

# St James' C of E Junior School



## Attendance Policy 2019 – 2020

Head teacher

Signed:

Date:

10/12/19

Next Review Date: December 2020

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## ATTENDANCE POLICY

### 1. Introduction

- 1.1 St James' Junior School is committed to providing an education of the highest quality for all its pupils and recognises this can only be achieved by supporting and promoting excellent school attendance for all. This is based on the belief that only by attending school regularly and punctually will children be able to take full advantage of the educational opportunities available to them. High attainment depends on good attendance.
- 1.2 The whole school community – pupils, parents and carers, teaching and support staff and school governors – have a responsibility for ensuring good school attendance and have important roles to play. The purpose of the policy is to clarify everyone's part in this.
- 1.3 The policy has been drawn up after consultation with the governing body and is based on current government and Local Authority guidance and statutory Regulations. The school will ensure that all members of the committee know of the policy and have access to it. This policy should be read in conjunction with the Safeguarding Policy.

### 2. School's roles and responsibilities

- 2.1 All staff (teaching and support) at have a key role to play in supporting and promoting excellent school attendance and will work to provide an environment in which all our pupils are eager to learn, feel valued members of the school community and look forward to coming to school every day. Staff also have a responsibility to set a good example in matters relating to their own attendance and punctuality.
- 2.2 Registration
  - i) The school is required to mark the attendance register twice each day; once at the start of the day and once during the afternoon session. All classes now use the electronic register on Scholarpack.
  - ii) The register will be called promptly at **8.50 am** and **1.15 pm** by each class teacher and a mark will be made during the registration period in respect of each child.
  - iii) The registers will close at **9.20 am** and **1.25 pm**. Any pupil who arrives **after** the closing of the register will count as **absent (Code U)**. Pupils who arrive after 9.10 a.m. but before the register closes will be counted as **present, but late (Code L)**.

## REGISTER CODES

| CODE | DESCRIPTION  | MEANING                     |
|------|--|-----------------------------|
| /    | Present (AM)   | Present                     |
| \    | Present (PM)   | Present                     |
| B    | Educated off site (NOT Dual registration)  | Approved Education Activity |
| C    | Other Authorised Circumstances (not covered by another appropriate code/description) | Authorised absence          |
| D    | Dual registration (i.e. pupil attending other establishment)                         | Approved Education Activity |
| E    | Excluded (no alternative provision made)   | Authorised absence          |
| F    | Extended family holiday (agreed)   | Authorised absence          |
| G    | Family holiday (NOT agreed <u>or</u> days in excess of agreement)                    | Unauthorised absence        |
| H    | Family holiday (agreed)  | Authorised absence          |
| I    | Illness (NOT medical or dental etc. appointments)                                    | Authorised absence          |
| L    | Late (before registers closed)   | Present                     |
| M    | Medical/Dental appointments  | Authorised absence          |
| N    | No reason yet provided for absence   | Unauthorised absence        |
| O    | Unauthorised absence (not covered by any other code/description)                     | Unauthorised absence        |
| P    | Approved sporting activity   | Approved Education Activity |
| R    | Religious observance   | Authorised absence          |
| S    | Study leave  | Authorised absence          |
| T    | Traveller absence  | Authorised absence          |
| U    | Late (after registers closed)  | Unauthorised absence        |
| V    | Educational visit or trip  | Approved Education Activity |
| W    | Work experience  | Approved Education Activity |
| X    | DfES school closed to pupils   | Attendance not required     |
| Y    | Enforced closure   | Attendance not required     |
| #    | School closed to pupils and staff  | Attendance not required     |

### 2.3 Categorising absence

- i) A mark will be made in respect of each child during registration. Any child who is not present at this time will be marked unauthorised absence unless leave has been granted by the school in advance or the reason for absence is already known and accepted by the school as legitimate. Where a reason for absence is given and accepted by the school at a later stage, the register will be amended in such a way that the original entry and the amendment / correction are distinguishable. The decision about whether the absence should be authorised or unauthorised rests with the head teacher.

