

**St John's Church of England Primary School**

**Attendance and Punctuality Policy**



*"For I know the plans I have for you," declares the Lord, plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you a hope and a future." - Jeremiah 29:11*

**Date agreed and ratified by Governing Body:**

**Date of next review: 08/12/2023**

**This policy will be reviewed at least annually and/or following any updates to national and local guidance and procedures.**

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## Statement of intent

St John's C of E Primary School believes that in order to facilitate teaching and learning, good attendance is essential. Pupils cannot achieve their full potential if they do not regularly attend school.

We will use all possible opportunities to promote the importance of good attendance and punctuality. These will include the Home-School agreement, newsletters, rewards and incentives for good attendance. The foundation for good attendance is a strong partnership between the school, parents/carers and children.

We take a whole-school approach to securing good attendance, and recognise the impact that our efforts in other areas – such as the curriculum, behaviour standards, social interaction, SEND support, pastoral support, and the effective use of resources such as pupil premium – can have on improving pupil attendance.

We are committed to:

- Promoting and modelling high attendance and its benefits.
- Ensuring equality and fairness for all.
- Ensuring this attendance policy is clear and easily understood by staff, pupils and parents/carers.
- Intervening early and working with other agencies to ensure the health and safety of our pupils.
- Building strong relationships with families to overcome barriers to attendance.
- Working collaboratively with other schools in the area, as well as other agencies.
- Ensuring parents/carers follow the framework set in section 7 of the Education Act 1996, which states that the parent/carer of every child of compulsory school age shall cause them to receive efficient full-time education suitable to their age, ability and aptitude, and to any SEND they may have, either by regular attendance at school or otherwise.
- Regularly monitoring and analysing attendance and absence data to identify pupils or cohorts that require more support.

The school's attendance officer is Mrs Garrett and can be contacted via the school office. Staff, parents/carers and pupils will be expected to contact the attendance officer for queries or concerns about attendance.

## 1. Legal Framework

This policy has due regard to all relevant legislation and statutory guidance including, but not limited to, the following:

- Education Act 1996
- Equality Act 2010
- The Education (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2006 (As amended)
- The Children (Performances and Activities) (England) Regulations 2014
- Children and Young Persons Act 1963
- DfE (2022) 'Working together to improve school attendance'
- DfE (2022) 'Keeping children safe in education 2022'
- DfE (2016) 'Children missing education'

This policy operates in conjunction with the following school policies:

- Child Protection and Safeguarding Policy
- Complaints Procedures Policy
- Behaviour Policy
- SEND Policy
- Supporting Pupils with Medical Needs Policy

## 2. Roles and responsibilities

The governing body has overall responsibility for:

- Monitoring the implementation of this policy and all relevant procedures across the school.
- Promoting the importance of good attendance through the school's ethos and policies.
- Arranging attendance training for all relevant staff that is appropriate to their role.
- Working with the SLT to set goals for attendance and providing support and challenge around delivery against those goals.
- Regularly reviewing attendance data.
- Ensuring that this policy, as written, does not discriminate on any grounds, including, but not limited to, ethnicity/national origin, culture, religion, gender, disability or sexual orientation.
- Having regard to 'Keeping children safe in education' when making arrangements to safeguard and promote the welfare of children.

The headteacher is responsible for:

- The day-to-day implementation and management of this policy and all relevant procedures across the school.
- Appointing a member of the SLT to oversee the attendance officer role.
- Ensuring all parents/carers are aware of the school's attendance expectations and procedures.
- Ensuring that every pupil has access to full-time education and will act as early as possible to address patterns of absence.

The Senior Leader overseeing attendance (Miss Pellant) is responsible for:

- The overall strategic approach to attendance in school.
- Developing a clear vision for improving attendance.
- Monitoring attendance and the impact of interventions.
- Analysing attendance data and identifying areas of intervention and improvement.

The Attendance Officer is responsible for:

- Communicating with pupils and parents/carers with regard to attendance.
- Following up on incidents of persistent poor attendance.
- Informing the LA of any pupil being deleted from the admission and attendance registers.

Staff are responsible for:

- Following this policy and ensuring pupils do so too.
- Ensuring this policy is implemented fairly and consistently.
- Modelling good attendance behaviour.
- Using their professional judgement and knowledge of individual pupils to inform decisions as to whether any welfare concerns should be escalated.
- Taking the attendance register at the relevant times during the school day.
- Sharing current attendance data with parents/carers at parent/carer consultation sessions.

