



St. John Fisher

CATHOLIC COMPREHENSIVE SCHOOL

ATTENDANCE POLICY

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:	10 th September 2023
Next Review:	August 2024
Date of Ratification:	25 th September 2023
Chair of Governors:	Mr Owen McColghan

Policy owner:	E Bailey (Assistant Headteacher)
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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

Mrs. Bailey (e.bailey@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)	headteacher@stjohnfisher.school
Mrs. Simpson / Ms. Robb	Family Liaison Officer and Assistant FLO (can provide more detailed support on attendance and link in with social services support)	j.simpson@stjohnfisher.school n.robbs@stjohnfisher.school
Mrs. Puddy	Attendance Officer (responsible for day-to-day management of attendance, taking first day of absence calls)	attendance@stjohnfisher.school
Ms. Tabiri, Mrs. Field, Ms. Clarke, Mr. Oni, Mr. Jennings	Heads of Year (can arrange interventions to support pupils in school)	e.tabiri@stjohnfisher.school a.field@stjohnfisher.school l.clarke@stjohnfisher.school a.jennings@stjohnfisher.school s.oni@stjohnfisher.school

Underlying Principles

The 2022 Department for Education document, [*Working Together to Improve Attendance*¹](#), states that:

‘Improving attendance is everyone’s business. The barriers to accessing education are wide and complex, both within and beyond the school gates, and are often specific to individual pupils and families. The foundation of securing good attendance is that school is a calm, orderly, safe, and supportive environment where all pupils want to be and are keen and ready to learn.’

The Department for Education has published [a parent-friendly version of this guidance](#).

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.’².

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.

¹

https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/1099677/Working_together_to_improve_school_attendance.pdf, p.6

²

https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/1073616/Working_together_to_improve_school_attendance.pdf, p.7

Pupil Attendance Policy

Timings of the School Day

Time	Session
8.00- 8.30am	Breakfast Club (normal canteen prices apply)
8.30-8.50am	Form Time: Preparation for learning, prayer and reflection AM register taken between 8.35-8.50am A pupil is marked late if they arrive onsite or to form after 8.35am They will be given an unauthorised absence mark if they arrive onsite after 9am.
8.50-9.55am	Session 1
9.55-11.00am	Session 2
11.00-11.15am	Break
11.15am-12.20pm	Session 3
12.20-1.25pm	Session 4 PM register taken between 12.20-12.30pm A pupil will be marked late if they arrive to lesson or to school after 12.25pm They will be given an unauthorised absence mark for the afternoon session if they arrive onsite after 12.45pm.
1.25-2.10pm	Lunch Wednesday: early exit at 2pm
2.10-3.15pm	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 pupil's absence whether written, telephoned or given in person and where parentally-condoned absence appears to be a problem, the School Attendance Team 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 pupil, resulting in a £60 Penalty Notice, increasing to £120 if not paid within 21 days.
- Failure to pay the penalty notice, within 28 days, will result in a court prosecution, for your child's irregular school attendance, being taken against you under section 4441 of the education Act 1996, where you could be subject to a fine of up to £1000, and a criminal record.

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
- 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 pupil. Non- payment of the penalty notice will result in prosecution in the Magistrates 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 pupil.
- If the parent/ carer removes a pupil from their education for the purpose of a suspected holiday without advising the school this will be referred to the Family Liaison Officer to conduct a home visit. On the third day of absence a letter will be sent, or home delivered, requesting that the parent/ carer contacts the school within 2 days to confirm the reason for absence and request medical evidence to be able to authorise the 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 pupil.

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 at attendance@stjohnfisher.school, 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 pupil 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~~ the school's Family Liaison Officer team.

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). Alternatively, evidence may be emailed to the school attendance officer at attendance@stjohnfisher.school. If the authenticity of illness is in doubt, medical evidence may be requested. This may be in the form of doctor's note (either a screen shot or an appointment card), appointment letter from Paediatrician or Consultant, 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

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 pupils 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 pupils in advance and will be close to or during the external examination period.

