



ST JAMES
C.E. PRIMARY SCHOOL

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Attendance Policy

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Next review: September 2022

Signed Principal: L. Belfield

Signed Chair of Governors: J. Waring

Introduction

Once a child is enrolled at school, parents have a legal responsibility to ensure that their child attends every day, unless prevented from doing so by illness or other exceptional circumstances for which absence is authorised by the school.

At St James CE Primary School, we aim to provide an environment that enables and encourages all members of the community to reach out for excellence. For our children to gain the greatest benefit from their education it is vital that they attend school regularly. Your child should be at school, on time, every day the school is open unless the reason for the absence is unavoidable.

This policy sets out how together we will achieve this.

Aims and Objectives

Our aims and objectives in relation to pupils' attendance are to:

- maximise attendance so that all pupils can gain full access to our curriculum and be enabled to reach their full academic potential and achieve a high level of personal and social well-being;
- ensure that pupils are safe and that their whereabouts are known;
- eliminate unauthorised absence;
- discourage families from arranging holidays during school terms;
- ensure that parents and carers understand clearly when it is appropriate to keep their children off school and when this constitutes unauthorised absence;
- ensure that school staff and parents and carers are familiar with and adhere to our procedures for registering pupils' attendance, and reporting, recording and following up a pupil's absence or lateness;
- ensure that pupils and their parents and carers understand the importance of regular and consistent attendance;
- make clear to parents and carers the consequences of failing to ensure that their children attend school;
- ensure that children enjoy coming to school and are highly motivated to attend regularly and consistently.

The Law Relating to Attendance

Section 7 of the Education Act 1996 states that 'the parents of every child of compulsory age shall cause him/her to receive efficient full time education suitable:-

- a) to age, ability and aptitude
- b) to any special educational needs he/she may have either by regular attendance at school or otherwise'.

The Law Relating to Safeguarding

Section 175 of the Education Act 2002 places a duty on local authorities and governing bodies to have regard to guidance issued by the Secretary of State with regard to safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children and students under the age of 18.

Why Regular Attendance is so Important

Learning: - Any absence affects the pattern of a child's schooling and regular absence will seriously affect their learning. Any pupil's absence disrupts teaching routines so may affect the learning of others in the same class.

Ensuring your child's regular attendance at school is your legal responsibility and permitting absence from school without a good reason creates an offence in law and may result in prosecution.

Safeguarding: - Your child may be at risk of harm if they do not attend school regularly. Safeguarding the interests of each child is everyone's responsibility and within the context of this school, promoting the welfare and life opportunities for your child encompasses:-

- Attendance
- Behaviour Management
- Health and Safety
- Access to the Curriculum

- Anti-bullying

Failing to attend this school on a regular basis will be considered as a safeguarding matter.

Promoting Regular Attendance

Helping to create a pattern of regular attendance is everybody's responsibility – parents, pupils, and all members of staff.

To help us all focus on this we will:

- Give details on attendance in our regular school newsletters.
- Report to you at least twice a year at parents evening on how your child is performing in school, what their attendance and punctuality rate is and how this relates to their attainments;
- Celebrate good attendance by displaying class achievements and individual achievements;
- Reward good or improving attendance through certificates, post cards home and other appropriate events.
- Run promotional events when parents, pupils and staff can work together on raising attendance levels across the school.

Understanding Types of Absence

Every half-day absence from school has to be classified by the school (not by the parents), as either AUTHORISED or UNAUTHORISED. This is why information about the cause of any absence is always required, preferably in writing.

Authorised absences are mornings or afternoons away from school for a good reason like illness, medical/dental appointments which unavoidably fall in school time, emergencies or other unavoidable cause. However wherever possible we encourage you to make dental and doctor appointments outside of school hours.

