

# 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: January 2022**

**Date of next review: January 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 or significantly improving attendance. The foundation for good attendance is a strong partnership between the school, parents/carers and children.

The school aims to act in accordance with the Primary Attendance and Absence Policy as much as possible; however, we are committed to compliance with the relevant attendance legislation while the school observes infection control guidelines during the coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic

The information is under constant review and kept up-to-date to reflect any changes to national or local guidance.

All pupils are required to attend school. As such, the arrangements set out in the Primary Attendance and Absence Policy will be adhered to.

We are committed to:

- Ensuring parents/carers follow the framework set out in section 7 of the Education Act 1996, which states that the parent 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.
- Promoting good attendance and reducing absence, including persistent absence.
- Ensuring every child has access to full-time education
- Acting early to address patterns of absence.
- Promoting and modelling good attendance behaviour.
- Ensuring equality and fairness of treatment for all.
- Implementing our policies in accordance with the Equality Act 2010.
- Early intervention and working with other agencies to ensure the health and safety of our pupils.
- Rewarding regular attendance.

Principles:

- Receiving a full-time, suitable education is a child's legal entitlement - it is a parent's/carer's legal responsibility to ensure this happens.

- Attending school regularly aids intellectual, social and emotional development and is essential if children are to benefit fully from their school life.
- Attending school regularly safeguards the welfare of children while they are not in the care of their parents/carers.
- All children whose attendance is irregular will be considered vulnerable.

## 1. 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 (2020) 'School attendance'
- DfE (2015) 'Child performance and activities licensing legislation in England'
- DfE (2021) 'Keeping children safe in education 2021'
- DfE (2016) 'Children missing education'
- DfE (2021) 'Improving school attendance: support for schools and local authorities'
- DfE (2021) 'Schools COVID-19 operational guidance'
- DfE (2021) 'School attendance: guidance for schools'
- DfE (2021) 'Recording attendance during the coronavirus (COVID-19) outbreak'

This policy operates in conjunction with the following school policies:

- Complaints Procedures Policy
- Behaviour Policy

## 2. Roles and responsibilities

The governing board has overall responsibility for:

- Monitoring the implementation of this policy and all relevant procedures across the school.
- 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.
- Handling complaints regarding this policy as outlined in the school's Complaints Procedures Policy.
- Having regard to 'Keeping children safe in education' when making arrangements to safeguard and promote the welfare of children.

- Ensuring there is a Children Missing Education Policy in place and that this is regularly reviewed and updated.

The headteacher is responsible for:

- The day-to-day implementation and management of this policy and all relevant procedures across the school.
- 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.

Staff are responsible for:

- Following this policy
- 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.
- Where designated, taking the attendance register at the relevant times during the school day.

The attendance assistant is responsible for informing the LA of any pupil being deleted from the admission and attendance registers if they:

- Are being educated from home.
- No longer live within a reasonable distance of the registered school.
- Have an authorised medical note.
- Are in custody for a period of more than four months and the proprietor does not reasonably believe they will be returning.
- Have been permanently excluded.

Pupils are responsible for:

- Attending their lessons and any agreed activities when at school.
- Arriving punctually to lessons when at school.

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.
- Telephone 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:**

- Arrival at school after the register has closed
- 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 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
- 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

### 4. Training of staff

The school will recognise that early intervention can prevent poor attendance. As such, staff will receive training in identifying potentially at-risk pupils as part of their induction and refresher training.

Teachers and support staff will receive training on this policy as part of their induction. Following this initial training, staff will receive regular and ongoing training as part of their development.

Staff will receive training to ensure they understand that increased absence from school could indicate a safeguarding concern, and know how such concerns should be managed.

## **5. Pupils at risk of persistent absence (PA)**

The school will ensure it provides support to 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.

A member of the SLT will:

- Monitor the implementation and quality of escalation procedures and seek robust evidence of the escalation procedures that work.
- Attend or lead attendance improvement meetings in line with escalation procedures.
- Establish robust escalation procedures which will be initiated before absence becomes a problem by:
  - Reviewing and tracking attendance weekly
  - Sending letters to parents/carers raising our concerns and making them aware that we can offer support if needed.
  - Creating attendance clinics with the Family Liaison officer (FLO) to offer any support that may be needed.
  - Using fixed penalty notices.

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.

Where a pupil becomes at risk of PA, the school will:

- Welcome pupils back following any absence and provide catch-up support to build confidence and bridge gaps.
- Meet with pupils to discuss patterns of absence, barriers to attendance, and any other problems they may be having.
- Establish plans to remove barriers and provide additional support.
- The FLO, Office or the Head of Inclusion & Welfare will make regular contact with key families to discuss progress.
- Consider what support for re-engagement might be needed, including for vulnerable groups.

The school attendance system will be used to give an accurate and informative view of attendance, reasons for absence and patterns within groups, including:

- Children with a Social Worker
- Children with an Early Help or School Health Worker
- LAC
- Pupils who are eligible for FSM
- Pupils with EAL
- Pupils with SEND

## **6. Absence procedures**

Parents/carers will be required to contact the school office via telephone as soon as possible on the first day of their child's absence.

A text message will be sent to the parent/carer of any pupil who has not reported their child's absence on the first day that they do not attend school.

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.
- Identify the correct code to use to enter the data onto the school census system.

The school will ensure pupils do not attend the school site where they are displaying symptoms of, or have tested positive for, coronavirus, or are quarantining following travel abroad.

