

Attendance policy

St James and St John CE Primary School



Approved by: Standards, Achievement and Welfare Committee **Date:** 14th November 2018

Last reviewed on: n/a

Next review due by: November 2021

Introduction

Our school vision is '*Jesus said, I came that they may have life, and have it abundantly*' **St John 10:10**. Good attendance is vital if our children are going to live out our school vision in their lives at school and if they are to thrive in love, life and learning.

At St James and St John we all recognise that good attendance is a whole school matter and as such is of primary concern to teaching staff, support staff, office staff, Governors, parents, any outside agencies that the school liaises and of course children.

Legal framework

This policy and procedures document is informed by guidance on school attendance published by the Department for Education in September 2018.

The legal powers and duties that govern school attendance are contained in:

- The Education Act 1996 – sections 434(1)(3)(4)&(6) and 458(4)&(5)
- The Education (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2006
- The Education (Pupil Registration) (England) (Amendment) Regulations 2010
- The Education (Pupil Registration) (England) (Amendment) Regulations 2011
- The Education (Pupil Registration) (England) (Amendment) Regulations 2013
- The Education (Pupil Registration) (England) (Amendment) Regulations 2016

The law requires all schools to have an admission register and an attendance register. All pupils must be placed on both registers. At St James and St John, we address this legal requirement through the use of an electronic information management system.

Safeguarding concerns and Children at Risk of Missing Education

School governing boards must have regard to the statutory guidance 'Keeping Children Safe in Education' when making arrangements to safeguard and promote the welfare of children.

Schools must put in place appropriate safeguarding responses for children who go missing from school, particularly on repeat occasions. Where staff at St James and St John have concerns about a child, they will use their professional judgement to inform their decision as to whether welfare concerns in relation to attendance should be escalated to the school's designated safeguarding lead or to the relevant person in the local authority.

Definitions and attendance codes

Absence

When a pupil is not present at school for half a day session.

Authorised absence

Authorised absence means that the school has either given approval in advance for a pupil of compulsory school age to be away or has accepted an explanation offered afterwards as justification for absence.

These are attributable to:

1) Illness

We request parents to notify our school office on the first day their child is unable to attend due to illness. St James and St John will authorise absences due to illness unless there is a genuine cause for concern about the veracity of an illness. If the authenticity of illness is in

doubt or the current level of attendance is very low, the school will request parents to provide medical evidence to support illness. Medical evidence could include:

- Prescriptions
- Appointment cards
- Doctor's note

If a child is a persistent absentee with an attendance rate of below 85% then the school may request medical evidence as part of monitoring the low attendance rate.

2) Exclusion

3) Other exceptional circumstances including:

Medical or dental appointments

Missing registration for a medical or dental appointment is counted as an authorised absence. At St James and St John, we encourage parents to make appointments out of school hours. Where this is not possible, the pupil should only be out of school for the minimum amount of time necessary for the appointment.

Religious observance

Absence is treated as authorised when it is due to religious observance. The day must be exclusively set apart for religious observance by the religious body to which the parents belong.

Authorised leave of absence

Only exceptional circumstances warrant an authorised leave of absence. Parents should submit an application form in advance and the headteacher must be satisfied that there are exceptional circumstances based on the individual facts and circumstances of the case which warrant leave. The Department for Education has stated that "the school year is designed to give families the opportunities for breaks without having to disrupt their children's education."

If parents wish to request a leave of absence from school, they must do so using a leave of absence request form available from the school office. Parents should provide as much information as they feel is necessary to explain the exceptional circumstances behind their request.

The school will use the following guidelines in considering any request for leave of absence:

1. The decision to authorise absence is at the Headteacher's discretion based on their assessment of the situation. This will include taking into account the child's attendance and punctuality record for their time at school.
2. Term times are for education. This is the priority. Children and families have 175 days off school to spend time together, including weekends and school holidays. Our school policy is that absence will not be granted during term time and will only be authorised in exceptional circumstances.
3. If an event can be reasonably scheduled outside of term time then it would not be normal to authorise absence.
4. Absence during term time for holidays is therefore not considered an exceptional circumstance and will not be authorised.
5. Absences to visit family members are also not normally granted during term time if they could be rescheduled for holiday periods or outside school hours.

6. Absence for a bereavement of a close family member is usually considered an exceptional circumstance but for the funeral service only (1 or 2 days), not extended leave.
7. Early collection from school in advance of a school holiday or weekend resulting in a half day's session absence is also subject to the same guidelines as above and subject to the school receiving an application.

Unauthorised absence

Unauthorised absence is where a school is not satisfied with the reasons given for the absence.

