

# Attendance Policy



**St John's**  
CofE Primary School

**Approved by:** Head teacher

**Date:** March 2021

**Last reviewed on:** March 2021

**Next review due by:** March 2022

## **ATTENDANCE POLICY**

This policy should be taken and used as part of St John's Church of England Primary School's overall strategy and implemented within the context of our vision, instrument of government, aims and values as a Church of England school.

### **RATIONALE**

The purpose of this policy is to provide a structure which ensures that, through record keeping and monitoring, parents, pupils and staff are able to work together, with the support of the governors, to obtain the regular and prompt attendance of pupils.

### **AIMS**

Through this policy we aim to:

- ensure that parents, governors, pupils and staff are aware of legal requirements.
- ensure that the recording of the pupil's arrival in school has taken place and can be checked in the case of a fire or other emergencies.
- ensure regular attendance, which enhances educational output and social experience. A close link has been established between established between good school attendance and academic success:

Across one school year:

- Less than 5 days absence = 97.3% attendance
- 14 days absence (approx.) = 92.6% attendance
- 20 days absence (approx.) = 89.4% attendance
- 30 days absence (approx.) = 84.2% attendance

If a child achieves 80% attendance this means that they have missed approximately 39 days of education over the academic year, averaging 1 day per week.

- identify truanting pupils who are in danger of exposure to situations in which they might:
  - have an accident
  - experiment with dangerous substances
  - become involved in criminal activity
  - be abused or assaulted
  - be at increased risk of CSE
  - be subjected to FGM
  - be exposed to extreme ideologies
  - suffer from mental health problems

- ensure that all parents, governors, staff and the LA are able to take their full share of responsibility for improved school attendance, pupil's social and academic progress and community safety.

## **GUIDELINES**

### **LEGAL RESPONSIBILITIES OF PARENTS**

Parents have a duty to ensure that their children receive efficient full-time education suitable to their age, ability and aptitude and any special needs they may have, either by regular attendance at school or otherwise. Schooling is thus not compulsory but education is.

### **MORAL OBLIGATION OF PARENTS**

Parents have a responsibility beyond the legal requirements to transmit to their children an awareness of the value and importance of their education. They can aid this by:

- ensuring regular attendance and prompt arrival;
- ensuring that their children are well rested, properly clothed and have appropriate equipment;
- not agreeing to absence from school unless their children are genuinely unwell;
- notifying school on the first day of absence;
- avoiding family holidays or other absences unless circumstances are exceptional. In this case school authorisation must be requested;
- consulting and advising staff of any problems which may make their children reluctant to attend school (e.g. family breakdown, bullying) so that the children can be appropriately supported;
- resolving any problems of this kind either by discussion or through the complaints procedure, but without withdrawing children from school
- informing the school of any changes in address, the full name of the parent with whom the pupil will live and the date when the pupil will live at the new address.

### **RESPONSIBILITIES OF PUPILS**

- in the case of very young children, parents should be responsible for establishing habits of regular and punctual attendance.
- all pupils have a responsibility to ensure that they arrive at school promptly, do not leave the school premises without permission and report to the School Secretary if they arrive late.
- they should seek help from parents, teachers or the LA's Children Missing Education Office if they have difficulties with work or their peers.

## **RESPONSIBILITIES OF HEADTEACHER, STAFF AND ATTENDANCE GOVERNOR**

The school is required to:

- provide efficient education to meet the needs of all children in the school.
- keep an admission register which contains personal details of every pupil in the school along with the date of admission to the school;
- ensure the admission register is updated to include any new address at which a pupil will be living, the full name of the parent with whom the pupil will be living and any new school which a pupil will be attending along with the corresponding dates;
- inform the local authority within five days each time a pupil is added to the register (not applicable when the child starts at the beginning of the reception year);
- keep an attendance register which must be marked at the beginning of the morning session and at some time during the afternoon session;
- mark the attendance register in a uniform manner as agreed by all staff, which shows whether child is present, absent, engaged in an appropriate activity away from the school site or unable to attend due to exceptional circumstances;
- ascertain the reason for an absence and show whether absences are authorised or unauthorised;
- use uniform codes as recommended by the DfE;
- inform parents with end of year reports of the number of unauthorised absences (i.e. absences not agreed by the Headteacher) during the year.

