



ST JOHN'S CHURCH OF ENGLAND ACADEMY

ATTENDANCE POLICY

Reviewed	January 2016
Adopted	January 2016
Review due date	January 2018

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ATTENDANCE POLICY

Mission Statement

At St John's C of E Academy we strive for excellence in education by providing a safe, secure caring family environment where all children are valued and respected as individuals, enabling them to reach their full potential whilst growing in their love and understanding of the Christian faith.

At our academy we recognise that good attendance is an essential prerequisite to effective learning, raising standards and pupil attainment, therefore giving our children the best possible chance in life.

Research has shown that poor attendance leads to poorer attainment, and this often leads to lack of confidence and affects their relationships with other children. Children who do not achieve their full potential are disadvantaged in the future labour market and a cycle of social exclusion is initiated. We expect all children on roll to attend every day, when the school is in session as long as they are fit and healthy enough to do so. We rely on the cooperation of all parents and carers to ensure the success of this policy.

Aims

- To encourage excellent attendance and therefore ensure children reach their full potential in line with our Christian mission.
- To promote children's welfare and safeguarding
- To encourage prompt arrival at school.
- To ensure that routines are in place for monitoring attendance and for early identification of any difficulties.
- To work in partnership with parents and external agencies to ensure that children are fully supported and barriers to learning are removed so they can flourish academically, socially, morally and spiritually.

Responsibilities

All members of school staff have a responsibility to support and promote good attendance and punctuality.

Class teachers are responsible for:

- Emphasising with their class the importance of good attendance and punctuality.
- Promptly & accurately completing the electronic register for the admin staff to follow up absences.
- Keeping an overview of class and individual attendance, looking particularly for either poor overall attendance, anomalies in patterns of attendance and/or unusual explanations for absence offered by children and their parents/ carers.
- Informing the Headteacher/Home School Support Worker where there are concerns and acting upon them.
- Providing background information to support referrals.
- Emphasising with their class the importance of good attendance and punctuality.
- Setting an example by arriving promptly to lessons.

- Discussing attendance issues at consultation evenings/days, recording attendance on reports.

The Attendance Team is formed by the Admin Assistant & Home School Support Worker

The Attendance Team is responsible for:

- Ensuring that the attendance policy is followed. Liaising with parents and keeping records.
- Following the schools' procedures for first day calling.
- Monitoring individual attendance on a daily basis where concerns have been raised.
- Contacting families where concerns are raised about absence.
- Providing reports and background information for the school's Attendance Officer.
- Providing a point of contact between individual teachers, the headteacher and the school's Attendance Officer.
- Informing the headteacher on a formal and an informal basis of patterns of attendance noted.
- Including information about attendance trends and class percentages in the school newsletter.
- Following up specific requests from the headteacher/class teachers/Attendance Officer for information about individuals.
- Collating weekly attendance percentages.
- Liaising with other professionals to determine potential sources of difficulties and reasons for absence (HSSW).
- Using the persistent absenteeism framework for identification of pupils whose absences are 10% or above.
- Feedback and discussions with the class teacher over individual cases (Home school support Worker).
- Weekly meetings with the Attendance Officer (Home school support Worker)
- Processing and following up Leave of Absence requests (Admin assistant).
- Referring a minority of families to external agencies such as family support or FIT (Family Intervention Team) for intensive support where specific needs have been identified and liaising with them.
- Referring a minority of families to the LA via the Children's access Point for a court action where attendance has fallen below 80% with 10 or more unauthorised absences.
- Following LSCB guidance on Keeping Children safe in Education and when a child has been absent from school for 5 days with no explanation , by putting a missing in education referral in to the CAP. If there are Safeguarding or child protection concerns this should be done immediately.

The Attendance Officer is responsible for:

- Monitoring weekly attendance where it has fallen to 95% or below.
- Contacting parents via telephone, home visits or meeting with parents in school to inform parents of attendance level and give them the opportunity to discuss reasons for absence.
- Giving advice and support to parents and liaising with external agencies where appropriate e.g. school nurse family support.

- Sending Low Warning Letters to parents where attendance is below 95% or issuing Attendance Reports with attendance below 90%.
- Liaising with Home School Support Worker when a referral is required to other agencies for intensive support where specific needs have been identified.
- Liaising with Admin Staff when a referral is required for the LA re court action where attendance has fallen below 85% or there are 10 or more unauthorised absences within a six week period.
- Referring a minority of families to the LA via the CAP (Children's Access Point) for Penalty Notice fines for unauthorised holidays taken in term time.
- Together with the Home School Support Worker, keeping meticulous records to support improved attendance.
- Liaising every half term with the Headteacher or more if a priority case arises.
- Carrying out regular Late Gate's to monitor and promote punctuality.