## **7. Self-isolating pupils**

The school will stay up-to-date with all relevant national and local public health advice regarding self-isolation, communicating any changes to all relevant stakeholders.

Absences due to suspected C-19 will be recorded with Code X.

Absences due to confirmed C-19 will be recorded with Code I.

Where a pupil is required to self-isolate, the school will notify their social worker (if they have one), secure a method of maintaining contact with the pupil, and ensure the pupil has access to remote education.

The school will stay up-to-date with all relevant national and local public health advice regarding shielding and self-isolation, communicating any relevant changes to all stakeholders.

Absences relating to pupils following clinical and/or public health advice will not be penalised. Where a pupil is unable to attend school because they are complying with clinical and/or public health advice, they will be immediately offered access to remote learning, in line with the Pupil Remote Learning Policy.

## 8. Parental involvement

The school will build 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.

Parents/carers will be expected to:

- Treat staff with respect.
- Actively support the work of the school.
- Call staff for help when they need it.
- Communicate with the school about possible circumstances which may affect their child's attendance or require support.

## 9. Attendance register

Designated staff members will take the attendance register **at the start of each school day** and **at the start of the afternoon session**. This register will record whether pupils are:

- Present.
- Absent.
- Attending an approved educational visit.
- Unable to attend due to exceptional circumstances.

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
- C = Authorised absence
- E = Excluded 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
- 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

When the school has planned in advance to be fully or partially closed, the code ‘#’ will be used for the relevant pupils who are absent. This code will also be used to record year groups who are not due to attend because the school has set different term dates for different years, e.g. induction days.

## 10. Lateness

The school will regard punctuality as of the utmost importance and lateness will not be tolerated.

The school day starts at **8:30am**. Registers are taken as follows throughout the school day:

- Registers are marked by **8:45am**. Pupils will receive a late mark if they are not in their classroom by this time.
- The register closes at **8:55am**. Pupils will receive a mark of absence if they do not attend school before this time.
- In the afternoon, registers are marked as soon as pupils return from lunch.

Parents/carers of children arriving to school late must bring their child/ren to the school office and complete a late form giving the reason for lateness.

## 11. Term-time leave

Only the Headteacher can authorise absence. A letter or telephone message from a parent does not in itself authorise an absence. If absences are not authorised, parents will be notified. If no explanation is received, absences will not be authorised.

The following reasons are examples of absence that will not be authorised:

- Persistent nonspecific illness e.g. ‘poorly’ or ‘unwell’

- Absence of siblings if one child is ill
- Oversleeping
- Inadequate clothing/uniform
- Confusion over school dates
- Medical/dental appointments of more than half a day without very good reasons
- Child/family birthday
- Shopping trip
- Family Holidays

The school will require parents/carers to observe the school holidays as prescribed; therefore, the headteacher will be unable to authorise holidays during term-time in most cases. The headteacher will be only allowed to grant a leave of absence in exceptional circumstances. Applications will be made in advance and the headteacher will be satisfied by the evidence which is presented, before authorising term-time leave. The headteacher will determine the amount of time a pupil can be away from school during term-time. Any leave of absence is at the discretion of the headteacher. 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.

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

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

If parents/carers take their child out of school during term-time without authorisation from the headteacher, they may be subject to sanctions such as penalty fines.

## **12. Penalty Notices**

St John's C of E Primary School may make use of Penalty Notices to address poor school attendance in accordance with Kent County Council's Education Penalty Notice Code of Conduct.

A penalty notice can be issued as a result of the following:

- Parentally condoned absence
- Unauthorised leave for the purpose of a family holiday in term-time
- Delayed return from leave of absence without prior school agreement
- Persistent late arrival at school (after the register has closed)
- Where an excluded child is found in a public place during school hours during the first five days of exclusion.

A Penalty Notice may be issued when a pupil has been absent for 10 or more half day sessions (5 school days) without authorisation during any 100 possible school

sessions or period of 50 school days – these absences do not need to be consecutive.

Penalty Notices are issued to each parent of each child and the amount of the penalty will be £120 to be paid within 28 days, reduced to £60 if paid within 21 days. Failure to pay the penalty in full at the end of the 28-day period may result in prosecution by the local authority.

### **13. Children Missing Education**

Parents 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 guidance relating to Children Missing Education (CME). If after ten day's continuous absence the school has been unable to ascertain the whereabouts of a pupil, they will make a referral to the Local Authority.

### **14. Young carers**

The school understands the difficulties that face young carers, and will endeavour to identify young carers at the earliest opportunity, as well as through their time at the school. A caring and flexible approach will be taken to the needs of young carers and each pupil will be examined on a case-by-case basis, involving other agencies if appropriate.

The school, in conjunction with relevant authorities, will implement support for pupils who are young carers, to encourage their sustained and regular attendance at school in line with the school's expectations.

### **15. Rewarding good attendance**

**The school will acknowledge outstanding attendance in the following ways:**

For classes who achieve an overall class attendance for the week of 96% or above

- Non school uniform day

For classes who achieve an overall class attendance for the week of 100%

- Bouncy castle session

For individuals who achieve 100% attendance for the year

- Trip to Pizza Express  
or
- Trip to Wagamamas  
or
- Ice cream factory with mini disco in school

## 16. **Monitoring and review**

Attendance and punctuality will be monitored throughout the year. The school's attendance target is **96 %** – full details of the school's absence levels can be found on the **school website**.

Any changes made to this policy will be communicated to all relevant stakeholders.