- ii) St James' Junior School recognises the clear links between attendance and attainment, and attendance and safeguarding children. It recognises that inappropriate authorisation of absence can be as damaging to a child's education as unauthorised absences and will potentially send a message to parents that any reason for non-school attendance is acceptable and may render children extremely vulnerable to harm. If absence is frequent or continuous, and except where a child is clearly unwell, staff will challenge parents about the need and reasons for their child's absence and will encourage them to keep absences to a minimum. A note or explanation from a pupil's home does not mean an absence becomes authorised. The decision whether or not to authorise an absence **will always rest with the school**.
- iii) If no explanation about an absence is received by the school **within 2 weeks**, the absence will remain unauthorised;
- iv) Absence will be authorised in the following circumstances:
- (a) where leave has been granted by the school in advance, for example –
- a pupil is to participate in an approved performance for which a licence has been granted by the Local Authority,
  - a pupil is involved in an **exceptional** special occasion – in authorising such an absence the individual circumstances of the particular case and the pupil's / student's overall pattern of attendance will be considered,
  - in **exceptional** circumstances where permission has been granted for a family holiday for which the parents have sought permission in advance
- (b) where the school is satisfied that the child is too ill to attend;
- (c) where the pupil has a medical appointment (although parents should be encouraged to make these out of school hours wherever possible, and to return their child to school immediately afterwards – or send him / her to school beforehand);
- (d) where there is an unavoidable cause for the absence which is beyond the family's control, e.g. extreme weather conditions;
- (e) the absence occurs on a day exclusively set aside for religious observance by the religious body to which the pupil's parents belong;
- (f) the pupil lives more than two miles (if he/she is under eight) or three miles (if he/she has reached eight) and no suitable transport arrangements have been made by the Local Authority;
- (g) the pupil is of no fixed abode, his/her parent is engaged in a trade which required him/her to travel, the pupil has attended school as often as the nature of the trade permits **and**, have reached the age of six, he/she has attended 200 sessions in the preceding 12 months;

(h) in other **exceptional circumstances** (eg a family bereavement) and for a **very limited period**.

v) Except in the circumstances described above, absences will be unauthorised. Some examples of reasons for **not** authorising absence would be:

- no explanation has been given by the parent;
- the school is not satisfied with the explanation;
- the pupil is absent for **unexceptional** reasons, eg a birthday;
- the pupil is absent from school on a family holiday without prior permission;

#### 2.4 Staff Training

The Head teacher will ensure that all staff responsible for taking registers, including any temporary or supply staff, receive sufficient training to enable them to perform the task accurately.

### 3. **Collection and analysis of data**

3.1 The School's Administration Assistant will ensure that attendance data is complete, accurate, analysed and reported to the Head teacher. The report should include commentary on the trajectory and the school target. The data will inform the school's future practice to improve attendance.

3.2 Attendance is monitored by year group, pupils with special educational needs and Pupil Premium. It can also be analysed by reasons for absence, e.g. holiday during term time.

3.3 Accurate attendance returns are made to the DfES within the stipulated time frame.

### 4. **Systems and strategies for managing and improving attendance**

4.1 Attendance has a high profile at St James' Junior School and is regularly discussed in classes, assemblies and governors meetings. Parents are regularly reminded in newsletters and school meetings about the importance of good attendance and its links to attainment, and weekly attendance figures are displayed prominently on the school website.

#### 4.2 First-day calling

School has in place a system of first response calling. This means that parents will be telephoned on the first day a pupil is absent without explanation to establish a reason for the absence. The full First Day Contact Procedure is included as an attachment to the policy.

#### 4.3 Working in partnership with parents

Summative reports are completed every half-term. At the end of each term, children will be grouped into 3 RAG rated bands. RAG – rated letters will be sent out to all parents stating current attendance percentages and further actions needed. It will be explained to parents who receive 'Red Letters' that any future absences will be

unauthorised unless there is clear evidence of a good reason for them and further attendance panel meetings will be arranged.

#### 4.4 Lateness and punctuality

Pupils are expected to arrive in school on time every day. It is very disruptive to their own education and that of others in their class, if they are late. Pupils who arrive after the register closes will be marked absent for the whole session (a session being a morning or an afternoon). This absence will be unauthorised unless the school is satisfied that there is a legitimate reason for the pupil to be late.

- 4.5 For health and safety reasons it is important that the school knows who is in the building. Pupils arriving late should therefore report to the School Office. (It is their responsibility to order their school lunch at the same time.) **It is important that all pupils arriving late following this procedure.**

#### 4.6 Incentives

Strong attendance is recognised during weekly celebration assembly time. A winning class is given the attendance trophy. In addition the winning class will gain a weekly treat e.g. extra playtime. At the end of each term, children who have 100% attendance will be presented with a certificate to recognise their achievement. 100% attendance at the end of the school year will result in a Bronze, Silver and Gold Badges for 1, 2 or 3 full terms of attendance.

