



## **Attendance Policy**

### **Introduction**

Regular and punctual school attendance is important. Pupils need to attend school regularly if they are to take full advantage of the educational opportunities available to them by law. St John's RC Primary School fully recognises its responsibilities to ensure pupils are in school and on time, therefore having access to learning for the maximum number of days and hours.

Our policy applies to all children registered at this school and this policy is made available to all parents/carers of pupils who are registered at our school, on our school website.

This policy has been written to adhere to the relevant Children Acts, Education Acts, Regulations and Guidance from the Department for Education in addition to guidance from the Local Authority.

Although parents/carers have the legal responsibility for ensuring their child's good attendance, the Head teacher and Governors at our school work together with other professionals and agencies to ensure that all pupils are encouraged and supported to develop good attendance habits. Procedures in this policy are followed to ensure this happens.

Children who are persistently late or absent soon fall behind with their learning. Children who are absent from school frequently develop large gaps in their learning which will impact on their progress and their ability to meet age related learning expectations. A child whose attendance drops to 90% each year will, over their time at primary school, have missed two whole terms of learning.

### **AIMS OBJECTIVES**

This attendance policy ensures that all staff and governors in our school are fully aware of and clear about the actions necessary to promote good attendance.

Through this Policy we aim to:

- Improve pupils' achievement by ensuring high levels of attendance and punctuality.
- Achieve a minimum of 96% attendance for all children, apart from those with chronic health issues.
- Create an ethos in which good attendance and punctuality are recognised as the norm and seen to be valued by the school.
- Raise awareness of parents, carers and pupils of the importance of uninterrupted attendance and punctuality at every stage of a child's education.
- Ensure that our policy applies to Nursery and Reception aged children in order to promote good habits at an early age.
- Work in partnership with pupils, parents, staff and the Education Welfare Service so that all pupils realise their potential, unhindered by unnecessary absence.
- Promote a positive and welcoming atmosphere in which pupils feel safe, secure, and valued, and encourage in pupils a sense of their own responsibility.



- Establish a pattern of monitoring attendance and ensure consistency in recognising achievement and dealing with difficulties.
- Recognise the key role of all staff, but especially class teachers, in promoting good attendance.

We maintain and promote good attendance and punctuality through:

- Raising awareness of attendance and punctuality issues among all staff, parents and pupils.
- Ensuring that parents have an understanding of the responsibility placed on them for making sure their child attends regularly and punctually.
- Equipping children with the life skills needed to take responsibility for good school attendance and punctuality appropriate to the child's age and development.
- Maintaining effective means of communication with parents, pupils, staff and governors on school attendance matters.
- Developing and implementing procedures for identifying, reporting and reviewing cases of poor attendance and persistent lateness.
- Supporting pupils who have been experiencing any difficulties at home or at school which are preventing good attendance.
- Developing and implementing procedures to follow up non-attendance at school.

### **Definitions**

#### **Authorised Absences**

- An absence is classified as authorised when a child has been away from school for a legitimate reason and the school has received notification from a parent or carer. For example, if a child has been unwell and the parent telephones the school to explain the absence.
- Only the school can make an absence authorised. Parents do not have this authority. Consequently not all absences supported by parents will be classified as authorised.

#### **Unauthorised Absence**

- An absence is classified as unauthorised when a child is away from school without the permission of the school.
- Therefore the absence is unauthorised if a child is away from school without good reason, even with the support of a parent.

### **Procedures**

Our school will undertake to follow the following procedures to support good attendance:

- To maintain appropriate registration processes.
- To maintain appropriate attendance data.
- To communicate clearly the attendance procedures and expectations to all staff, governors, parents and pupils.
- To have consistent and systematic daily records which give detail of any absence and lateness.
- To follow up absences and persistent lateness if parents/carers have not communicated with the school.
- To inform parents/carers what constitutes authorised and unauthorised absence.
- To strongly discourage unnecessary absence through holidays taken during term time.
- To offer early help and work with parents to improve individual pupils attendance and punctuality



- To refer to the Educational Welfare Service any child whose attendance causes concern and where parents/carers have not responded to school initiatives to improve.
- To report attendance statistics to Rochdale LA and the DFE where requested.
- All staff should be aware that they must raise any attendance or punctuality concerns to the Headship Team with responsibility for monitoring attendance.

### **Responsibilities**

All members of school staff have a responsibility for identifying trends in attendance and punctuality. The following includes a more specific list of the kinds of responsibilities which individuals might have.