The Headteacher and staff will ensure that the following will be adhered to:

- exemplary or improving attendance will be positively recognised.
- pupils will be made aware of the social and academic disadvantages of irregular attendance and/or frequent lateness.
- through the school website, parents and pupils will be familiarised with times of the school day, the procedure for notification of absence, how to seek authorisation of absence and the circumstances in which this will be agreed and contact points in school for any discussion about problems in relation to school attendance.
- parents will be contacted as promptly as can be reasonably expected in the case of unexplained absence.
- make arrangements for the effective management of bullying according to the Anti-Bullying Policy.
- report regularly to the Governing Body and the LA, especially where a pupil's attendance falls below 90% (i.e. persistent absentees).
- ensure there is a governor appointed to lead on attendance, who will have regular contact with Headteacher as part of the monitoring and review process

- pupils will be marked as being late in the register if they arrive at school later than 9.10am.
- regularly review and monitor this document.
- the attendance of all pupils will be monitored by the Attendance Lead Headteacher. This is a staged approach to the management of attendance. See appendix A.
- the following categories of pupils will be monitored with particular care:
  - pupils on the CP register
  - “looked after pupils”
  - Special Educational Needs pupils
- ensure that the LA’s Children Missing Education Office is notified when a pupil is removed from the register, in order that no school aged pupils may be “lost” to the educational system. The School will also contact the school to which the pupil is to join to ensure that they arrive on roll as expected.

## **CHILDREN MISSING FROM EDUCATION**

There are many reasons why we may make a referral to the Children Missing Education Service (CMES) including the following circumstances:

- Unexplained absences of ten consecutive days
- Continued unauthorised absence
- Patterns of irregular attendance
- Prior to removing a child from the school roll if the destination school is not known or there are other safeguarding concerns
- The school has been unable to contact parents
- The school is concerned that absence may be condoned by parents/carers
- School refusal
- The school is concerned that a pupil's absences may be due to emotional or medical difficulties
- Illegal child employment

This is not an exhaustive list.

### **Prior to making a referral**

The school will take appropriate and meaningful action to address a pupil's non-attendance and will make, or attempt to make, contact with the parents/carers before making a referral.

Reasonable steps to be taken by school staff include:

- Telephone calls to all known contacts (parents are asked to provide a minimum of two emergency contacts in the event of children not arriving at school without prior notification and also for other emergency purposes)
- Letters home (including recorded delivery)
- Contact with other schools where siblings may be registered
- Possible home visits

- Enquiries to friends, neighbours etc. through school contacts
- Enquiries with any other Service known to be involved with the pupil/family

All contacts and outcomes to be recorded on the pupil's file.

## **PUNCTUALITY AND LATENESS**

It is important that classes make a prompt and effective start at the start of the school day. The Attendance Lead and Headteacher monitors lateness of pupils as punctuality to school is crucial. Lateness into school causes disruption to that individual's learning and to that of the other pupils in the class. It is of extreme importance therefore that all pupils arrive at school on time.

Children may arrive at school from 8.45 and go into class from 8.50 (juniors) and 8.55 (infants). There is no supervision on site for children before this time and the school is not legally responsible for them. Registration is called at 9.00 am for all classes.

Registers will close at ten minutes after registration times. A pupil that arrives after this time will be marked as 'late after registration has closed' unless the school have previously acknowledged the reason for their late arrival into school.

Where there are concerns about punctuality, the school will make verbal contact with parents/carers. If the concerns persist, the Attendance Lead will write to the parents/carers, including a copy of the child's registration certificate, and stating the total minutes late over a determined period.

If there is no improvement, the school will arrange a meeting with the parent/carer.

## **AUTHORISED AND UNAUTHORISED ABSENCES**

The DfE recognises the importance of regular attendance and it is a requirement of School to decide with every absence whether it is authorised or unauthorised.

Wherever possible parents are expected to make routine appointments (e.g. medical, dental) outside of school time.

If a child is absent from school for any reason the parent must inform the school in person, in writing or by telephone as soon as possible of absence and reason for it. Such calls are always logged and the class teacher informed.

Unauthorised absences are those absences for which the school received no reason/explanation or if the school has good reason to doubt the explanation given.

## LEAVE OF ABSENCE IN TERM TIME

In line with Bath & North East Somerset Local Authority **leave for pupils during term time is only authorised in exceptional circumstances.** The school recognises that taking children out of school may constitute a safeguarding risk and will make necessary enquiries, in order to be satisfied that the child is not at risk. The school may contact outside agencies in order to ensure that a visit is legitimate and safe for the child/children.

