



# St. James' Church of England Primary School.

## Attendance and Punctuality Policy.

*Let all that you do be done in Love*  
*I Corinthians 16.14*

### Our Vision

At St James, we believe every child has a light, their own light and with support and nourishment they will be able to shine.

Our children are happy to come to school, they feel safe and well cared for. They feel challenged and supported in their learning and are excited by their learning opportunities. With this happiness and love of learning, they attend school every day which in turn brings them academic success and the opportunity to reach their potential. Attending school means that children can make friends, improve their social skills and build positive relationships to prepare them for life.

At St James we are certain that high academic success is linked to high attendance and we have high expectations for all of our children to reach their highest potential.

The school aims to work together with parents and carers to ensure that every child registered at the school attends every day and arrives punctually. It is for this reason that the following procedures have been put in place.

### Aims of this policy

- To safeguard pupils and ensure they receive their right to education.
- To raise parents and pupil's awareness of the importance of good attendance and of the impact attendance has upon achievement.
- To improve and maintain levels of attendance consistent with established targets (school, local and national).
- To ensure that there is common understanding and consistent practice amongst different groups of the school community, everyone understands their role in securing high attendance.
- To have a system of incentives and rewards, which encourage individual pupils, and whole classes, to secure high attendance.
- To ensure that pupils are only removed from roll within the safeguarding procedures set out by the local authority.

### Expectations

We use the following percentages to classify our attendance:

98%+ Excellent

95 – 97% Good

90 – 94% - Concern (poor)

Below 90% - High Concern – officially ‘persistently absent’

This information is included on pupils’ end of year reports.

Expectations are communicated with parents at the beginning of every academic year and on a regular basis via newsletters. The table below is included in the information shared.

| <b>Attendance during one school year</b> | <b>equals this number of days absent</b> | <b>which is approximately this many weeks ‘absent</b> | <b>which means this many lessons missed</b> |
|--|--|---|---|
| 95%                                      | 9 days                                   | 2 weeks   | 50 lessons                                  |
| 90%                                      | 19 days                                  | 4 weeks   | 100 lessons                                 |
| 85%                                      | 29 days                                  | 6 weeks   | 150 lessons                                 |
| 80%                                      | 38 days                                  | 8 weeks   | 200 lessons                                 |

## Safeguarding

In communication with parents, the link between attendance and pupils’ attainment and wider wellbeing is clarified.

Poor attendance can be an indicator of a safeguarding concern. Where there are safeguarding concerns, the school will intensify support through statutory children’s social care, following the safeguarding procedures detailed in the school’s safeguarding policy.

## Authorised absence

Authorised absence means that one of the following circumstances applies:

- Illness (not medical or dental appointment) only when the school has a genuine and reasonable doubt about the authenticity of the illness or if family is within the Fast Track to Attendance process
- Medical or dental appointments (absence should be agreed with the school in advance when it is not possible for the pupil to attend appointments out of school hours)
- Religious observance (only on dates set by a religious body)
- Fixed term exclusion
- Temporary part – time timetable to meet the individual special needs of a pupil (for a limited period)
- Leave of absence granted by the school in exceptional circumstances
- Attending an approved educational activity (attending another school or taking part in offsite activities such as educational visits and sporting events)
- Unable to attend due to exceptional circumstances (school closed unavoidably, transport provided by the local authority is not available, local or national emergency resulting in widespread travel disruption).

## Unauthorised absence

Unauthorised absence will be the following circumstances:

- A child's/family member's birthday
- Shopping for uniform or shoes
- Illness of other family members
- Having their hair cut
- Closure of a sibling's school for INSET or other purposes
- "Late getting up"
- Illness where the child is considered well enough to attend school without medical authority and in the absence of a communicable disease
- Leave during term time taken without the authorisation of the school

## Leave in Term Time

A key factor reducing the school's attendance figure has been the taking of holidays in term time and extended leave of absence. Staff and Governors are committed to addressing this issue.

DFE and Birmingham guidelines state that Head Teachers may no longer authorise leave during term time except where 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)
- leave for armed forces personnel who are prevented by operational duties to take their leave at any other time

Leave of Absence can only be taken after discussion with the Head Teacher. Parents will be asked to complete a "Leave of Absence" form (available from the school office)

Where the absence is taken and not authorised by the Head Teacher, a penalty notice may be issued, legal action may be taken or a pupil may lose their school place. The penalty notice will be for a minimum amount of £60 or £120 depending on how soon a payment is made. This could result in a criminal record.