Parents/carers are responsible for:

- Providing accurate and up-to-date contact details.
- Providing the school with more than one emergency contact number.
- Updating the school if their details change.
- Keeping absences to a minimum.
- Ensuring that their child arrives at school on time each day (8.30am – 8.45am).
- Telephoning the School when their child is unable to attend on the first day of the absence and each day thereafter with the reason for this.

- Providing medical evidence indicating attendance at the dentist, doctor or optician, if asked to do so. **Whenever possible all medical/dental appointments should be made outside of school hours unless an emergency has arisen.**
- The attendance of their children at school.
- Promoting good attendance with their children.

### 3. Definitions

The following definitions apply for the purposes of this policy:

#### **Absence:**

- Not attending school for any reason

#### **Authorised absence:**

- An absence for sickness for which the school has granted leave
- Medical or dental appointments which unavoidably fall during school time, for which the school has granted leave
- Religious or cultural observances for which the school has granted leave
- An absence due to a family emergency or circumstance for which the school has granted leave

#### **Unauthorised absence:**

- Parents/carers keeping children off school unnecessarily or without reason
- Truancy before or during the school day
- Absences which have never been properly explained
- Arrival at school after the register has closed (after 8.55am)
- Absence due to shopping, looking after other children or birthdays
- Absence due to day trips and holidays in term-time which have not been agreed
- Leaving school for no reason during the day

#### **Persistent absenteeism:**

- Missing 10 percent or more of schooling across the year for any reason (90% or less attendance)

### 4. Attendance expectations

The school has high expectations for pupils' attendance and punctuality, and ensures that these expectations are communicated regularly to parents/carers and pupils.

Pupils will be expected to attend school punctually every day they are required to be at school, for the full day.

The school gates open at **8.30am**, and pupils are expected to be in their classroom, ready to begin lessons at **8.45am**.

Registers will be taken as follows throughout the school day:

- The morning register will close at **8.55am**. Pupils will receive a mark of absence (U) if they do not attend school before this time, this will mean your child will be marked as missing the whole morning session reducing your child's attendance percentage.
- The afternoon register will be taken at the start of afternoon lessons.

## **5. Absence procedures**

Parents/carers will be required to contact the school office via telephone before **9:00am** on the first day of their child's absence – they will be expected to provide an explanation for the absence and an estimation of how long the absence will last, e.g. one school day.

Where a pupil is absent, and their parent/carer has not contacted the school by **9:00am** to report the absence, administrative staff will contact the parent/carer by **text message** as soon as is practicable on the first day that they do not attend school, reminding them to call.

The school will always follow up any absences in order to:

- Ascertain the reason for the absence.
- Ensure the proper safeguarding action is being taken.
- Identify whether the absence is authorised or not.

The school will not request medical evidence in most circumstances where a pupil is absent due to illness; however, the school reserves the right to request supporting evidence where there is genuine and reasonable doubt about the authenticity of the illness, or if the child is currently a Persistent Absentee.

## **6. Children Missing Education (CME)**

Parents/carers must inform the school and complete a form from the school office if they are planning to remove their child from the school roll. This must include the details of the arrangements that will be put in place for the child's education, and where possible the child's new school.

The school will follow the Department for Education's guidance relating to children missing education. If after 10 days continuous absence the school has been unable to ascertain the whereabouts of a pupil, they will make a referral to the Local Authority.

## 7. Attendance register

The school uses Arbor to keep attendance registers as accurate as possible and when needed, this will be analysed and shared with the appropriate authorities.

Designated staff members will take the attendance register **at the start of each school day** and **at the start of the afternoon session**.

The school will use the national attendance codes to ensure attendance and absence are monitored and recorded in a consistent way. The following codes will be used:

- / = Present in the morning
- \ = Present in the afternoon
- L = Late arrival before the register has closed (**8.45 – 8.54**)
- C = Leave of absence granted by the school
- E = Excluded (Suspended) but no alternative provision made
- H = Authorised holiday
- I = Illness
- M = Medical or dental appointments
- R = Religious observance
- B = Off-site education activity
- G = Unauthorised holiday
- O = Unauthorised absence
- U = Arrived after registration closed (after **8.55**)
- N = Reason not yet provided
- X = Not required to be in school
- T = Gypsy, Roma and Traveller absence
- V = Educational visit or trip
- P = Participating in a supervised sporting activity
- D = Dual registered – at another educational establishment
- Y = Exceptional circumstances
- Z = Pupil not on admission register

Every entry received into the attendance register will be preserved for **three years**.



