



ST JOHN'S CHURCH OF ENGLAND ACADEMY

ATTENDANCE POLICY

Reviewed	January 2018
Adopted	March 2018
Review due date	January 2021

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ATTENDANCE POLICY

Mission Statement

'Guided by God, to be the best that we can be.'

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. In line with our Christian values we will endeavour to establish reasons for low attendance and support families and children through difficult times. We rely on the cooperation of all parents and carers to ensure the success of this policy

Aims

- Encourage excellent attendance and punctuality to ensure children reach their full potential in line with our Christian mission.
- Promote children's welfare and safeguarding
- That all children understand the importance of having good attendance
- Clear procedures and guidelines are in place for all parents and staff
- 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.
- Meet or exceed our DfE targets for attendance

Responsibilities

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

Governors are responsible for:

- Monitoring overall attendance and benchmarking according to national averages using Analyse School Performance (ASP), Inspection Data Summary Report.
- Approving the annual attendance target – **currently 96.4%**
- 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.

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.

Class teachers are responsible for:

- **Providing a caring, welcoming learning environment to where children want to come.**
- 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 for example following up unauthorized absence when admin staff have been unable to reach parents/carers.
- Providing background information to support referrals.
- Setting an example by arriving promptly to lessons.
- Discussing attendance issues at consultation evenings/days, recording attendance on reports.

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, Early Help/TAF.
- 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 e.g. Persistent Absentee Tracker, CPOMs.
- 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 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 Early Help 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 in a 6 week period..
- 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.

Parents/Carers are responsible for:

- Ensuring their child(ren) attend(s) regularly
- Ensuring that child(ren) are punctual and in school for 8.55 am
- Informing school on the first morning of absence.
- Informing school in advance of any unavoidable medical appointments in school time and providing copies of medical appointments if requested.
- Talking to school as soon as possible about any child's reluctance to come to school so problems can be quickly identified and dealt with.

Registration

The school doors open at 8.45 a.m. (KS1 and 2) and 8.50 (Reception) until 8.55 am. This time is sufficient for all pupils to come into their classroom.

Staff are responsible for keeping an accurate record of attendance. Any pupil who is absent must be recorded at the beginning of the morning and afternoon session. The attendance register must be completed by the class teacher by 9.05 am and by 1.05pm. (Attendance code / and \ for pupils who are present) using SIMs software. Attendance registers are legal documents and these must be kept secure and preserved for a period of three years after the date they were last used.

Lateness

Once the doors are closed at 8.55am the only way to get into school is via the school office. Any pupil who comes into school this way from 9 am will be marked as late in the attendance record. Records are kept of those pupils who are late, this is documented on the electronic register for each pupil (Attendance code L). Any child who arrives for school later than 9.30 a.m. will be marked as having an unauthorised absence for the morning. (Attendance code U).

Children who are persistently late miss a significant amount of learning, often the most important aspect, as the beginning of the day is where the teacher explains the learning and what each child is expected to achieve. 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.

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 for advice or support if you are having problems getting your child to school on time.

Absences

Parents/carers should contact the school on the first morning of their child's absence. When parents/carers notify us of their child's absence it is important that they provide us with details of the reason for their absence.

All absences are recorded as either authorised or unauthorised absences on the computer. It is important that we receive accurate information from parents with reasons for the child's absence. This information is used to determine whether the absence is authorised or unauthorised. The Headteacher has the responsibility to determine whether absences are authorised or unauthorised.

Where a child is absent from school and we have not received any verbal or written communication from the parent, then we initiate a **first day contact** process. Office staff check all of the registers from 9.00am to 9.30am on a daily basis, to identify those pupils who are absent. There are occasions when we are unaware why the child is absent and we will contact the parent to check the reasons for the child's absence. If we are unable to make contact by phone, a Leave of Absence form requesting these details will be sent to parents/carers to complete when the child returns to school. If this is not completed then the absence will be recorded as an unauthorised absence (Attendance Code O).

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. Authorised absence may include:

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- Illness (code I)
- Exceptional family circumstances e.g. Bereavement of an immediate family (code C)
- Medical or dentist appointments that can't be made out of school hours (code M)
- Fixed term exclusions (code E)
- Family holiday (code H)

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.

If a child is subject to a Child Protection Plan or if the academy has safeguarding concerns, the academy would notify the Attendance Officer of the Safeguarding Hub to make a visit.

Penalty Notice

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.

Illness

When children have an illness that means they will be away from school long term, the school will do all it can to send material home, so that they can keep up with their school work.

