

Holy Family Catholic School



ATTENDANCE AND ABSENCE POLICY

**“Trying to make the world a better place, through creating a learning environment based on Gospel values, where all children and adults become better people.”
Holy Family School Mission Statement**

Last reviewed July 2023
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1. Aims

Our school aims to meet its obligations with regards to school attendance by:

- Promoting good attendance and reducing absence, including persistent absence
- Ensuring every pupil has access to full-time education to which they are entitled
- Acting early to address patterns of absence

We will also support parents to perform their legal duty to ensure their children of compulsory school age attend regularly and will promote and support punctuality in attending school.

Holy Family Catholic Primary School is committed to providing a full and efficient educational experience for all our pupils. Attendance is a critical factor to a productive and successful school career. Our school target is 95% attendance for every child. We give high priority to conveying to parents and pupils the importance of regular and punctual attendance through our newsletter and letters home.

We believe that good attendance requires working together. We encourage parents to work with us and inform us of anything that is causing difficulties with attendance. Equally, we believe in working with Slough Borough Council Attendance Service and other agencies to support families and improve attendance. It is essential that everyone involved in promoting attendance is clear about the important role it plays in supporting the raising standards and the provision of equal opportunities for all children. The whole school community is responsible for promoting full attendance such that children can have the opportunity to achieve their potential.

2. School procedures

2.1 Attendance register

By law, all schools (except those where all pupils are boarders) are required to keep an attendance register, and all pupils must be placed on this register.

The attendance register will be taken 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
- Unable to attend due to exceptional circumstances
- Absent

Pupils must arrive in school by **8.50am** (Year 3-6) and **9.00am** (Nursery, Reception, Year 1-2) on each school day.

Students arriving after these times must enter through the main reception and wait to be signed in by a member of staff.

The register for the first session will be taken at the above times.

The register for the second session will be taken at **1.35pm**.

2.2 Unplanned absence

Parents must notify the school via email on the first day of an unplanned absence – for example, if their child is unable to attend due to ill health – at the latest by **9.30am** or as soon as practically possible.

Absence due to illness will be authorised unless the school has a genuine concern about the authenticity of the illness. Where possible an attempt should be made to provide medical evidence, such as a doctor's note, prescription, appointment card or other form of evidence. Evidence is compulsory for illness lasting 5 or more days.

2.3 Following up absence

The school will follow up any absences to ascertain the reason, ensure proper safeguarding action is taken where necessary, identify whether the absence is approved or not and identify the correct attendance code to use. It is important parents email school. We expect to be notified every other day of the current situation in order to ascertain if we can authorise the absence.

2.4 Medical or dental appointments

Missing registration for a medical or dental appointment is counted as an authorised absence; advanced notice is required for authorising these absences and evidence of an appointment card or medical letter should be handed in upon arrival back to school.

However, we encourage parents 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 and registration periods avoided.

Applications for other types of absence in term time must also be made in advance. Information relating to whether the school can authorise such absences can be found in section 2.6 and 3.

2.5 Lateness and punctuality

A pupil who arrives late but before 9.30 will be marked as late, using the appropriate code. A pupil who arrives after 9.30 will be marked as absent for the first session, using the appropriate code.

2.6 Completion of leave of absence forms

Parents wishing to take their child out of school during term time for any reason, must complete a 'request for planned absence in term time' form, which is available from the school reception or via the website.

The Department for Education has removed any references to a family holiday or extended leave from attendance regulations, so this means that no school may grant leave of absence for holidays.

The school holiday dates are published a year in advance and are available on the website and from the school office. Family holidays need to be booked within these dates and are not deemed extreme circumstances.

Absences just prior to and following a school holiday will be unauthorised if parents do not provide medical evidence on request. This is to prevent absence due to extended holidays.

If the absence is not authorised, yet the pupil is absent, this will be considered unauthorised absence and a referral will be made to Slough Borough Council Attendance Service who may issue a penalty notice or fine-(explained in section 3.3). After 20 days of unauthorised absence, a pupil will be removed from the school roll and the place offered to another child.

If you are requesting any time off during term time, for any reason, you must fill in a request form beforehand.

