



**St John's CE Primary School
Attendance Policy**

October 2024

Our School Vision is underpinned by the Bible verse John 10:10: **'That they shall have life, life in all its fullness.'** This verse acts a reminder that it possible for everybody to have a full life. We believe that attendance at our school will enable pupils to begin to develop a full life. This policy reflects the vision and aims of St John's CE Primary School by encouraging staff, parents and children to maximise the learning experience in order that all children reach their full potential.

Principles

Regular and punctual attendance is of paramount importance in ensuring that all children have full access to the curriculum. Valuable learning time is lost when children are absent or late. By providing clear procedures for involving parents in matters relating to school attendance we believe high attendance can be maintained.

Children should be at school, on time, every day the school is open, unless the reason for the absence is unavoidable. The school day starts at 8.50am for all pupils and the afternoon session starts at 1.15pm. (Children are allowed into school in the mornings from 8.40am via the main entrance door – where a member of the Senior Leadership team will welcome the children. Children from Year R and Year 1 will go straight to their classroom from the playground entrances).

Permitting absence from school without a good reason is an offence by the parent.

Children are sometimes reluctant to attend school. Any problems with regular attendance are best sorted out between the school, the parents and the child. If a child is reluctant to attend, it is never better 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 may make things worse.

Each school day is divided into a morning and afternoon session. Every half-day absence has to be classified by the school, (not by the parents), as either AUTHORISED or UNAUTHORISED. This is why information about the cause of each absence is always required, preferably in writing. Authorised absences are mornings or afternoons away from school for a reason such as genuine illness or other unavoidable cause. Unauthorised absences are those which the school does not consider reasonable and for which no "leave" has been given. This includes:

- Parents keeping children off school unnecessarily
- Holidays in term time
- Truancy before or during the school day
- Absences which have never been properly explained
- Children who arrive at school too late to get a mark

Parents are expected to contact school at an early stage and to work with the staff in resolving any problems together. If difficulties cannot be sorted out in this way, the school may refer the child to the Team Around the Setting or School (TASS) from

the Local Education Authority. TASS will also try to resolve the situation by agreement but, if other ways of trying to improve the child's attendance have failed, these Officers can use court proceedings to prosecute parents or to seek an Education Supervision Order on the child. The maximum penalty on conviction is a fine of £2500 and/or 3 months imprisonment.

Procedures

It is not usually appropriate for the school to authorise absences for shopping, looking after other children, day trips etc. Leave may, however, be granted in an emergency (e.g. bereavement) or for medical appointments which must be in school time.

It is the responsibility of parents or carers:

- To notify the school by on the first day of absence, as early as possible and no later than 9.30am.
- To send a dated letter/ email explaining the absence, when the child returns to school.
- To agree a later registration time with the Headteacher if the child needs regular medical attention before coming to school. The child must always be signed in on arrival.
- To inform the office in writing or to provide Medical Appointment Cards if the child needs to attend a medical appointment in school time. Whenever possible, please try to make all appointments out of school hours.
- To liaise with the school about specific family problems, which might cause absence.

Holidays will not be authorised during term time. In exceptional circumstances absences may be authorised e.g. Family illness, bereavement. Parents/ carers should complete an 'absence from learning form' to seek permission.

In exceptional circumstances that apply to individual cases the Headteacher is called upon to justify ALL parental holidays, and to give good reasons as to why the holiday was authorised by the school. The Headteacher's conduct in relation to the granting of permission for holidays is scrutinised in order to ensure consistency between schools within the Local Education Authority

Role of the School

The school has the responsibility to ensure that all children receive a minimum of twenty one teaching hours a week. This does not include time for registration or collective worship. The school's role is:

- To register the children promptly and accurately.
- To record absence appropriately, including signing in and out during school hours.

- To record as late, pupils who arrive after 9.00am and before the close of registers at 9.10am.
- To record as unauthorised absences, pupils who arrive after the registers close at 9.10am (unless there are unavoidable mitigating circumstances).
- To check registers daily for first day absence.
- To telephone those parents who have not contacted the school by the required time on the first day of absence, priority being given to:
 - Children on the Protection Register or involved with Social Services.
 - Children in families where there is a particular concern.
 - Children, whose parents or carers are normally fastidious in making contact.
- To send an email / letter home to parents who cannot be contacted, to ask them why the child is absent.
- To keep records of all telephone calls and keep all letters concerning absence.
- To monitor regularly absence and lateness, to look for patterns and to take appropriate action.
- To involve the TASS if a parent or carer fails to make first day contact on three occasions during one school year.
- To inform TASS of any concerns regarding absence or punctuality.
- To obtain details of telephone contacts for all pupils and to ensure that records are updated regularly by contacting parents to remind them of their responsibilities, whilst requesting current contact information. At least two emergency telephone numbers must be recorded for every pupil.
- To send reminders regarding absence and punctuality on the school's regular newsletters.
- To raise concerns regarding absence at parent consultation meetings, or sooner if necessary.
- To discourage the practice of taking children out of school for odd days and holidays.
- For the Headteacher to decide whether or not to authorise absence in exceptional circumstances and to inform the parents or carers of the decision.
- To report all unauthorised absence to TASS (East Sussex County Council) and on the child's annual report.
- To publish attendance data in the School Prospectus.
- To report all unauthorised absence to the LEA and the DfES.
- To monitor and set attendance targets annually.

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. School staff are committed to working with parents as the best way to ensure as high a level of attendance as possible.