### 5. **Term-time Holidays**

Amendments to **The Education (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2006** came into force on September 1<sup>st</sup> 2013. These amendments remove all reference to 'family holidays' as well as the statutory threshold of 'ten school days'. The amendments make clear that head teachers may not grant any leave of absence during term time unless there are exceptional circumstances.

- 5.1 School will consider every application for a holiday in term time individually, whilst paying heed to the statutory regulations. Our policy is **NOT** to grant leave of absence for a holiday other than in the most exceptional circumstances. Time off school for family holidays is **not a right**. An application must be made in writing, with appropriate evidence, in **advance** of the intended holiday.

- 5.2 School will consider authorising holidays for:

- service personnel and other employees who are prevented from taking holidays during term-time;
- when a family needs to spend time together to support each other during or after a crisis;
- parents who are subject to a strict and un-negotiable holiday rota and evidence is provided to this effect.

- 5.3 Requests for holidays for the following reason will not be authorised:

- cheaper cost of holiday;



- availability of the desired accommodation;
- poor weather experienced in school holiday periods; and
- overlap with beginning or end of term.

5.4 School will respond to all requests for a leave of absence in writing giving the reasons for the decision.

## **6. Extended leave of absence**

6.1 In considering absence for extended trips overseas we will take account of the following:

- a visit to family overseas has a very different significance from a normal 'holiday';
- such visits may be important in terms of children's identity and self-esteem as they grow up;
- parents may feel that the reasons for their visit outweigh the importance of their child's uninterrupted attendance at school (although parents could be encouraged to use the school holiday periods for at least part of their trip);
- the reasons for wishing to make a visit is more difficult, particularly for ethnic minority families, where huge distances and high costs are involved;

## **7. Parents'/carers' responsibilities**

7.1 The prime responsibility for ensuring children receive an appropriate and full-time education rests with parents / carers (defined by the Education Act 1996 as those with parental responsibility and those who have the care of a child), who will be supported and encouraged by St James' Junior School.

7.2 School expects parents / carers will:

- ensure their children attend the school regularly and punctually;
- support their children's attendance by keeping requests for absence to a minimum;
- not expect the school to automatically agree any requests for absence, and not condone unjustified absence from school.

7.3 Parents will also be expected to:

- notify school on the first day of absence, giving an indication of how long the absence will be;
- ensure their children arrive at school on time, properly dressed and with the right equipment for the day;
- work in partnership with the school, for example by attending parents' meetings and consultations, signing reading diaries when asked to do so, taking an interest in their children's work and activities;



- contact the school without delay if they are concerned about any aspects of their children's school lives. School will support parents to address their concerns.

## **8. Pupils' responsibilities**

- 8.1 All pupils should be aware of the importance of regular school attendance. If they are having difficulties that may prevent them from attending school regularly, they should speak to their class teacher or other adult in school.
- 8.2 Pupils should attend all their lessons on time, ready to learn. Pupils also have a responsibility for following school procedures if they arrive late.

## **9. Governors' responsibilities**

Section 175 (2)

- 9.1 The governing body of a maintained school shall make arrangements for ensuring that their functions relating to the conduct of the school are exercised with a view to safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children who are pupils at the school.

## **Reviewing the policy**

The school will review this policy each year.

In writing this policy the following documents have been used:

- Children Missing education – Statutory Guidance for Local Authorities November 2013 (DfE)
- Section 436A of the Education Act 1996 (added by section 4 of the Education and Inspections Act 2006).

## ATTENDANCE - A GUIDE FOR PARENTS

### 1. When does my child need to be in school?

Your child should be at school in good time for registration. The morning register will be called promptly at **8.50am** and the afternoon register at **1.15pm**.

### 2. What happens if my child is late?

Registration finishes at **9.20am** in the morning and **1.25pm** in the afternoon.

If your child arrives between **9.10am** and **9.30am** he/she will be marked **late (Code L)**.

If your child arrives after **9.20am** he/she will be marked **absent (Code U)**.

*(Pupils who arrive after registration should report to the school office. If a pupil is persistently late a meeting will be arranged with the Head Teacher and parents/carers.)*

### 3. What do I do if my child is too ill to attend school?

*We would expect a parent to telephone the school on the first day of absence. If you do not phone us, we will phone you. If we do not receive an explanation, or if the explanation is unsatisfactory, we will not authorise the absence, and this will be shown on your child's end of year report.*

### 4. What reasons will the school accept for absences?

- Illness
- Emergency dental / medical appointment (please make routine appointments after school or during the holidays)
- Day of religious observance
- Family bereavement

Except in the case of illness, you should ask for permission for your child to miss school well in advance, giving full details. In cases of recurring absences through illness you may be asked to produce a medical certificate.