2.7 Attendance at After School Clubs

Children are not expected to leave school early on a routine basis to attend sports, music, dance or drama clubs at any level. Occasional absence to attend local, regional and/or national performances or to be assessed by awarding bodies are likely to be authorised. Each request will be considered in light of distance and travel time. We support enriching activities however, it is expected that whenever possible all children will complete the school day.

3. Authorised and unauthorised absence

3.1 Authorised absence

Valid reasons for **authorised absence** include:

- Illness and medical/dental appointments – as explained in sections 2.2, 2.3 and 2.4
- Religious observance – where the day is exclusively set apart for religious observance by the religious body to which the pupil's parents belong. The school will authorise one day of absence per religious festival, up to a maximum of 3 days in any one academic year, on the day specifically set aside by the religious body of which the parent/carer is a member.
- Approved educational activity- Children who are educated off site, dual registered or who are engaged in supervised educational activities away from school premises,

need not be as authorised absent, and will be recorded as an approved educational activity. This means that for educational visits, or approved sporting activities children can be counted as statistically present. The nature of the activity must, however, be recorded by use of appropriate code. This is important to ensure that an accurate record of those children physically present on site at any given time is instantly available.

3.2 Unauthorised absence is where no explanation has been given for the child's absence or where the explanation offered is considered by the school to be unacceptable. Absence will not be authorised in the following circumstances:

- No explanation is offered by the parent/carer
- The explanation is unsatisfactory and is up to the head teacher's discretion
- Family holidays

3.3 Legal sanctions

Schools can fine parents for the unauthorised absence of their child from school, where the child is of compulsory school age.

If issued with a penalty notice, parents must pay £60 within 21 days or £120 within 28 days. This is on a per parent per child basis. The payment must be made directly to the local authority. In every case a pupil must have had a minimum of 5 school days lost to unauthorised absence during the current term or 10 school days lost to unauthorised absence in 2 consecutive terms before a Penalty Notice is considered. In cases of unauthorised absence parents/carers will receive a written warning of the possibility of the Penalty Notice being issued from Slough Borough Council Attendance Service. This will state the extent of the child's absences and give parents/ carers 15 days to bring an improvement. In that time the child should have no unauthorised absences from school.

For unauthorised holiday taken for 5 consecutive days or more; an instant fine can be issued with no warning.

The decision on whether to issue a penalty notice ultimately rests with the head teacher, following the local authority's code of conduct for issuing penalty notices. This may take into account:

- A 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 the parent or withdraw the notice.

4. Reporting to parents

In a child's end of year report an attendance record will be included.

We continually monitor each child's attendance and any patterns of absence will be recorded and the head teacher made aware of. We will contact the parents of a child whose attendance raises concerns.

Below 90% is regarded as **persistent absence** by the DfE. At the end of each term we identify all those pupils who have met the persistent absence threshold and issue a courtesy letter informing parents. We then monitor the pupils' attendance and hope to see a pattern of unbroken weeks developing. This will be formally recorded in a letter to parents that will set clear targets for improved attendance and outline the following procedures and next steps. We work closely with Slough Borough Council Attendance Service and will make referrals for cases that continue to cause concern.

The DfE target for every child is 95% attendance. A child's attendance directly affects their performance at school. Each day of absence a child misses five hours of learning which will never be repeated. During the spring term, attendance will be monitored and children whose attendance falls below 95% will receive a letter encouraging improved attendance.

Lateness

It is a legal requirement that children are in school by the published times. School is legally obliged to inform Slough Borough Council Attendance Service of any child who is persistently late for school.

Any child who has **6 or more** late markings in a term will be sent a letter home. If they continue to arrive late they will have their name passed to Slough Borough Council Attendance Service and they will speak to parents regarding this issues.

5. Strategies for promoting attendance

We recognise and reward outstanding attendance. At the end of the school year students who have 100% attendance will be presented with a certificate. Such achievement is highly valued and shows thorough commitment to their school career.

6. Monitoring arrangements

This policy will be reviewed every two years. At every review, the policy will be shared with the governing board.

7. Links with other policies

This policy is linked to our Child Protection and Safeguarding policies.