



# St. John Fisher

CATHOLIC COMPREHENSIVE SCHOOL

## **ATTENDANCE POLICY (Draft)**

### The Mission Statement:

**'St. John Fisher Catholic Comprehensive School inspires students, spiritually and educationally, forming them through Faith so they can achieve their aspirations and contribute to their community.'**

Date of Review:	16 <sup>th</sup> February 2023
Next Review:	September 2023
Date of Ratification:	To be ratified March 2023
Chair of Governors:	Mr Clive Mailing
Policy owner:	V Walker (Deputy Headteacher)

## Attendance at School

St John Fisher School seeks to ensure that all its pupils receive a full-time education. Through good attendance at school pupils will be able to maximise their opportunities and be helped to realise their scholastic potential. A high attendance rate in lessons helps pupils prepare for and achieve in examinations. Attainment at school is hampered by time away from class. The Attendance Advisory Service for Schools and Academies will work closely with the school in order to promote regular attendance and punctuality.

### Staff Information and Contact Details

Ms. Walker ([v.walker@stjohnfisher.school](mailto:v.walker@stjohnfisher.school)) is the senior leader responsible for the strategic approach to attendance in school.

The following staff can also be contacted with regards to attendance:

Mrs. Lennon	Headteacher (responsible for authorising holidays in term time and overall authority of all attendance)	<a href="mailto:d.lennon@stjohnfisher.school">d.lennon@stjohnfisher.school</a>
Mr. Issaka	Lead Practitioner for Attendance (responsible for day-to-day leadership of attendance strategy)	<a href="mailto:s.issaka@stjohnfisher.school">s.issaka@stjohnfisher.school</a>
Mrs. Simpson	Family Liaison Officer (can provide more detailed support on attendance and link in with social services support)	<a href="mailto:j.simpson@stjohnfisher.school">j.simpson@stjohnfisher.school</a>
Mrs. Puddy	Attendance Officer (responsible for day-to-day management of attendance, taking first day of absence calls)	<a href="mailto:a.puddy@stjohnfisher.school">a.puddy@stjohnfisher.school</a>
Mr. Thompson, Mr. Oni, Mr. O'Halloran Ms. Tabiri Mr. Jennings	Heads of Year (can arrange interventions to support pupil in school)	<a href="mailto:c.thompson@stjohnfisher.school">c.thompson@stjohnfisher.school</a> <a href="mailto:s.oni@stjohnfisher.school">s.oni@stjohnfisher.school</a> <a href="mailto:d.ohalloran@stjohnfisher.school">d.ohalloran@stjohnfisher.school</a> <a href="mailto:e.tabiri@stjohnfisher.school">e.tabiri@stjohnfisher.school</a> <a href="mailto:a.jennings@stjohnfisher.school">a.jennings@stjohnfisher.school</a>

## Underlying Principles

The Attendance Policy contributes to the five outcomes of Every Child Matters agenda. That is:

1. To enjoy and achieve
2. To stay safe
3. To be healthy
4. To participate positively
5. To become economically independent

All pupils are encouraged to attend school every day of the 190 days that school is open. The register is called twice daily, and pupils are expected to be present for the 380 sessions, or half-days. That leaves 175 days for family holidays, shopping trips and other needs.

DFE guidance states that 'The pupils with the highest attainment at the end of key stage 2 and key stage 4 have higher rates of attendance over the key stage compared to those with the lowest attainment.'<sup>1</sup>.

St John Fisher Catholic Comprehensive School supports the government guidance that pupils should maintain a minimum of 96% attendance for all pupils. Many of our pupils achieve 100% attendance over one, two or three terms. Some pupils achieve 100% attendance over more than one year. Pupils, parents, and staff are rightly proud of such remarkable achievement.

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[https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/1073616/Working\\_together\\_to\\_improve\\_school\\_attendance.pdf](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/1073616/Working_together_to_improve_school_attendance.pdf), p.7

## Student Attendance Policy

### Timings of the School Day

Time	Session
8.00- 8.30am	Breakfast Club (normal canteen prices apply)
8.35-8.55am	Form Time: Preparation for learning, prayer and reflection AM register taken between 8.35-8.50a.m.
8.55-10.00am	Session 1
10.00-11.05am	Session 2
11.05-11.20am	Break
11.20-12.25pm	Session 3
12.25-2.00pm	Session 4a/b (Split Lunch): Early Lunch 12.25-12.55pm, Late Lunch 1.30-2.00pm PM register taken between 2.00-2.15pm on all days except Wednesday, when it is taken between 12.00-12.05pm. <b>**Wednesday early exit for students at 2.00pm</b>
2.00-3.05pm	Session 5

### Unauthorised Absence

The law of England and Wales is quite clear about absence from school. In the school register schools **must** differentiate between authorised and unauthorised absence.

