Sacred Heart RC Primary School

'Where Every Heart is Sacred'

Attendance Policy
For Pupils

Mission Statement

Our school community serves the common good to the benefit of all;
where the rights and dignity of every human person are respected and
'Every Heart is Sacred'.
We support and encourage everyone to reach their full potential.
We are witnesses to God's love through our actions;
Inspiring hope, nurturing love and caring for our Common Home.
We serve each other peacefully, joyfully and truthfully
so that all
'have life and have it to the full'.

Approved by:	Full Governors
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1.0 Introduction

1.1 Regular school attendance is essential if children are to achieve their full potential.

1.2 Sacred Heart RC Primary School believes that regular school attendance is the key to enabling children to maximise the educational opportunities available to them and become emotionally resilient, confident and competent adults who can realise their full potential and make a positive contribution to their community.

1.3 Sacred Heart RC Primary School values all pupils. As set out in this policy, we will build strong relationships with families to ensure pupils have the support in place to attend school and identify the reasons for poor attendance.

1.4 Sacred Heart RC Primary School recognises that attendance is a matter for the whole school community. Our Attendance Policy should not be viewed in isolation; it is a strand that runs through all aspects of school improvement, supported by our policies on admissions, safeguarding, anti-bullying, child protection, safeguarding and behaviour and inclusive learning. This policy takes into account the Human Rights Act 1998, the Disability Discrimination Act 1995 and the Race Relations Act 2000.

1.5.1 This policy aims to show our commitment to meeting our obligations with regards to school attendance, including those laid out in the Department for Education's (DfE's) statutory guidance on **working together to improve school attendance (applies from 19 August 2024)**, through our whole-school culture and ethos that values good attendance, including:

- Setting high expectations for the attendance and punctuality of all pupils
- Promoting good attendance and the benefits of good attendance
- Reducing absence, including persistent and severe absence
- Ensuring every pupil has access to the full-time education to which they are entitled
- Acting early to address patterns of absence
- Building strong relationships with families to make sure pupils have the support in place to attend school

We will also promote and support punctuality in attending lessons.

2.0 Legal Framework

2.1 This policy is based on the Department for Education's (DfE's) statutory guidance 'Working together to improve school attendance (*effective from 19th August 2024)* and school attendance parental responsibility measures.
The guidance is based on the following legislation, which set out the legal powers and duties that govern school attendance:

- Part 6 of the Education Act 1996
- Part 3 of the Education Act 2002
- Part 7 of the Education and Inspections Act 2006
- The Education (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2006 (and 2010, 2011, 2013, and 2016 amendments)

- The Education (Penalty Notices) (England) (Amendment) Regulations 2013

It also refers to:

- School Census Guidance
- Keeping Children Safe in Education
- Mental health issues affecting a pupil's attendance: guidance for schools

3.0 Safeguarding

3.1 Every pupil should be able to learn in an enjoyable and safe environment and be protected from harm. We respect and value all children and are committed to providing a caring, friendly and safe environment for all our pupils so they can learn and participate in all school activities in a relaxed and secure atmosphere.

3.2 Attending school regularly promotes the welfare and safety of children whilst they are not in the care of their parents/carers. Safeguarding is about offering early help and support to children and families and difficulties with attendance and lateness may be signs that something is worrying the child or that there are difficulties within the family. Poor or irregular attendance, persistent lateness, or children missing from education may be considered a safeguarding matter if this places a child at risk of harm.

3.3 Safeguarding the interests of each child is everyone's responsibility and within the context of this school; safeguarding and promoting the welfare and life opportunities for children encompasses: Attendance, Behaviour Management, Health and Safety, Access to the Curriculum and Anti- bullying, protecting children from abuse and neglect, online safety, radicalisation and extremism, FGM and CSE.

3.4 More information on safeguarding and the protection of children can be found in the school's Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy.

3.5 In order to allow us to safeguard the children in our care, it is important that parents and carers provide the school with their current contact details and provide at least three other contact numbers in case of emergency.

3.6 It is also important for parents to inform the school of any specific vulnerability in relation to their child or home circumstances.

4.0 Categorising Absence

4.1 Where pupils of compulsory school age are recorded as absent, the register must show whether the absence is authorised or unauthorised.

4.2 Absence can only be authorised by the headteacher and cannot be authorised by parents. All absences will be treated as unauthorised unless a satisfactory explanation for the pupil's absence has been received.