## School Procedures

### Promoting excellent attendance

The school will employ a wide range of strategies to promote excellent attendance:

- Teachers will communicate regularly with parents on attendance matters
- Clear attendance information will be entered in the Parent Handbook, in the "parent speak" Attendance & Punctuality Policy and on the school website;
- Good, regular attendance will be highlighted in the induction for new parents.

- Attendance and punctuality board in the school hall, changed weekly with best attending class in KS1/KS2 as well as progress to 96% Attendance challenge

The school aims to encourage excellent attendance, where the pupils' efforts are acknowledged, and rewarded. Rewards will be various and may include:

- Termly certificates to individuals with excellent attendance
- Termly prizes for attendance
- Attendance Teddy/weekly prize awarded to each class each week.
- Weekly 96% Attendance challenge – a class celebrates their collective success. When a class achieves 96% or above they receive a token, when they collect 6 tokens they receive a class reward of their choice.
- Improved attendance certificates/letters

The school also promotes excellent attendance by informing parents, pupils, staff and governors on the school newsletter each week.

## **Punctuality**

We are aware that persistent lateness can have a cumulative effect and deny full access to the National Curriculum. Children will be marked late if they arrive after registration which is 9:00am. If pupils arrive after 9:25am they will be assigned the U code, this is classed as an unauthorized absence. In exceptional circumstances this time might be extended, for example, for pupils in temporary accommodation, who are travelling longer distances via buses.

We discourage lateness by:

- Providing supervision for children from 8.45am
- Keeping a late book every morning and after school.
- Deputy Head Teacher/Senior Office Manager monitor punctuality on a daily basis and speak to parents where necessary.
- Providing a breakfast club facility.

## **First Day of absence**

- Parents are asked to contact the school as soon as possible on each day of absence. The reason is then recorded by the school admin team.
- If the school is not contacted by 10 am, the Learning Mentor/school office will endeavour to make contact via telephone in the first instance with the parent and identify the reason for absence.
- If no contact is made, then the school will keep trying throughout the day. The school will try all contacts provided on a pupils' record to ascertain the whereabouts of the pupil. The office produces a daily print out of pupils who do not attend and no reason is provided. This is also recorded on the school system. In the case of a child in care or subject to a child protection plan, the child's social worker will be informed of any unexplained absence on the first day.
- If the child does not attend school, the following day and no contact is made and there are sufficient concerns for the child then the school office will inform the DSLs/pastoral team. A home visit may be undertaken as well as other emergency contacts will be called as well to ascertain the whereabouts of the pupil.

- If by day 3, a child has not attended school and no contact is made, then CME policy is followed with subsequent home visits as part of safeguarding procedures.
- If by day 3, parents have left messages giving a reason for absence but no verbal contact has been made, the school office will call to speak to the parents in person.

## **Strategies for tackling persistent absence and emerging concerns**

- Attendance is tracked and monitored weekly by the Senior Office Manager/Deputy Head Teacher and any concerns are highlighted. Data is analysed to identify:
  - The school attendance figure
  - Class attendance trends
  - Persistent absentees/children vulnerable to becoming persistent absentees
- The DHT will work with the Learning Mentor/Senior Office Manager to address concerns and to target any particular groups of pupils whose attendance is deemed a concern. Patterns of absence and lateness are monitored and questions asked of parents to challenge these.
- The school follows the Local Authority's 'Fast Track to Attendance' guidance when addressing instances of poor attendance. Early Help is offered in the first instance with the DHT/Learning Mentor making referrals to outside agencies where appropriate.
- In the case of pupils with an EHCP, the SENCO liaises with all appropriate agencies to put in place additional support and adjustments to ensure the provision outlined in the pupil's EHCP is accessed.
- If attendance does not improve following the offer of Early Help, parents are invited to a school attendance review meeting (SARM) with the DHT/Senior Office Manager, where the potential for legal intervention is made clear.
- If attendance still does not improve, the DHT/Senior Office Manager will work with Birmingham Local Authority on legal intervention.

## **Summary of Responsibilities**

### **Attendance is everyone's responsibility**

Parents have a legal duty to ensure that their children (of compulsory school age) attend on a daily and full-time basis.