Head teachers may now only grant leave in term time where the circumstances are exceptional, for example:

- Death of parent/carer or sibling of the pupil
- Life threatening or critical illness of parent or sibling of the pupil
- Parent/carer recuperation and convalescence from critical illness or surgery (leave request to be made within 6 months of recovery and medical evidence required)
- Close family wedding. Unless the school is aware of the family member getting married (mother or father), a copy of the invitation must be requested in order to assist the decision making process.

Family emergencies need careful consideration. It is not always in the best interest of the child, nor appropriate for them to miss school for family emergencies that are being dealt with by adult family members. Being at school, friendships and support from staff can provide children with stability and care during difficult times. The routine of school can provide a safe and familiar background during times of uncertainty.

If you have exceptional circumstances, which have lead you to request leave in term time for your child/ren, please complete the required form, which you can obtain from the school office after speaking with the Headteacher. The Headteacher will then make a decision, on whether or not the leave can be lawfully authorised and will do so only if there is a genuine, exceptional and urgent reason for a child to be absent during term time.

Where a request for leave of absence has been made by a parent with whom the child resides, any estranged parent with parental responsibility will be advised of the request for leave. The school will not become involved in disputes between parents over permissions surrounding the request. If the parent on receipt of the notification does not agree with the absence, then he/she may put in writing to the Headteacher with notification to that effect. This will be given consideration should a Penalty Notice be requested for the absence.

## PENALTY NOTICES

**If a child is taken out of school without the Head Teacher's authorisation, it will be recorded as unauthorised absence. This may lead to the issuing of a penalty notice and legal action being taken.**

Penalty notices may be issued to the parent of pupils who have unauthorised absence from school. The amount of the penalty is £60 per child per parent.

If this is not paid within 21 days the amount rises to £120 per child per parent.

If not paid within 28 days the Local Authority will prosecute under section 444(1) unless it comes to our attention that the penalty notice had been issued in error.

### **Section 444(1) Education Act 1996:**

“If you are the parent of a child of compulsory school age who fails to attend school regularly, you are guilty of an offence.”

The court can fine each parent up to £1,000 per child, order payment of the prosecution costs and/or make a Parenting Order.

- Parent' includes any person who is not a parent of the child but who has parental responsibility for the child (and applies whether or not that person lives with the child) or who has care of him/her.

**These prosecutions are criminal proceedings and could result in you having a criminal record.**

## **ENCOURAGING AND ENABLING GOOD ATTENDANCE**

It is clear that children alone cannot ensure their regular and punctual attendance at school. From the outset, parents are encouraged to take an active interest in the work of the School and to build and support their children's enthusiasm for attending school.

All staff make children aware of the importance of good attendance and children are praised.

Each child's attendance record is shared with the parents as part of annual written reports and at Parent Consultations. It follows that individual records of attendance are kept on file and are passed onto subsequent schools.

## **CONCLUSION:**

This policy is intended to support a school ethos in which regular and punctual attendance is recognised, and encouraged, as a key factor in supporting the school to move towards its vision and achieve its agreed goals and targets.



## Appendix A

Staged Approach To the Management of Attendance		
Whole school attendance is monitored at a minimum of every half term but more frequently as appropriate to the needs of the school.		
	Trigger	Outcome
1	Attendance falls below 95% and the child's attendance is of concern.	Letter of concern 1 will be sent to parents: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Expressing concern about attendance</li> <li>Informing the parents of current attendance</li> <li>Enclosing a registration certificate</li> <li>Reminding parents of their legal responsibilities and the nature of 'persistent absence'</li> <li>Welcoming the parents to arrange contact the school if they wish to discuss attendance further.</li> </ul> Attendance is monitored for a fixed period.
2	Parents have received a Stage 2 letter and attendance remains of concern.	Letter of concern 2 will be sent to parents: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Informing parents of ongoing concern about attendance</li> <li>Informing the parents of current attendance</li> <li>Enclosing a registration certificate</li> <li>Reminding parents of their legal responsibilities and the definition of 'persistent absence'</li> <li>Inviting parents to an appointment with the Attendance Lead on a specific date, with the purpose of discussing attendance, agreeing an action plan of support, considering whether it may be appropriate to involve outside agencies, and setting an internal school attendance target.</li> <li>Notifying parents that should they chose not to attend, the meeting may take place without them and a target set.</li> </ul>
3	Parents have failed an internal school attendance target and attendance is below the level of Persistent Absence (90%) and still a concern	Letter of concern 3 will be sent to parents: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Informing parents of ongoing concern about attendance</li> <li>Informing the parents of attendance during the target period.</li> <li>Enclosing a registration certificate</li> <li>Notifying parents that the school intends to discuss their child's attendance with its Education Casework Officer, of the Attendance Compliance and Enforcement Service's Traded Service, and may make a formal referral.</li> </ul>
	During a monitoring period, attendance improves.	A Letter of Praise will be sent to parents: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Informing the parents of attendance during the monitoring period.</li> </ul> Notifying parents that the school will continue to monitor attendance to ensure sustained improvement.

