

Holy Family Catholic School



ATTENDANCE FOR LEARNING 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**

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Contents

1. Aims
2. Legal Framework
3. Roles and Responsibilities
4. Definitions
5. Attendance Expectations
6. School Procedures
7. Authorised and Unauthorised Absences
8. Attendance Intervention
9. Working with Parents to Improve Attendance
10. Legal Sanctions

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. Legal framework

This policy has due regard to all relevant legislation and statutory guidance including, but not limited to, the following:

- Education Act 1996
- Equality Act 2010
- The Education (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2006 (As amended)
- The Children (Performances and Activities) (England) Regulations 2014

- Children and Young Persons Act 1963
- DfE (2024) 'Working together to improve school attendance'
- DfE (2024) 'Keeping children safe in education (KCSIE) 2024'
- DfE (2024) 'Children missing education'
- DfE (2024) 'Providing remote education'
- DfE (2024) 'Summary table of responsibilities for school attendance'

This policy operates in conjunction with the following school policies:

- Child Protection and Safeguarding Policy
- Complaints Procedures Policy
- Behaviour Policy
- SEND Policy
- Supporting Pupils with Medical Conditions Policy
- Pupils with Additional Health Needs Attendance Policy

3. Roles and responsibilities

The governing board has overall responsibility for:

- Monitoring the implementation of this policy and all relevant procedures across the school
- Promoting the importance of good attendance through the school's ethos and policies
- Arranging attendance training for all relevant staff that is appropriate to their role
- Working with the SLT to set goals for attendance and providing support and challenge around delivery against those goals
- Regularly reviewing attendance data
- Sharing effective practice on attendance management and improvement across schools
- Ensuring that this policy, as written, does not discriminate on any grounds, including, but not limited to, ethnicity/national origin, culture, religion, gender, disability or sexual orientation
- Handling complaints regarding this policy as outlined in the school's Complaints Procedures Policy
- Having regard to KCSIE when making arrangements to safeguard and promote the welfare of children

The headteacher is responsible for:

- The overall strategic approach to attendance in school
- The day-to-day implementation and management of this policy and all relevant procedures across the school
- Appointing a member of the SLT to the attendance officer role
- Ensuring all parents are aware of the school's attendance expectations and procedures
- Ensuring that every pupil has access to full-time education and will act as early as possible to address patterns of absence

The designated senior leader responsible for attendance 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
- Arranging calls and meetings with parents to address attendance issues
- Delivering targeted intervention and support to pupils and families

The designated senior leader responsible for attendance at Holy Family Catholic School is Louise Clarke and she can be contacted via the school office or using attendance@hfcs.org.uk.

The attendance officer is responsible for:

- Working with SLT in developing a clear vision for improving attendance
- Working with SLT in monitoring attendance and the impact of interventions
- Analysing attendance data and identifying areas of intervention and improvement
- Communicating with parents with regard to attendance
- Leading a compassionate approach when listening to parents regarding barriers to attendance
- Following up on incidents of persistent poor attendance
- Enforcing attendance through statutory interventions in cases of persistent poor attendance where other supports have not succeeded
- Alongside the Admissions Officer, informing the LA of any pupil being deleted from the admission and attendance registers
- Working with Educational Welfare Officers and the School Nurse Team to tackle persistent absentees
- Advising the headteacher when to issue penalty notices

The Attendance Officer at Holy Family Catholic School is Emma Oakes, and can be contacted via the school office or by using attendance@hfcs.org.uk.

Staff are responsible for:

- Following this policy and ensuring pupils do so too
- Modelling good attendance behaviour
- Where designated, taking the attendance register at the relevant times during the school day

Parents are responsible for:

- Providing accurate and up-to-date contact details.
- Providing the school with more than one emergency contact number.
- The attendance of their children at school.
- Promoting good attendance with their children.
- Proactively engaging with any attendance support offered by the school and the LA.
- Notifying the school as soon as possible when their child has to be unexpectedly absent.
- Requesting leave of absence only in exceptional circumstances, using the 'Withdrawal from Learning Request in Term Time' form and in advance.
- Booking any medical appointments outside school hours where possible.
- Following any family-based support implemented by the school to improve attendance.