#### **Class Teacher**

Class teachers are responsible for:

- Keeping an overview of class and individual attendance looking particularly for either poor overall attendance, anomalies in patterns of attendance and/ or unusual explanations for attendance offered by children and their parents/ carers
- Informing the Headship Team where there are concerns and acting upon them
- Providing background information to support referrals
- Monitoring follow-up once actions have been taken to correct attendance concerns
- Emphasising with their class the importance of good attendance and promptness
- Following up absences with immediate requests for explanation which should be noted inside the register
- Discussing attendance issues at consultation evenings where necessary

#### **Head teacher**

The Head teacher is responsible for:

- Overall monitoring of school attendance

#### **Administration staff**

Are responsible for:

- Collating and recording registration and attendance information.
- Taking and recording messages from parents regarding absence
- Ensuring the Absence/Late Book is completed
- Contacting parents of absent children where no contact has been made.
- Recording details of children who arrive late or go home early
- Keeping an overview of class and individual attendance looking particularly for either poor overall attendance, anomalies in patterns of attendance and/ or unusual explanations for attendance offered by children and their parents/ carers and reporting concerns to the Head teacher
- Sending out standard letters regarding attendance
- Reporting to Head teacher and in regards to attendance



### **Parents**

Parents/Carers are responsible for:

- Ensuring that their child attends school regularly and punctually unless prevented from doing so by illness or attendance at a medical appointment.
- Contacting the school office on the first morning of absence.
- Informing the school in advance of any medical appointments in school time. For the absence to be recorded as a medical absence we do require evidence from the doctor or dentist. (Appointment card/letter)
- Making requests for authorised absence in term time, only if absolutely necessary as these are not automatically authorised.
- Talking to the school as soon as possible about any child's reluctance to come to school so that problems can be quickly identified and dealt with.

### **Registration**

All the school doors open at 8.50 (KS2) and 8.50 (KS1) am until 9.00 am. This time is sufficient for all pupils to come into their classroom.

Each class teacher has the responsibility for keeping an accurate record of attendance. Any pupil who is absent must be recorded at the beginning of the morning and afternoon session. The attendance register must be completed by the class teacher by 9.05 (KS2) and 9.05 (KS1) am and by 1.20pm. (Attendance code / and \ for pupils who are present). These registers are then returned to the school office.

All attendance records are documented using SIMs software, which is supported by the Local Authority. Attendance registers are legal documents and these must be kept secure and preserved for a period of three years after the date they were last used.

### **Lateness**

Once the doors are closed at 9.00am pupils must enter school via the school office. Any pupil who arrives after 9.00am will be marked as late in the attendance record. Records are kept of those pupils who are late; this is documented on the electronic register for each pupil (Attendance code L). Any child who arrives for school later than 9.20 (KS2) and 9.20 (KS1) will be marked as having an unauthorised absence for the morning. (Attendance code U).

Children who have attended a dentist or doctor's appointment and subsequently come to school later than 9.00am will have the absence recorded as a medical absence (Attendance code M).

Children who are persistently late miss a significant amount of learning, often the most important aspect, as the beginning of the day is where the teacher explains the learning and what each child is expected to achieve.



Where there have been persistent incidents of lateness parents/carers will receive a letter advising them of the concerns and the school will provide opportunities for parents/carers to seek support and advice to address these issues.

### **Absences**

Parents/carers should contact the school on the first day of their child's absence. When parents/carers notify us of their child's absence it is important that they provide us with details of the reason for their absence.

All absences are recorded as either authorised or unauthorised absences on the computer. It is important that we receive accurate information from parents with reasons for the child's absence. This information is used to determine whether the absence is authorised or unauthorised. The Head teacher has the responsibility to determine whether absences are authorised or unauthorised.

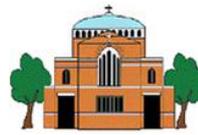
Where we have not received reasons for a child's absence then the Inclusion Officer with a member of the admin team may do a home visit if seen to be necessary in consultation with the Head teacher.

### **First day contact**

Where a child is absent from school and we have not received any verbal or written communication from the parent, then we initiate a first day contact process. Office staff checks all of the registers from 9.00am to 9.30am on a daily basis, to identify those pupils who are absent. There are occasions when we are unaware why the child is absent and we will contact the parent.

### **Attendance Process**

- 1) On the first day of absence phone call and text message sent to parents. If no contact then notes put on SIMS and send out letter 1.
- 2) When a child's attendance falls below 96% letter 2(a) to be sent out to the parent/carers address. Copy of letter to be kept in the attendance file.
- 3) A monitoring period of four weeks; if no improvement in attendance then letter 2(b) to be sent out to parent/carers address. Copy of letter to be kept in the attendance file. Meeting takes place at school with parent/carer to offer support(CAF, Referral to school health, family support)
- 4) If no improvement in attendance after all support is offered to parent/carer, letter 3 will then be sent to parent carers.



### **Illness**

When children have an illness that means they will be away from school long term, the school will do all it can to send material home, so that they can keep up with their school work.

If the absence is likely to continue for an extended period, or be a repetitive absence, the school will contact the support services to see if arrangements can be made for the child to be given some home tuition outside school.