### 5. Will the School contact me if my child is absent?

*The school operates a first day response to absences: we will phone you if we have not heard from you. The full first contact response is explained in the attachment at the rear of the policy.*

### 6. I am thinking about sending my child on an extended absence for an overseas trip to visit relatives. What should I do?

The school recognises that such absence can be important for children to keep in touch with their extended family. Contact your child's class teacher as soon as possible to discuss the best time for such a visit.

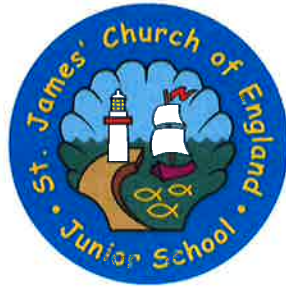
The school would strongly recommend that such absences do not take place during your child's SATs examinations. You need to complete an application form for extended leave of absence

**7. What can I do to encourage my child to attend school?**

Make sure your child gets enough sleep and gets up in plenty of time each morning. Ensure that he/she leaves home in the correct clothes and properly equipped. Show your child, by your interest, that you value his / her education.

**8. My child is trying to avoid coming to school. What should I do?**

Contact your child's class teacher immediately and openly discuss your worries. Your child could be avoiding school for a number of reasons. It is important that we identify the reason for your child's reluctance to attend school and work together to tackle the problem.



## **St James' C of E Junior School**

### **First Response Procedure – Child Missing from Registration**

1. Registers saved on ScholarPack.
2. Daily Check carried out in office.
3. Absence calls listened to/attendance emails checked.
4. Headteacher to be notified of any absence of a child on the persistent absence list.
5. Call to be made to first name on contact list within half an hour of school start time asking for absence reason.
6. If no response, start calling additional names on contact list within 45 minutes of school start time.
7. Ring down contact list until reply is received, ensuring where possible that someone from outside of the family home has been contacted.
8. Alert HT/DSL that this child is absent and no contact has been made within an hour of school start time.
9. If no reply send text and email to first and second contacts on list.
10. Home Visit made if possible/appropriate by school or other agency involved.
11. Contact Police if all other stages have been completed and there is still no contact regarding the absent child. This should be done using the 101 number.

**REQUEST FOR LEAVE OF ABSENCE IN TERM TIME**

This form should be completed and returned at least a month before the absence.

**Pupil's name:** ..... **Class**.....

Requested dates for leave of absence during school time:

Date from (first day of absence): ..... a.m. or p.m.

Date to (last day of absence): ..... a.m. or p.m.

Number of school days your child will be absent: .....

Please give details for which you are requesting a leave of absence and any exceptional circumstances, to enable the headteacher to make a decision?

I have read and understand the information overleaf about absence during term time.

Signed : ..... (parent/carer)

Date : .....

**For school use:**                      Date received:.....

| Attendance % | Authorised % | Unauthorised % | Authorised/Unauthorised by: | Code |
|--------------|--------------|----------------|-----------------------------|------|
|              |              |                |                             |      |

Your request for absence on the following dates   /  /   to   /  /   for ..... days

has been considered and has been;       **AUTHORISED**       **UNAUTHORISED**

- a) Your child's attendance is currently: .....
- b) The request does/does not meet the criteria for 'exceptional circumstances'.
- c) They are making/not making good progress towards their end of year targets.
- d) They are/are not being prepared for, or taking tests during the absence.

Please note: All unauthorised absences, including holidays that have not been sanctioned by the headteacher, are accumulated and parents who fail to ensure regular attendance of their children at school can be issued with a Fixed Penalty Notice. The amount is £60 (per parent, per child) if paid within 21 days, rising to £120 (per parent, per child) if paid between 21 and 28 days. Failure to pay a Fixed Penalty Notice may result in prosecution at court.

Signed: Mr A Beattie, Headteacher                      Date:

## LEAVE OF ABSENCE IN TERM TIME REQUEST

Every child deserves the best possible education. A major factor in pupils achieving the very best they can is full attendance at school. It is the view of the school, the local authority and the government, that holidays should not be taken during term time. Please read the following points carefully before completing and returning a request for leave of absence.