## 8. Authorising parental absence requests

Parents/carers will be required to request certain types of absence in advance. All requests for absence will be handled by the headteacher, using information supplied by the Attendance Officer and SLT responsible for school attendance. The decision to grant or refuse the request will be at the sole discretion of the headteacher, taking the best interests of the pupil and the impact on the pupil's education into account.

### Leave of absence

The school will only grant a pupil a leave of absence in **exceptional circumstances**. In order to have requests for a leave of absence considered, the school will expect parents/carers to complete the Request for Leave of Absence during Term Time form at least **two weeks** prior to the proposed start date of the leave of absence, providing the reason for the proposed absence and the dates during which the absence would be expected to occur.

Any requests for leave during term time will be considered on an individual basis and the pupil's previous attendance record will be taken into account. The school is not likely to grant leaves of absence for the purposes of family holidays.

Requests for leave **will not** be granted in the following circumstances:

- Immediately before and during statutory assessment periods
- When a pupil's attendance record shows any unauthorised absence
- Where a pupil's authorised absence record is already above **10 percent** for any reason

If term-time leave is not granted, taking a pupil out of school will be recorded as an unauthorised absence and may result in sanctions, such as a penalty notice. The school cannot grant leaves of absence retrospectively; therefore, any absences that were not approved by the school in advance will be marked as unauthorised.

### Illness and healthcare appointments

Parents/carers will be expected to make medical or dental appointments outside of school hours wherever possible. Where this is not possible, parents/carers will be expected to obtain approval for their child's absence to attend such appointments as far in advance as is practicable. Parents/carers will be responsible for ensuring their child misses only the amount of time necessary to attend the appointment.

### Performances and activities, including paid work

The school will ensure that all pupils engaging in performances or activities, whether they receive payment or not, which require them to be absent from school, understand that they will be required to obtain a licence from the LA which authorises the school's absence(s).

## **Religious observance**

Parents/carers will be expected to request absence for religious observance at least **two weeks** in advance.

The school will only accept requests from parents/carers for absence on grounds of religious observance for days that are exclusively set apart for religious observance by the relevant religious body. The school will define this as a day where the pupil's parents/carers would be expected by an established religious body to stay away from their employment to mark the occasion.

The school may seek advice from the religious body in question where there is doubt over the request.

## **Gypsy, Roma and Traveller absence**

Where a pupil's parent belongs to a community covered by this code and is travelling for occupational purposes, the parent will be expected to request a leave of absence for their child at least **two weeks** in advance. Absences will not be granted for pupils from these communities under this code for reasons other than travel for occupational purposes.

## **9. SEND- and health-related absences**

The school recognises that pupils with SEND and/or health conditions, including mental health issues, may face greater barriers to attendance than their peers, and will incorporate robust procedures to support pupils who find attending school difficult.

In line with the SEND Policy, the school will ensure that reasonable adjustments are made for disabled pupils to reduce barriers to attendance, in line with any EHC plans or Medical Care Plans that have been implemented. The school will secure additional support from external partners to help bolster attendance where appropriate.

Where the school has concerns that a pupil's non-attendance may be related to mental health issues, parents/carers will be contacted to discuss the issue and whether there are any contributory factors to their child's lack of attendance.

## **10. Truancy**

Immediate action will be taken when there are any concerns that a pupil might be truanting. If truancy is suspected, the headteacher is notified, and they will contact the parent/carer in order to assess the reasons behind the pupil not attending school.