The Headteacher is responsible for:

- Overall monitoring of school attendance
- Acting as a point of contact for teaching and non-teaching staff where concerns need to be raised or advice sought.
- Liaising with other professionals.
- Liaising with and discussing with parents issues relating to attendance.
- Meeting with parents and Attendance Officer where attendance is a serious concern.
- Holding termly Pupil Progress meetings with Class Teacher where attendance is discussed highlighting individual concerns.
- Feedback and discussions with the class teacher over individual cases.
- Promoting attendance e.g. when children join the academy with parents outlining responsibilities.
- Monitoring and distribution of attendance awards.
- Reporting statistics to Governor's as part of the Headteacher's Termly Report.

Governors are responsible for:

- Monitoring overall attendance and benchmarking according to national averages using Raise online, Data dashboard, LA Data Brochure.
- Approving the annual attendance target.
- Ratifying the Attendance Policy.
- Receiving Headteacher termly reports outlining attendance attainment and an overview of operational matters.
- Making strategic decisions to influence policy and direct resources e.g. introduction of Breakfast Club, employment of Attendance Officer, agreeing school calendar.

Parents/Carers are responsible for:

- Ensuring their child(ren) attend(s) regularly which forms part of the Home School Agreement.
- Informing school on the first day of absence.
- Ensuring that child(ren) are punctual and in school for 8.50 am
- Providing copies of medical appointments if requested.

Information for Parents/Carers

There are two registrations a day: am 8.55 am and afternoon 12.55 pm

All children should be in the school yard ready inline at 8.50 am each day. The bell will ring at 8.55 am and children file into classes where an electronic registration is taken. The school gates are locked at 9am; any child who is late should enter through the main entrance where their name will be taken and marked in as late. Registration closes at 9.30 am any child entering school after this time will receive a mark that shows them to be on site, but this will not count as a present mark and it will mean they have an unauthorised absence. This may mean that you could face the possibility of a Penalty Notice if the problem persists. Parents are asked to notify the school if their child has an early morning appointment at the doctors, dentist or hospital so that the correct code can be entered on the register.

If a child misses the start of the day, they can miss work and do not spend time with their class teacher getting vital information and news for the day. Late arriving pupils also disrupt the learning of others and it can be embarrassing for the child. Good time keeping is a vital life skill which will help our children as they progress through their school life and out into the wider world.

Whilst any child may be absent due to illness, sometimes they can be reluctant to attend school. Any problems with regular attendance are best sorted out between the school, the parents/carers and the child. If your child is reluctant to attend, it is never better to cover up their absence or to give in to pressure to excuse them from attending. This gives the impression that attendance does not matter and usually make things worse.

If your child has a persistent late record you will be asked to meet with the Attendance Officer, Home School support Worker and or Headteacher to resolve the problem, but you can approach us at any time if you are having problems getting your child to school on time.

Attendance is reported to parents termly and where concerns are raised, parents will be informed via a letter or telephone call. Parents are expected to work with the school to improve attendance.

If your child is absent school will:

- Telephone you on the first day of absence if we have not heard from you.
- Send a letter requesting reasons for any unexplained absence.
- Invite you in to discuss the situation with our Attendance Officer, Home School Support Worker and the Headteacher if absences persist.

Illness and Medical Appointments

- Every effort should be made to arrange medical appointments outside school hours.
- An appointment card or verification by the doctors/dentist/hospital is required.

If it is necessary for a child to be out of school for this reason, the child should be returned to school directly after the appointment.

If your child is absent due to vomiting then they should not return to school for the next 24 hours after the last time that the child is sick. This is to reduce the risk of infection to other children and adults at the school.

Leave of Absence

Holidays taken in term time **will not be authorised** unless in **exceptional** circumstances. Any requests must be made in advance and authorisation must be given before booking.

If the request for leave is not authorised and the pupil goes on holiday, the absence is recorded as unauthorised. We are required by law to report unauthorised absence. The Local Authority will issue fixed penalty fines to all parents / carers who ignore the law and take children out of school without authorisation. This fine is £60 per parent which needs to be paid within 21 days. If the fine is not paid within the time it rises to £120 per parent.

