



SAINT JOHN'S

# Attendance Policy

Spring 2022

Designated Member of Staff	Head Teacher
Committee with responsibility	Curriculum and Standards
Date of Issue	Spring 2022
Frequency of Review	Annual

Issue Number	Issue Date	Summary of Changes
1	February 2022	Review and re-format of the policy

## **Introduction and background**

Saint John's Church of England Primary School recognises that positive behaviour and good attendance are central to raising standards and pupil attainment.

This policy is written with the above statement in mind and this policy underpins our school ethos to ensure that we all flourish at Saint John's.

For our children to gain the greatest benefit from their education, it is vital that they attend regularly unless the reason for the absence is unavoidable. Any absence affects the pattern of a child's schooling and regular absence will seriously affect their learning. Any child's absence or later arrival disrupts teaching routines and so may affect the learning of others in the same class. Ensuring a child's regular attendance at school is a parental responsibility and permitting absence from school without a good reason creates an offence in law and may result in prosecution.

## **Promoting Regular Attendance:**

Helping to create a pattern of regular attendance is everybody's responsibility – parents/carers, children and all members of school staff.

## **To help us all to focus on this we will:**

- Give parents/carers details on attendance in our newsletters
- Report to parents/carers annually on their child's attendance with the annual school report
- Contact parents/carers should their child's attendance require improvement
- Celebrate good attendance by displaying individual, class and whole school achievements
- Reward good or improving attendance with stickers, certificates, the Attendance alligator, tombola prize draw and the school Attendance Cup

## **Arrival and Registration**

Children are able to enter the school from 8.45am and there are activities available to complete in the classroom with the class teacher present. The gate closes at 8.55am and the register is taken shortly after this so that lessons can start at 9.00am. A day counts as two attendances.. If a child arrives after the registration period, but before 9.30am, he/she will be marked in as Late. After 9.30am, this will become an Unauthorised Absence. The afternoon register is taken at 1.15 pm. It is essential that children arriving and leaving school with a parent/carer outside the normal hours are signed in or out from the office. The signing in/out register in the office is used in the case of fire as an appendix to class registers.

Registers are checked regularly by the Strategic Leadership Team to ensure they are kept accurately by teachers and to assess the reasons and incidence of any absences.

## **Lateness**

Poor punctuality is not acceptable. If a child misses the start of the day, they miss work and getting vital information and news for the day. Late arriving pupils disrupt lessons and can encourage absence in others. It can also be embarrassing for the child. Good time-keeping is a vital life skill which will help our children as they progress through their school life and beyond in the wider world.

We will encourage good punctuality by being good role models to our children and celebrate good class punctuality.

### **Absence Procedures:**

If your child is absent the parent/carer must follow the following procedures:

- Contact us by 9.30am on the first day of absence; please leave a message on our answer phone or speak to a member of the office, which opens at 8.30am..

### **If your child is absent we will:**

- Telephone or text you on the first day of absence if we have not heard from you and record the relevant information
- Invite you in to discuss the situation with the Inclusion Lead if absences persist
- Refer the matter to the Headteacher if attendance moves below 90%
- Refer the matter to the Local Authority

### **Illness and medical appointments:**

Every effort should be made to arrange medical appointments outside school hours. If it is necessary for a child to be out of school for this reason, please inform the school office and the class teacher prior to the visit. The child should be returned to school directly after the appointment.

In the case of illness, it is the parent/carer's responsibility to keep the school informed as to the likely return date of the child.

### **Holidays in Term Time:**

There is **no** automatic entitlement in law to time off in school time to go on holiday. You **must** obtain permission from the head teacher if you want to take your child out of school during term time.

You can only do this if:

- you make an application to the head teacher in advance (as a parent the child normally lives with)
- there are exceptional circumstances

It is up to the head teacher how many days your child can be away from school if leave is granted. Holidays are not considered as exceptional circumstances.

We will not agree leave during term time under the following circumstances:

- When a pupil is just starting the school. This is very important as your child needs to settle into their new environment as quickly as possible.
- Immediately before and during assessment periods (SATS) for Year 6 pupils.
- When a pupil's attendance record already includes any level of unauthorised absence.
- Where a pupil's attendance rate is already below the school's attendance target for any individual or will fall to or below that level as a result of taking holiday leave.

Any period of leave taken without the agreement of the school, or in excess of that agreed, will be classed as unauthorised and may attract sanctions such as a Penalty Notice. Targets for the school will be displayed in the school to encourage participation by all in reaching these. Through the school year we monitor absences and punctuality to show us where improvements need to be made.

### **Understanding types of absence:**

Every half-day absence from school has to be classified by the school (not by the parents), as either AUTHORISED or UNAUTHORISED. This is why information about the cause of any absence is always required.

Absence for the following reasons would be authorised:

- Illness
- Religious observance
- Attendance at medical appointments which cannot be made outside school hours

Absence for the following reasons would be unauthorised:

- Parents/carers keeping children off school unnecessarily
- Truancy before or during the school day
- Absences which have never been properly explained
- Children who arrive at school after 9.30am
- Shopping, looking after other children or birthdays
- Day trips and holidays in term time which have not been agreed

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. If a parent thinks their child is reluctant to attend school then we will work with that family to understand the root problem.

### **Persistent Absenteeism (PA):**

A pupil becomes a 'persistent absentee' when they miss 10% or more schooling across the school year for whatever reason. Absence at this level is doing considerable damage to any child's education and we need parents' fullest support and co-operation to tackle this. We monitor all absence and the reasons given thoroughly. Any case that is seen to have reached the PA mark or is at risk of moving towards that mark is given priority and we will inform the parents/carers immediately.

PA pupils are tracked and monitored carefully. We also combine this with academic tracking where absence affects attainment. All our PA pupils and their parents are subject to an Action Plan and the plan may include the allocation of additional support through external agencies including the School Nurse or the LA Education Inclusion Service. We may also use circle time, individual incentive programmes, individual targets and participation in group activities around raising attendance.

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

Children Missing Education refers to 'any child of compulsory school age who is not registered at any formally approved education activity e.g. school, alternative provision, elective home education, and has been out of education provision for a substantial period of time'.

At Saint John's Primary School, we follow the Gloucestershire County Council Guidance which includes the following:

- First day calling
- Attempt to contact all known emergency contacts on subsequent days (at various times of the day)
- Gather further information including details of siblings from other schools, agencies, wider community (staff, other pupils, friends etc)
- Home visit within 5 school days
- Referral to Education Inclusion Service no later than the 10<sup>th</sup> day of absence.

### **Education Inclusion Service**

Parents are expected to contact school at an early stage and to work with the staff in resolving any problems together. This is nearly always successful. If difficulties cannot be sorted out in this way, the school may refer the child to the Education Inclusion Service at the Local Authority. He/she will also try to resolve the situation by agreement but, if other ways of trying to improve the child's attendance have failed and unauthorised absences persist, these Officers can use sanctions such as Penalty Notices or prosecutions in the Magistrates Court. Full details of the options open to enforce attendance at school are available from the Local Authority.

### **Summary**

The school has a legal duty to publish its absence figures to parents and to promote attendance. Equally, parents have a duty to make sure that their children attend. All school staff are committed to working with parents and children in order to ensure good attendance.

### **Further Reading**

This policy should be read in conjunction with: Child Protection and Safeguarding Children Policy, Behaviour Policy, Looked After Children Policy, Special Educational Needs Policy, and Saint John's Offer of Early Help.