Unauthorised absences are those that the school does not consider reasonable and for which no 'leave' has been given. This type of absence can lead to the involvement of the Early Intervention Team and the potential for legal proceedings being initiated. The criteria for issuing a penalty notice and a potential fine being considered is where a pupil has had 10 sessions (equivalent of five days - consecutive or otherwise) of unauthorised absence over the period of two consecutive half terms. Such absences include:

- Parents/carers keeping children off school unnecessarily;
- Truancy before or during the school day;
- Absences which have not been properly explained;
- Children who arrive at school too late to get a mark – after 9.30am;
- Shopping, looking after other children or birthdays;
- Day trips and holidays in term time unless permission has been granted prior to the trip/holiday and is considered as a special circumstance.

Whilst a child may be off school because they are ill, sometimes they can be reluctant to attend school. Any problems with regular attendance are best sorted out between the school, the parents 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 makes things worse. Children who are absent from school due to illness/es for a considerable amount of time/occasions will be referred for a medical assessment.

Persistent Absenteeism

A pupil becomes a 'persistent absentee' when they miss 10% or more schooling across the school year for whatever reason, including holidays. Absence at this level is doing considerable damage to any child's educational prospects and we need parents' fullest support and co-operation to tackle this.

We monitor all absence thoroughly (please see appendix 1 for our procedures to tackle poor attendance and punctuality). Any case that is seen to have reached the PA mark or is at risk of moving towards that mark is given priority and you will be informed of this immediately. PA pupils are tracked and monitored carefully through our pastoral system and we also combine this with academic mentoring where absence affects attainment.

If PA does not improve over a short period of time (see appendix 1), pupils and parents involved are subject to an action plan and the plan may include: allocation of additional support, use of circle time, individual incentive programmes and participation in group activities around raising attendance. All PA cases are automatically followed up and if improvement is not made prosecution may result.

Absence Procedures

If your child is absent you must:

- Contact us as soon as possible on the first day of absence by telephoning the school office;
- On the first day your child returns to school we may ask you to send in a note with an explanation of the absence.

If your child is absent we will:

- Text or telephone you on the first day of absence if we have not heard from you;
- Class teachers will contact parents/carers to have an informal discussion around attendance if they have concerns;
- Alert parents/carers via text if their child's attendance drops below 95%;
- Send out a letter alerting you of our concerns around your child's attendance when their attendance falls below 90%;
- Telephone you to discuss the matter and/or invite you into school to discuss this with the Principal and Learning Mentor if attendance does not improve;
- Refer the matter to Early Intervention Team or we may also refer your child for a medical.

Lateness

Poor punctuality is not acceptable. If your 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 lessons; this can be embarrassing for your child and can also encourage absence.

How we manage lateness:

The school day starts at **8.55am** but children are able to enter the school building from **8.45am** through the Reception, Infant and Junior entrances. **ALL** children are expected to be in the classroom for a prompt **8.55am** start. Entrance doors close at **8.55am**. Any children that arrive after this time will have to enter school through the main office entrance.

Registers are marked by **9.05am** and in accordance with regulations, if your child arrives after this time they will receive a late mark. If your child arrives after 9:30am they will receive a mark that means they have an unauthorised absence. This may mean that you could face the possibility of a Penalty Notice if the problem persists.

If your child has a persistent late record (five consecutive/persistent late marks) you will be informed of this via a letter and if the problem persists, you will be asked to meet with the Principal and/or the Learning Mentor in charge of attendance to resolve the problem. However, you can approach us at any time if you are having problems getting your child to school on time.

Nursery and Little Saints open their doors at **8.30am** for morning pupils and **12.30pm** for afternoon pupils. Attendance and punctuality for our Nursery and Little Saints pupils is monitored as per the main school.

Holidays in Term Time

Taking holidays in term time will affect your child's schooling as much as any other absence and **we expect parents to help us by not taking children away in school time.** Remember that any savings you think you may make by taking a holiday in school time are offset by the cost to your child's education.