If the absence is likely to continue for an extended period, or be a repetitive absence, the school will contact the support services to see if arrangements can be made for the child to be given some home tuition outside school.

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Where over the course of an academic year, a child has repeated periods of illness, the school will write to parents to ask them to provide medical evidence for each future period of illness related absence. This evidence could be a Doctor's note, appointment card or copy of a prescription. We may seek written permission from you for the school to make their own enquiries.

If your child is absent due to vomiting due to something they have eaten, then they should not return to school for the next 24 hours after the last time that the child is sick. If the vomiting is due to a virus, then they should not return until 48 hours after their last bout of sickness. This is to reduce the risk of infection to other children and adults at the school.

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 a good idea 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.

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.

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.

Leave of Absence

From September 2013, the government issued guidance which prohibits headteacher's from authorising any holidays during term time except in very exceptional circumstances. *Exceptional circumstances are usually one off incidences connected to personal family circumstance.* Any requests must be made in advance and authorisation must be given before booking. Taking holidays during term time can have a detrimental effect on a child's education. Not only do they miss valuable learning time whilst they are away but it often takes them awhile to catch up when they come back. Consequently **governors have agreed that any requests for absence longer than 5 days will not be authorised due to the length of time missing education and the likelihood that this will place children in a persistent absentee category. Requests for leave of absence in September will not be granted as this is a key time for settling into a new class. Requests made during or before national tests will also not be permitted.**

Other reasons that will not be authorised include:

- Cheap holiday
- Birthday
- Shopping/ no uniform
- A family member has booked it as a treat
- Not aware of the dates for school holidays
- Family celebration abroad

If the request for leave is not authorised and the pupil goes on holiday, the absence is recorded as unauthorised (code G). 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.

Attendance procedures

The Home School Support Worker and the Attendance Officer 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 Persistent Absentees (PA's). 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:

- Ensuring that we provide a caring, welcoming learning environment where every child is valued.

- Announcing class attendance and punctuality figures on a weekly basis on a Monday morning.
- 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 the welcome meeting for new parents. All parents sign the agreement as part of their acceptance of taking up a school place.
- Awarding certificates and prizes termly for children with 100% attendance and inviting parents to Celebration Worship.
- Awarding certificates and prizes termly for children with excellent attendance (98-99%) or most improved attendance every term.
- Awarding prizes to children with 100% attendance at the end of the year with invitations to parents to Celebration Worship.
- 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 SEND. Governors will be advised of any Persistent Absentees.

Review

The success of this policy 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?

Policy reviewed January 2018 by:

Miss C Large – Headteacher
 Mrs M Baker – Home School Support Worker
 Mrs Janine Lowther – Educational Welfare
 Mrs V Cadd - Safeguarding Governor

Next Review date due: January 2021

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 and missing learning:		
Reason for application: (If this is a holiday request please explain the exceptional circumstances which mean that the holiday cannot be taken during a school holiday- please see overleaf).		
Signature of Parent/Carer:		Date:

RESPONSE FORM

Attendance to date (current academic year):		Previous year attendance:
Leave of absence AUTHORISED by: Headteacher	Leave of absence UNAUTHORISED by: 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 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. **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 fine of £60 to be paid within 21 days or £120 within 28 days. Please be aware that the proceeds from the fixed penalty fines DO NOT go to the school.

When making a decision, the attendance panel will consider:

- The age of the child (education for children below the age of 5 is not statutory);
- The time and duration of absence;
- Previous and current attendance;
- Impact of lost learning time on the child;
- The individual circumstances of the request.

N.B Requests for absence will not be authorised in September as this is a key time for settling in. Nor will requests be granted for pupils during or before national assessments. Requests for absence over 5 days will not be granted due to the impact on learning as agreed by the Governing Body.

Examples of 'exceptional' circumstances

- Genuine illness
- Unavoidable medical appointment (please book after school or after registration where possible)
- Bereavement/Funeral of immediate family member
- Weddings of immediate family
- Religious observance
- Family member's Graduation ceremony/Passing Out Parade
- Out of school programmes such as music, arts or sport operating which are supported by the Local Authority/Tees Valley.
- Parents/carers employment commitments (supported by letter from employer)

The following are not regarded as 'exceptional' circumstances:

- Cheaper holiday
- Booked dates by mistake
- Birthdays
- Shopping
- No uniform/shoes

Further information and guidance can be found on the DFE website www.education.gov.uk/schools/pupilsupport/behaviour/attendance. I hope that we can rely upon your support in this matter and I will keep you informed of any future development and provide you with further information as it becomes available.

