full advantage of educational opportunities available to them in order to make good progress in their learning. Poor attendance undermines their educational attainment and progress and, sometimes, puts pupils at risk by encouraging anti-social behaviour.

St John's Catholic Comprehensive School expects ALL parents to:

- Promote the importance of maintaining 100% attendance and outstanding standards of punctuality with their child
- Keep absences to a minimum.
- Ensure that their child arrives at school on time each day (BEFORE 8.40am)
- Provide up to date contact numbers, email addresses and any changes of home address.
- Telephone St John's Catholic Comprehensive School (Attendance) when their child is unable to attend on the first day of the absence and each day thereafter with the reason for this.
- Parents are expected to let St John's Catholic Comprehensive School know if their child is going to be late. **This is a safeguarding requirement so that all parties are aware that the child in question is safe and their whereabouts are known.**
- Provide a written explanation addressed to the child's form tutor for the absence when their child returns to school. School diaries can be used for any absence notes.
- Parents should provide medical evidence indicating attendance at the dentist, doctor or optician, if asked to do so. Whenever possible all medical/dental appointments should be made outside of school hours unless an emergency has arisen.
- Contact the school at the earliest opportunity if their child is experiencing any difficulties and the school will do everything possible to resolve the issues.

St John's Catholic Comprehensive School expects ALL students to:

- Attend school every day unless they are too ill, or the absence has been authorised by the school.
- Arrive at school on time (before 08.40am).
- Go to registration and all lessons on time.

The Role of the School Staff

At St John's Catholic Comprehensive School there is a whole school responsibility and approach for improving school attendance, with specific staff taking individual responsibility.

Mr J. Steadman has overall responsibility for monitoring attendance issues.

Form tutors complete a register at the beginning of each morning (08.40am). Afternoon registers will be taken at 1.05pm and will be taken by class teachers. Marking the attendance registers twice daily is a legal requirement. (The Education (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2006). Teachers mark pupils present, absent or late.

It is the responsibility of the Attendance Officer to ensure:

- Attendance and lateness records are up to date.
- If no reason for absence has been provided, the attendance officer will contact parents/guardians on the first day of absence by phone call to investigate child's absence from school.
- Where there has been no communication, the attendance officer will send letters to parents requesting reasons for absence.
- The appropriate attendance code is entered into the register (see National Attendance Codes)

Timeline of the Staged Approach for Managing Poor Attendance

- Below 96% attendance – Form tutors and or Mr Steadman to investigate and notify Attendance Officer of concerns. Attendance Officer to contact parent if appropriate.
- Below 90% - School intervention letters/meeting with parents and pre-referral meetings with the School Liaison Officer from KCC
- Where the level of absence has not improved and there are unauthorised absences, the school will make a referral to the KCC Inclusion and Attendance Service using the Digital Front Door. If it is not clear a referral to the Service is appropriate, the school will consult with the Local Authority School Liaison Officer for advice.
- For the cases that require intensive family support, the school may make an Early Help Notification.

Children Missing Education

No child should be removed from the school roll without consultation between the Headteacher and the Inclusion and Attendance Service when appropriate. Please see the circumstances below:-

Where a child is missing from education, Local Authority guidance will be followed, by completing a Child Missing Education referral for the following circumstances:-

- If the whereabouts of the child is unknown and the school has failed to locate him/her.
- The family has notified the school that they are leaving the area but no Common Transfer Form (pupil file) has been requested by another school.

Monitoring Punctuality to School

Pupils are expected to arrive at school BEFORE 08:40 am. Pupils that arrive late will receive a late stamp in their diary and will be expected to complete a lunch detention with their HOY on the day that they failed to arrive to school on time. The pupil will be marked as late before registration has closed (Code 'L').

If a student arrives AFTER 9am they must report to the Attendance Officer in Reception where they will receive a stamp in their diary and then report to Mr Steadman with a reason for their lateness. Pupils arriving after the register has closed will be marked as late after registration (Code 'L')

- Mr Steadman will monitor punctuality. Students that are consistently late to school will be at risk of the following sanctions –
 - 3 or more times in a term – 1-hour detention.
 - 6 or more times in a term – 2-hour detention.
 - 9 or more times in a term – Parents contacted and requested for a meeting with Mr Steadman.