- Requests should be submitted to the school at least one month before the proposed absence.
- St James' Church of England Junior School encourages 100% attendance for all pupils and discourages any absences during term time.
- Leave of absence requests **will not** be authorised in the month of September.
- Leave of absence requests will only be considered if your child's prior attendance has been in line with attendance targets.
- A leave of absence will only be considered in the most exceptional circumstances.
- Any absence resulting from holiday taken without consultation with the school will be recorded as unauthorised.
- Any unauthorised absence will be noted in your child's record and may be passed to the Access & Inclusion Officer, Children's Services.
- Parents may face fines or prosecution at court for failing to ensure their child's regular attendance at school.

### TYPICAL UNAUTHORISED LEAVE OF ABSENCE RESPONSE

Thank you for informing us of your child's absence in term time on .... to .... totalling ... days.

As you are probably aware the government has refused to allow schools to sanction holidays in term time except in the most exceptional of circumstances. **The Education regulations (2006)** clearly state that '*...pupils need to attend school regularly to benefit from their education. Missing out on lessons leaves children vulnerable to falling behind. Children with poor attendance tend to achieve less in both primary and secondary school.*'

Your child will have this absence recorded as 'unauthorised' and I have to inform you that new instructions from the Department for Education classify any child with attendance of less than 90% as a 'persistent absentee'.

All unauthorised absences, including holidays that have not been sanctioned by the headteacher, are accumulated and parents who fail to ensure regular attendance of their children at school can be issued with a Fixed Penalty Notice. The amount is £60 (per parent, per child) if paid within 21 days, rising to £120 (per parent, per child) if paid between 21 and 28 days. Failure to pay a Fixed Penalty Notice may result in prosecution at court.

Yours sincerely,



Mr A Beattie  
Head teacher

## CUMBRIA COUNTY COUNCIL GUIDANCE ON SCHOOL ATTENDANCE

### What is regular school attendance?

- Attending school everyday unless there is a very good reason for absence.
- Getting to school on time.
- Being present at school for both morning and afternoon sessions.

### Children who attend school regularly are more likely to:

- Keep up with school work.
- Develop good habits and important life skills.
- Maintain friendships.
- Gain better qualifications.
- Have access to a wider range of opportunities when they leave school.
- Stay away from harm.

### What does the law say about parental duty concerning children's education?

- Parents must make sure that their children receive efficient full time education in school or elsewhere.
- Once a child is registered at school, the parent must make sure that the child attends regularly.
- Parents should inform the school of the reasons for any unavoidable absence on the first day.
- Parents may request term time absence only in special or exceptional circumstances; this should be made in writing to the head teacher.
- Giving as much notice as possible.

### At what age do children have to start school and when can they leave?

Children must receive full-time education from the **start of the school term after their fifth birthday** until the **end of June in the school year in which they turn 16**.

### What is unauthorised absence?

Only the headteacher can decide if the reason given for absence is acceptable. If the head teacher decides that the reason given for absence is unacceptable, the absence will remain unauthorised.

### Parents can face legal and financial sanctions if their child fails to attend school

- Fixed Penalty Notices to the amount of £ 120, this amount will reduce to £ 60 if paid within 21 days.
- An Education Supervision Order issued by the family court.
- Prosecution in a Magistrates' court.

### Useful links

- [DirectGov](#)
- [School Reluctance an Introduction](#)
- [Emotionally Based School Refusal Guide](#)



## EXAMPLE RAG LETTER WORDING

Dear Parents,

### RED ALERT

As you know, attendance is a very important part of your child's school career. At St James' CE Junior School we are committed to raising children's attendance to ensure that they have the opportunity to get the best from their education. Each term we send home a RAGG letter (Red, Amber, Green or Gold) to highlight your child's attendance by colour.

Your child has an attendance of ...%, so far this year, which I am sure you will agree is a cause for concern. The Government has set a target of 96.2% for every student and unfortunately your child falls well below this figure.

There may be a good reason for this level of absence and we are grateful for your communication when your child is absent from school. However, we have to inform you that if your child's attendance does not improve we may need to invite you to an Attendance Panel meeting in school.

We will continue to monitor attendance on a weekly basis and if you have any concerns, please do not hesitate to contact me at any time. Our aim is to help your child achieve their full potential and we know you support us in this.

Yours sincerely,

Mr Andrew Beattie

Headteacher

Overall Attendance Percentage: ...%  
Overall Authorised Absence Percentage: ...%  
Overall Unauthorised Absence Percentage: ...%