Suspension and Permanent Exclusion

A pupil suspended for a fixed term remains on roll and the absence is authorised while the pupil is requested to stay at home. If the suspension is for longer than five days and the pupil is required to attend 6th 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. The pupil will be required to attend an alternative provision from the 6th day after a permanent exclusion. A pupil'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 pupil to be reinstated
3. The prescribed period for lodging an appeal has expired and the parent/carers 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 pupils are asked to arrive punctually to school. Punctuality is taken seriously by the school.

- Pupils must arrive at school by 8.30 am, when the gates close.
- Pupils then have five minutes to move to registration. They must be with their tutor by 8.35am or are otherwise late for school.
- Pupils who arrive after 8.35 a.m. will need to report to the late line, located by the Chapel, instead of going to form. They sign in with their Pastoral Care Leader in this lineup.

Pupils 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 the Attendance Officer.

Sanctions:

- When a pupil arrives after 8.35am:
 - 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 pupils do not just leave).

- Pupils who fail to attend their ten-minute detention will then be kept for a thirty-minute detention after school the following day.
- Where a pupil has 3 late marks after close of registration (9am):
 - a letter will be sent by the School advising of our concerns and request medical evidence for each late session. The pupil'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 Attendance Team. If pupils 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 pupil. This is £120 per parent/carers if paid within 28 days, £60 if paid within 21 days. Unpaid penalty notices are referred to the Magistrates Court

Rewards and Incentives

- Pupils 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 pupil 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.
- 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/ carers inform the school in writing that they intend to remove their child from school roll to 'educate otherwise.'
- The school will write to parent / carers to discuss their decision further.
- St John Fisher Catholic Comprehensive School will notify Medway local authority (LA) of an elected home-education pupil via Medway's referral form.
- On receipt of the notification, Medway LA will add the pupil to the LA database, which will trigger immediate action.
- The pupil will remain on school roll for 10 school days, in line with Medway Council's Elective Home Education policy.

Parents and carers can access more information about home elective education with Medway Council and download [Medway Council's Elective Home Education Policy](#) .

Children Missing in Education

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

- The attendance officer will make a referral to the Family Liaison Officer team with as much information about the pupil as is known by the school.
- The independent Attendance Advisor makes enquiries, including a home visit. If this visit clarifies that the pupil 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 Refer to the attendance advisory practitioner (AAP).

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.
- Pupils 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 providing support and guidance for St John Fisher regarding attendance matters. It will process penalty notices on behalf of the school. The school's allocated Attendance Advisory Practitioner (AAP) will receive referrals for pupils with unauthorised absences, will commence legal proceedings for poor school attendance. Under the 1996 Education Act S4441/1A, failure to improve attendance will result in prosecution at Magistrates Court.

SLT Attendance Lead

- Policy drafting
- Reports to governors on school attendance issues
- Line management of Attendance Officer
- Works with Medway AASSA
- Leads Serious Absence Concerns meetings

Family Liaison Officer Team / Independent Attendance Advisor

The Family Liaison Officer Team works closely with the SLT Attendance Lead and the Attendance Officer who has responsibility for attendance. They will conduct home visits for safeguarding purposes or where it is suspected that an unauthorised holiday has been taken. At particularly busy times of year, the FLO team may be supported by an additional Independent Attendance Advisor employed by the school.

Attendance Officer, Heads of Year 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 School Attendance Team for investigation and referred to the AASSA for unauthorised school absence. Internal truancy will be addressed by the year teams.
- Liaising with school nurse regarding pupils with medical needs
- Liaising with any pupils with rising attendance concerns

- Contacting parents/carers of pupils 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 SLT Attendance Lead
- Heads of Year may also lead meetings regarding absence

Staff

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

Pupils

- 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 responsibility to inform the school of every day of absence for their child and supply any evidence required to support this absence as and when requested. This can be done through any of the following methods:
 - o Email: attendance@stjohnfisher.school
 - o Website: <https://stjohnfisher.school/home/contact/report-absence/>
 - o Telephone: 01634 543123, then press 2

APPENDIX: Sixth Form Attendance

Although not subject to the same legal framework as attendance in Years 7-11, pupils 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 pupils to maintain a good level of attendance.

Sixth formers who arrive after 8.35am will then complete a ten-minute detention after school with their Head of Year / Assistant Head of Year.