**Letter to be addressed and sent to each parent with parental responsibility; if parents are living apart and there is an acrimonious relationship, separate meetings will need to be held.**

**Letter of concern stage 1**

Dear

**Re: Child's Name dob:                      School:  
Attendance: %**

I am writing to all parents whose child's attendance has fallen since September.

A close link has been established between good school attendance and academic success. Missed lessons leave pupils trying to catch up and may cause anxiety when they return to find the class has moved on. Continuity of education is very important. It is worth considering that a 10% absence rate is equivalent to a half year of a child's time in secondary school.

I want to take this opportunity to inform you that under the Education Act 1996, you have a duty to ensure the regular attendance of your child at (name of school). This means that (child's name) must be in attendance every time the school is open, unless s/he is prevented from doing so by reason of illness or any unavoidable cause.

We are aware of the variety of reasons why children do not attend regularly at school. Where there is a valid reason (for example a diagnosed health or medical issue) a plan will be agreed between you and the school; this plan will offer appropriate support and will be regularly reviewed. It is therefore important that information is shared with school staff. We will continue to need a note to explain any absence.

Please take immediate action to improve (child's name) school attendance.

If you wish to discuss this matter further, please do not hesitate to contact (name and school) on (telephone number).

I look forward to your cooperation in this important matter.

Yours sincerely

*Enclosed: School attendance record*

## Letter of concern Stage 2

Dear

**Re:**

**dob:**

**School:**

**NAME OF SCHOOL**

Following the letter dated DATE I have continued to monitor NAME's attendance.

This academic year, NAME has attended on only NUMBER out of a possible NUMBER half-day sessions, giving an attendance rate of NUMBER % - the equivalent to missing NUMBER days school each week. The school register shows that NUMBER of NAME's absences have not been authorised and that his/her last week of full attendance was in the week starting Monday DATE.

Under the Education Act 1996, it is your duty as NAME's parent/carer to ensure his/her regular attendance at school. **This means that NAME must be in attendance every time the school is open, unless he/she is prevented from doing so by reason of illness or any unavoidable cause.**

I would like to offer an opportunity for you to discuss your child's school attendance with me and therefore invite you to a XXX School Attendance Meeting on:

**Date:**

**Time:**

**Place:**

This meeting will discuss the reasons why NAME is not attending school regularly and how this is impacting on his/her educational attainment. We will plan together how this matter will be resolved, what the next steps are and agree a date to review progress.

If you are unable to attend the meeting on the above date please let me know as soon as possible to enable another date to be arranged.

Yours sincerely

**Letter of concern Stage 3**

Dear Parents Name,

Re:

DOB:

Year

Group:

We had arranged an attendance meeting at XXX School on DATE. At this meeting I had hoped to address the fact that CHILD'S NAME attendance is of real concern. I was therefore very disappointed that you didn't attend or inform us that you were not able to attend.

CHILD'S NAME overall attendance for this academic year is XX.XX% which falls below of what we would expect.

I will take this opportunity to remind you that Under the Education Act 1996, it is your duty as CHILD'S NAME parent to ensure his/her regular attendance at school. This means that CHILD'S NAME must be in attendance every time the school is open, unless she is prevented from doing so by reason of illness or any unavoidable cause.

I shall continue to monitor CHILD'S NAME attendance until DATE at which point, I will review. If CHILD'S NAME accrues any further unauthorised absences during this period, we may refer your child to the Local Authority.

Yours sincerely,