



# **St Johns C of E Primary Academy**

## **Attendance and Punctuality Policy**

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Attendance for pupils at St. John's is very important and it is an expectations that parents will do all they can to ensure that their children attend regularly.

A parent's responsibility is to ensure that their child attends school regularly and on time. It is a legal requirement that pupils attend school. Being punctual is teaching the children life skills and manners. Also it ensures that no child misses out on any aspect of their education.

## **Attendance Policy**

### **Introduction**

Regular and punctual school attendance is important. Pupils need to attend school regularly if they are to take full advantage of the educational opportunities available to them by law. St. John's C of E Primary Academy and Nursery fully recognises its responsibilities to ensure pupils are in school and on time, therefore having access to learning for the maximum number of days and hours.

Our policy applies to all children registered at this school and this policy is made available to all parents/carers of pupils who are registered at our school on our school website.

This policy has been written to adhere to the relevant Children Acts, Education Acts, Regulations and Guidance from the Department for Education in addition to guidance from the Local Authority.

Although parents/carers have the legal responsibility for ensuring their child's good attendance, the Principal and Governors at our school work together with other professionals and agencies to ensure that all pupils are encouraged and supported to develop good attendance habits. Procedures in this policy are followed to ensure this happens.

Children who are persistently late or absent soon fall behind with their learning. Children who are absent from school frequently develop large gaps in their learning which will impact on their progress and their ability to meet age related learning expectations. A child whose attendance drops to 90% each year will, over their time at primary school, have missed two whole terms of learning.

### **Aims and Objectives**

This attendance policy ensures that all staff and governors in our school are fully aware of and clear about the actions necessary to promote good attendance.

#### **Through this Policy we aim to:**

- Improve pupils' achievement by ensuring high levels of attendance and punctuality.
- Achieve a minimum of 96% attendance for all children, apart from those with chronic health issues.
- Create an ethos in which good attendance and punctuality are recognised as the norm and seen to be valued by the school.
- Raise awareness of parents, carers and pupils of the importance of uninterrupted attendance and punctuality at every stage of a child's education.
- Ensure that our policy applies to Nursery and Reception aged children in order to promote good habits at an early age.

- Work in partnership with pupils, parents, staff and the Attendance and Prosecution Service so that all pupils realise their potential, unhindered by unnecessary absence.
- Promote a positive and welcoming atmosphere in which pupils feel safe, secure, and valued, and encourage in pupils a sense of their own responsibility.
- Establish a pattern of monitoring attendance and ensure consistency in recognising achievement and dealing with difficulties.
- Recognise the key role of all staff, but especially class teachers, in promoting good attendance.

### **We maintain and promote good attendance and punctuality through:**

- Raising awareness of attendance and punctuality issues among all staff, parents and pupils.
- Ensuring that parents have an understanding of the responsibility placed on them for making sure their child attends regularly and punctually.
- Equipping children with the life skills needed to take responsibility for good school attendance and punctuality appropriate to the child's age and development.
- Maintaining effective means of communication with parents, pupils, staff and governors on school attendance matters.
- Developing and implementing procedures for identifying, reporting and reviewing cases of poor attendance and persistent lateness.
- Supporting pupils who have been experiencing any difficulties at home or at school which are preventing good attendance.
- Developing and implementing procedures to follow up non-attendance at school.
- Incentives at school to raise awareness of attendance and punctuality.

### **Definitions**

#### **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. For example, if a child has been unwell and the parent telephones the school to explain the absence.
- Only the school can make an absence authorised. Parents do not have this authority. Consequently not all absences supported by parents will be classified as authorised.

#### **Unauthorised absence**

- An absence is classified as unauthorised when a child is away from school without the permission of the school.
- Therefore the absence is unauthorised if a child is away from school without good reason, even with the support of a parent.

### **Procedures**

Our school will undertake to follow the following procedures to support good attendance:

- To maintain appropriate registration processes.
- To maintain appropriate attendance data.
- To communicate clearly the attendance procedures and expectations to all staff, governors, parents and pupils.
- To have consistent and systematic daily records which give detail of any absence and lateness.
- To follow up absences and persistent lateness if parents/carers have not communicated with the school.
- To inform parents/carers what constitutes authorised and unauthorised absence.
- To strongly discourage unnecessary absence through holidays taken during term time.
- To work with parents to improve individual pupils attendance and punctuality
- To refer to the Attendance and Prosecution Service any child whose attendance causes concern and where parents/carers have not responded to school initiatives to improve.
- To report attendance statistics to CECET, Sandwell LA and the DfE where requested.
- All staff should be aware that they must raise any attendance or punctuality concerns to the Headship Team with responsibility for monitoring attendance.

### **Responsibilities**

All members of school staff have a responsibility for identifying trends in attendance and punctuality. The following includes a more specific list of the kinds of responsibilities which individuals might have.

