Attendance policy

St Joseph's Catholic Primary

Shining in the Light of Christ to be the Best that we can be

Policy agreed (date):	**1st September 2026**
Policy approved by:	**Headteacher**
Policy published (date):	**1st September 2026**
Next review (date):	**1st September 2027**

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1.Rationale for our Attendance Policy

At St Joseph's School, we understand that regular school attendance is the key to enabling children and young people to maximise the educational opportunities available to them and become emotionally resilient, confident adults who are able to realise their full potential and make a positive contribution to their community. School is the foundation for preparing children and young people for life as adults.

We are committed to providing an education of the highest quality for all our pupils/students and endeavour to provide an environment where all pupils feel valued and welcome and are able to **SHINE.**

For our children to gain the greatest benefit from their education it is vital that they attend school regularly and punctually. Parents and the school community share the responsibility for supporting and promoting excellent school attendance and punctuality for all.

This policy represents our commitment to support pupils to achieve 100% attendance. It sets out the principles, procedures and practice the school will undertake. It outlines our strategies to improve attendance and the rewards and benefits of good attendance (defined in section 6). The sanctions and possible legal consequences of poor attendance and punctuality are also detailed. This policy will be reviewed, amended as necessary and published annually in accordance with current legislation and guidance.

2. Aims of our Attendance Policy

At St Joseph's, our aims are to:

- Ensure that children make the best use of their educational opportunities by attending regularly, punctually and in a state of readiness for learning
- Emphasise a commitment to promoting excellent attendance and punctuality
- Establish a consistent framework to improve attendance for all pupils
- Ensure that everyone within the school community understand the issues and procedures for attendance
- Fulfil the statutory duties in relation to school attendance

- Encourage, recognise and reward good attendance

Responsibilities:

At St Joseph's, we are passionate about working in partnership with families to secure good attendance so that every child can **SHINE** and be the very best that they can be. This includes clear communication with parents and pupils regarding our expectations of what is required to secure excellent attendance for pupils at our school.

At St Joseph's School we will:

- Provide regular information about attendance through regular communications through newsletters/website
- Include attendance information in reports about your child's performance in school and how any absence may be affecting their attainment
- Reward good attendance by providing Class treats if set targets are reached in our Attendance Race or for individual children who achieve 100% attendance in a week
- Work with you and your child to achieve maximum attendance

At St Joseph's School we expect:

- Pupils to arrive at school every day on time, ready to learn
- Parents to work with the school to ensure that their child attends regularly

3. Attendance: The Legal Framework

The law says that ensuring a child receives education is a parent/carer's legal responsibility Section 444 of the 1996 Education Act). For most parents this means registering their child at a school. Permitting absence from school that is not authorised by the school creates an offence in law and parents/carers who do not secure their child's regular attendance at school may be referred to the Wiltshire Education Welfare Service for a formal legal intervention.

To avoid this happening, we will work with parents and carers to address irregular or poor attendance to ensure full-time attendance.

Authorised absences are those that have been agreed by the headteacher.

Unauthorised absences are those where no valid reason has been provided for absence or those absences which the headteacher has not agreed.

4. Partnership Working- Roles and Responsibilities

Do you know these facts about absence and attendance?

Research suggests that a pupil who misses 17 days of school a year will drop 1 GCSE grade in attainment. (DfE)

95% equates to half a day off every two weeks in a school year
90% equates to a day off every two weeks in a school year
85% equates to one and a half days off every two weeks in a school year
80% equates to one whole day off every week in a school year

“Better attendance at school by pupils improves their educational achievements and, in turn, their lives and prospects. Even a small reduction in absence would result in many pupils receiving greater benefit from their education.” The National Audit Office.

At St Joseph’s School, attendance is the business of **everyone** in our school community.
The governors and all staff are committed to supporting all pupils to achieve excellent attendance and regularly review school procedures and strategies to support this.

Roles of staff:

- Mrs Wilkins (Headteacher) is responsible for improving and maintaining good attendance
- The Senior Attendance Champion (Mrs Wilkins) monitors and analyses attendance
- The Headteacher (Mrs Wilkins) will maintain attendance profile through assemblies, staff meetings, monitoring, registration process, target setting across year group/classes, liaison with the EWO, Targeting Support Meetings parent/carer contact, School Attendance Meetings (SAM), attending Local Authority Attendance Meetings (LAAM)
- Classteachers will maintain accurate registration and contact parents when attendance begins to drop
- Julie Boyle is the Governor specific responsibility for attendance
- Miss Smoker (Secretary) is involved in first day contact procedures

The Role of parent/carers:

We expect that parents and carers will work with us if school absence becomes a concern. Parents and carers can help to promote positive attendance by:

- Ensuring children arrive at school on time, before registers close, appropriately dressed and in a ‘condition to learn’ (ie not too tired or too hungry) and with the right equipment for the day
- Working in partnership with us to help their child(ren) gain an appreciation of the importance of attending school regularly
- Working in partnership with us to take an active interest in their child’s education
- Working in partnership with us and other agencies (as appropriate) to resolve problems relating to non-attendance or which may have a negative impact on their child’s attendance

5. Procedures

Our school attendance target is: 97%.
Pupils who miss just 3 days of school in a school year will contribute to the school not achieving the attendance target set by the governing board.