In all cases where a detention has been given to a student, a note will be written in the child's diary which will provide parents/guardians 24 hours' notice of detention.

Authorising Absence

Only the Headteacher can authorise absence using a consistent approach. The Headteacher is not obliged to accept a parent's explanation. A letter or telephone message from a parent does not in itself authorise an absence. If absences are not authorised, parents will be notified.

If no explanation is received, absences will not be authorised.

Absence (for example leave for holidays) during term time can only be approved in "exceptional circumstances".

The following reasons are examples of absence that **WILL NOT BE AUTHORISED**:

- **Persistent nonspecific illness e.g. poorly/unwell**
- **Absence of siblings if one child is ill**
- **Oversleeping**
- **Inadequate clothing/uniform**
- **Confusion over school dates**
- **Medical/dental appointments of more than half a day without very good reasons**
- **Child's/family birthday**
- **Shopping trip**
- **Family Holidays (with some rare exceptions)**

Persistent unauthorised absence (10% or more of the school year) may result in an AS1 referral to the Local Authority School Liaison Officer for consideration of prosecution. The school will follow procedures prior to referral and parents will be notified in writing.

When a referral is made, the child's Registration Certificate, copies of all letters sent to parents and minutes of any meetings **need to** be attached to the completed AS1 referral form with any other relevant information.

Local Authority Action may include:-

- Attendance Improvement Meeting attended by School Liaison Officer, Mr Rowlinson and/or School Governor and the school Attendance Officer.
- Home visits by the School Liaison Officer.
- Liaison with other agencies.

Penalty Notices Proceedings for Poor Attendance

Penalty Notices are issued in accordance with Kent County Council's Education Penalty Notices Code of Conduct effective from January 2016 and revised in April 2017.

- A Penalty Notice can only be issued in cases of absence for 10 or more half day sessions (5 school days) without authorisation during any 100 possible school sessions or period of 50 days of schooling – these do not need to be consecutive.
- A Penalty Notice can also be issued where an excluded child is found in a public place during school hours.
- After the appropriate request for a Penalty Notice is received, the KCC Inclusion and Attendance Service will issue a warning letter setting out 15 school days during which no unauthorised absence is to be recorded
- If unauthorised absence is recorded during the 15 day period a Penalty Notice will be issued (one per parent per child)

Exceptional circumstances could include:

- Service personnel returning from a tour of duty abroad where it is evidenced the parent will not be in receipt of any leave in the near future that coincides with school holidays.
- Where an absence from school is recommended by a health professional as part of a parent's or child's rehabilitation from a medical or emotional issue.

Any examples provided are illustrative rather than exhaustive. It is acceptable to take a pupil's previous record of attendance into account when the school is making decisions. The fundamental principles for defining 'exceptional' are rare, significant, unavoidable and short. And by 'unavoidable' it implies that an event could not reasonably be scheduled at another time. It is important to note that Headteachers can agree the absence of a child in exceptional circumstances and this discretion can be used also to determine the length of the authorised absence.

Where Penalty Notices are imposed, the regulations state that the penalty will be £120 to be paid within 28 days, reduced to £60 if paid within 21 days. Penalty Notices are issued to each parent of each child. Failure to pay the penalty in full by the end of the 28 day period will result in prosecution by the Local Authority.

Section 444 of the Education Act 1996 says that parents are **guilty** of an offence of failing to secure regular attendance at school unless they can prove that the child was absent:

- with leave (the school has given permission)
- due to sickness or any unavoidable cause (the sickness or unavoidable cause must relate to the child, not the parent)
- religious observance
- failure by the Local Authority to provide transport

In law, these are the only acceptable reasons for a child being absent from school.

The Headteacher may authorise absence in “exceptional circumstances” but this must be requested in advance and agreement to each request is at the discretion of the Headteacher, acting on behalf of the Governing Body (Education (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2006). Each case will be judged on its merits and the Headteacher’s decision is final. Once the decision not to authorise leave is taken, it cannot be authorised retrospectively.

If the absence is not authorised and the holiday is taken anyway, the case may be referred to the Inclusion and Attendance Service who may issue a Penalty Notice to each parent for each child taken out of school.

Failure to pay the penalty in full by the end of the 28 day period will result in prosecution by the Local Authority.

St John’s Catholic Comprehensive School asks that parents fully support this policy as a vital contribution towards their child’s education.