



St Joseph's Catholic Primary School
part of
The Good Shepherd Catholic Trust



Attendance Policy

Owner: Mrs A Hinton (Headteacher)
Approved by: Mrs G Spencer (Chair of Governors)
Date approved: Summer 2026
Next review date: Autumn 2027



- Attendance Lead: Mrs Hinton

Summary for Governors

- The updated policy clarifies operational responsibilities, communication processes (including support for EAL and digitally excluded families), thresholds and triggers for intervention, and procedures for SEND/medical adjustments. It formalises timelines for exceptional leave requests and appeals, specifies acceptable medical evidence, and sets reporting cadence: weekly monitoring by the Attendance Lead, termly senior leader and governors' reporting. Equality impact monitoring is included. These amendments strengthen transparency, legal compliance and the school's capacity to intervene early and proportionately, aligning with safeguarding and inclusion priorities.

Policy statement and aims

- St Joseph's Catholic Primary School is committed to ensuring excellent attendance and punctuality so pupils can achieve their potential, remain safe and benefit from a full education. The schools will:
 - promote good attendance and punctuality as essential to learning and wellbeing;
 - provide early, inclusive support to families experiencing difficulties attending; and
 - apply sanctions only after appropriate support and in line with the LBBD Code of Conduct and statutory guidance.

Scope

- This policy applies to all pupils on roll at St Joseph's Catholic Primary School.

Statutory framework and references

- Education Act 1996; Education (Pupil Registration) Regulations; DfE guidance "Working together to improve school attendance"; Departmental guidance on medical conditions and equality duties; Essex Code of Conduct for Penalty Notices.

Roles and responsibilities

- Headteacher
 - Overall responsibility for attendance strategy and decisions on authorised absence.
 - Ensure record-keeping and escalation to LA when required.
 - Report attendance matters to governors.



- Attendance Lead
 - Daily monitoring of registers and first-day response.
 - Maintain attendance records, undertake data analysis and coordinate interventions.
 - Lead contact for families, LA and external agencies.
- SENCO
 - Ensure attendance plans align with PLPs/EHCPs and reasonable adjustments are considered.
- Class teachers
 - Complete registers accurately each session and report unexplained absence to the Attendance Lead promptly.
- Governors / Trust
 - Receive termly reports on attendance, persistent absence (PA), and actions taken; hold leaders to account.
- Parents / carers
 - Ensure children attend regularly and on time; notify school on the first day of absence and follow reporting procedures.

Registration, school day and lateness

- School day
 - Gates open: 8:40–8:50am. Registration opens at 8.50am. School day ends at 3:20pm.
- Registration
 - Registers must be completed by class teachers within the first 10 minutes of the session.
 - Pupils arriving after register opens but before close of registration will be marked as late (L).
 - Pupils arriving after the close of registration (9:10am) will be marked with a U code for the session, which counts as an unauthorised absence unless the school accepts a valid reason.
- Lateness procedure



- If late, pupils must sign in at the main office and reason for lateness recorded.
- Repeated lateness triggers monitoring and staged interventions (see Triggers and Interventions).

First-day response and ongoing communication

- Parents must contact the school on the first day of absence by 9:00am via phone or email.
- If no contact is received, the school will:
 - Attempt telephone contact on day 1 and every subsequent day until a reason is provided.
 - Send emails as secondary contact methods.
 - Use alternative contact methods where phone/email fail, including welfare/home visits and contacting known community links.
 - For families with limited English, the school will offer translation support (bilingual staff or LA translation services) to ensure parents understand absence requirements.
- If contact cannot be made and safeguarding concerns arise, the Attendance Lead will follow the school's safeguarding protocols and may make an immediate home visit or contact Children's Services.

Authorised and unauthorised absence

- Authorised absence
 - Absence is authorised at the school's discretion for reasons such as illness (with appropriate evidence in some cases), medical or dental appointments, religious observance, and other exceptional circumstances agreed by the Headteacher.
- Unauthorised absence
 - Absence without valid reason (e.g. family holidays during term-time, unexplained absence, late arrival after registration close without good reason) will be recorded as unauthorised.
 - Persistent unauthorised absence may lead to referral to the LA for consideration of Penalty Notices or prosecution, following the Essex Code of Conduct.