4.3 Parents must advise the school by telephone on the first day of absence and provide the school with an expected date of return. This should be followed up in the form of a written note from the parent/carer, though verbal explanations may be acceptable where this is considered appropriate.

4.4 Absence will be categorised as follows:

4.4.1 **Illness** Parents may be asked to provide medical evidence to allow the head teacher to authorise absence where appropriate. This will usually be in the form of an appointment card, prescription etc.

4.4.2 **Medical/Dental Appointments** Parents are advised where possible to make medical and dental appointments outside of the school day. Where this is not possible, pupils must attend school for part of the day. Parents must show the appointment card to school.

4.4.3 **Other Authorised Circumstances** This relates to where there is cause for absence due to exceptional circumstances.

4.4.4 **Suspended or Excluded (No alternative provision made) Exclusion** from attending school is counted as an **authorised** absence. The child's class teacher will make arrangements for work to be sent home.

4.4.5 **Religious Observance** Sacred Heart RC Primary School acknowledges the multi-faith nature of British society and recognises that on some occasions, religious festivals may fall outside school holiday periods or weekends and this necessitates a consideration by written request by the parent of authorised absence.

4.4.6 **Traveller Absence** It is expected that Traveller children, in common with all other children, are to attend school as regularly and as frequently as possible *(see Appendix 2)*

4.4.7 **Late Arrival** Registration begins at 8:55am. On arrival after the school gates have closed at 8:55am, pupils must immediately report to the school office to ensure that school can be responsible for pupils' health and safety whilst they are in school. Pupils arriving after 8:55am will be marked as present but arriving late (code L). The register will close at 9:25am *(no more than thirty minutes after the opening of the register).* Pupils arriving after the close of register will be recorded as late (code U) - this means 'unauthorised'.

On arrival after the close of the register, the absence will only be authorised if a satisfactory explanation for the late arrival can be provided, for example, attendance at a medical appointment. The absence will be recorded as unauthorised if the pupil has arrived late without justifiable cause.

4.4.8 **Unauthorised absence -** Absence will not be authorised unless parents/carers have provided a satisfactory explanation and that it has been accepted as such by the head teacher.

4.4.9 A full list of the Department for Education (DfE) Registration Codes can be found in Appendix 1.

4.5 All requests for leave of absence in term, including holidays, will be responded to in writing.

4.5.1 If a pupil fails to return from a leave of absence and contact with the parents has not been made or received, school may take the pupil off the school's roll in compliance with the Education (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2013. This means that the child will lose their school place.

4.5.2 If the permission to take leave is not granted and the parent takes their child out of school, the absence will be unauthorised. In such cases the school may request the local authority issue a Penalty Notice or consider other legal sanctions including prosecution in the magistrate's court. This will follow Manchester's Statutory Action Escalation Pathway.

5.0 Roles and Responsibilities

5.1 Governance:

The governing board is responsible for:

- Promoting the importance of school attendance across the school's policies and ethos

- Making sure school leaders fulfil expectations and statutory duties
- Regularly reviewing and challenging attendance data
- Monitoring attendance figures for the whole school
- Making sure staff receive adequate training on attendance
- Holding the headteacher to account for the implementation of this policy
- Making sure that the school's attendance management system is delivered effectively
- Making sure the school has high aspirations for all pupils but adapts processes to pupils' individual needs

5.2 The Headteacher:

The headteacher is responsible for:

- Implementation of this policy at the school
- Monitoring school-level absence data and reporting it to governors
- Supporting staff with monitoring the attendance of individual pupils
- Monitoring the impact of any implemented attendance strategies
- Requesting statutory action in line with Manchester's Statutory Action Escalation Pathway or authorizing the School Attendance Officer to do so
- Ensuring effective communication between school, the Local Authority and parents/carers of pupils with Special Educational Needs (SEND) where there are barriers to attendance which relates to the pupils needs
- Following Manchester City Council's Children Missing Education (CME) Protocol when a pupil's whereabouts is unknown

5.3 **The designated Senior Leader Responsible for School Attendance:**

The designated Senior Leader 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 discuss attendance issues
- Delivering targeted intervention and support to pupils and families
- Establishing and maintaining effective systems for tackling absence and making sure they are followed by all staff

The designated Senior Leader responsible for Attendance is Mrs Katherine McCarthy. She can be contacted via 0161 223 0231 or admin@sacredheart-jun.manchester.sch.uk.