Where the unauthorised absence is due to holiday being taken during term time that has not been agreed with the school, the school will issue a penalty notice referral to the attendance and child employment team in the local authority.

Attendance and punctuality monitoring and reporting

- Parents are asked to phone the school office or email attendance@ststj.co.uk to report their child's absence with a reason for the absence.
- The office staff undertake first day calling when no indication of a child's absence has been given to the school.
- If not explanation about an absence has been given a letter of enquiry will be sent home.
- The school will undertake regular checks of attendance to ensure that:
 - Attendance is of a good standard throughout the school.
 - Punctuality for the school day is good and supports starting learning well.
 - Unauthorised absences are checked and followed up.
 - Parents are contacted where there are concerns about the level of attendance.

If there are concerns about the level of a child's attendance or their punctuality for the start of the school day, the school will undertake appropriate action which could include:

- Raising concerns with the parents through phone calls and letters.
- Writing to parents to share current attendance levels and why these are a concern.
- Meeting with parents to discuss the reasons for the lower than average attendance rates.
- Meeting with parents to discuss how the school might support an improvement in attendance.
- Making a referral to the local authority early help team if appropriate.
- Making a referral to local authority children's services if the attendance and punctuality issues raise safeguarding concerns in the opinion of school staff.

The headteacher will report termly on attendance to the governing board and the governing board will monitor patterns and trends in attendance including those for key groups within the school.

Appendix 1 – Unauthorised attendance letter

Dear

Your childwas absent from school on the date(s) shown below

At the moment this absence is unauthorised. However if you contact the school with a valid reason for the absence, we may be able to amend our records.

Please complete the slip below and return this to school as soon as possible.

Yours sincerely,

Mr M Hewitt

Headteacher

Name:

Class:

Date(s) of absence:

Reason for absence.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

Signed Date.....

Appendix 2 – Absence cause for concern letter

Dear Parent / Carer

Re: School Attendance – (*forname, surname and date of birth from SIMs*)

We are writing to you as we are concerned with (name of child) 's current level of attendance. As you can see from the enclosed record (name of child)'s level of attendance is currently only (percentage attendance).

The national average for primary age children is 96% and this is our school target for all children. This ensures that every child receives the maximum educational benefits of their schooling.

We understand that children do fall ill from time to time, but frequent absences and lateness means that your child misses out on valuable learning experiences. This subsequently reduces their learning potential and they are prevented from achieving their best.

If your child's attendance falls below 90%, this is classified as persistent absence and a referral may be made to the local authority early help team or the attendance team. If there is no valid reason for an absence the school may need to issue a penalty referral notice.

We will continue to monitor (name of child)'s attendance and will invite you to a meeting for further discussion if there is no improvement.

If you have any concerns regarding this letter, please contact our school office who may be available to answer any queries you have.

Yours sincerely,

Mr M Hewitt

Headteacher

Appendix 3 – Invitation to an attendance meeting

Dear Parent / Carer

Re: Invitation to an attendance meeting

The national average for attendance is 96% and this is our target for every child.

We have recently carried out an attendance check at school and found that your child's level of attendance isfor the current academic year.

Attendance below 90% is considered persistent absenteeism and could be subject to further action by the school or local authority.

We request that you come to an attendance review meeting at the school on (Date and Time) to discuss the reasons for high number of absences and how we can ensure that this improves over time.

Yours sincerely,

Mr M Hewitt

Headteacher

Appendix 4 – Leave of absence application form

As is stated in our attendance policy, only exceptional circumstances warrant an authorised leave of absence. Parents should submit an application form in advance and the headteacher must be satisfied that there are exceptional circumstances based on the individual facts and circumstances of the case which warrant leave. *The Department for Education has stated that “the school year is designed to give families the opportunities for breaks without having to disrupt their children’s education.”*

Parents should provide as much information as they feel is necessary to explain the exceptional circumstances behind their request.

The school will use the following guidelines in considering any request for leave of absence:

1. The decision to authorise absence is at the Headteacher’s discretion based on their assessment of the situation. This will include taking into account the child’s attendance and punctuality record for their time at school.
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7. Early collection from school in advance of a school holiday or weekend resulting in a half day’s session absence is also subject to the same guidelines as above and subject to the school receiving an application.

Name of pupil(s) and Year group		
Reason for requesting term time leave of absence for the above child / children.		
Start date	Expected return date	Total number of school days

SCHOOL USE ONLY – Once signed and dated by HT, copy to parents and copy to pupil file

Date received	Received by
Request refused	Request granted
Additional information if appropriate:	
Signed and dated by Headteacher	