## 11. Missing children

Pupils will not be permitted to leave the school premises during the school day unless they have permission from the school. The following procedures will be taken in the event of a pupil going missing whilst at school:

- The member of staff who has noticed the missing pupil will inform a member of the leadership team and the school office immediately.
- The office staff will act as a point of contact for receiving information regarding the search.
- A member of staff will stay with the rest of the class, and all other available members of staff will conduct a thorough search of the school premises as directed by the headteacher or a member of the leadership team.
- The following areas will be systematically searched:
  - All classrooms
  - All toilets
  - School hall
  - The library
  - Any outbuildings
  - The school grounds
- Available staff will begin a search of the area immediately outside of the school premises, and will take a walkie talkie with them so they can be contacted.
- If the pupil has not been found after **10 minutes**, then the parents/carers of the pupil will be notified.
- The school will attempt to contact parents/carers using the emergency contact numbers provided.
- If the parents/carers have had no contact from the pupil, and the emergency contacts list has been exhausted, the police will be contacted.
- The missing pupil's teacher will fill in an incident form, describing all circumstances leading up to the pupil going missing.
- If the missing pupil has an allocated social worker, is a looked-after child, or has any SEND, then the appropriate personnel will be informed.
- When the pupil has been located, members of staff will care for and talk to the pupil to ensure they are safe and well.
- Parents/carers and any other agencies will be informed immediately when the pupil has been located.

The headteacher will take the appropriate action to ensure that pupils understand they must not leave the premises, and sanctions will be issued if deemed necessary. Appropriate disciplinary procedures will be followed in accordance with the Behaviour Policy.

The headteacher will carry out a full investigation and will draw a conclusion as to how the incident occurred. A written report will be produced, and policies and procedures will be reviewed in accordance with the outcome where necessary.

## 12. Attendance intervention

In order to ensure the school has effective procedures for managing absence, the attendance officer, supported by the SLT, will:

- Discuss barriers to attendance during a meeting with parents/carers.
- Establish robust escalation procedures which will be initiated before absence becomes a problem by:
  - Sending letters to parents/carers.
  - Engaging with LA attendance teams.
  - Using fixed penalty notices.

The school will use attendance data, in line with the 'Monitoring and analysing absence' section of this policy, to develop specific strategies to improve attendance where patterns of absence are emerging. These strategies will be developed on a case-by-case basis, and will consider the particular needs of the pupils whom the intervention is designed to target.

The school will acknowledge outstanding attendance and punctuality in the following ways:

- **Non-uniform days for classes that achieve 96%+ attendance for the week**
- **Bouncy Castle session for classes that achieve 100% attendance for the week**
- **Attendance Certificates given at the end of each term and end of the year for children who achieve over 96% attendance**
- **Trips to restaurants offering a school experience for children who achieve 98%+ attendance over the school year**

The school will develop strategies for ensuring that pupils with health needs or home circumstances that result in additional absences are not unfairly excluded from attendance rewards, e.g. by setting individualised targets.

## 13. Working with parents/carers to improve attendance

The school will work to cultivate strong, respectful relationships with parents/carers and families to ensure their trust and engagement. Open and honest communication will be maintained with pupils and their families about the expectations of school life, attendance and performance so that they understand what to expect and what is

expected of them. The school will liaise with other agencies working with pupils and their families to support attendance, e.g. social services.

The school will ensure that there are emergency contact details for each pupil wherever possible to ensure the school has options for getting in touch with adults responsible for a pupil where the pupil is absent without notification or authorisation.

The school will ensure that parents/carers are aware of their legal duty to ensure that their child attends school regularly and to facilitate their child's legal right to a full-time education – parents/carers will be made aware that this means their child must attend school every day that it is open, save for in certain circumstances, e.g. sickness or absences that have been authorised in advance. The school will regularly inform parents/carers about their child's levels of attendance, absence and punctuality, and will ensure that parents/carers are aware of the benefits that regular attendance at school can have for their child educationally, socially and developmentally.

If a pattern of absence becomes problematic, the attendance team will work collaboratively with parents/carers to improve attendance by addressing the specific barriers that prevent the pupil from being able to attend school regularly. The school will always take into consideration the sensitivity of some of the reasons for pupil absence and will approach families to offer support rather than immediately reach for punitive approaches.

Where these barriers are related to the pupil's experience in school, the attendance team will work with relevant school staff to address this. Where the barriers are outside of the school's control, e.g. they are related to issues within the pupil's family, the attendance team will liaise with any relevant external agencies or authorities, e.g. children's social care or the LA, and will encourage parents/carers to access support that they may need.