5.4 The Attendance Officer:

The school attendance officer is responsible for:

- Monitoring and analysing attendance data (see section 7)
- Benchmarking attendance data to identify areas of focus for improvement
- Providing regular attendance reports to school staff and reporting concerns about attendance to the designated senior leader responsible for attendance and the headteacher

- Working with the local authority and other key stakeholders to tackle persistent and severe absence
- Liaising with the headteacher/Senior Leader Responsible for School Attendance (authorised by the headteacher) as to when a request for statutory action in line with Manchester's Statutory Action Escalation Pathway is appropriate.

  The attendance officer is Donna Long and can be contacted via 0161 223 0231 or admin@sacredheart-jun.manchester.sch.uk.

5.5 Senior Mental Health Lead

A Senior Mental Health Lead is responsible for:

- Strategic oversight for setting a whole school approach to mental health and wellbeing
- Promoting the health and wellbeing of children and young people in school
- Action taken aligned to Manchester's Emotional Barriers to School Attendance (EBSA) pathway

5.6 Class teachers:

Class teachers are responsible for:

- recording attendance on a daily basis and submitting this information to the school office before 9:25 in the morning and 30 minutes after afternoon registration.

5.7 School office/admin staff:

School office/admin staff are responsible for:

- Take calls from parents about absence on a day-to-day basis and record it on the school system
- Transfer calls from parents to the Attendance Officer, Senior Leader for School Attendance or Headteacher in order to provide them with more detailed support on attendance.

5.8 Parents/carers:

Parents/carers are expected to:

- Make sure their child attends every day on time
- Call the school to report their child's absence before 8:45am on the day of the absence and each subsequent day of absence, and advise when they are expected to return
- Provide the school with more than 1 emergency contact number for their child (we aim to collect 4 emergency contact numbers for each child)
- Ensure that, where possible, appointments for their child are made outside of the school day
- Engage with school support aimed at improving school attendance
- Seek support, where necessary, for maintaining good attendance by contacting Mrs Long (Attendance Officer), Mrs McCarthy (Senior Leader for Attendance) or Mrs Botham (Headteacher).

5.9 Pupils:

Pupils are expected to:

- Attend school every day on time

6.0 Attendance Data

6.1 Use of Attendance Data

The school will:

Monitor attendance and absence data half-termly, termly, and yearly across the school and at an individual pupil level.

Identify whether there are groups of children whose absences may be a cause for concern or particular cohorts of pupils where attendance is affecting their achievement/outcomes.

Pupil-level absence data will be collected each term and published at national and Local Authority level through the DfE's school absence national statistics releases.

The underlying school-level absence data is published alongside the national statistics. The school will compare attendance data to the national average and share this with the Governing Board.

6.2 Analysing attendance data

The school will:

- Analyse attendance and absence data regularly to identify pupils or cohorts that need additional support with their attendance, and use this analysis to provide targeted support to these pupils and their families
- Look at historic and emerging patterns of attendance and absence, and then develop strategies to address these patterns
- Identify pupils whose absences may be a cause for concern, especially those who demonstrate patterns of persistent or severe absence

6.3 Using data to improve attendance

The school will:

- Provide regular attendance reports to class teachers, and other school leaders, to facilitate discussions with pupils and families
- Use data to monitor and evaluate the impact of any interventions put in place in order to modify them and inform future strategies
- Provide targeted support to the pupils it has identified whose absences may be a cause for concern, especially those who demonstrate patterns of persistent or severed absence, and their families

6.4 Reducing persistent and severe absence

Persistent absence is where a pupil misses 10% or more of school, and severe absence is where a pupil misses 50% or more of school.

