

St. Joseph's R.C. Primary School



Attendance Policy

January 2026

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1. Aims

We are committed to meeting our obligation with regards to school attendance through our whole-school culture and ethos that values good attendance, including:

- › Promoting good attendance
- › Reducing absence, including persistent and severe absence
- › Ensuring every pupil has access to the full-time education to which they are entitled
- › Acting early to address patterns of absence
- › Building strong relationships with families to ensure pupils have the support in place to attend school

We will also promote and support punctuality in attending lessons.

2. Legislation and guidance

This policy meets the requirements of the [working together to improve school attendance](#) from the Department for Education (DfE), and refers to the DfE's statutory guidance on [school attendance parental responsibility measures](#). These documents are drawn from the following legislation setting out the legal powers and duties that govern school attendance:

- › Part 6 of [The Education Act 1996](#)
- › Part 3 of [The Education Act 2002](#)
- › Part 7 of [The Education and Inspections Act 2006](#)
- › [The Education \(Pupil Registration\) \(England\) Regulations 2006 \(and 2010, 2011, 2013, 2016 amendments\)](#)
- › [The Education \(Penalty Notices\) \(England\) \(Amendment\) Regulations 2013](#)

It also refers to:

- › [School census guidance](#)
- › [Keeping Children Safe in Education](#)
- › [Mental health issues affecting a pupil's attendance: guidance for schools](#)

Please also see Herefordshire Council's guidance on attendance: <https://www.herefordshire.gov.uk/schools-education/school-attendance-absences/23>. Roles and responsibilities

3.1 The governing board

The governing board is responsible for:

- › Promoting the importance of school attendance across the school's policies and ethos
- › Making sure school leaders fulfil expectations and statutory duties
- › Regularly reviewing and challenging attendance data
- › Monitoring attendance figures for the whole school
- › Making sure staff receive adequate training on attendance
- › Holding the headteacher to account for the implementation of this policy
- › The full governing body is responsible for approving this policy

3.2 The headteacher

The headteacher is responsible for:

- › Implementation of this policy at the school
- › Monitoring school-level absence data and reporting it to governors
- › Supporting staff with monitoring the attendance of individual pupils
- › Monitoring the impact of any implemented attendance strategies
- › Completes referral to Herefordshire Council who may issue Penalty Notices, where necessary

3.3 The designated senior leader responsible for attendance

The designated senior leader is responsible for:

- › Leading attendance across the school
- › Offering a clear vision for attendance improvement
- › Evaluating and monitoring expectations and processes
- › Having an oversight of data analysis
- › Devising specific strategies to address areas of poor attendance identified through data
- › Building relationships with parents/carers to discuss and tackle attendance issues
- › Creating intervention reintegration plans in partnership with pupils and their parents/carers
- › Delivering targeted intervention and support to pupils and families

The designated senior leader responsible for attendance is Mrs Francis and can be contacted via 01989 564655 or admin@st-josephs.hereford.sch.uk

3.4 The attendance officer

The school attendance officer is responsible for:

- › Monitoring and analysing attendance data (see section 7)
- › Benchmarking attendance data to identify areas of focus for improvement
- › Providing regular attendance reports to school staff and reporting concerns about attendance to the designated senior leader responsible for attendance and the headteacher
- › Working with the school's independent education welfare officer to manage persistent absence
- › Advising the headteacher when to make a referral to Herefordshire Council who may issue fixed-penalty notices

The attendance officer is Mrs Finlay and can be contacted via 01989 564655 or admin@st-josephs.hereford.sch.uk

3.5 Class teachers

Class teachers are responsible for recording attendance on a daily basis, using the correct codes, and submitting this information to the school office by 9:10am and 1:15pm each day.

3.6 School admin staff

School admin staff will:

- › Take calls from parents/carers about absence on a day-to-day basis and record it on the school system
- › Transfer calls from parents/carers to a member of the Senior Leadership Team in order to provide them with more detailed support on attendance if and when needed.

3.7 Parents/carers

Parents/carers are expected to:

- › Make sure their child attends every day on time
- › Call the school to report their child's absence before 9am on the day of the absence and each subsequent day of absence and advise when they are expected to return
- › Provide the school with 2 (three best practice) emergency contact numbers for their child
- › Ensure that, where possible, appointments for their child are made outside of the school day

3.8 Pupils

Pupils are expected to:

- › Attend school every day on time

4. Recording attendance

4.1 Attendance register

We will keep an attendance register, and place all pupils onto this register.

