St. Joseph's Grammar School
Scoil Iósaef

Attendance Policy and Procedures 2025-2026

Policy Author	**Mrs A McGleenan**
Frequency of Review	**Every 2 years**
Date of Last Review	**September, 2025**
Date Approved by Governors	**01-10-2025**
Proposed by	**C.McKenna**
Seconded by	**T. McElroy**
Date of Next Review	**June 2027**

CONTEXT

St Joseph's Grammar School is committed to providing a full and efficient educational experience for all students. Full attendance is vital to:

- Ensure success in all aspects of school life, including public examinations
- Ensure that each student is within the care of the school
- Secure a positive reference which will assist in gaining a place in further education and/or employment

It is a legal requirement that registered students of compulsory school age attend regularly and punctually. An explanation for every absence is required. If such explanation is not forthcoming from the student's parent/guardian, the absence will be treated an unauthorised.

Unauthorised absence is an absence without permission from a Head of Year or member of Senior Management and includes all unexplained or unjustified absence. Minding the house, looking after family members, going to a concert, shopping or going on a holiday in term time will not normally be acceptable reasons for absence.

ROLE OF THE SCHOOL

Our school will:

- Encourage 100% attendance
- Give a high priority to conveying to parents and students the importance of regular and punctual attendance
- Establish strong home school links to be utilised whenever there are concerns about attendance
- Investigate, identify and strive in partnership with parents and students to resolve problems as quickly as possible
- The Board of Governors provide support by reviewing school attendance figures and targets and ensuring it is a standing agenda item at each meeting.
- Teaching staff regularly monitor the attendance and punctuality of pupils by ensuring that attendance is recorded at the beginning of morning and afternoon registration sessions

Every member of the school staff will make attendance a priority and convey to the students its importance for their education. This requires all teaching staff to attend regularly, arrive on time for lessons, be well prepared and maximize the use of class time.

ROLE OF PARENTS

It is the responsibility of parents to ensure that their children attend school and arrive in good time for class each morning.
A student should only be absent for an unavoidable reason which would usually mean ill-health or family bereavement.

If a child appears reluctant to attend school, it is important the parent/carer discusses the matter promptly with the form teacher to ensure that both the parent/carer and child receive maximum support.

LEAVING SCHOOL EARLY

Medical and dental appointments etc. if possible should not be made during school hours.

If a pupil is leaving school early the parent/carer should complete the Permission to Leave Early Form by 9.30am on or before that day.

The link to the form can be accessed on the **Secondary 365 Parents App** in the section **Permission to Leave Early** and on the school website. It is important this is completed using the parent/carer personal email account. On receipt of this

(i) The **form teacher will note on SIMS and inform the office staff**.

(ii) Pupils in year **13 & 14** will be given a **Permission Slip** by their **form teacher** which then has to be **countersigned** by the **Head of Sixth Form or Assistant Head of Sixth Form**. This must be presented to office staff before leaving school.

(iii) All students leaving early in year 8-12 **must** be signed out at the school office by a parent/carer. The student must **inform the Office staff** when they are leaving school and inform the office **on return** to school. This is to ensure that, as is our legal obligation, we have an up-to-date and accurate record at all times of those who are (and are not) on the school premise.

In line with school safeguarding policy, pupils will not be permitted to leave school without proper permission.

For child protection reasons, pupils in Years 8-12 should not be signed out by anyone other than a parent/carer. Where this is not possible, written permission from parents /carers should be presented to office staff, indicating the reason for leaving school early and the name, address and relationship of the person collecting the pupil. Proof of identity may be required.

ABSENCE PROCEDURE

- **Absence procedure** - If a student is unfit to attend school, parents/carers should complete the **Reason for Absence Report Form** by 9.30am on the day of absence**.**
  This must be completed for **each day** the student is absent. The link to the form can be accessed on the **Secondary 365 Parents App** in the section **Attendance** and on the school website. It is important this is completed using the parent/carer personal email account.
- **Pupils should also explain the reason for their absence to their subject teachers at the start of their next lesson and make arrangements to catch up on missed work.**
- The practice of parents withdrawing students during term time to go on holidays is very strongly discouraged due to the impact they have on students' learning. Family holidays taken during term time will be categorised as an unauthorised absence. Parents/carers need to contact the principal Mrs G Donnelly if they are taking their child/children out of school on holiday.