The school will:

- Use attendance data to find patterns and trends of persistent and severe absence
- Hold regular meetings with the parents of pupils who the school (and/or local authority) considers to be vulnerable, or are persistently or severely absent, to discuss attendance and engagement at school
- Provide access to wider support services to remove the barriers to attendance
- Consider potential safeguarding issues and, where suspected or present, address them in line with Keeping Children Safe in Education
- Create a contract between parents/carers and school with a view to improving child's attendance

7.0 Support Systems

7.1 Sacred Heart RC Primary School recognises that poor attendance is often an indication of difficulties and trauma in a child's life. This may be related to problems at home and/or in school. Parents should make school aware of any difficulties or changes in circumstances that may affect their child's attendance and/or behaviour in school, for example, bereavement, divorce/separation, incidents of domestic abuse. This will help the school identify any additional support that may be required. It is expected that the child and their family work collaboratively with school to identify the anxiety-based school avoidance resources most appropriate for support and to accept the support that is offered or advised

7.2 Sacred Heart RC Primary School also recognises that some pupils are more likely to require additional support to attain good attendance, for example, those pupils with special educational needs, those with physical or mental health needs, migrant and refugee pupils and children with a social worker

7.3 The school will implement a range of strategies to support improved attendance for all pupils. Strategies used will include:

- Attendance trophies/bears in assemblies
- Highest classes' attendance figures in newsletters
- Attendance certificates and vouchers at the end of each academic year
- Attendance prompts via ParentMail/text
- Attendance contracts
- Initiating an Early Help Assessment and/or referral to appropriate agencies such as M Thrive or Early Help Hubs
- Pupil voice activities
- Use of Emotional Barriers to School Attendance pathway (EBSA)
- Trauma-informed approaches
- Time limited part time time-tables
- Inclusion Strategy Toolkit

- Reintegration support packages

7.4 If a pupil has an Education, Health & Care plan, Sacred Heart RC Primary School will communicate with Manchester City Council EHCP Team at an early stage once they become aware of barriers to attendance that relate to the child's needs

7.5 Where parents fail or refuse to engage with the support offered and further unauthorised absence occurs, Sacred Heart RC Primary School may consider the use of legal sanctions following Manchester City Council's Code of Conduct

8.0 Legal Sanctions

8.1 Sacred Heart RC Primary School will make use of the full range of potential sanctions – including, but not limited to, those listed below – to tackle poor attendance. Decisions will be made on an individual, case-by-case basis

Penalty notices

8.2 Manchester City Council, upon a request from school, can fine parents for the unauthorised absence of their child from school, where the child is of compulsory school age, by issuing a penalty notice

8.3 Before requesting a legal sanction, the school will consider the individual case, including:

- Whether the national threshold for considering a penalty notice has been met (10 sessions of unauthorised absence in a rolling period of 10 school weeks)
- Whether a penalty notice is the best available tool to improve attendance for that pupil
- Whether appropriate support has been put in place
- Whether any obligations that the school has under the Equality Act 2010 make issuing a penalty notice inappropriate

8.4 Each parent who is liable for the pupil's offence(s) can be issued with a penalty notice, but this will usually only be the parent/parents who allowed the absence

8.5 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 or withdraw the notice

8.6 If issued with a first penalty notice, the parent must pay £80 within 21 days, or £160 within 28 days

8.7 If a second penalty notice is issued to the same parent in respect of the same pupil, the parent must pay £160 if paid within 28 days

8.8 A third penalty notice cannot be issued to the same parent in respect of the same child within 3 years of the date of the issue of the first penalty notice. In a case where the national threshold is met for a third time within those 3 years, alternative action will be taken instead.

Notice to Improve

8.9 If the national threshold has been met and support is appropriate, but parents do not engage with offers of support, a Notice to Improve letter will be issued in line with processes set out in by Manchester City Council's Code of Conduct. This will include a clear warning that a penalty notice may be issued if attendance doesn't improve within the monitoring period which will be up to 6 weeks. Sufficient improvement will be decided on a case-by-case basis.