We will take our attendance register at the start of the first session of each school day and once during the second session. It will mark whether every pupil is:

- › Present
- › Attending an approved off-site educational activity
- › Absent
- › Unable to attend due to exceptional circumstances

Any amendment to the attendance register will include:

- › The original entry
- › The amended entry
- › The reason for the amendment
- › The date on which the amendment was made
- › The name and position of the person who made the amendment

See appendix 1 for the DfE attendance codes.

We will also record:

- › Whether the absence is authorised or not [For pupils of compulsory school age]

- › The nature of the activity if a pupil is attending an approved educational activity
- › The nature of circumstances where a pupil is unable to attend due to exceptional circumstances

We will keep every entry on the attendance register for 6 years after the date on which the entry was made.

Pupils must arrive in school by 9:00am on each school day.

The register for the first session will be taken at 9:00am and will be kept open until 9:15am The register for the second session will be taken at 12:30pm for Reception and Key Stage 1 and will be kept open until 12:35pm.

The register for the second session will be taken at 1:15pm for Key Stage 2 and will be kept open until 1:20pm.

4.2 Unplanned absence

The pupil's parent/carer must notify the school of the reason for the absence on the first day of an unplanned absence by 9:00am or as soon as practically possible by calling the school admin staff (see also section 7).

We will mark absence due to physical or mental illness as authorised unless the school has a genuine concern about the authenticity of the illness.

Where the absence is longer than 5 days or there are doubts about the authenticity of the illness, the school will ask for medical evidence, such as a doctor's note, prescription, appointment card or other appropriate form of evidence. We will not ask for medical evidence unnecessarily.

If the school is not satisfied about the authenticity of the illness, the absence will be recorded as unauthorised and parents/carers will be notified of this in advance.

4.3 Planned absence

Attending a medical or dental appointment will be counted as authorised as long as the pupil's parent/carer notifies the school in advance of the appointment and is able to provide an appointment card or other proof of this appointment.

However, we encourage parents/carers to make medical and dental appointments out of school hours where possible. Where this is not possible, the pupil should be out of school for the minimum amount of time necessary.

The pupil's parent/carer must also apply for other types of term-time absence as far in advance as possible of the requested absence. Go to section 5 to find out which term-time absences the school can authorise.

4.4 Lateness and punctuality

A pupil who arrives late:

- › Before the register has closed will be marked as late, using the appropriate code
- › After the register has closed will be marked as absent, using the appropriate code
- › For children who are regularly late we send a letter to parents and have a meeting if the issue isn't resolved

4.5 Following up unexplained absence

Where any pupil we expect to attend school does not attend, or stops attending, without reason, the school will:

- › Call the pupil's parent/carer on the morning of the first day of unexplained absence to ascertain the reason. If the school cannot reach any of the pupil's emergency contacts, the school will consider involving our education welfare officer and conduct a home visit if necessary
- › Identify whether the absence is approved or not
- › Identify the correct attendance code to use and input it as soon as the reason for absence is ascertained – this will be no later than 5 working days after the session

4.6 Reporting to parents/carers

The school notifies parents of their child's attendance each term through parent consultation meetings and on pupil reports.

The school will notify parents/carers about their child's attendance and absence levels straight away if their attendance falls below 90%.

5. Authorised and unauthorised absence

5.1 Approval for term-time absence

The headteacher will only grant a leave of absence to a pupil during term time if they consider there to be 'exceptional circumstances'. A leave of absence is granted at the headteacher's discretion, including the length of time the pupil is authorised to be absent for.

The school considers each application for term-time absence individually, taking into account the specific facts, circumstances and relevant context behind the request.

Any request should be submitted in writing to the headteacher as soon as it is anticipated and, where possible, at least 6 weeks before the absence. The headteacher may require evidence to support any request for leave of absence.

Valid reasons for **authorised absence** include:

- › Illness (including mental illness) and medical/dental appointments (see sections 4.2 and 4.3 for more detail)
- › Religious observance – where the day is exclusively set apart for religious observance by the religious body to which the pupil's parents/carers belong. If necessary, the school will seek advice from the parents'/carers' religious body to confirm whether the day is set apart

5.2 Legal sanctions

If issued with a fine, or penalty notice, each parent/carers must pay £80 within 21 days or £160 within 28 days. The payment must be made directly to the local authority.

Penalty notices may be issued by Herefordshire Council, via a referral from the headteacher.

The decision on whether or not to issue a penalty notice may take into account:

- › The number of unauthorised absences occurring within a rolling academic year
- › One-off instances of irregular attendance, such as holidays taken in term time without permission
- › Where an excluded pupil is found in a public place during school hours without a justifiable reason

If the payment has not been made after 28 days, the local authority can decide whether to prosecute or withdraw the notice.