#### **14. Persistent Absence (PA)**

The school will focus particularly on pupils at risk of persistent absence, (this is where a child's attendance falls below 90%), in conjunction with all relevant external authorities, where necessary.

There are various groups of pupils who may be vulnerable to high absence and PA, such as:

- Children in need
- LAC
- Young carers
- Pupils who are eligible for FSM
- Pupils with EAL

- Pupils with SEND

The school will use a number of methods to help support pupils at risk of PA to attend school. These include:

- If considered appropriate, meeting with pupils to discuss patterns of absence, barriers to attendance, and any other problems they may be having.
- Establishing plans to remove barriers and provide additional support.
- The FLO will offer any support needed to help the parent/carer to improve the child's attendance.
- Making regular contact with families to discuss progress.

Where a pupil at risk of PA is also at increased risk of harm, the school will work in conjunction with all relevant authorities, e.g. social services, to support the pupil in line with the school's duty of care. The school will also bear in mind that the continuation of severe PA following intervention may, in itself, constitute neglect, and will escalate any concerns in this regard in line with the Child Protection and Safeguarding Policy.

## **15. Legal intervention**

The school will allow sufficient time for attendance interventions and engagement strategies to improve pupils' attendance; however, where engagement strategies to improve attendance have not had the desired effect the attendance team will consider:

- Holding a formal meeting with parents/carers and the school's point of contact in the School Attendance Support Team.
- Working with the LA
- Engaging children's social care where there are safeguarding concerns.

Where the above measures are not effective, the headteacher will issue a fixed penalty notice in line with the LA's code of conduct.

Where attendance still does not improve following a fixed penalty notice, the school will work with the LA to take forward attendance prosecution as a last resort.

## **16. Monitoring and analysing absence**

The attendance team will monitor and analyse attendance data regularly to ensure that intervention is delivered quickly to address habitual absence at the first signs.

The school will collect data regarding punctuality, authorised and unauthorised absence, for:

- The school cohort as a whole.
- Individual pupils.

- Pupils at risk of PA.

The attendance team will conduct a thorough analysis of the above data on a **weekly basis** to identify patterns and trends. This will include identifying, for each group:

- Patterns in uses of certain codes.
- Particular days of poor attendance.
- Historic trends of attendance and absence.
- Barriers to attendance.

The governing body will regularly review attendance data.

The school will also benchmark its attendance data against local-, regional- and national-level data to identify areas of success and areas for improvement, and will share practice which has been shown to be effective with other schools.

## **17. Training of staff**

The school recognises that early intervention can prevent poor attendance and will make staff aware of the need to identify potentially at-risk pupils.

The governing board will ensure that teachers and support staff receive training in line with this policy as part of the Staff Development Day programme.

Training will cover at least the following:

- The importance of good attendance
- That absence is almost invariably a result of wider circumstances
- The legal requirements on schools, e.g. the keeping of registers
- The school's strategies and procedures for monitoring and improving attendance
- The school's procedures for multi-agency working to provide intensive support for pupils who need it.

## **18. Monitoring and review**

Attendance and punctuality will be monitored throughout the year. The school's attendance target is **96 percent**

This policy will be reviewed **annually**.

## Attendance Monitoring Procedures

**St John's Church of England Primary School** has adopted the following attendance monitoring procedures, to ensure that pupils' attendance meets the expected standard, and effective intervention is provided where pupils' attendance falls below the standard:

1. A spreadsheet is updated by the attendance officer and a member of SLT detailing **weekly** actions and progress.
2. Attendance is discussed by classroom teachers at parent/carer consultation meetings. Any attendance/punctuality trends noticed by classroom teachers are passed immediately to the attendance team.
3. Contact is made with parents/carers on the first day of absence for any pupil absence not reported.
4. If a pupil's attendance falls below **95 percent** and is a cause for concern, a letter is sent home raising concerns that their attendance has fallen below the school's expected standard. The letter offers support if needed.
5. If a pupil's attendance falls below **90 percent**, parents/carers will be contacted by the attendance team and offered a meeting at school to discuss methods of improvement.
6. The pupil's attendance is monitored for **two weeks** and, if attendance does not improve after this time and parents/carers are unwilling to cooperate, a referral may be required to the local school liaison officer (SLO), or the fixed penalty process may begin, depending on historical attendance data and support previously given.