Legally the school register must be taken twice a day.
At St Joseph's school the register is taken at 8:50am (morning registration time) and once during the afternoon session at 1pm. The registers will remain open for 20 minutes. Pupils arriving before registers close will be marked as late (L). Pupils arriving after the registers have closed will be coded U (Late after registers close) which counts as an unauthorised absence for the whole session.

Absence is recorded as unauthorised until a satisfactory reason is provided. If the reason given is not satisfactory and/or evidence of the reason cannot be provided, the absence will be coded as unauthorised. Ongoing and repeated lateness after the close of registration is considered as unauthorised absence and may be taken into account if any legal action is taken.

We will contact parents to address and improve attendance where:
A pupil's attendance falls below 96%,
A pupil has more than 3 weeks where they haven't achieved full attendance in a term (In Wiltshire there are 6 terms in an academic year)
A pupil has more than 4 recorded lates in a term
A pupil has a regular pattern of absence

Parents are asked to:

Notify the school when their child is unable to attend, with a reason, on the first and subsequent days of absence. Parents should contact the school before the start of the school day. Please phone 01380 723084.

Keep the school informed, in cases of ongoing absence. A note from a pupil's home does not mean an absence becomes authorised. The decision whether or not to authorise an absence will always remain with the school.

Arrange medical or dental appointments outside of school hours unless there is urgent need for an appointment.

Tell the school if their child is going to be late, the reason why and expected time of arrival.

Only request leave of absence if it is for an exceptional circumstance. (The process for requesting leave of absence is explained further in this policy)

Examples of types of absence that are not considered reasonable and which will not be authorised under any circumstances are:
Going shopping with parents
Birthdays
Minding other younger children in the family
Staying at home because other members in the family are unwell
Day trips and holidays in term time
Arriving at school too late to get a present mark (After the close of registration)
Death of a pet

Processes:
We will contact the parent/carer if a child is absent and the parent/carer has not advised that the child will not be in school. Parents can expect contact on every occasion of an un-notified absence. The School Secretary will initially phone parents within 30 minutes of registers closing. If we cannot speak directly with parents/carers then we will contact nominated emergency contacts to establish the reason for absence; this is in line with school safeguarding procedures.

If after 3 days of absence, your child has not been seen and no contact has been made with the school, a home visit will be made by school staff, to ascertain the safety and well-being of your child and establish the reason for absence from school.

After 10 days of unexplained absence and no contact with the school, we are obliged to notify the local authority. The local authority will follow their procedures for Children Missing from Education (CME) and parents may expect contact and visits from an Education Welfare Officer to ascertain the well-being and safety of your child.an

Collecting your child from school

We ask that all parents/carers ensure that they are able to collect their children from school on time. School finishes at 3:15pm. Pupils are not permitted to leave **before** 3:15 except in authorised circumstances.
If parents are unable to collect their child as usual then they will need to communicate the alternative arrangements they have made with the school.
We will not release children in these circumstances to anyone who we have not been advised of.
If children remain uncollected from school the protocol is to call other contacts on the list.

Monitoring attendance

Weekly monitoring of the registers will be made by the Senior Attendance Champion to analyse overall absence for each pupil and identify pupils with low attendance, a pattern of absences that may lead to Persistent Absence (PA), Severe Absence (SA) patterns and levels of broken weeks, lateness, authorised absence and unauthorised absence and reasons for absence.
A pupil is classed as a persistent absentee when they miss 10% or more schooling across the school year and as a severe absentee if they miss more than 50% of schooling for whatever reason, whether it be authorised or unauthorised, or a mixture of both. Absence at this level is doing considerable damage to a child's educational prospects and we need parents' full support and encouragement to tackle it. PA and SA pupils are tracked and monitored carefully through our pastoral system, and we combine this with tracking academic progress to assess the effect on the pupil's attainment. Absence for whatever reason disadvantages a pupil by creating gaps in his or her learning. The Senior Attendance Champion, together with our Family Link Worker will be responsible for putting in place actions for each pupil of concern. Initially we will try to resolve the problem with parents/carers and this may involve requesting medical evidence in order for the school to authorise any further absence due to ill health and/or an attendance meeting with a member of school staff where we can discuss the barriers to attendance and provide help and support to address that. We will always involve the pupil through gaining their pupil voice. We may ask parents to agree to an Attendance Contract which details how we will work together to improve attendance. However, if absence continues and the support we have offered is not working we may make a referral to the Local Authority for additional intervention.
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Requesting leave of absence in exceptional circumstances