For full details of the penalty notice can be found by following this link: [Penalty Notice - Local Code of Conduct 2024](#)

6. Strategies for promoting attendance

We celebrate class weekly attendance in our school newsletter with rewards for classes. We use badges and certificates for children with termly 100% attendance. There are end of year awards for children with 100% attendance.

There are also recognition awards for improved attendance for pupils who previously had below 90%.

7. Attendance monitoring

Registers are monitored daily. Letters are sent to families with below 90% attendance to inform them that their attendance is being monitored and if improvement is not being made then we refer to our independent – Karen Borthwick - Education Welfare Officer. A support plan will be agreed.

Early Help is offered to families who require support.

The Education Welfare Officer reports on attendance termly and offers advice on further action and support for families whose attendance is below 90%.

7.1 Monitoring attendance

The school will:

- › Monitor attendance and absence data half-termly, termly and yearly across the school and at an individual pupil level
- › Identify whether or not there are particular groups of children whose absences may be a cause for concern

Pupil-level absence data will be collected each term and published at national and local authority level through the DfE's school absence national statistics releases. The underlying school-level absence data is published alongside the national statistics. The school will compare attendance data to the national average, and share this with the governing board.

7.2 Analysing attendance

The school will:

- › Analyse attendance and absence data regularly to identify pupils or cohorts that need additional support with their attendance, and use this analysis to provide targeted support to these pupils and their families
- › Look at historic and emerging patterns of attendance and absence, and then develop strategies to address these patterns

7.3 Using data to improve attendance

The school will:

- › Provide regular attendance reports to class teachers to facilitate discussions with pupils and families
- › Use data to monitor and evaluate the impact of any interventions put in place in order to modify them and inform future strategies

7.4 Reducing persistent and severe absence

Persistent absence is where a pupil misses 10% or more of school, and severe absence is where a pupil misses 50% or more of school.

The school will:

- › Use attendance data to find patterns and trends of persistent and severe absence
- › Inform families whose child's attendance is below 90% and offer support if needed
- › Hold regular meetings with the parents/carers of pupils who the school (and/or local authority) considers to be vulnerable, or are persistently or severely absent, to discuss attendance and engagement at school
- › Provide access to wider support services to remove the barriers to attendance

8. Legal Measures for Tackling Poor Attendance

Parental Responsibility

A parent includes any person who has parental responsibility for the child or who has care of the child, as set out in section 576 of the Education Act 1996, irrespective as to whether those persons are biological parents.

Penalty notices will usually be issued to the parent or parents with day-to-day responsibility for the pupil's attendance or the parent or parents who have allowed the absence (regardless of which parent has applied for a leave of absence).

Parents are expected to work with the school to address any attendance concerns. Parents should proactively engage with the support offered, aiming to resolve any problems together.

Referrals to Herefordshire Council

In education law, parents/carers are committing an offence if they fail to ensure the regular attendance of their child of compulsory school age at the school at which the child is registered, unless the absence has been authorised by the school.

Legal measures for tackling persistent absence or lateness

We will use the full range of legal measures to secure good attendance.

Legal measures will only be considered when there is unauthorised absence and:

1. the child or family do not require the support from any agency to improve the attendance
2. the child or family has failed to engage with help and support and parents are complicit in the child's absence.

The following measures may be used for pupils of compulsory school age who are registered at a school and the decisions regarding legal actions are made by Herefordshire Council in accordance with their code of conduct: Herefordshire Council penalty notice code of conduct.

- Attendance Plans
- Written Warnings
- Issue of a Notice to Improve
- Penalty Notices
- Education Supervision Orders
- Prosecution

The decision on whether to refer to Herefordshire Council ultimately rests with the Headteacher.

This may take into account:

- a number of unauthorised absences occurring within a rolling academic year
- Irregular attendance, such as holidays taken in term time without permission
- where an excluded child is found in a public place during school hours without a justifiable reason
- Once the school has referred to Herefordshire Council, they consider the facts and decide the appropriate action in accordance with Herefordshire Councils Penalty Notice code of conduct

National Threshold

The national threshold has been met when a pupil has been recorded as absent for 10 sessions within 10 school weeks

1, with one of, or a combination of the following codes: (a) Code G (the pupil is absent without leave for the purpose of a holiday), (b) Code O (none of the other rows of Table 3 in regulation 10(3) of the School Attendance (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2024 applies), and (c) Code U (the pupil attended after the taking of the register ended but before the end of the session, where no other code applies)

Notice To Improve

If the national threshold has been met and support is appropriate but offers of support have not been engaged with by the parent or have not worked, a Notice to Improve should usually be sent to give parents a final chance to engage in support.

Where it is clear that improvement is not being made, it may be appropriate to issue a penalty notice before the improvement period has ended.