ROLE OF STUDENTS

REGISTRATION

- To value education and attend all classes required by his/her timetable.
- To be punctual for school. Students must be in by 8.50am at the latest, to ensure that they are in their first lesson by 9.00am. Students who arrive **after this time** must report to reception in the school office, where the time and reason for lateness will be recorded in the ***Latecomers Book***. And on SIMS. **They then proceed immediately to class.** Parents/Carers must provide the form teacher by email with a valid reason for lateness.
- **A student who is late without a valid reason in writing from parent/carer on three occasions in any given half-term will be required to do a lunch time detention.**
- Morning Registration closes at 10.15 am Students who arrive after this time should report to reception as above but will be **marked absent** for the **morning session**.
- Students must remain on the school premises at all times throughout the school day. The exceptions to this rule are as follows:

LEAVING SCHOOL EARLY

Leaving school early - except in exceptional circumstances, medical and dental appointments etc. should not be made during school hours. **If a pupil is leaving school early** the **parent/carer should email the form teacher.**

(i) The **form teacher will note on SIMS and inform the office staff**.

(ii) Pupils in year 13 & 14 will be given a **Permission Slip** by their **form teacher** which then has to be **countersigned** by the **Head of Sixth Form or Assistant Head of Sixth Form**. This must be presented to office staff before leaving school.

If a pupil is leaving early due to illness and is a driver permission will have to be obtained from the parent/carer that the child is permitted to drive home.

In line with school safeguarding policy, pupils will not be permitted to leave school without proper permission.

All students leaving early must **inform the Office staff** when they are leaving school and inform the office **on return** to school. This is to ensure that, as is our legal obligation, we have an up-to-date and accurate record at all times of those who are (and are not) on the school premise.

ABSENCE PROCEDURE

- If parents/carers do not provide a reason for absence for their child this will result in the pupil being placed **on a lunch time detention** for non-submission of reason for absence.
- **Pupils should also explain the reason for their absence to their subject teachers at the start of their next lesson and make arrangements to catch up on missed work.**
- If a student truants from class/school he/she should also catch up on any work missed. The student will be sanctioned in line with the school behaviour policy.
- Students in Years 8-14 whose attendance falls between **95% and 85%** will be interviewed by Form Teacher/Year Head and the Form Teacher and HoY will contact parent/carer to discuss concerns.
- Students in Years 8-12 whose attendance falls below **85%** will be interviewed by Mrs McGleenan and if absence persists will be referred to the EWS. Parents/Carers will be informed of student referral.
- Students in Year 13 and 14 whose attendance falls below **85%** parents/carers will be invited to attend an interview with Ms Dolan/Mr A Gallagher where the decision may be taken not to enter the student for external exams.

Students eligible for EMA payment will not receive their payment unless they have full attendance in all classes except in exceptional circumstances e.g. family bereavement, family wedding, and attendance at interviews.

ROLE OF FORM TEACHER/BACK UP FORM TEACHER

- Ensure form class are on time for registration to begin promptly at 9.45am/10.00am and 2.00pm.
- AM registration should be completed **on SIMS** by 10.15am
  PM registration should be completed **on SIMS** by 2.05pm
- All students who are not present at registration should be coded as **N** on SIMS by the Form Teacher (even if they are engaged in an authorised off-site activity e.g. sport, work experience, educational visit etc.)
- **If a pupil is late for lesson 1 i.e. arrives after 9am or misses registration, The office staff will record reason for absence on SIMS and email all teaching staff that the student is now in school.**
- When reasons for absence are provided by phone or note ensure reasons are coded on SIMS. (see *DENI Absence codes: Guidance for Schools Appendix 1A* attached).