Medical evidence and illness

- For single, short absences due to illness the school will usually accept parental confirmation.
- Where absence is repeated, prolonged, or patterns of illness cause concern, the school may request medical evidence to authorise the absence. Acceptable



evidence includes:

- GP/hospital appointment card or letter;
 - Copy of prescription or medication label;
 - NHS appointment confirmation text/email;
 - Letter/email from a clinician or clinic.
- If parents cannot obtain a GP note, they should contact the Attendance Lead to discuss alternative evidence or support.

Persistent Absence (PA) and thresholds

- Definitions and monitoring triggers:
 - Attendance below 95%: prompt initial contact and support letter to parents.
 - Attendance below 92% or 6+ unauthorised sessions in a rolling 6–8 week period: parental meeting and an Attendance Support Plan.
 - Attendance at or below 90% (PA threshold): formal casework, consideration of intervention and potential referral to LA Attendance Team.
 - Attendance below 50% or where medical and safeguarding concerns present: urgent multi-agency support and possible safeguarding referral.
- The Attendance Lead reviews attendance data half termly and shares concerns with the SENCO and SLT for early action.

Triggers and staged interventions

- Staged approach:
 1. Universal: Promotion of attendance, parent information, termly attendance updates.
 2. Early intervention (attendance <95%): Letter to parents, review with class teacher, offer of support.
 3. Targeted support (attendance <92%): Meeting with Attendance Lead, agree an Attendance Support Plan, consider referrals to family support services.
 4. Formal intervention (attendance ≤90% PA): Casework, multi-agency meetings, formal letters, referral to LA for statutory intervention where appropriate.
 5. Escalation: Consider Penalty Notices or prosecution when unauthorised absence persists despite support, in line with Essex Code of Conduct.
- All interventions will be recorded and monitored. The Attendance Lead will document offers of support and reasons for any escalation to sanctions to ensure proportionality.



SEND, medical needs and reasonable adjustments

- For pupils with SEND, long-term medical conditions, or social/emotional barriers to attendance, the school will:
 - Convene a multi-disciplinary meeting (parents, SENCO, Attendance Lead, relevant professionals) to create an Individual Attendance/Access Plan.
 - Consider reasonable adjustments such as phased return, adjusted timetables, targeted in-school support, or remote/home tuition where clinically advised.
 - Record agreed arrangements in the pupil's PLP or EHCP where appropriate and review them at least termly.
- The school will ensure decisions consider duties under the Equality Act 2010 and make reasonable adjustments to avoid disadvantage.

Term-time leave, exceptional circumstances and process

- Exceptional leave requests
 - Requests for leave in term time must be made in writing, ideally at least 10 school days in advance.
 - The Headteacher will decide and respond in writing within 15 school days of receipt of the request. If further evidence is required the decision may be delayed and parents will be informed of the revised timescale.
 - Leave will only be authorised in exceptional circumstances. Requests involving critical events may be considered; routine holidays and family events are unlikely to be authorised.
 - Time taken without authorisation may result in a referral to the LA for a Penalty Notice, particularly where 10 or more consecutive sessions are unauthorised.
- The policy clarifies that leave will normally not be authorised for:
 - Any time in September causing in-year induction disruption;
 - Periods of statutory assessments or examinations;
 - Times when a pupil has an existing pattern of poor attendance.

Penalty Notices and legal sanctions

- The school will work with the LA and apply the Essex Code of Conduct before issuing Penalty Notices.
- Before requesting a Penalty Notice, the Attendance Lead will:
 - Ensure parents have been offered support and opportunities to engage;
 - Confirm the absence is unauthorised and document attempts to resolve the issue;



- Consider mitigating circumstances and proportionality.
- Amounts and process will follow LA guidance. Prosecution for failure to ensure attendance remains an option when statutory steps have been taken and failed.