4. Definitions

Absence:

- Arrival at school after the register has closed
- Not attending the registered school for any reason

Authorised absence:

- An absence for sickness for which the school has granted leave
- Medical or dental appointments which unavoidably fall during school time, for which the school has granted leave
- Religious or cultural observances for which the school has granted leave

Unauthorised absence:

- Parents keeping children off school unnecessarily or without reason
- Truancy before or during the school day
- Absences which have never been properly explained
- Arrival at school after the register has closed
- Absence due to day trips and holidays in term-time which have not been agreed
- Leaving school for no reason during the day

Persistent absence (PA):

- Missing 10 percent or more of schooling across the year for any reason

Missing education

- Not registered at a school and not receiving suitable education in a setting other than a school

5. Attendance Expectations

The school has high expectations for pupils' attendance and punctuality, and ensures that these expectations are communicated regularly to parents and pupils. Pupils will be expected to attend school punctually every day they are required to be at school, for the full day.

The school day starts at 8:50am, and pupils will be in their classroom, ready to begin lessons at this time. Registers will be taken as follows throughout the school day:

- The morning register will be marked at 8:50am. Pupils will receive a late mark if they are not in their classroom by this time. Pupils attending after this time will receive a mark to show that they were on site, but this will count as a late mark.
- The morning register will close at 9:10am. Pupils will receive a mark of absence if they do not attend school before this time.
- The afternoon register will be marked by 1:35pm. Pupils will receive a mark of absence if they are not present.

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. School procedures**6.1 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
- Absent
- Attending an approved educational visit

Pupils must arrive in school by **8.50am** 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 afternoon session will be taken at **1.35pm**.

The school uses SIMS to keep attendance registers to ensure they are as accurate as possible and can be easily analysed and shared with the appropriate authorities.

Designated staff members will take the attendance register at the start of each school day and at the start of the afternoon session. This register will record whether pupils are:

- Present
- Absent
- Attending an approved educational visit

The school will use the national attendance codes to ensure attendance and absence are monitored and recorded in a consistent way.

When the school has planned in advance to be fully or partially closed, the code ‘#’ will be used for the relevant pupils who are absent. This code will also be used to record year groups who are not due to attend because the school has set different term dates for different years, e.g. induction days. Pupils who are absent from school but are receiving remote education for any reason will be marked as absent in the register.

Every entry received into the attendance register will be preserved for three years.

6.2 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 **9.00am** or as soon as practically possible. Where a pupil is absent, and their parent has not contacted the school by 9:00am to report the absence, the attendance officer will contact the parent by telephone as soon as is practicable on the first day that they do not attend school.

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. Evidence of illness should be provided by the child’s registered GP.

6.3 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 ascertain if we can authorise the absence. The school will not request medical evidence in most circumstances where a pupil is absent due to illness; the school does, however, reserve the right to request supporting evidence where there is genuine and reasonable doubt about the authenticity of the illness, or if the illness is immediately prior to or following a school holiday.

In the case of persistent absenteeism, arrangements will be made for parents to speak to the attendance officer. The school will inform the LA, on a termly basis, of the pupils who fail to attend regularly, or who have missed 10 school days or more without authorisation.

If a pupil's attendance drops below 90%, the attendance officer will take steps to encourage and support parents to improve this rate; if no improvements are seen, a formal meeting will be arranged with the Headteacher and the child's parents.

Where a pupil has not returned to school for 10 days after an authorised absence, or is absent from school without authorisation for 20 consecutive school days, the school will remove the pupil from the admissions register if the school and LA have failed to establish the whereabouts of the pupil after making reasonable enquiries.

6.4 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. 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.

6.5 Lateness and punctuality

A pupil who arrives late but before 9.10 will be marked as late, using the appropriate code.

A pupil who arrives after 9.10 will be marked as absent for the first session, using the appropriate code.

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 issue.