Examples of what may constitute exceptional circumstances:

To have a short absence (up to 3 days) to attend a family wedding, or a special family celebration or religious/cultural festival, may constitute an exceptional circumstance.

Exceptional circumstances are usually one off incidences connected to personal family circumstances.

Understanding types of absence.

Every half-day absence from school has to be classified by the school (not by parents) as either AUTHORISED OR UNAUTHORISED. This is why information about the cause of each absence is always required.

Authorised Absence

An absence is classified as authorised when a child has been away from school for a legitimate reason and the school has received notification from a parent or carer. Only the school can authorise an absence.

Unauthorised Absence

Unauthorised absences are those, which the school does not consider reasonable and for which no 'authorisation' has been given. This includes:

- absences which have never been properly explained
- keeping children off school unnecessarily e.g. to go shopping, birthdays, no one to look after children.
- truancy before or during the school day.
- holidays not agreed
- persistent lateness after the register has closed.

A pupil has to be absent from school in one of these circumstances for at least 10 sessions in a 6 week period before the issuing of a Penalty Notice can be considered.

Following a request by the school for the issuing of a Penalty Notice, a check is made by the Senior Family Support Officer that the request meets the conditions of the Code of Conduct. A warning letter will then be sent to parents explaining that unless their child attends full time for the next 15 days a Penalty Notice will be issued. Where a Penalty Notice is issued, each parent/carer is required to pay a fine to the Local Authority.

Persistent Absentee (PA)

A pupil becomes a 'persistent absentee' (PA) when they miss 10% or more of schooling across the school year, **for whatever reason**. The Government has reduced the PA percentage because it is known that absence at this level is doing considerable damage to a child's education.

Term	Sessions Absent (10%)
First half Autumn Term	7
Autumn Term	14
Autumn Term plus first half of Spring Term	20
Autumn & Spring Term	25
Autumn, Spring Term plus first half of Summer Term	31
Whole of the academic year	38

The EWO identifies any children who have met this trigger every half term. These children and children at risk of becoming a PA are monitored very closely and subject to an Action Plan. The plan may include additional support from outside agencies.

Attendance procedures

The Home School Support Worker and the EWO meet weekly to discuss any concerns, and monitor attendance. They liaise with the headteacher where appropriate to discuss any concerns and follow up the progress of individuals.

At the end of every half term a meeting is held to discuss issues including the PA list. Prior to the meeting, the following information is collected:

- Attendance record for any child with less than 90% attendance.
- Attendance record for any child whose absence shows particular trends.
- Attendance record for any child who has been frequently arriving at school late.
- Class percentage totals.

Information is shared about previous cases and decisions taken about the next stages of intervention where this is appropriate. Decisions taken are recorded on the attendance monitoring sheet. It is expected that reasonable steps have been taken by the school.

Following the meeting with the Attendance Officer, class teachers are notified of the outcome and agreed actions are discussed with office staff and followed up as appropriate.

- **Low Warning Attendance** letter is sent to parents at the end of every half term where attendance is below 95%. If parents have any specific issues which are affecting the child's attendance it asks them to contact the Attendance Officer. If no improvement is shown during the following half term it may result in a Penalty fine.
- **Attendance Report** letter is sent to parents where attendance has fallen below 90% and informs parents that their child is now on Attendance Report where attendance is monitored daily and school has serious concerns. Future absences are followed up by telephone calls and home visits by the Attendance Officer or Home School support Worker to challenge absence and provide support where necessary. (Previous intervention from Attendance Officer but attendance still causing concern and insufficient progress).
- **Persistent Absentees** (children who are under 90%) are subject to a formal meeting with Attendance Officer, Home School Support Worker and Headteacher to discuss

reasons for absence and involve external agencies e.g. school nurse or family support where necessary and set targets for improved attendance. A CAF may be set up with parental agreement if required.

Encouraging good attendance and punctuality

It is important to remember that the vast majority of children at St John's arrive on time and every day. An important part of our attendance policy is that this good practice is commended and celebrated with the whole community. We do this by:

- Announcing class attendance and punctuality figures on a weekly basis in assembly on a Monday.
- Making attendance a regular feature of Newsletters and publishing weekly attendance figures.
- Ensuring new parents understand that attendance and punctuality forms part of our Home School Agreement which is discussed at welcome meeting for new parents. All parents sign the agreement as part of their acceptance..
- Awarding certificates and prizes termly for children with 100% attendance and inviting parents to a special Achievement Assembly.
- Awarding certificates and prizes termly for children with excellent attendance (98-99%) every half term.
- Awarding prizes to children with 100% attendance at the end of the year with invitations to parents to Achievement Award Assembly.
- Rewarding the class with the highest termly attendance with a visit or a special visitor.
- Liaising with children to agree rewards/prizes so children are motivated to achieve our attendance target.

