



ST JOSEPH'S ROMAN CATHOLIC PRIMARY SCHOOL

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Headmistress: Mrs D Titus

Dear Parents and Guardians

Monday 21 January 2019

Attendance and Punctuality

I am writing to all parents with a reminder about the importance of children attending school every day and arriving in good time. I also want to ensure that parents are very clear about expectations at St Joseph's and that they have agreed to fully support the school with policies, procedures and routines.

- *The law is very clear that parents are responsible for ensuring their children attend school*
- *The school is very clear about their statutory duties for ensuring children attend school*
- *In accepting a place for their child at St Joseph's, parents have agreed to adhere to and fully support all school policies and procedures*

Attendance

Family Holidays, Celebrations etc during school term time are banned. There are 14 weeks of school holidays and 38 weekends during term time to plan special events, holidays and celebrations. Please do not hinder your child's learning progress by taking them out of school for these reasons.

It is clear that some parents have a false belief that there is an 'entitlement' for children to be absent for certain circumstances including holidays, special events and family gatherings. Please be clear that there has never been a reference to this in the school policy as there is no legal entitlement to such absences. Please also be clear that the school does not take into account past attendance records, good or bad, as our concern is for the current impact on your child's learning progress.

Should you choose to ignore the law and the school policy on this matter, the absence will be recorded as unauthorised and a referral made to Brent's Education Welfare Service. This will lead to Brent Council issuing an Education Penalty Fine Notice (£120 per parent, per child – reduced to £60 per parent, per child, if paid within the stipulated timeframe).

All unauthorised absences will be reviewed to determine if the circumstances require the issuing of an Education Penalty Fine Notice.



Since September 2018, we have made 4 referrals to Brent in relation to unauthorised absence and Education Penalty Fine Notices were issued to the parents in all those cases.

We have found some families claim that their children are unwell when they are actually abroad or on holiday. It is disappointing that some families find this acceptable. The school finds this conduct unacceptable and will also refer these families to Brent's Education Welfare Service.

Passports, Visas etc should be organised during the school holidays. A child should not be missing out on their learning for this reason and absences for this reason will be recorded as unauthorised.

Routine Medical / Dental Appointments should be booked outside of school hours. It is good practice to book routine appointments during half-term breaks. If the appointment must take place on a school day, please arrange the appointment for as late in the day as possible. All children participate in key learning skills from 8.55am so it is essential your child is in school all day. If you receive an appointment during school time, most dentists, doctors and hospitals are able to change this to later in the day so your child does not miss out on their learning in mathematics, English or phonics. Please telephone the surgery / clinic / hospital to rearrange appointments so your child's learning progress is not adversely affected. A copy of the appointment letter should also be handed in at the school office.

Other Planned Absences, for example, visits to prospective high schools, should be notified to the school in writing in advance of the absence. Alternatively, a copy of the letter advising you of the meeting will suffice if this clearly states the name of the child, the date, time and purpose of appointment.

Unplanned Absences, such as personal illness, should be reported to the school by telephone at the earliest opportunity and certainly **by 9.00am**. There is an answerphone facility so parents can leave messages at any time. Unless otherwise agreed, the school requires a telephone call before 9.00am on every day of absence.

For safeguarding purposes, the school has to allocate staff to contact parents to establish the reason for their child's absence when this has not already been provided. All school staff are employed to provide a service which will ensure that your child reaches their full learning potential. Therefore, it is beneficial for all concerned if staff can focus on their assigned tasks rather than trying to make contact with parents who have not followed school procedures.

Following any period of any absence where the school has not received written notification in advance, the parent must complete a 'Reason For Absence' form which is available from the main office and the school website. Parents who have not provided a written explanation for absence will receive a letter requesting this information. If a written explanation for absence has not been received within 2 weeks of the child returning to school, the period of absence will be recorded as **unauthorised**.

Please note that the school monitors absences on a daily basis to determine if a pattern is forming. Parents will be invited to meet with Mrs Studd if there are any causes for concern.

Punctuality

All children must be in school by 8.55am at the latest. DO NOT arrive after 9.00am and expect to be able to gain entry unless you have provided a reason for the lateness in advance by telephoning the school. The gates are secured promptly by 9.00am and entry to the school will not be allowed after this time. The number of disruptions to lessons last term owing to late arrival was unacceptable and will not be tolerated.

We will contact the parents of late children if we have not received a satisfactory reason and we will expect them to be collected and brought back at lunchtime.

If you have provided prior notification of late arrival, please bring your child to the main school office so you can sign them in when you arrive. This is a very important safeguarding and health & safety protocol as your child would have been marked as absent in the school registers.

Children must be collected promptly at the end of the day. There must be no assumption that it is OK to collect your children at your convenience. All staff continue to work after the children have been dismissed so it is inconsiderate to expect that there is capacity for the school to provide free childcare.

If you have a particular circumstance that affects your child/ren arriving on time or being collected on time, please make an appointment to see Mrs Studd as children should not be at a learning disadvantage owing to poor punctuality.

It is vital that we work together to ensure that your child attends school every day so they can achieve their very best and do not miss their learning.

God bless,

**Mrs D Titus
Headmistress**