6.6 Applying to Withdraw a Child from Learning in Term Time

Parents must do their best to avoid taking their children out of school for any reason. Term-time leave is only allowed in exceptional circumstances communicated in advance, with evidence provided, as soon as possible to the headteacher. Parents wishing to take their child out of school during term time for any reason, must complete a 'Request for Withdrawal from Learning in Term Time' form, which is available from the school reception or via the website. Requests made via email, and not using the request form, will not be considered.

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.

School will send a notification for a penalty notice to be issued by the Local Authority 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 £80 within 21 days or £160 within 28 days. This is on a per parent per child basis. The payment must be made directly to the local authority, not school. 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 Penalty Notices Guidance 2024. 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.

6.7 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.

7. Authorised and unauthorised absence

7.1 Authorised absence

Valid reasons for **authorised absence** include:

- Illness and medical/dental appointments – as explained in sections 6.2, and 6.4
- 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.

- Gypsy, Roma and Traveller absence – where a pupil’s parent belongs to a community covered by this code and is travelling for occupational purposes, the parent will be expected to request a leave of absence for their child at least 2 weeks in advance. Absences will not be granted for pupils from these communities under this code for reasons other than travel for occupational purposes.

7.2 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

7.3 Child Missing Education

The school will inform the LA of any pupil who will be deleted from the admission register where they:

- Have been taken out of school by their parent and are being educated outside the school system, e.g. home-schooled
- Have ceased to attend school and no longer live within a reasonable distance of the school
- Have been certified by the school medical officer as unlikely to be in a fit state of health to attend school before ceasing to be of compulsory school age, and neither they nor their parent has indicated the intention to continue to attend the school after ceasing to be of compulsory school age
- Are in custody for a period of more than four months due to a final court order, and the school does not reasonably believe they will be returning at the end of that period
- Have been permanently excluded
- Have been registered at another school where it is not indicated this should be the case
- Are registered at more than one school, but have failed to attend the school and the proprietor of any other schools concerned have consented to the deletion
- Have been granted authorised leave but have failed to attend school within 10 school days after the period of authorised absence ended, and:
 - There is reason to believe the pupil is not unable to attend school
 - The LA and school are unable to determine the pupil’s whereabouts after making joint reasonable enquiries
- Have been continuously absent from school for a period of at least 20 school days, and:
 - The absence was not authorised
 - There is reason to believe the pupil is not unable to attend school
 - The LA and school are unable to determine the pupil’s whereabouts after making joint reasonable enquiries

The school will notify the LA that a pupil is to be removed from the admissions register as soon as any of the above criteria are met, and no later than the time at which the pupil’s name is actually removed.

If a pupil's name is to be removed from the admissions register, the school will provide the LA with the following information:

- The full name of the pupil
- The full name and address of any parent with whom the pupil lives
- At least one telephone number of the parent with whom the pupil lives
- The full name and address of the parent who the pupil is going to live with and the date the pupil is expected to start living there, if applicable
- The name of the pupil's new school and their expected start date, if applicable
- The grounds for removal from the admissions register under Regulation 8 of the Education (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2006 (as amended), as outlined in this policy.

Where the name of a pupil with a social worker is to be removed from the admissions register, the school will inform the pupil's social worker.

8. Attendance Intervention

In order to ensure the school has effective procedures for managing absence, the attendance officer, supported by the SLT, will:

- Identify a range of evidence-based interventions to address barriers to attendance
- Monitor the implementation and quality of escalation procedures and seek robust evidence of the escalation procedures that work
- Attend or lead attendance reviews in line with escalation procedures
- Establish robust escalation procedures which will be initiated before absence becomes a problem by:
 - Communicating regularly with parents.
 - Meeting regularly with the attendance team in school, which is made up of the Attendance Officer and members of SLT.
 - Engaging with LA attendance teams.
 - Using fixed penalty notices.
 - Creating attendance clinics.

The school will use attendance data to develop specific strategies to improve attendance where patterns of absence are emerging. These strategies will be developed on a case-by-case basis, and will consider the particular needs of the pupils whom the intervention is designed to target.

