Attendance Policy

Love One Another as I have Loved You – John 13:34

Date of Approval:	February 2023
Planned Review:	February 2024
Review Date:	

1. **Expectations & Daily Routines**

Expectations

The law entitles every child of compulsory school age to an efficient, full-time education suitable to their age, aptitude, and any special educational need they may have. It is the legal responsibility of every parent to make sure their child receives that education either by attendance at a school or by education otherwise than at a school.

When parents decide to have their child registered at school, they have an additional legal duty to ensure their child attends that school regularly. This means their child must attend every day that the school is open, except in a small number of allowable circumstances such as being too ill to attend or being given permission for an absence in advance from the school.
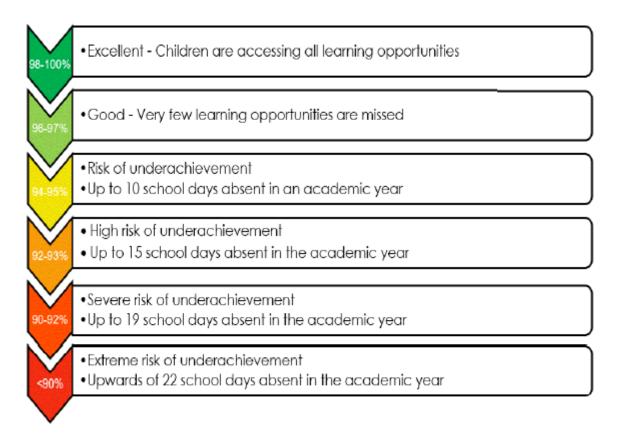
For the most vulnerable pupils, regular attendance is also an important protective factor and the best opportunity for needs to be identified and support provided. Research has shown associations between regular absence from school and several extra-familial harms. This includes crime (90% of young offenders had been persistently absent) and serious violence (83% of knife possession offenders had been persistently absent in at least 1 of the 5 years of study).

What is good attendance and why is it important?

Attendance is important to Sacred Heart School because we recognise it is a key component in ensuring we have safe, healthy, and successful children.

We aim for all children to be in school every day and achieve 100% attendance. However, we recognise there may be times when children are absent from school due to exceptional circumstances, e.g., illness. Therefore, our school attendance target is for pupils to attend at least 97%.

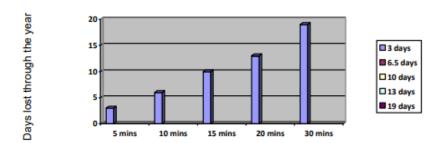The table below illustrates the impact of attendance below this target.

98-100%	• Excellent - Children are accessing all learning opportunities
96-97%	• Good - Very few learning opportunities are missed
94-95%	• Risk of underachievement • Up to 10 school days absent in an academic year
92-93%	• High risk of underachievement • Up to 15 school days absent in the academic year
90-92%	• Severe risk of underachievement • Up to 19 school days absent in the academic year
<90%	• Extreme risk of underachievement • Upwards of 22 school days absent in the academic year

Daily Routines

What are OUR daily attendance routines?

Meet & Greet (Punctuality)

The school day starts promptly at 8.50 am. Arriving after this time can affect children's progress. It also disrupts the classroom when lessons have already begun. Therefore, not only must children attend school regularly, but they must not be late.

The following graph clearly illustrates how being late can add up to a loss of learning:

As you can see, if your child is late for just 5 minutes every day that can add up to over three days lost each year and arriving 15 minutes late each day is the same as being absent for 2 weeks a year: for that reason, it is imperative that your child is punctual.

To reduce congestion at the beginning of the school day and help all our children arrive on time, we open our school gates by at least 8.35 am. The gates are closed at 8:50 am.

Every morning a member of staff will be at the school gate to meet and greet the children as they arrive at school. Once inside the school building, they will be greeted by their class teacher.

Register open and close

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 8.50 am at the start of the first session of each school day and once at 1 pm (for KS2) or 1.15 pm (for FS2 and KS1), the start of the session after lunch.

Class teachers are responsible for recording attendance daily. Teachers record absence as an N code and attendance with a present code / (AM) or \ (PM). Correct codes for absences are added by the school office.

