

# **St James and St John Church of England Primary School**



## **Attendance Policy**

**Kindness, Respect, Collaboration, Resilience, Aspiration,  
Courage, Friendship**

This policy was adopted and approved by the Governing Body: October 2024

The policy is to be reviewed by: October 2027

## **Introduction**

At St James and St John Church of England Primary School we strive for all members of our community to flourish and prosper in all aspects of their life. St James and St John Church of England Primary School is a friendly, nurturing Christian school that strives to be an environment where all pupils want to be and are keen and ready to learn. For our pupils to achieve their full potential, it is vital that they are punctual and attend school regularly.

This policy is a guide to attendance matters and sets out how we will endeavour to achieve improvements in attendance working in partnership with our parents and pupils. It is in line with Government guidance and the Local Authority procedures.

## **Legal Framework**

Section 7 of the 1996 Education Act entitles every child of Compulsory School Age to an efficient, full-time education suitable to their age, aptitude, and any special education need they may have, either by regular attendance at school or otherwise.

Where a child is registered at a school, parents have a legal duty to ensure their child attends the school regularly. This means their child must attend every day that the school is open, except in a small number of allowable circumstances such as being too ill to attend or being given permission for an absence in advance from the school.

Under the Education Act 1996, the Local Authority has a statutory responsibility to ensure that parents secure education for children of compulsory school age and where necessary, use legal enforcement.

A child is of Compulsory School Age at the beginning of the term following their 5<sup>th</sup> birthday. St James and St John Church of England Primary School promotes and expects that all children in Early Years attend at full attendance (after the transition days) in the September of the academic year they turn five. This helps them to develop friendships, develop their learning behaviours and sets the standard for years to come.

## **The importance of regular attendance**

Regular attendance is the key to enabling children to maximise the educational opportunities available to them and become emotionally resilient, confident and competent adults who are able to realise their full potential and make a positive contribution to their community.

Regular attendance enables pupils to get the most out of their school experience, including: their attainment, wellbeing, and wider life chances. There is statistical evidence that those with higher attendance achieve higher attainment than those pupils with poor attendance.

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

## **Promoting regular attendance**

Helping to create a pattern of regular attendance is everybody's responsibility; parents, pupils and the school. To help us all to focus on this we will:

- report to you annually on how your child is performing in school and raise concerns at parental consultation meetings where attendance and punctuality is affecting attainment and progress
- regularly monitor and analyse attendance and absence data to identify pupils that require support with their attendance and put effective strategies in place
- regularly share with parents and pupils any concerns regarding attendance and work with families to improve attendance
- build strong relationships with families, listen to and understand barriers to attendance and work with families to remove them
- celebrate good child attendance with an email to parents and personal acknowledgement to pupils 1:1 from teachers

## **Absence procedures**

If your child is absent you must:

- contact school by 9.00am on each day of absence by email or phone (01280 860272 / 812291)
- if you do not inform the school of your child's absence, we will attempt to contact you by phone. We will try to contact you several times during the morning. In line with our safeguarding responsibilities, in the event that we are unable to reach you or your designated contacts and we have concerns about the safety of your child, we may carry out a home visit and / or contact the Police.

## **Understanding types of absence**

Every half-day absence has to be classified by the school, as either AUTHORISED or UNAUTHORISED. This is why information about the reason for any absence is always required. Authorised absences are mornings or afternoons away from school with a good reason.

Examples of authorised absences include:

- illness (medical evidence may be requested for repeated absences)

- medical/dental appointments which unavoidably fall in school time (documentary evidence must be shared with school)
- educational appointments off-site e.g. attending examinations
- emergencies or other unavoidable incidents.

Absence can only be authorised by the school and cannot be authorised by parents. All absences will be treated as unauthorised unless a satisfactory explanation for the pupil's absence has been received.

Unauthorised absences are those which the school does not consider reasonable, and for which no 'leave' has been given. This type of absence can lead to the school and Local Authority using sanctions and/or legal proceedings.

Examples of unauthorised absences include:

- parents/carers keeping children off school unreasonably
- absences which have not been properly explained
- extended visits to see family without exceptional circumstances
- day trips and holidays in term time
- late arrival (after the registers close at 9.20am)
- a pupil's /family member's birthday
- swimming lessons
- tiredness / 'couldn't get up'

Whilst any 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. Some pupils find it harder than others to attend school and therefore at all stages of improving attendance, St James and St John Church of England Primary School will work with pupils and parents to remove any barriers to attendance by building strong and trusting relationships and work together to put the right support in place. If your child is reluctant to attend, it is never advisable 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. As a school, we have a number of strategies to support children and families who may be experiencing problems of this nature.

### **Absences in term time**

Headteachers may ***not*** grant any leave of absence during term time unless there are exceptional circumstances. If you feel that you have 'exceptional circumstances' then a written submission must be made to the Headteacher (Leave of Absence request form found on our website).