- If no reasons for absence are supplied following the students return to school, the code 'N' should be changed to 'D' and the form teacher should **contact the parent/Carer via phone, email or letter to establish a reason for absence.** The student should be placed on a lunch-time detention. The form teacher puts the students name on the lunch-time detention list.
- **On a weekly basis during form period ensure students complete weekly attendance record in the student planner.**
  Check for patterns of absence and persistent lateness i.e. sporadic absence, pattern of absence on specific days. Discuss absence with student and identify if there are any pastoral or academic reasons impacting on the student.
  If a reason is provided for all absences but percentage attendance is still a cause for concern this may still necessitate the Form Teacher contacting parent/carer.
  Contact home by phone, letter or email if concerned and discuss reasons for absence and support strategies that can be put in place. Record and send copy to HoY, Head of School KS3 Dr McCoy/KS4 Mr N Kelly, Pastoral VP Mrs McGleenan, and office staff.
  Students who are absent persistently due to illness should supply medical evidence i.e. letter from GP confirming impact on attendance.
- **Interview** those giving cause for concern for absence or persistent lateness (3 days or more) (include in deliberations, the student's previous absence history) and set targets for improvement. Refer persistent absentees/latecomers to Year Head. Keep written record of interview and forward copy to Pastoral VP Mrs McGleenan, HoY, Head of School KS3 Dr McCoy/KS4 Mr N Kelly, and school office to be retained in students file.
- If a student's attendance is a cause for concern ask the office staff to contact home on each morning of absence.
- Provide counselling and pastoral support for those who give cause for concern.
- **Where a student has achieved 100% attendance for a month/term award points on SIMS.**
- Display monthly attendance rates in the Form rooms
- Complete attendance comments on school report
- Consult relevant subject teachers when a student is going to be absent for a period of time, co-ordinate collection of work and make arrangements for work to be sent home to student or posted on google classroom.
- On a student's **fourth** consecutive day of absence if parents/carers have not contacted school, **the Form Teacher or Mrs M O'Gara under the direction of the Form Teacher should contact the parents/carers to ascertain reason for absence.** If unable to make contact by telephone the form teacher should contact the parent/carer by email or letter to establish a reason for absence.
- Monitor student attendance on a daily basis. Interview pupils whose attendance falls between **95% and 90%. Contact parents/carers when attendance is below 95%.** Refer students whose attendance falls below **90%** to Year Head and below **85%** to Mrs. McGleenan.
- Welcome students on their return after being absent.
- Provide advice and support so that students can catch up on their work.
- Complete Attendance Audit on a monthly basis recording communication with student, parent/carer etc. regarding attendance.

TEACHERS ORGANISING EDUCATIONAL ACTIVITIES OFF SITE

- Should ensure that the names of students involved are emailed to all staff prior to the trip.
- Students should be reminded that it is their responsibility to catch up on work missed when out of class by speaking with the subject teacher.

ROLE OF HEAD OF YEAR

- On a **weekly basis** identify pupils with attendance figures between **86-90%** in year group and monitor their absence patterns.
- Interview pupil and ascertain reasons for absence and contact parents/carers by phone, email or letter to discuss concerns, review attendance targets for individuals. Keep written record of interview and forward copy to Pastoral VP Mrs McGleenan, HoY, Head of School KS3 Dr McCoy/KS4 Mr N Kelly and school office to be retained in students file. Document interventions on Attendance Audit.
- Communicate with parents/carers where lateness /absence is persistent (see Appendix 4, 4(a), 4(b), present parent/carer with a copy of the student's attendance detailing total numbers of days/periods lost and discuss the implications for the student's education, integration into school life etc.
- Include a review of attendance/late patterns on the agenda for each Form Teacher meeting.
- Provide opportunities for counselling and feedback.
- Involve parents/carers if necessary.
- Consider peer support.
- Where a student is persistently late establish the reason(s) for being late – e.g. if because of domestic/family situations, initiate school support mechanisms to talk through their difficulties / interview parents / refer to External Agencies.
- Head of Year will discuss concerns regarding attendance with Vice-Principal Mrs McGleenan.
- Complete Attendance Audit on a monthly basis recording communication with student, parent/carer etc.

ROLE OF PASTORAL VICE PRINCIPAL

- On a monthly basis complete Attendance Audit recording communication with student, parent/carer etc.
- Liaise with Form teachers and Heads of Year to identify students with attendance figures 85% and below.
- Contact parent/carer by telephone/letter (Appendix 8) outlining concerns and informing them of the possible referral to the E.W.S. **If improvement not evident for students who are persistently late [as outlined above], or those whose attendance falls below 85%, initiate referral to EWS.** Inform parents by telephone or letter (Appendix 9).
- Liaise with the Educational Welfare Service regarding truancy, condoned absence or recurring short absences.
- Interview student in school with the E.W.O. and set targets for improvement.
- Invite parent/carer to a meeting in school with E.W.O. to discuss concerns.
- Where interventions are not working refer students to EA Restorative Practice Team for FACE Meeting.
- Refer students for Exceptional Teaching Arrangements where necessary.
- In consultation with Form Teacher, Head of Year, Head of School implement support strategies to support students to return to school who are suffering from anxiety based school avoidance or have been absent due to illness etc.

EDUCATIONAL WELFARE SERVICE

The Education Authority through the Education Welfare Service (EWS) has a legal duty to make sure that parents/guardians meet their responsibility towards their children's education. If a pupil's absence causes concern, or if their attendance falls below 85% and there is also a concern, they will be referred to the EWS, if appropriate. EWS will support staff and parents in developing and implementing strategies to address or improve school attendance.