**Authorised absence** is where the school has either given approval in advance for a pupil of compulsory school age to be out of school or has accepted an explanation offered afterwards as satisfactory justification for absence. All other absences must be treated as **unauthorised**

- Parents may not authorise any absence, only the Head Teacher can do this.
- Parentally condoned unauthorised absence can be a problem as it means disruption to a child's education. The Headteacher need not accept a parental explanation for a child's absence whether written, telephoned or given in person and where parentally-condoned absence appears to be a problem, the school's independent Attendance Advisor will be involved at an early stage.
- If there are ten unauthorised absences in a six-week period, a referral will be made by the school to Medway's Attendance Advisory Service for Schools and Academies (AASSA) requesting the issue of a penalty notice being served to each parent/ carer that resides with the child.

## Persistent Absence

The flow chart below demonstrates the process that the school follows with regard to persistent absentees.



## Holidays

As a school we prioritise teaching and learning, therefore, in accordance with the school's attendance policy and DfE guidelines, St John Fisher Catholic Comprehensive School will not authorise holidays during term time.

Permission, however, may be granted only in exceptional circumstances, when the benefit of the absence far outweighs the benefit of school attendance. A request for such absence should be made in writing to the Headteacher.

When requesting leave of absence during term time may you be reminded that 10 days of absence equates to 20 sessions missed schooling which is equivalent to 5.2% of absence.

### Notes on Holidays:

- A formal application must be made in writing, IN ADVANCE, to the Headteacher via the email [headteacher@stjohnfisher.school](mailto:headteacher@stjohnfisher.school)
- Permission sought after a holiday has been taken will not be granted.
- The Anti-Social Behaviour Act 2003 has made it possible that certain cases of unauthorised absence can be dealt with by way of a penalty notice. These penalty notices will require the recipient to pay currently £60.00 if paid within 21 days or £120.00 if paid within 28 days. A penalty notice will be issued to each parent/ carer that resides with the child. Non- payment of the penalty notice will result in prosecution in the Criminal Court.
- If a Parent or Carer request for a term holiday is refused, but the holiday taken, it will be recorded as unauthorised absence and a referral will be made by the school to Medway's Attendance Advisory Service for Schools and Academies (AASSA) requesting the issue of a penalty notice being served to each parent/ carer that resides with the child.
- If the parent/ carer removes a student from their education for the purpose of a suspected holiday without advising the school this will be referred to the Independent Attendance Adviser to conduct a home visit. On the third day of absence a letter will be sent requesting that the parent/ carer contacts the school within 2 days to confirm the reason for absence. If there is no one at home during the home visit, and no response is made to the letter left, it will be assumed to be a holiday absence. A referral will be made by the school to Medway's Attendance Advisory Service for Schools and Academies (AASSA) requesting the issue of a penalty notice being served to each parent/ carer that resides with the child.

## **Illness, medical and dental appointments**

If your child is too sick to attend school, please report your child's absence on the first day of absence, either by contacting the Attendance Officer, Mrs. Puddy, or by completing the absence reporting page on the school website at <https://stjohnfisher.school/home/contact/report-absence/>.

If your child does not attend school by 9am and we have not had confirmation of absence via the mechanisms above, the Attendance Officer will make a first day of absence call to the parent / carer to ascertain why the child is absent. Repeated failure to respond to first day of absence calls from either parent / carer or other emergency contacts will be referred to the school's Independent Attendance Adviser to make a home visit.

As far as possible medical appointments should be made outside of school hours. Medical appointments can count as authorised absence, but the Pastoral Care Leader (PCL) will need to see proof of their appointment. Hospital Consultant appointments will be classed as authorised absence; however, proof of appointment must be shown to the Pastoral Care Leader (PCL). If the authenticity of illness is in doubt, medical evidence may be requested. This may be in the form of doctor's note, sight of prescription or sight of prescribed medication etc. All medical evidence will be passed to the attendance officer who will then update records with the correct DfE register codes.