See appendix 1 for the DfE attendance codes. The school follows DfE guidance to ensure compliance.

Pupils arriving after 8.50 must report to the school office where the reason for their late arrival and how many minutes they are late by will be recorded by the school office. If the pupil arrives late at the school office without their parent, the parent will be contacted to notify them that their child has arrived late for school.

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

A pupil who arrives after the register has closed will be marked as absent, using the appropriate code.

Pupils must arrive at school by 8.50 am on each school day. The register for the first session will be taken at 8.50 am, a "Late" mark will be entered from 8.50 am until 9.20 am, and from 9.20 am onwards an "Unauthorised" mark will be made.

The register 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

Every entry in the attendance register will be preserved for 3 years after the date on which the entry was made.

Register Check

The office will check the register by 9.10 am each morning and by 1.30 pm each afternoon.

Any N codes where the reason for the absence is known by the school office will be changed to the correct code – see appendix 1.

Unplanned absence

Parents must notify the school office on the first day of an unplanned absence – for example, if their child is unable to attend due to ill health – by 9 am or as soon as practically possible by leaving a message on the school absence line or send an email to the office enquiries@sacredheart.sheffield.sch.uk

Absence due to illness will be authorised unless the school has a genuine concern about the authenticity of the illness.

If the authenticity of the illness is in doubt, the school may ask parents to provide medical evidence, such as a doctor's note, prescription, appointment card, or another appropriate form of evidence. We will not ask for medical evidence unnecessarily.

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

Medical or dental appointments

Missing registration for a medical or dental appointment is counted as an authorised absence; advance notice is required for authorising these absences.

However, we encourage parents to make medical and dental appointments outside of school hours where possible.

Where this is not possible, the pupil should be out of school for the minimum amount of time necessary.

Advance notification of appointments should be made to the school office only, either by telephone or email at enquiries@sacredheart.sheffield.sch.uk, providing evidence of the appointment.

Applications for other types of absence in term time must also be made in advance.

Other planned absences

Applications for planned absences during term time should be made in writing to the school office using the form in appendix 2 for consideration by the headteacher.

Headteachers may not grant any leave of absence to pupils during term time unless they consider there to be 'exceptional circumstances'; it is unlikely a leave of absence will be granted for the purposes of a family holiday.

The school considers each application for term-time absence individually, considering the specific facts, circumstances, and relevant context behind the request. A leave of absence is granted entirely at the headteacher's discretion.

Valid reasons for authorised absence include:

- Illness and medical/dental appointments
- Religious observance – where the day is exclusively set apart for religious observance by the religious body to which the pupil's parents belong. If necessary, the school will seek advice from the parents' religious body to confirm whether the day is set apart
- Traveller pupils travelling for occupational purposes – this covers Roma, English and Welsh Gypsies, Irish and Scottish Travellers, Showmen (fairground people) and Circus people, Bargees (occupational boat dwellers), and New Travellers. Absence may be authorised only when a Traveller family is known to be travelling for occupational purposes and has agreed to this with the school, but it is not known whether the pupil is attending educational provision

Part-time timetables

All pupils of compulsory school age are entitled to full-time education. In very exceptional circumstances, where it is in a pupil's best interests, there may be a need for a temporary part-time timetable to meet their individual needs. For example, where a medical condition prevents a pupil from attending full-time education, and a part-time timetable is considered as part of a re-integration package.

The school will follow the Local Authority policy for part-time timetables and have a formal arrangement in place for regularly reviewing it with the pupil and their parents.

In agreeing to a part-time timetable, a school has agreed to a pupil being absent from school for part of the week or day and therefore must treat absence as authorised.

Exclusion

See the school's exclusion policy

Follow up on unexplained absences – including first-day calling, home visits, and engaging external agencies

The school will follow up on any unexplained absences to ascertain the reason, ensure where necessary proper safeguarding action is taken, identify whether the absence is approved or not, and identify the correct attendance code to use.

We will call parents/carers on the first day by 9.30 am for absences not reported.

If we do not get a response by 10 am an email and text will be sent to the pupil's parents/carers.

If parents/carers do not respond by 10.30 am the emergency contacts will be phoned.

If a reason for absence is not established by 11 am members of staff will carry out a home visit and leave a note if there is no response asking the parent/carer to contact the school.