#### **Class teacher**

Class teachers are responsible for:

- 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 attendance offered by children and their parents/ carers
- Informing the Senior Leadership Team where there are concerns and acting upon them
- Providing background information to support referrals
- Monitoring follow-up once actions have been taken to correct attendance concerns
- Emphasising with their class the importance of good attendance and promptness
- Following up absences with immediate requests for explanation which should be noted inside the register
- Discussing attendance issues at consultation evenings where necessary

#### **Principal**

The Principal is responsible for:

- Overall monitoring of school attendance
- Trends in authorised and unauthorised absence

- Contacting families where concerns are raised about absence including arranging meetings to discuss attendance issues
- Monitoring individual attendance where concerns have been raised
- Making referrals to the Attendance and Prosecution service
- Providing reports and background information to inform discussion with the school's Attendance and Prosecution service
- Liaising with other professionals to determine potential sources of difficulties and reasons for absence.

### **Administration staff**

Staff in the School Office are responsible for:

- Collating and recording registration and attendance information.
- Taking and recording messages from parents regarding absence
- Ensuring the Absence/Late Book is completed
- Contacting parents of absent children where no contact has been made.
- Recording details of children who arrive late or go home
- 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 attendance offered by children and their parents/ carers and reporting concerns to the Principal
- Sending out standard letters regarding attendance

### **Parents**

Parents/Carers are responsible for:

- Ensuring that their child attends school regularly and punctually unless prevented from doing so by illness or attendance at a medical appointment.
- Contacting the school office on the first morning of absence.
- Informing the school in advance of any medical appointments in school time. For the absence to be recorded as a medical absence we do require evidence from the doctor or dentist. (Appointment card/letter)
- Making requests for authorised absence in term time, only if absolutely necessary as these are not automatically authorised.
- Talking to the school as soon as possible about any child's reluctance to come to school so that problems can be quickly identified and dealt with.

### **Registration**

All the school doors open at 8.50 until 9.00 am. This time is sufficient for all pupils to come into their classroom.

Each class teacher has the responsibility 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 9.00 and by 1.05pm. (Attendance code / for pupils who are present)  
These registers are closed and saved.

All attendance records are documented using SIMs software, which is supported by the Local Authority. 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 9.00am the only way to get into school is via the school office. Any pupil who comes into school this way from 9.00am 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 will be marked as having an unauthorised absence for the morning. (Attendance code U).

Children who have attended a dentist or doctor's appointment and subsequently come to school later than 9.05am will have the absence recorded as a medical absence (Attendance code M).

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.

Where there have been persistent incidents of lateness parents/carers will receive a letter advising them of the concerns and the school will provide opportunities for parents/carers to seek support and advice to address these issues.

### **ABSENCES**

Parents/carers should contact the school on the first day 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 Principal has the responsibility to determine whether absences are authorised or unauthorised.

Where we have not received reasons for a child's absence then we send a letter requesting these details to parents/carers to complete. If this letter is not completed

and returned by the specified date then the absence will be recorded as an unauthorised absence (Attendance Code O)

### **First Day Contact**

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.

### **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.

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.

### **Parental Requests for Leave of Absence in term time**

Requests for Leave of Absence in term time will initially be recorded as unauthorised. However, if parents feel there are exceptional circumstances which should be considered, parents must provide written evidence to support their request. If written evidence is submitted, the academy will respond in writing to inform parents of the Principal's decision within 7 school days. Should Leave of Absence be taken following a decision from the Principal for this to be unauthorised parents may be liable to a fixed penalty notice.

### **Addressing Attendance Concerns**

The school expects attendance of at least 96%.

It is important for children to establish good attendance habits early on in their primary school career. It is the responsibility of the Principal and the governors to support good attendance and to identify and address attendance concerns promptly.

In primary school we rely upon parents to ensure their child attends school regularly and punctually and therefore where there are concerns regarding attendance parents are always informed of our concerns. Initially concerns about attendance are raised with parents via letters which are sent home. There will be opportunities for the parent/carer to discuss reasons for absence and support to be given by the school with the aim to improve attendance. Where a child's attendance record does not improve over a period of time then the school has a responsibility to make a referral to the Attendance and Prosecution Service.

The Attendance and Prosecution Service will issue penalty notices to parents where there has been a referral to them from the school as part of the school's processes to address poor attendance patterns.

In addition, education-related parenting orders are available by direct application by a school or LA to the Magistrates' Court as an ancillary order following a successful prosecution by the LA for irregular attendance or breach of a school attendance order.

### **Monitoring Attendance**

Our office staff, has the responsibility for ensuring that all of the attendance data is accurately recorded on the SIMs attendance software. Regular meetings are held with the Principal to discuss all attendance concerns and appropriate actions are taken following these meetings such as letters sent to parents or meetings arranged to discuss attendance concerns with parents.