- The length of improvement will usually be between 3 - 6 school weeks.
- In most cases, notices to improve will not be issued where support is not appropriate (for example in circumstances relating to a holiday in term time).

If a Notice to Improve is not appropriate a written warning will be sent to the parents before referring for a penalty notice. In all cases where parents are being referred for legal intervention they will be informed in writing.

Penalty Notice in respect of failure to secure regular attendance at school of registered pupil under section 444A Education Act 1996:

- The National Framework for penalty notices sets out that a maximum of 2 penalty notices per child, per parent can be issued within a rolling 3-year period. Parents will not be issued with a third penalty notice.
- If the first penalty notice is paid within 21 days, the penalty is £80. If paid after 21 days, but within 28 days, the penalty is £160.
- If a second penalty notice is issued within a rolling 3-year period parents will not be given the opportunity to pay the lower amount and will be required to pay £160 within 28 days. Herefordshire Council will not accept part payment or payment after 28 days.
- If the national threshold is met for a third time (or subsequent times) to the same parent in respect of the same child within 3 years of the date of issue of the first or the penalty notice is not paid in full before the expiry date, Herefordshire Council may prosecute under S444(1) or (1A) of Education Act 1996.
- For the purpose of the escalation process, previous penalty notices include those not paid (where guilt was established in a court) but not those proceedings which were withdrawn.
- Once 3 years have elapsed since the first penalty notice was issued a further penalty notice can be issued, but in most cases, it would not be the most effective tool for changing what may have now become an entrenched pattern of behaviour.

If in an individual case Herefordshire Council believes a penalty notice would be appropriate, they retain the discretion to issue one before the threshold is met. Circumstances where this may apply include (not exhaustive):

- Several term time holidays below the threshold.
- Repeated absence for birthdays or family events
- When a parent purposefully tries to avoid a penalty notice by taking their child out of school when the school is open for four days for pupils and closed on the fifth day due to a bank holiday or training day.

There is no statutory right of appeal against the issuing of a penalty notice. Penalty notices may only be withdrawn for the following reasons: where it is determined that the notice should not have been issued; where the notice should not have been issued to the person named as the recipient; or where it appears to the Council that the notice contains material errors.

Excluded Pupil

For a child of compulsory school age who is a registered pupil at a school and is excluded from that school, either for a fixed period, or permanently, his/her parent/carer is guilty of an offence under Section 103 of the

Education and Inspections Act 2006 if: a) **the child in question is present in a public place during school hours without reasonable justification during the first five days of each and every period of exclusion;** b) the parent must have been notified by the school at the time of the exclusion of their duty and the dates the exclusion relates to; c) If all criteria are met, a penalty notice will be issued pursuant to section 105 Education and Inspections Act 2006 A 'Notice to Improve' will not be issued.

9. Monitoring arrangements

This policy will be reviewed as guidance from the local authority or DfE is updated, and as a minimum annually by the Head Teacher. At every review, the policy will be approved by the full governing board.

10. Links with other policies

This policy links to the following policies:

- Child protection and safeguarding policy
- Behaviour policy

Appendix 1: attendance codes

The following codes are taken from the DfE's guidance on school attendance.

Present Codes	
/ \	present during registration
B	educated off site and taster days and do not fit K, V, P or W codes
K	attending provision arranged by the local authority
L	arrived after the register has started but before it has closed
P	Sporting activity with prior agreement from school
V	educational visit or trip
W	work experience
Absent Codes	
Authorised Absences	
C	exceptional circumstances
C1	in a regulated performance/undertaking regulated employment abroad
C2	absent due to part-time timetable
D	dual registered
E	suspended or permanently excluded
I	illness (not medical or dental appointments)
J1	job/school/college interview
M	medical or dental appointment
Q	unable to attend because of a lack of access arrangements
R	religious observance (only 1 day allowed, any more coded as C if agreed)

S	study leave
T	parent travelling for occupational purposes
X	non-compulsory school age pupil not required to attend school
Y1	unable to attend due to transport provided not being available
Y2	unable to attend due to widespread transport disruption
Y3	unable to attend due to part of the school premises being closed
Y4	unable to attend due to whole school closure
Y5	unable to attend as pupil is in criminal justice detention
Y6	unable to attend in accordance with public health guidance or law
Y7	unable to attend due to other avoidable cause (must affect the pupil NOT the parent)
Unauthorised Absence	
G	holiday (not agreed)
N	reason for absence not yet established (must be corrected within 5 days)
O	absent in other or unknown circumstances
U	late after register has closed
Z	pupil not yet on register
#	planned whole school closure (eg holidays, insets and polling station days)