If the child has a MAST worker who is supporting their attendance they will be contacted at this point to inform them the child is not in school and the absence is unexplained.

If the child has a social worker they will be contacted at this point to inform them the child is not in school and the absence is unexplained.

Promotion & celebration

The school promotes good attendance and punctuality by:

- sharing the policy with staff and parents at the beginning of each academic year
- having a dedicated section on the school website
- adding regular reminders to the school website and newsletter
- liaising closely with other professionals from MAST & Social Care

The school celebrates good attendance by having a termly whole school celebration if the school's target of 97% has been achieved.

2. Data & Monitoring

How will we track the attendance of children?

Daily

After checking the registers, the school office will report the absence of any pupils on the monitoring list and any unexplained absences to the Learning Mentor or Headteacher.

The school office, Learning Mentor and Headteacher will follow up on any unexplained absences from the previous day.

Weekly

The Learning Mentor and Headteacher will complete the attendance tracker for each pupil and act in line with the thresholds below. A monitoring list will be provided to the school office.

Half termly

The Learning Mentor will monitor the attendance of the school's identified vulnerable groups and produce an anonymised report for the Headteacher's report to governors which compares the school to local and national outcomes.

Termly

The Learning Mentor will contribute to pupil progress meetings to highlight pupils where attendance and punctuality are a concern and discuss the support needed.

Annually

Attendance reports are issued to parents annually as part of pupils end of year reports.

Thresholds

Attendance %	Absence (days)
98 – 100%	0-3.5 days off
96 – 97.9%	4-7.5 days off
93 – 95.9%	8-13 days off
90 – 92.9%	13.5-19 days off
Under 89.9%	19+ days

The persistent absence threshold is 10%. If a pupil's individual overall absence rate is greater than or equal to 10%, the pupil will be classified as a persistent absentee.

The definition of a persistently absent (PA) pupil as set out by the DfE is a pupil with 10% or more absence (90% or less attendance). The table below, derived from the census guidance, gives an indication of the minimum number of sessions a pupil would miss by each half-term to be classed as PA.

	Half term 1	Half term 1-2	Half term 1-3	Half term 1-4	Half term 1-5	Half term 1-6

		(Autumn)		(Spring)		(Summer)
10% absence	3.5+ days	7+ days	10+ days	12.5+ days	15.5+ days	19+ days

How will we ensure that our work is effective?

As a school, we collect attendance data on our management information system. As per legal requirements, this data is shared with the local authority and nationally. Internally, we check this data on a weekly basis to look for patterns of absence across the school and at an individual level with a particular focus on those pupils in danger of being classed as PA. The office, Learning Mentor and Senior Leaders will then monitor these pupils and try to work with families to improve attendance. See the table below:

Attendance %	Absence (days)	Action to be taken by the school after weekly monitoring
98 – 100%	0-3.5 days off	Learning Mentor continues to monitor
96 – 97.9%	4-7.5 days off	Learning Mentor continues to monitor
93 – 95.9%	8-13 days off	Learning Mentor contact parent/carer by telephone to notify them their child's attendance is below the school target of 97%, discuss the reasons for this, and if necessary offer support and advise future absences may not be authorised unless medical evidence is provided. This information will be followed up in a letter detailing any information shared in the conversation and support agreed.
90 – 92.9%	13.5-19 days off	Learning Mentor contacts the parent/carer by telephone and letter to invite them to a meeting because their child's attendance is below 93% and are now at risk of becoming a persistent absentee. At the meeting, the Learning Mentor will discuss the reasons for the absence(s), discuss support and agree on an action plan for improving attendance.
Under 89.9%	19+ days	Learning Mentor and Headteacher contact the parent/carer by letter to attend a meeting because their child's attendance is below 90% and they are now a persistent absentee. At the meeting, the Learning Mentor and Headteacher will discuss the reasons for the absence(s), review any previous support/action plan, and agree on support and action plan for improving attendance.

Anonymous attendance data is monitored by our Safeguarding Governor on their termly visits and data is shared termly with the Governing body. This data is also shared with the Trustees to ensure the school is keeping PA at its lowest levels. Attendance of pupils that have a history of poor attendance, who are in receipt of free school meals, or who are vulnerable is the focus of this monitoring. From this, the school keeps a record of identified children.