## **Days of religious observance**

This is absence to take part in any day set aside exclusively for religious observance by the religious body to which the parents belong, including religious festivals. Parents should give advance notice.

**Interviews** with prospective employers, Further Education (FE) or for a place at another school. The school will ask for advance notice and proof of appointment such as a letter or invitation.

## **Study Leave**

Study leave is granted sparingly and is for Year 11 and 13 students only. This leave of absence may vary from year to year depending on school arrangements. Study leave when granted will be notified to parents/carers and students in advance and will be close to or during the external examination period.

## Exclusions

A student excluded for a fixed term remains on roll and the absence is authorised while the student is requested to stay at home. If the exclusion is for longer than five days and the student is required to attend 6<sup>th</sup> day provision, failure to attend this will not be authorised. Permanent exclusions from St John Fisher School are rare but during the period of appeal or review, the absence is authorised. A student's name may be removed from the roll on the first school day after the day on which:

1. The independent appeal panel upholds the permanent exclusion
2. The independent appeal panel does not uphold the permanent exclusion, but does not direct the student to be reinstated
3. The prescribed period for lodging an appeal has expired and the parent/carer has not lodged an appeal
4. The parent has, before the expiry of the prescribed period, advised the LA in writing that he/she does not intend to appeal

## Lateness to school

All students are asked to arrive punctually to school. Punctuality is taken seriously by the school.

- Students must arrive at school by 8.30 a.m., when the gates close.
- Students then have five minutes to move to registration. They must be with their tutor by 8.35a.m. or are otherwise late for school.
- Students who arrive after 8.35 a.m. will need to report to the late room, located in the Canteen, instead of going to form. They enter the City Way site via main reception and sign in with their Pastoral Care Leader.

Students arriving after the close of registration at 9.00a.m. will have an unauthorised mark for the morning session. They enter the City Way site via main reception and sign in with the receptionist there. A copy of each day's late lists will then be passed to Mrs. Puddy, Attendance Officer.

### Sanctions:

- When a student arrives after 8.35a.m., they are sanctioned with a ten-minute detention after school. This detention is run nightly by the Head of Year and Assistant Head of Year in their chosen venue. (PCLs should be on the gate to check that late students do not just leave).
- Sixth formers who arrive after 8.35am ~~will not be permitted to go out for lunch and must stay onsite for period 5. They~~ will then complete a ten-minute detention after school with their Head of Year / Assistant Head of Year.
- Students who fail to attend their ten minute detention will then be kept for a thirty minute detention after school the following day.



**Rewards:**

- Students who have no late morning / afternoon marks will be rewarded with a free trip to celebrate their achievement. (Please note that this is purely for punctuality and their attendance is not contingent upon this unless in exceptional circumstances – e.g. a child who has 5% attendance but is always on time for those days). Trips will be at the discretion of the Head of Year, Senior Leadership Team and SLT line manager for attendance.

Where a student has 3 late marks after close of registration, a letter will be sent by the School advising of our concerns and request medical evidence for each late session. The child's PCL will also have a conversation with them to emphasise the importance of good punctuality.

Further lates after close of registration (a 'U' code is an unauthorised absence) will be referred to the school's independent attendance advisor. If students have ten unauthorised absences in a six-week period a referral will be made by the school to the AASSA requesting the issue of a penalty notice being served to each parent/ carer that resides with the child. This is £120 per parent/carer if paid within 28 days, £60 if paid within 21 days. Unpaid penalty notices are referred to the Magistrate Court.

## Sixth Form Attendance

Although not subject to the same legal framework as attendance in Years 7-11, students in sixth form are still expected to maintain an attendance rate of 96% or above in order to maximise their academic potential. The flow chart below shows the process that the school will follow to encourage students to maintain a good level of attendance.



## **Rewards and Incentives**

Certificates will be awarded to those who have 100% attendance at the end of terms 2, 4 and 6. This will be presented during celebration assemblies held by the Head of Year.

## **Electing for Home Education**

Parents have the right to home-educate their children. Medway Council monitors elective home education through a dedicated post within the Inclusion Team. The Inclusion Team manager oversees notification of children educated at home, or parents who are considering removing their child from school to educate at home. There is a clear process in place to track the progress of elective home education and it is undertaken jointly through multi-disciplinary co-operation.