Monitoring

The Headteacher will report half termly to the governing body highlighting the attendance percentage for the school compared to target, individual class attendance and any specific trends and/or concerns. The attendance will be broken down into vulnerable groupings such as Pupil Premium and advise governors on any Persistent Absentees.

Review

This policy is due for review in September 2017. Its success should be judged by answers to the following questions:

- Have we reached our attendance target? Are we in line with or above national average? Are protected grouping in line or above national.
- Is everyone aware of the procedures to be followed and applying them consistently?
- Do children have high expectations of themselves and others?
- Do parents/carers acknowledge the importance of good attendance?
- Do we have any Persistent Absentees? What is being done to challenge this and is it having impact?
- Are rewards, effective in improving attendance?

Adopted by Governing Body: September 2015

To be reviewed September 2017

In light of changes to school policy and Government changes to PA's policy reviewed in Autumn 2015 by:

Miss C Large – Headteacher

Mrs M Baker – Home School Support Worker

Mrs Janine Lowther – Educational Welfare Officer

Adopted by Governing Body: January 2016

Review date due: January 2018

St John's Church of England Academy



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Appendix 1

Application for leave of Absence during Term Time

NAME OF CHILD(REN):		YEAR GROUP(s):
Name of Parent/Carer:		
First Day of Absence:	Last Day of Absence:	
Total number of days of absence from school:		
Reason for application (please give sufficient detail to inform decision making):		
Signature of Parent/Carer:		Date:

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RESPONSE FORM

Attendance to date (current academic year):		Previous year attendance:
Leave of absence AUTHORISED by:	Leave of absence UNAUTHORISED by:	
..... Headteacher Headteacher	
Date:		
Comments:		

Please submit this form to the Headteacher prior to booking any holiday. Your request will be considered and you will receive a response within 8 school days of receipt.

Leave of Absence Requests

The Department for Education has made amendments to the regulations which previously allowed Headteachers' the discretion to grant holidays taken during term time. The new regulations come into force from 1st September 2013 and we have had to revise our school policy based upon the new government legislation which states, in summary, that:

- **The current law does not give parents any entitlement to take their children out of school for a holiday during term time.**
- Any application for leave must only be in '**exceptional**' circumstances and the Headteacher must be satisfied that the circumstances are 'exceptional' and warrant the granting of leave.
- In 'exceptional' circumstances, a **request for absence must be made in advance**, to the Headteacher, who will inform you of the decision **prior** to booking your holiday.
- If a request for leave is not authorised by the Headteacher and the pupil goes on holiday, the absence will be recorded as unauthorised, which then stays on the child's permanent record.

We are required by law to report unauthorised absences to the Local Authority, who may issue a Fixed Penalty Notice, which means a parent may be fined by the Education Welfare Service. The regulations do stipulate that fixed penalty fines will be issued and from 1st September 2013 parents must pay £60 within 21 days or £120 within 28 days. Due to equalities legislation, fixed penalty notices will now be issued to **all parents who have parental responsibility and whom can be traced**. This means that both the father and mother of a child will receive separate fines, under the new regulations, and that each parent will incur a fine for each child. Please be aware that the proceeds from the fixed penalty fines DO NOT go to the school.

The Government have not provided clear guidance about the definition of 'exceptional' circumstances and what is considered to be 'exceptional' for one person may not be seen as such by another. Some examples which we are aware of are:

- 'Exceptional' circumstances are more likely to be unique and/or 'one-off' situations. eg: due to a parent's work/employment commitments. NB: Proof may be required from an employer in such circumstances.
- Where there has been a trauma or bereavement in the family or where the opportunity for such a holiday is highly unlikely to arise in the future.

As a result of this legislation, any decision to grant leave will be made using the following criteria:

- The individual circumstances as to why the holiday is being requested in term time.
- The child's attendance record and percentage of absences.
- The age of the child and the time of year proposed for the holiday.
- The child's attainment and progress.

N.B. Any requests for leave during September will not be authorised as this is an important time for settling into a new class/school. Similarly, leave of absence will not be authorised for year 6 pupils in the term prior to SATS or the weeks leading up to them.

Further information and guidance can be found on the DFE website
www.education.gov.uk/schools/pupilsupport/behaviour/attendance