PROFILING HIGH ATTENDANCE

Strategies:

- School holidays are planned to minimize disruption – thereby avoiding the wrong message
- Attendance and medical appointments procedures are clear – copies to parents
- Where relevant, meetings of parents with staff to include an attendance summary
- There is an emphasis on attendance to parents/carers, regular letters/parent/teacher meetings etc.
- During Key Stage transition & induction for new students, there is an emphasis on attendance
- Use Assemblies, PD and careers classes to reinforce the need for good attendance

Rewards System:
Monthly
Award at year group assembly.

Termly
Award at year group assembly.

Annually
Students with 100% attendance for the school year will receive an attendance certificate at prize giving.

Monitoring and Evaluation

This policy and the procedures outlined within will be the subject of ongoing review within the Pastoral Team Meetings. The Heads of Year and Form Teachers will review annually the targets for improvement and the success of the strategies for profiling high attendance. Feedback will also be sought from students and parents. A whole school review will be conducted every two years.

ABSENCE CODES: GUIDANCE FOR SCHOOLS

Summary of Attendance Codes on current C2K system (Updated July 2025)			
CODE	**DESCRIPTION**	**CODE**	**DESCRIPTION**
/ \	Present: / = (AM): \ =(PM)	S	Study Leave
A	Artistic Endeavour	U	Late (after registration closed)
B	Bereavement	V	Educational Visit / Examination
C	Suspended	W	Work Experience
D	No reason provided for absence	X	Only staff should attend
G	Family Holiday (not agreed)	Y	Exceptional Closure
H	Other Absence	#	Holiday for all
I1	Illness (not medical or dental appointments)	!	No attendance required
I4	Illness – Emotionally Based School Non-Attendance (EBSNA)	1	Community Providers / EOTAS (organised by the EA)
J	Extended Leave	2	Exceptional Teaching Arrangement / hospital
L	Late (before registration closed)	3	Elective Home Education
M	Medical / Dental Appointments	4	Pupil Referral Unit
N	No reason yet provided for absence (temporary code only)	5	Another mainstream school (under Entitlement Framework – EF)
O1	Other Exceptional Circumstances	6	Training Organisation (under EF)
O2	Temporary Exceptions to the Curriculum	7	FE College (under EF)
P	Approved Activity	8	Intensive Support Learning Unit
R	Religious Observance	9	CAMHS / Mental Health Support
Absence Category Colour Code			
Present / Approved Educational Activity		Authorised Absence	
Unauthorised Absence		Attendance not required	

Appendix 2

Student not returning Absence Note(s) Letter/Email

Dear Parent/Carer,

According to our records _____ was absent from school on the date(s) indicated below:

_____

_____

I am concerned that as yet we have not received any explanation for these absences. I would therefore appreciate if you would complete the section below and return this form to me without delay.

Thank you for your continued support.

Yours sincerely

_____
Form Teacher

To be completed by Parent

_____ was absent on the date(s) indicated because

_____

_____

_____

_____

Signature of Parent/Carer _____ Date _____

Appendix 3

Unable to Contact by Phone/Letter/ Email

Dear Parent/Carer,

_____ was absent from school on _____.

Unfortunately we have been unable to contact you by telephone to check the reason for this absence.

May I remind you respectfully that, as detailed in our Attendance Policy, if a student is unfit to attend school, parents/guardians should:

- *Contact the school **on the first day of absence***

As a child protection measure, it is important that you make contact with the school on the first day of absence.

Every class period missed is an opportunity missed. It is vital that all of our students have full attendance and are punctual for class.

We would ask for an immediate response to enable us to update our attendance records. If no reason is given for your child's absence, then it is our legal obligation to mark the absence as unauthorised.

We appreciate your co-operation in this matter

Yours sincerely

_____

Form Teacher

Appendix 4

Attendance Concern Letter

Date

Dear Parent/Carer

Re: **Class:**

As I am sure you are aware attending school regularly is important for all young people because of the link between attendance and attainment.

I regret that I must bring to your attention that, as of (**insert date)** your child has an attendance level of **%**. Please see below a breakdown of attendance:

Percentage attendance	**Number of days absent**	**Unauthorised absence** **i.e. number of days no reason for absence has been provided**	**Number of days absence which are Covid related**

We are conscious that attendance may have been impacted as a result of COVID but attendance of less than 85% is a serious concern and school is required by law to make a referral to the Educational Welfare Service. Your child's attendance will be monitored and if there is not an immediate improvement in attendance such a referral will have to be made.

Please be assured of our support in this matter and should you have any queries do not hesitate to contact your child's form teacher.

Yours sincerely