3. Escalation of procedures

How will we ensure children are safe & tackle absence together?

Children who are below the school's attendance target are the focus of action and intervention (as described above) and are discussed in meetings with the Local Authority attendance officer. These identified children become a daily or weekly focus to ensure improvement. The school is committed to working with parents to help solve attendance issues and ensure regular attendance. As parents/carers have accepted a place at our school, it is an expectation that parents/carers will be committed to ensuring attendance is as high as possible and pupils are always punctual.

If after contacting parents a pupil's absence continues to rise, action will be taken as shown in the table below. If necessary, we will use the Local Authority support to meet with parents and legal action may be taken.

Sequence of support – see table below

Attendance %	Absence (days off)	Action taken by the school after weekly monitoring	Action taken by the school if absence continues to increase	Action taken by the school if absence continues to further increase
98 – 100%	0 – 3.5	Learning Mentor continues to monitor	Learning Mentor continues to monitor	
96 – 97.9%	4 – 7.5	Learning Mentor continues to monitor	Learning Mentor continues to monitor	
93 – 95.9%	8 – 13	Learning Mentor contact parent/carer by telephone to notify them their child's attendance is below the school target of 96%, discuss the reasons for this, and if necessary offer support and advise future absences may not be authorised unless medical evidence is provided. This information will be followed up in a letter detailing any information shared in the conversation and support agreed. Provide a monitoring list to the school office – to identify if/how absences can be authorised. Review after 3-4 weeks.	Learning Mentor contacts the parent/carer by telephone and letter to invite them to a meeting because their child has had further absences. At the meeting, the Learning Mentor will discuss the reasons for the absence(s), discuss support and agree on an action plan for improving attendance. Provide a monitoring list to the school office – SLT to be informed of absences. Review after 2-3 weeks.	Learning Mentor and Headteacher contact the parent/carer by letter to attend a meeting because their child has had further absences. At the meeting, the Learning Mentor and Headteacher will discuss the reasons for the absence(s), review any previous support/action plan, and agree on a support and action plan for improving attendance. Provide a monitoring list to the school office – SLT to be informed of absences. Review after 1-2 weeks.
90 – 92.9%	13.5 – 19	Learning Mentor contacts the parent/carer by telephone and letter to invite them to a meeting because their child's attendance is below 93% and are now at risk of becoming a persistent absentee. At the meeting, the Learning Mentor will discuss the reasons for the absence(s), discuss support and agree on an action plan for improving attendance. Provide a monitoring list to the school office – SLT to be informed of absences. Review after 2-3 weeks.	Learning Mentor and Headteacher contact the parent/carer by letter to attend a meeting because their child has had further absences. At the meeting, the Learning Mentor and Headteacher will discuss the reasons for the absence(s), review any previous support/action plan, and agree on a support and action plan for improving attendance. Provide a monitoring list to the school office – SLT to be informed of absences. School to seek advice from Local Authority attendance officer. Review after 1-2 weeks.	Headteacher and Local Authority attendance officer contact the parent/carer by letter to attend an attendance review panel meeting. Referral to MAST if this has not already been done. Provide a monitoring list to the school office – SLT to be informed of absences. Review weekly.
Under 89.9%	19+	Learning Mentor and Headteacher contact the parent/carer by letter to attend a meeting because their child's attendance is below 90% and they are now a persistent absentee. At the meeting, the Learning Mentor and Headteacher will discuss the reasons for the absence(s), review any previous support/action plan, and agree on a support and action plan for improving attendance. Provide a monitoring list to the school office – SLT to be informed of absences. School to seek advice from Local Authority attendance officer. Review after 1-2 weeks.	Headteacher and Local Authority attendance officer contact the parent/carer by letter to attend an attendance review panel meeting. Referral to MAST if this has not already been done. Provide a monitoring list to the school office – SLT to be informed of absences. Review weekly.	The school and Local Authority may make use of the full range of legal interventions. These are: • Parenting contracts • Education supervision orders • Attendance prosecution • Parenting orders • Fixed penalty notices

If issued with a penalty notice, parents must pay £60 within 21 days or £120 within 28 days. The payment must be made directly to the local authority. If the payment has not been made after 28 days, the local authority can decide whether to prosecute the parent or withdraw the notice.