Appendix 1 – Attendance Codes

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

Code	Definition	Scenario
/	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
Attending at a place other than at school		
K	Attending education provision arranged by the local authority	Pupil is attending a place other than a school at which they are registered, for educational provision arranged by the local authority
V	Attending an educational visit or trip	Pupil is on an educational visit/trip organised or approved by the school
P	Participating in a sporting activity	Pupil is participating in a supervised sporting activity approved by the school
W	Attending work experience	Pupil is on an approved work experience placement
B	Attending any other approved educational activity	Pupil is attending a place for an approved educational activity that is not a sporting activity or work experience
D	Dual registration	Pupil is attending a session at another setting where they are also registered
Absent – approved leave of absence		
C1	Participating in a regulated performance or undertaking regulated employment abroad	Pupil is undertaking employment (paid or unpaid) during school hours, approved by the school
M	Medical/dental appointment	Pupil is at a medical or dental appointment
J1	Interview	Pupil has an interview with a prospective employer/educational establishment
S	Study leave	Pupil has been granted leave of absence to study for a public examination
X	Not required to be in school	Pupil of non-compulsory school age is not required to attend
C2	Part-time timetable	Pupil is not in school due to having a part-time timetable
C	Exceptional circumstances	Pupil has been granted a leave of absence due to exceptional circumstances
Absent – other authorised reasons		
T	Parent travelling for occupational purposes	Pupil is a 'mobile child' who is travelling with their parent(s) who are travelling for occupational purposes
R	Religious observance	Pupil is taking part in a day of religious observance
I	Illness (not medical or dental appointment)	Pupil is unable to attend due to illness (either related to physical or mental health)
E	Suspended or excluded	Pupil has been suspended or excluded from school and no alternative provision has been made
Absent – unable to attend school because of unavoidable cause		
Q	Lack of access arrangements	Pupil is unable to attend school because the local authority has failed to make access arrangements to enable attendance at school

Y1	Transport not available	Pupil is unable to attend because school is not within walking distance of their home and the transport normally provided is not available
Y2	Widespread disruption to travel	Pupil is unable to attend because of widespread disruption to travel caused by a local, national or international emergency
Y3	Part of school premises closed	Pupil is unable to attend because they cannot practicably be accommodated in the part of the premises that remains open
Y4	Whole school site unexpectedly	Every pupil absent as the school is closed closed unexpectedly (e.g. due to adverse weather)
Y5	Criminal justice detention	Pupil is unable to attend as they are: - In police detention - Remanded to youth detention, awaiting trial or sentencing, or - Detained under a sentence of detention
Y6	Public health guidance or law	Pupil's travel to or attendance at the school would be prohibited under public health guidance or law
Y7	Any other unavoidable cause	To be used where an unavoidable cause is not covered by the other codes
Absent – unauthorised absence		
G	Holiday not granted by the school	Pupil is absent for the purpose of a holiday, not approved by the school
N	Reason for absence not yet established	Reason for absence has not been established before the register closes (must be cleared at least weekly)
O	Absent in other or unknown circumstances	No reason for absence has been established, or the school isn't satisfied that the reason given would be recorded using one of the codes for authorised absence
U	Arrived in school after registration closed	Pupil has arrived late, after the register has closed but before the end of session
Administrative codes		
Z	Prospective pupil not on admission register	Pupil has not joined school yet but has been registered
#	Planned whole-school closure	Whole-school closures that are known and planned in advance, including school holidays

Appendix 2: Traveller Family Absence

To protect Traveller parents from unreasonable prosecution for non-attendance, the Education Act 1996, section 444(6), states that a Traveller parent is safe from prosecution if their child accrues 200 attendances (i.e. 200 half days) in the year preceding the absence. This applies only when the family proves it is engaged in a trade or business that requires it to travel and when the child is attending school as regularly as that trade permits.

When in or around Manchester, if a family can reasonably travel back to their Base School (see below) then the expectation is that their child will attend full-time.

Sacred Heart RC Primary School will be regarded as the base school if it is the school where the child normally attends when they are not travelling. However, the pupil must have attended in the last 18 months. Traveller children can register at other schools temporarily while away from their base school, in such cases, the pupil's school place at **Sacred Heart RC Primary School** will be kept open for them whilst travelling. This is to protect them from unfairly losing their place at their school of usual attendance.

Sacred Heart RC Primary School can only effectively operate as the child's base school if it is engaged in on-going dialogue with Traveller families. This means that parents must:

- advise of their forthcoming travelling patterns before they happen; and
- inform the school regarding proposed return dates

Sacred Heart RC Primary School will authorise absence of Traveller children if we are satisfied that a family is travelling for work or trade purposes and has given indication that they intend to return.

Traveller children will be recorded as attending an approved educational activity when:

- The child is on roll and attending another visited school
- Undertaking supervised educational activity under the jurisdiction of another Local Authority's Traveller Education Service
- The child is undertaking computer-based distance learning that is time evidenced

Where Traveller children are registered pupils at a school and are known to be present either at a site (official or otherwise) or in a house and are not attending school, the absence will be investigated in the same way as that for any pupil and appropriate statutory action may be undertaken.