9. Working with parents to improve attendance

The school will work to cultivate strong, respectful relationships with parents and families to ensure their trust and engagement. Open and honest communication will be maintained with pupils and their families about the expectations of school life, attendance and performance so that they understand what to expect and what is expected of them. The school will liaise with other agencies working with pupils and their families to support attendance, e.g. social services.

The school will ensure that parents are aware of their legal duty to ensure that their child attends school regularly and to facilitate their child's legal right to a full-time education – parents will be made aware that this means their child must attend school every day that it is open, save for in certain circumstances, e.g. sickness or absences that have been authorised by the headteacher in advance. The school will regularly inform parents about their child's levels of attendance, absence and punctuality, and will ensure that parents are aware of the benefits that regular attendance at school can have for their child educationally, socially and developmentally.

If a pattern of absence becomes problematic, the attendance officer will work collaboratively with the pupil and their parents to improve attendance by addressing the specific barriers that prevent the pupil from being able to attend school regularly. The school will always take into consideration the sensitivity of some of the reasons for pupil absence and will approach families to offer support rather than immediately reach for punitive approaches.

Where these barriers are related to the pupil's experience in school, e.g. bullying, the attendance officer will work with the headteacher and any relevant school staff, e.g. the DSL and SENCO, to address this. Where the barriers are outside of the school's control, e.g. they are related to issues within the pupil's family, the attendance officer will liaise with any relevant external agencies or authorities, e.g. the school nurse, children's social care or the LA, and will encourage parents to access support that they may need.

10. Legal sanctions

The school will allow sufficient time for attendance interventions and engagement strategies to improve pupils' attendance; however, where engagement strategies to improve attendance have not had the desired effect after one term, the attendance officer will consider:

- Holding a formal meeting with parents and the school's point of contact in the School Attendance Support Team.
- Working with the LA to put a parenting contract or an education supervision order in place.
- Engaging children's social care where there are safeguarding concerns.

Where the above measures are not effective, the headteacher will issue a notice to improve as a final opportunity for parents to engage in support and improve attendance before a penalty notice is considered. Where a pupil reaches the national threshold of ten sessions of unauthorised absence in a rolling period of ten school weeks, the school will consider whether a penalty notice is appropriate. Each case will be considered individually to determine whether a penalty notice or another tool or legal intervention should be used to improve attendance. A fixed penalty notice will be issued in line with the LA's code of conduct and the DfE's '[Working together to improve school attendance](#)' guidance. Penalty notices for unauthorised absences will be charged at £160, reduced to £80 if paid within twenty-one days. A penalty notice of £120 may also be issued where parents allow their child to be present in a public place during school hours without reasonable justification during the first five days of a fixed period or permanent exclusion. This will be reduced to £80 if paid within twenty-one days.

Parents will only get up to two fines for the same child in a three-year period. Once this limit has been reached, other action such as a parenting order or prosecution will be considered. Where attendance still does not improve following a fixed penalty notice, the school will work with the LA to take forward attendance prosecution as a last resort. Parents who are prosecuted and attend court because their child has not been attending school may be fined up to £2,500.

Education Supervision Orders (ESOs)

Where interventions have not been successful, an ESO can be an alternative to provide formal legal intervention without criminal prosecution. ESOs are made through the Family or High Court and give the LA a formal role in supporting the pupil and parents to improve their attendance. LAs will issue parents with a notice of the intention to consider an ESO, set up a meeting to discuss with the parent and pupil, and decide whether the case will be taken forward.

Once an ESO is secured, a supervisor from the local authority will decide any actions or requirements. These may include:

- Requiring the parents to attend support meetings

- Requiring the parents to attend a parenting programme
- Requiring the parents to access support services
- Requiring an assessment by an educational psychologist
- Review meetings involving all parties to be held every three months

Failing to comply with an ESO will result in a fine and decisions will be made about whether further action is required.

This policy will be reviewed every two years. At every review, the policy will be shared with the Local Academy Committee.