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

- 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

Roles & responsibilities

The local academy committee is responsible for monitoring attendance figures for the whole school, including vulnerable groups, on at least a termly basis. It also holds the headteacher to account for the implementation of this policy.

The Headteacher (and Deputy Headteacher in their absence) are responsible for ensuring this policy is implemented consistently across the school, and for monitoring school-level absence data and reporting it to governors. They also support other staff in monitoring the attendance of individual pupils and issuing fixed penalty notices, where necessary. In addition, they also have responsibility for attendance at the school and act alongside the office staff and Learning Mentor as attendance officers.

The office staff and Learning Mentor - act as attendance officers:

- Monitor attendance data at the school and individual pupil level
- Follow policy to ensure implementation
- Report concerns about attendance to the Headteacher and Deputy Headteacher
- Work with the Local Authority attendance officer to tackle persistent absence
- Manage and maintain correspondence
- Arrange calls and meetings with parents to discuss attendance issues
- Advise the headteacher when to issue fixed-penalty notices

Class teachers are responsible for recording attendance daily. Teachers record the absence as an N code and attendance with a present code / (AM) or \ (PM). Correct codes for absences are added by the school office. Class teachers are responsible for working with parents to ensure improved attendance for identified pupils. Class teachers are responsible for reporting any concerns about patterns of absence to the office staff, Learning Mentor, and/or Headteacher, and add to CPOMS when it is considered a Safeguarding issue.

The office staff are expected to check absence lines, and emails and take calls from parents about absences and record them on the school system. The office staff are expected to contact parents when absence has not been reported as per the policy guidelines.

This policy will be reviewed annually by the school office, Learning Mentor and Headteacher.

At every review, the policy will be shared with the local academy committee for approval.

Appendix 1: attendance codes

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

	Code	Definition	Scenario
Attendance	/	Present (AM)	Pupil is present at morning registration
	\	Present (PM)	Pupil is present at afternoon registration
	L	Late arrival	Pupil arrives late before register has closed
	B	Off-site educational activity	Pupil is at a supervised off-site educational activity approved by the school
	D	Dual Registered	Pupil is attending a session at another setting where they are also registered
	J	Interview	Pupil has an interview with a prospective employer/educational establishment
	P	Sporting activity	Pupil is participating in a supervised sporting activity approved by the school
	V	Educational visit or trip	Pupil is on an educational visit/trip organised, or approved, by the school
Authorised Absence	C	Authorised leave of absence	Pupil has been granted a leave of absence due to exceptional circumstances
	H	Authorised holiday	Pupil has been allowed to go on holiday due to
	E	Excluded	Pupil has been excluded but no alternative provision has been made
	I	Illness	Pupil absent due to illness
	M	Medical/dental appointment	Pupil is at medical / dental appointment
	R	Religious Observance	Pupil is taking part in a day of religious observance
	T	Gypsy, Roma and Traveller absence	Pupil from a Traveller community is travelling, as agreed with the school
Unauthorised Absence	G	Unauthorised holiday	Pupil is on a holiday that was not approved by the school
	N	Reason not provided	Pupil is absent for an unknown reason (this code should be amended when the reason emerges, or replaced with code O if no reason for absence has been provided after a reasonable amount of time)
	O	Unauthorised absence	School is not satisfied with reason for pupil's absence
	U	Arrival after registration	Pupil arrived at school after the register closed
Not present	Y	Unable to attend due to exceptional circumstances	School site is closed, there is disruption to travel as a result of a local/national emergency, or pupil is in custody
	Z	Pupil not on admission register	Register set up but pupil has not yet joined the school
	X	Non-compulsory school age pupil not required to be in school	Pupil non-compulsory school age not required to be in school
	#	Planned school closure	Whole or partial school closure due to half term/bank holiday/INSET day

Appendix 2 – Request for Term Time Leave Form

Appendix 3 – Punctuality Letter

Appendix 4 – Unexplained Absence Letter

Appendix 5 – Attendance Concern Letter

Appendix 6 – Attendance Meeting Letter

Appendix 7 – Fixed Penalty Notice Explanation letter