Recording and use of attendance data

- Registers are legal documents and must be kept accurately.
- The Attendance Lead reviews attendance data half termly and shares half termly reports with senior leaders.
- The Headteacher reports attendance data (overall attendance, PA rates, persistent lateness, identified cohorts) to the Local Governing Body and Trust each term.
- Attendance data will be used to target interventions, inform the school improvement plan and monitor the impact of actions.

Equality impact and monitoring

- The school will monitor attendance patterns by protected characteristics where lawful and appropriate (for example, SEN, EAL, ethnicity, disadvantage).
- Any disparate impact will be addressed through targeted support and reasonable adjustments. All attendance actions will be applied in line with the school's equalities policy.

Communication, parental engagement and EAL support

- The school will:
 - Provide annual attendance reports to parents.
 - Publish the attendance policy and key guidance on the school website in plain language; where feasible provide translated summaries for families with limited English.
 - Use bilingual staff and LA translation services to support conversations with families who have limited English.
 - Use targeted home-school liaison, community links and referrals to family support services for families facing barriers to attendance.

Remote education and prolonged authorised absence

- Where a pupil is absent for an extended authorised period for medical reasons, the school will discuss individual arrangements with parents to support continuity of education (for example, provision of work packs, liaison with hospital/home tuition services, or remote learning where appropriate).
- For short-term authorised leave for exceptional circumstances, the school will not routinely set work but may signpost reading and learning activities.

Deletion from roll and in-year transfers



- The school will comply with the Education (Pupil Registration) Regulations when removing pupils from roll, including informing the LA and keeping records of onward school details where available.
- The school will adhere to statutory requirements regarding elective home education referrals and safeguards.

Appeals and dispute resolution

- If parents disagree with a decision about authorisation of absence, they should contact the Headteacher in writing within 10 school days of the decision.
- The Headteacher will review and respond in writing within 15 school days. If unresolved, parents may raise the matter with the Local Governing Body or Trust via the published complaints procedure.

Training and support for staff

- Staff who complete registers, lead attendance work or undertake first-day responses will receive appropriate training.
- Subject-specific flexibility: school-wide policies will allow subject and role-specific flexibility (for example, pastoral staff may vary contact approaches).
- Subject departments and key staff may request tailored CPD to support attendance-related work with vulnerable pupils.

Data protection

- Attendance data will be processed in line with the school's Data Protection Policy. Information will be shared with LA and statutory partners as required for safeguarding and statutory duties.

Monitoring, review and governance

- The Attendance Lead reviews daily and weekly operational data.
- SLT reviews attendance patterns half termly and the Headteacher reports to the Governing Body each term.
- This policy will be reviewed annually or sooner in response to changes in statutory guidance or local requirements.



Annexe A — Responsibilities checklist (school-level)

- Headteacher: overall oversight and legal decisions on authorisation; reporting to governors.
- Attendance Lead: day-to-day operation; first-day calling; data analysis; documentation of interventions.
- Class teachers: complete registers and inform Attendance Lead of unexplained absence.
- SENCO: co-ordinate attendance plans for pupils with SEND.
- Governors: receive and scrutinise termly attendance reports and challenge leaders on action and impact.

Annexe B — Attendance monitoring thresholds and actions (quick reference)

- $\geq 95\%$: Good — universal support and monitoring.
- $< 95\%$: Letter and review.
- $< 92\%$ / 6+ unauthorised sessions in 6–8 weeks: Meeting and Attendance Support Plan.
- $\leq 90\%$: Persistent Absence — formal casework and potential LA referral.
- $< 50\%$ or rapid decline: Urgent multi-agency response.

Annexe C — Exceptional leave request (summary of required information)

- Pupil name, dates requested, reason for request, evidence supplied, parent/carers signature, date submitted.

Annexe D — Acceptable medical evidence examples

- GP/hospital appointment card/letter, prescription, NHS appointment text/email, clinician note.