- Parents inform the school that they intend to remove their child from school roll to 'educate otherwise'. This intention should be made in writing from parents / carers.
- The school will forward this correspondence from the parent / carer, as well as the letter they send back to the parent and a copy of form EAH 01, to the Medway Home Education Team.
- Further information is gathered by the Inclusion Team to inform of the next action. If appropriate, contact is made with parents to offer mediation and possible support in school/academy.
- Contact is made by the Home Education Advisor to meet and offer advice and guidance on the education being provided. This is usually at the home address, but other alternative venues can be offered.
- If there are concerns regarding the education provided and it is deemed inadequate, parents/carers will be advised to register their child/children at a school/academy. If this does not happen a report (must be submitted) to the Medway AASSA for the purpose of pursuing a School Attendance Order, if appropriate.

St John Fisher Catholic Comprehensive School will notify Medway local authority of an elected home-education pupil via Medway's referral form. On receipt of a referral the information will be logged onto the database, which will trigger immediate action.

## **Children Missing in Education**

If a child has left St John Fisher School with no forwarding school or academy:

- The attendance officer will make a referral to the independent Attendance Advisor with as much information about the child as is known by the school.
- The independent Attendance Advisor makes enquiries, including a home visit. If this visit clarifies that the child and family have left the home, this information will be passed to the school's Attendance Officer who will complete a Child Missing in Education (CME) form and pass to Medway Local Authority's (LA) CME department.

The local authority CME team will then carry out the following checks:

- Council tax/benefit systems checked.
- Enquiries made of partners and other agencies including Children's Social Care and partner agencies with responsibility for housing to establish any additional risks to young person.
- Students will only be off rolled after consultation and agreement from the LA's CME officer.

## **Roles and Responsibilities**

### **Governing Body**

The Governing Body must ensure the attendance policy is regularly reviewed and, where necessary, revised.

### **Headteacher**

The Headteacher is responsible for ensuring the policy is made available to all staff appointees and to parents/carers who request to read it. The Headteacher must ensure the policy is regularly reviewed and where necessary revised and ratified by the governing body.

### **Medway AASSA**

The AASSA is responsible for progressing penalty notices and, where necessary, applying full cases to the Magistrate Court where a penalty notice has been unpaid.

### **Deputy Headteacher Pastoral**

- Regular liaising with the Lead Practitioner for Attendance
- Policy drafting
- Reports to governors on school attendance issues

### **Lead Practitioner for Attendance**

- Referrals to the independent Attendance Advisor
- Regular liaising with the Independent Attendance Advisor and Attendance Officer
- Monitoring of attendance systems and structures

### **Independent Attendance Advisor**

The independent Attendance Advisor works closely with the Lead Practitioner for Attendance and the Attendance Officer who has responsibility for attendance. Attendance panels, to which parents and students are invited, may be held to deal with problems concerning attendance and punctuality. The independent Attendance Advisor will also liaise with Medway AASSA over matters relating to penalty notices or court proceedings.

### **Attendance Officer and Pastoral Care Leaders**

- Raising awareness with parents/ carers regarding attendance concerns, including truancy. External truancy will be addressed by the attendance officer and referred to the independent Attendance Advisor for investigation and to the AASSA for a penalty notice if necessary. Internal truancy will be addressed by the year teams.
- Liaising with school nurse regarding students with medical needs
- Liaising with any students with rising attendance concerns
- Contacting parents/carers of students on the first day of absence
- Communicating with parents/carers in the event of unauthorised absence
- Keeping data updated on a daily basis
- Liaising with Lead Practitioner for Attendance

### **Staff**

- Keeping an accurate register in line with procedure for SIMs registration
- Celebrating good attendance with students/form
- Take appropriate action to counteract lateness to form/classes

### **Students**

- To ensure that they attend school every day unless they are genuinely unwell and unfit to come to school, being mindful of the government minimum required attendance of 96%.
- To arrive to school on time every day.

### **Parents**

- To ensure their child's attendance at school, being mindful of the school's expectation of 96% attendance.
- To ensure that their child arrives to school on time.

- To fulfil their legal expectation to inform the school of any absence for their child using the published numbers and supply any evidence required to support this absence as and when requested.