In accordance with Department for Education statutory guidance, leave of absence from school may only be authorised in **exceptional** circumstances.
Absence for the purpose of a holiday is not considered to be an exceptional circumstance.
Parents are required to complete a leave of absence request form which must outline the exceptional circumstances for which the leave has been requested.
Leave of absence request forms must be completed in advance of the dates requested. We require 2 weeks' notice unless the absence is related to an emergency.
We do not give retrospective agreement for leave of absence so any absence not advised to the school in advance will be unauthorised.
Requests will be considered by the headteacher and parents and carers will be advised if their request is agreed.
Any pupil who has taken a term time holiday will be required to provide medical evidence if they are ill in the period directly before or after the dates advised to school or if the absence is immediately before or after a designated school holiday period.
Parents/carers will be asked to provide evidence if a pupil does not return to school on the agreed date following a holiday as a result of delayed or cancelled flights or other travel arrangements.

Consequences of persistent and severe absence

At St Joseph's school, we will always work with you to address any attendance concerns.
If we have been unable to resolve the issue, despite a number of interventions, then we may have to refer you to the local authority where possible actions include:

1) The National Framework for Penalty Notices

The Department for Education has issued a national framework and the Education (Penalty Notices) (England) (Amendment) Regulations 2024 which govern how and when penalty notices may be used.

All local authorities and schools must work within the new framework.

This means that whenever a pupil accrues 10 sessions (half days) of unauthorised absence in a 10-week period a school must consider whether a penalty notice should be issued. The unauthorised absence can relate to unexplained absence, absence that the school has not agreed to including for a holiday in term time or a pupil being late after the register closes.

Where a pupil has accrued 10 sessions of unauthorised absence in 10 weeks that is NOT related to a holiday in term time we may issue you with a Notice to Improve. This will provide you with an opportunity to engage with support to improve your child's attendance. If support is not working then we will refer the matter to the local authority who may decide to issue a penalty notice to you.

Where there are 10 sessions of unauthorised absence in a 10-week period as a result of a holiday taken in term time the absence will be notified to the local authority who may issue a penalty notice without further warning.

Each parent can receive a penalty notice for each child that has unauthorised absence. For example, 2 parents with 2 children who take a holiday in term time can expect to receive 4 penalty notices.

The new framework allows for parents to receive a maximum of 2 penalty notices for each of their children in a 3-year period.

The first penalty notice issued in respect of an individual child will be in the sum of £160 to be paid within 2 days, reduced to £80 if paid within 21 days.

The second penalty notice issued in respect of the same child within 3 years shall be in the sum of £160.

If the national threshold is met on a third or subsequent occasion in 3 years then the local authority may present the matter to the magistrates' court.

or

2) The local authority may initiate court action under Section 444 of the Education Act 1996, which could lead to fines of up to £2,500, imposition of orders such as Parenting Orders or even imprisonment.

or

3) In some cases, action may be taken under the Children Act 1989 to protect the welfare and development of the child.

6. Strategies for improving and maintaining good attendance

At this school we take every opportunity to promote excellent attendance for all pupils. We will celebrate excellent attendance by sending letters to families with excellent attendance and through our Weekly Class Attendance Reward system (Classopoly) where each class who meets their attendance target (97%+) will win the treat that their counter lands on. The treats are chosen by pupils and change termly.



In addition, any class who has a weekly attendance of 100% will get their names entered into a class 'Golden Ticket' Draw in our weekly SHINE Celebration.

We are a caring school community where the needs of all pupils are carefully considered.
St Joseph's school provides and promotes a welcoming and positive atmosphere so that pupils feel safe, and know that their presence is valued.

If there are specific issues which might impact on your child's attendance it is important that you talk to us so that we can support you and your child. You can speak to your child's classteacher, Mrs Wilkins (Headteacher) or Mrs Cleaver (ELSA and Family Key Worker)

There may be times when we ask other agencies to become involved to help us understand and work with you to encourage regular school attendance. (eg Wiltshire Council,Spurgeons, school health, Ethnic Minority and Traveller Achievement Service, Medical Needs Education and Reintegration Service). If we feel that this would be helpful we will discuss with you first.