# **ANNEX**

- **Letter to parents re lateness**
  - **Letter to parent – Letter 1 - Attendance Warning Letter**
    - **Letter to parent – Letter 2 – Notice to Improve Letter**
- **Letter to parent – Response to Leave of Absence in term time request**

## **LETTER RE PUNCTUALITY**

Ms XXX  
Address

Tuesday 10<sup>th</sup> January 2017

Dear Ms XXX,

Following routine monitoring of pupils' attendance achievements, we have noticed that XXX have been late to school on several occasions. This gives us cause for concern, as it is unsettling and disruptive for both the pupil and the class when a child arrives after the start of lessons.

As I'm sure you're aware, the Government has made regular school attendance a national priority. We aim to encourage good habits in punctuality to equip all children for later life. The school gates open at 8.45am and registration begins at 8.55am. I wish to make you aware that it is school policy to mark all pupils who arrive after the registers have closed (9.15am or 1.15pm) as an unauthorised absence for the whole of that session. So far, since September, XXX has arrived late on 17 occasions. As you may already be aware, once attendance drops below 95%, the Attendance Officer may decide to make a home visit to discuss any difficulties you may have, and there may be prosecutions following.

I do hope that you are able to resolve the problems you may be having with XXX's punctuality, so that his/her registration records are a true reflection of his/her actual attendance.

Thanking you in anticipation of your cooperation.



Mrs S Cockshott  
Principal

**LETTER 1 - Attendance Warning Letter**

Mr/Ms  
Address

**Date**

**Parent of:**

**ATTENDANCE WARNING**

Dear Parent

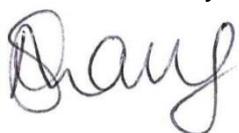
As part of the schools commitment to positively improve attendance, I am writing to inform you that your child's attendance has recently fallen and is now \_\_\_\_\_%

Any further absence will not be authorised unless medical evidence is provided.

I hope that you appreciate the need to bring this to your attention, as it is important that you are made aware of your child's current situation, and as a parent/guardian we hope that you can understand the importance of your child regularly attending school.

School is committed to supporting parents in helping their children achieve and attend school. If you feel you need any support or would like to meet about attendance, or your child's education, please do not hesitate to contact the school office.

Yours sincerely



Laura Shaw  
Business Manager

**LETTER 2 – Notice to Improve Letter**

Mr/Ms  
Address

**Date**

**Parent of:**

**NOTICE TO IMPROVE**

Dear Parent

As part of the schools commitment to positively improve attendance, I am writing to inform you that your child’s attendance has continued to fall and is now \_\_\_\_\_%.

Your child is now classed as a ‘Persistent Absent’ pupil. This means that your child is currently missing at least 10% of their education at school.

It is now necessary for you to attend a meeting in school to discuss ways to improve your child’s attendance. The meeting will be held on \_\_\_\_\_ at \_\_\_\_\_ .

Failure to attend this meeting or no improvement in your child’s attendance will result in a referral being made to the Attendance and Prosecution Service.

I must also remind you that any further absence will not be authorised unless medical evidence is provided

St John’s CofE Primary Academy is committed to supporting parents in helping their children achieve and attend school. If you feel you need any support with any issue which is affecting your child’s school attendance, or your child’s education, please do not hesitate to contact the school office.

Yours sincerely



Sarah Cockshott  
Principal

## **RESPONSE TO LEAVE OF ABSENCE IN TERM TIME REQUEST**

Name of Parent (in full)

Address (Line 1)

Address (Line 2)

Address (Line 3)

Address (Line 4)

Postcode

Date dd/mm/yyyy

Dear Name(s) of parent(s)

Application for leave in term time (in exceptional circumstances)

Name and date of birth for each pupil

Your application for leave in term time (in exceptional circumstances) from **date to date** has been considered and declined. If you take the above child or children out of school during term time the absence will be recorded as "unauthorised". In line with legislation and our attendance policy we will ask the local authority to issue you with a penalty notice if you choose to remove your child and take this unauthorised leave in the absence of any exceptional circumstances.

Please be advised that parents who fail to ensure their child's regular attendance can be fined £60 (per parent, per child). If payment to the local authority is not made within 21 days (of the issued date) the penalty will rise to £120 (per parent, per child) for the next 7 days. Should the fixed penalty not be paid after 28 days from the date of issue, parent(s) will then be prosecuted under S444(1) of the Education Act 1996.

We encourage all parents to support us to achieve high levels of attendance and attainment for their child or children. Therefore, we ask you to give this matter serious consideration before deciding to remove your child or children for any unauthorised term time holiday.

Yours sincerely



Mrs S Cockshott

Principal