The School must refer all unauthorised absences to the County Attendance team in accordance with the new National Framework for Penalty Notices that came into force on the 19<sup>th</sup> August 2024.

## **The National Framework for Penalty Notices**

The National Threshold for when a penalty notice must be considered by all school in England is 10 sessions (usually equivalent to 5 school days) of unauthorised absence within a 10 school week period. These sessions do not have to be consecutive and can be made up of a combination of any type of unauthorised absences. The 10-school week period can span different terms or schools years.

### Per Parent, Per Child

Penalty Notice Fines are issued to each parent, for each child that was absent. For example: 3 siblings absent for term time leave, would result in each parent receiving 3 separate fines.

### First Offence

The first time a Penalty Notice is issued for unauthorised absence the amount will be:

- £160 per parent, per child paid within 28 days.
- Reduced to £80 per parent, per child if paid within 21 days.

### Second Offence (within 3 years)

The second time a Penalty Notice is issued for unauthorised absence the amount will be:

- £160 per parent, per child paid within 28 days.

### Third Offence and Any Further Offences (within 3 years)

- The third time an offence is committed a Penalty Notice will not be issued and the case will be presented straight to the Magistrate's Court. Prosecution can result in criminal records and fines of up to £2,500.
- Cases found guilty in Magistrate's Court can show on the parent's future DBS certificate due to 'failure to safeguard a child's education'.

## **School targets and attendance trends**

The Headteacher is responsible for the strategic approach to attendance in school. The school monitors pupil attendance and lateness, particularly those below 90%. The school has targets to improve attendance and your child has an important part to play in meeting these targets. The current target is to achieve full attendance, (every child to attend school each school day).

The school uses the following scale to judge attendance:

- 95 - 100% good
- 91 - 95% poor (risk of persistent absenteeism)
- 90% or less persistent absenteeism

If a parent/carer wishes to know the current attendance percentage of their child/ren, the school office will be able to provide this information.

## **Persistent Absenteeism (PA)**

A pupil becomes a 'persistent absentee' when they miss 10% or more schooling across the school year *for whatever reason* (attendance less than 90%). Absence at this level is considerably detrimental to any child's educational prospects and we expect parents' fullest support and co-operation to tackle this. Any case that is seen to have reached the persistent absenteeism level is given priority and you will be invited to a support meeting with the Headteacher. We will work with parents and pupils to improve attendance, closely monitoring for signs of improvement.

Should there be no significant improvement in attendance and persistent absenteeism persists the school must refer parents to the Local Authority under the National Framework for Penalty Notices.

Please see Appendix1: School Attendance Flow Chart for clarification.

### **EXAMPLE - Children with an attendance percentage of 90%**

Children who have attendance figures of 90% are missing approximately half a day each week. This equates to 19 full days (nearly four weeks) each school year. If this pattern continues through a child's time at primary school, this equates to a total of 28 weeks lost (from EYFS to Year 6). This is only 10 weeks short of a full year missed from their education before they reach secondary school.

### **EXAMPLE - Children with an attendance percentage of 80%**

Children who have attendance figures of 80% are missing a full day each week. This equates to 38 full days (nearly eight weeks) each school year. If this pattern continues through a child's time at primary school, this equates to a total of 56 weeks lost (from EYFS to Year 6. This is one and a half years missed from their education before they reach secondary school).

## **Lateness**

Poor punctuality is not acceptable. If your child is late at the start of the morning or afternoon session they will miss valuable time with their class teacher and important information as well as part of a lesson. Pupils who arrive late often disrupt lessons for other children. The school day begins promptly at 8.45am (Chackmore site) and 8.50am (Akeley site), when morning registration takes place. Any child arriving after this time must report to reception and will be recorded as late ('L' code used in the register). If your child arrives after 9.15am they will receive a mark that shows them to be on site ('U' code used), but this will not count as a present mark and it will mean they have an unauthorised absence.

Afternoon registration takes place at 1.00pm.

In accordance with Local Authority regulations, we will monitor any children who are **persistently late** for school. This will mean that you face the possibility of a Fixed Penalty Notice if the problem persists.

### **Children Missing in Education**

St James and St John Church of England Primary School will refer to Buckinghamshire County Council's Children Missing Education (CME) team when a pupil has been missing from school for 10 days, and the school has been unable to locate the pupil after carrying reasonable checks during this time. The school will also refer to the CME team if a pupil has moved out of Buckinghamshire but does not have a school place confirmed.

### **Taking a child off the school register**

A pupil will only be deleted from the admission register for a reason that is set out in regulation 8 of the Education (pupil Registration) (England) regulations 2006. The Local Authority will be informed of a pupil's name being deleted from the admission register.

## Appendix 1: School Attendance Flow Chart