We are very keen to listen to the views of children and parents with regard to attendance matters and we welcome any feedback which helps us to shape how we work with families to address attendance issues and reward excellent attendance.

7. Monitoring and Evaluation

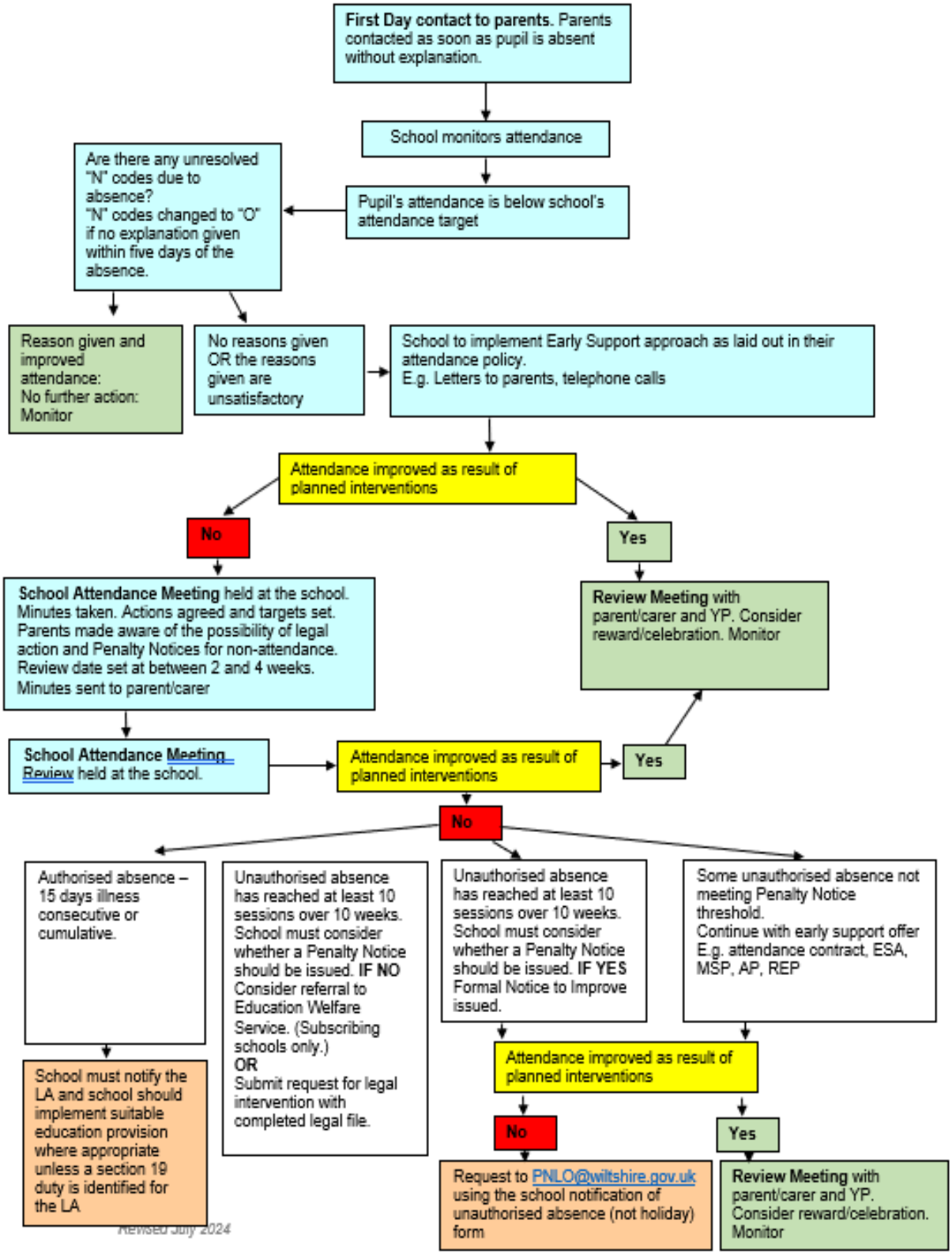
The attendance policy will be reviewed annually by school staff to ensure that it continues to meet the needs of the school community.

We will ensure that the policy reflects current DfE and Local Authority guidance so that parents may be assured of the standards that we strive to achieve.

8. Communicating the contents of the attendance policy

All new parents are introduced to the policy and information on attendance in the school prospectus. It is also accessible on the school website.
School attendance will feature in the school newsletter and we will advise parents of any changes to policy and procedures.

Absence From School
School Level Action



Revised July 2024