#### **Parents will:**

- Promote a good attitude to learning, by ensuring that their children arrive at school punctually, (in time for the start of registration, 8.55am) every day, in appropriate dress and willing to work to fulfil the expectations of the school with regard to rules and behaviour, learning and homework.
- Work in partnership with school and other agencies in the best interests of their child: this includes informing school about significant influences and changes in the child's life, which may impact on learning and attendance.
- Ensure that, if their child is to be absent from school for any unavoidable reason such as sickness, they should contact the school by 10.00am on the first morning of absence, giving the reason for absence and the likely date of return.
- Plan holidays and family visits during the school holidays. If the need for leave of absence is absolutely unavoidable, parents should arrange to meet with the Head

teacher as far in advance of the period for which leave is to be requested as possible and before making any travel arrangements.

- Plan routine dental check-ups and visits to the optician during school holidays
- Inform the school of any medical, optician or dental appointments in advance if they are to take place during term time.
- Avoid requesting leave of absence during periods where there are National Curriculum assessments (beginning of April to the end of June)
- Work together with the DHT/Senior Office Manager/Learning Mentor and other agencies where necessary to improve their child's attendance when they are/or at risk of persistent absence.

At St James we understand the need to build strong relationships with our families, to listen to and understand barriers to attendance and punctuality and work with families to remove them.

Class teachers are key staff members in promoting regular, punctual attendance.

**Class teachers will:**

- Provide a good example by always being punctual and meeting children at the door – providing a welcoming and safe environment, which encourages attendance and the best performance from children.
- Keep an accurate and up to date register of attendance on time, at the start of each morning and afternoon session.
- Report any concerns regarding attendance matters concerning the class group to the DHT/Senior Office Manager.
- Regularly remind children and parents of the importance of good attendance.
- If children are picked up late (after 3.25pm) they should be taken to the school office and their names should be recorded in the late book.
- Inform parents of their child's attendance percentages at parent's evening.
- Ensure children receive rewards in relation to attendance and punctuality success – aligned to the Attendance Policy.
- Build a welcoming atmosphere in the classroom and provide support as necessary (for example catch up session with TA to begin to fill any gaps in lost learning) when children return after an absence.

The Attendance Team (members include the Head Teacher/DHT (Lead on Attendance)/Senior Office Manager/Learning Mentor) take responsibility for monitoring the attendance of children and regularly promote the importance of attendance and punctuality.

**The Attendance Team will:**

- Build strong relationships with families, listen to and understand barriers to attendance and punctuality, and work with families to remove them.
- Have a clear school attendance policy (reviewed annually), which all staff, pupils and parents understand.
- Monitor the attendance and punctuality of cohorts, groups and individuals to identify support needed and look at emerging patterns across the school to develop strategies to address them.
- Monitor and track the attendance and punctuality of vulnerable children weekly and take action as soon as issues are noted.

- Monitor and track the attendance and punctuality of persistent absenteeism/risk of persistent absenteeism weekly (Continuous contact with parents regarding expectation/responsibility)
- Ensure contact (letter, meetings) is made with parents of children whose attendance/punctuality is a concern in a timely manner to enable any support needed to be implemented (Early Help) to try and eradicate issues so that they do not become 'the norm'. Emphasis will be on support before sanctions.
- Ensure the school follows Birmingham Local Authority's Fast Track to Attendance procedures.
- Ensure children receive rewards in relation to attendance and punctuality success – aligned to the Attendance Policy.
- Respond to leave of absence requests in a timely manner, following the DFE and Birmingham Local Authority Guidance.
- Conduct a home visit of any unexplained absence to ensure children's whereabouts.
- Liaise with the Local Authority in the case of a child missing from education.
- Provide reports regarding attendance for Governing Body meetings

**Governors will:**

- Recognise the importance of school attendance, promote it across the school's ethos and policies and, in consultations with the Head teacher and senior leaders, set attendance targets that demonstrate high expectations.
- Review the attendance policy (annually)
- Ensure that the school and staff meet legal responsibilities in relation to all Pupil Attendance and Registration Regulations.
- Review attendance data and progress towards attendance targets termly. Discuss and challenge leaders and help school leaders focus improvements efforts on the individual pupils/cohorts/groups who need it most.

This policy was developed and is reviewed and updated with key staff following DFE (Working Together to Improve School Attendance) and Birmingham Local Authority guidance

To be read in conjunction with the CME policy, Fast Track to Attendance (BCC), Medical needs Policy, SEND Policy and Safeguarding Policy.

Date of Policy: September 2023

Member of Staff Responsible: Jayne Pritchard

Review Date: September 2024