Parents and carers have no statutory right to withdraw their children from school for a family holiday. Children are required to attend school for 190 days in a school year, leaving 175 days of weekends and school holidays. Parents and carers should always endeavour to arrange family holidays when their children are not required to be in school. There is no automatic entitlement in law to time off in school time to go on holiday.

All applications for leave must be made in advance using the school's holiday request form, copies of which are available from the school office. At the discretion of the school, a maximum of 5 days in any academic year may be authorised for exceptional circumstances. In making a decision the school will consider the circumstances of each application individually, including any previous pattern of leave in term time.

Any period of leave taken without the agreement of the school, or in excess of that agreed, will be classed as unauthorised and may incur sanctions such as a Penalty Notice.

Long Term Absence

When children have an illness that means they will be away from school for over five days, the school will do all it can to send work home, so that, where possible, the child can keep in touch with the learning going on in their class.

If the absence is likely to continue for an extended period, or be a repetitive absence, the school will contact the Local Authority (LA) support services, so that arrangements can be made for the child to be given some tuition outside school, where possible.

The Early Intervention Team

Parents are expected to contact school at an early stage and to work with the staff in resolving any problems together. This is nearly always successful. If difficulties cannot be sorted out this way, the school may refer the child to the Early Intervention Team. They will also try to resolve the situation by agreement but, if ways of trying to improve the child's attendance have failed and unauthorised absences persist, the School and EIT together can use sanctions such as Penalty Notices or prosecutions in the Magistrates Court. Full details of the options open to enforce attendance at school are available from school.

School Targets, Projects and Special Initiatives

The school has targets to improve attendance and your child has an important part to play in meeting these targets. The minimum level of attendance for this school is **95%** attendance and we will keep you updated regularly about progress to this level and how your child's attendance compares. Through the school year we monitor absences and punctuality to show us where improvements need to be made. Information on any projects or initiatives that will focus on these areas will be provided in our school newsletters and we ask for your full support.

Rewards for Good Attendance

While the school would always seek to avoid disadvantaging children who, through illness or other circumstances, have been unavoidably absent from school, we do, from time to time, give attendance incentive rewards or certificates for children with 100 per cent attendance over a term or a whole school year, in order to maintain a focus on the importance of regular attendance. We also reward weekly class attendance with class certificates/stickers and daily 100% class attendance with a 'superclass' card. We display attendance statistics in school in a child friendly way so that pupils can see the importance of attending school. We also send home monthly cards for children that indicate (in a child friendly way) if their attendance is 95%-100% in green, 90%-94.99% in yellow and below 90% in red.

Telephone Numbers and Email Addresses

There are times when we need to contact parents about lots of things, including absence, so we need to have your contact numbers at all times. **Please help us to help you and your child by making sure we always have an up to date number – if we don't then something important may be missed.**

Monitoring and Review

It is the responsibility of the governing body to monitor overall attendance, and they will request an annual report from the Head Teacher. The governing body also has the responsibility for this policy, and for seeing that it is carried out. The governors will therefore examine closely the information provided to them, and seek to ensure that our attendance figures are as high as they can be. The school will keep accurate attendance records on file for a minimum period of three years.

Class teachers will be responsible for monitoring attendance in their class and for following up absences in the appropriate way. If there is concern about a child's absence, they will contact the school office immediately. If there is a longer-term general worry about the attendance of a particular child, this will be reported to the Learning Mentor & Principal, who will contact the parents or carers.

Those people responsible for attendance matters in school are:

Mrs Belfield - Principal

Mrs McKinnon - Learning Mentor for Attendance

Summary

- The school has a legal duty to publish its absence figures to parents and to promote attendance;
- Parents have a duty to make sure that their children attend;
- All school staff are committed to working with parents and pupils as the best way to ensure as high a level of attendance as possible and that every child's welfare and life opportunities are promoted.

Appendix 1: Attendance and Punctuality Sequence of Actions

Attendance & Punctuality: Sequence of Actions Flowchart