Where over the course of an academic year, a child has repeated periods of illness, the school will write to parents to ask them to provide medical evidence for each future period of illness related absence. This evidence could be a Doctor's note, appointment card or copy of a prescription. We may seek written permission from you for the school to make their own enquiries.

### **Parental Request for Absence from School for Holiday**

With effect from September 2013 the government abolished the right of head teachers to authorise absence specifically for holidays of up to 5 days per year if special circumstances exist. Instead, head teachers will only be allowed to grant leave of absence for any reason if they are satisfied exceptional circumstances exist.

### **Addressing Attendance Concerns**

The school expects attendance of at least 96%.

It is important for children to establish good attendance habits early on in their primary school career. It is the responsibility of the Head teacher and the governors to support good attendance and to identify and address attendance concerns promptly. In primary school we rely upon parents to ensure their child attends school regularly and punctually and therefore where there are concerns regarding attendance parents are always informed of our concerns. Initially concerns about attendance are raised with parents via letters which are sent home. There will be opportunities for the parent/carer to discuss reasons for absence and support to be given by the school with the aim to improve attendance. Where a child's attendance record does not improve over a period of time then the school has a responsibility to make a referral to the Educational Welfare Service.

The Educational Welfare Service (EWOL) will issue penalty notices to parents where there has been a referral to EWOL from the school as part of the school's processes to address poor attendance patterns.



In addition, education-related parenting orders are available by direct application by a school or LA to the Magistrates' Court as an ancillary order following a successful prosecution by the LA for irregular attendance or breach of a school attendance order.

The Education Welfare Officer visits once a month to check and monitor attendance. She carries out regular register checks to identify children with low attendance (usually below 85%). She works with the school to improve attendance and may issue fixed penalty fines if attendance support meetings held by the school do not improve attendance.

### **Monitoring Attendance**

Our office staff have responsibility for ensuring that all of the attendance data is accurately recorded on the SIMs attendance software. Regular meetings are held with the Head teacher and the Inclusion Officer to discuss all attendance concerns and appropriate actions are taken following these meetings such as letters sent to parents or meetings arranged to discuss attendance concerns with parents.

Reviewed May 2016



Dear \_\_\_\_\_,

**Re:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Absent from School on:** \_\_/\_\_/\_\_

You will be aware that it is the parent's responsibility to notify the school on the first day of a pupil's absence to explain the reasons why they are unable to attend school and provide an expected date of return. Unfortunately we have not received any contact from you.

I am therefore writing to you to give you an opportunity to explain the recent absences, this can be done in person, by telephone or letter. Any absence that hasn't been explained within one day will be categorised as **Unauthorised Absence** – an explanation of this term and the possible consequences are attached.

If you wish to discuss this letter further, please contact the school office on 01706 647195.

Thank you for your co-operation.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'M.D. Unsworth', written in a cursive style.

Mr M.D. Unsworth  
Head teacher



### **Why does attendance matter?**

Attending School on a regular basis is the key to your child doing well at school and will set them up with good routines for later life and the working world, as well as giving your child the opportunity to:

- Make friends and feel included;
- Learn new things and develop many skills;
- Increase confidence and self esteem;
- Improve social skills;
- Achieve potential and fulfil aspirations.

### **When your child is absent**

By law, schools must record absences and the reasons given. Only the Head teacher can officially authorise an absence, but unless there is a concern, the staff will usually do this on his behalf. Parents should provide reasons for absences and the school must decide whether or not they justify authorisation according to Government Guidelines.

### **Unauthorised Absences**

- A shopping trip;
- A birthday treat;
- Oversleeping due to a late night;
- Looking after other children;
- Letting the gas man in, etc.

Whenever a child is absent from school the parent should:

- Contact the school as soon as possible on the first day of absence. If no notification of absence is received, the school office will contact the parents to ascertain the reason;
- Where possible let the school know in advance of any planned absences e.g. hospital appointments;
- Where possible make medical/dental appointments out of school hours.

### **Term Time Holiday**

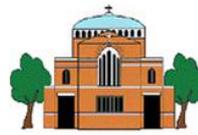
Family holidays should take place during the school holiday dates. These are published a year in advance so there is no excuse of not knowing the school holiday dates. Please be mindful that absence due to a holiday is not, and never has been a parent's entitlement.

### **Arriving late to school**

When a child arrives late to school it can be very disruptive to your child, the teacher and other children in the class. If your child arrives late to school they will be marked as late on the register. If your child arrives very late, the child will be marked as an "Unauthorised Late" - This is the same as an Unauthorised Absence.

### **Absence and the Law**

As a parent you are committing an offence if you fail to make sure that your child attends regularly, even if they are missing school without your knowledge. The details of Parents with children who have unauthorised absence (including those who have taken an unauthorised holiday) will be passed to the school's Education Attendance Officer, who could consider issuing a Penalty Notice or starting legal action.



Dear \_\_\_\_\_,

**Re:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Current Attendance:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Number of school sessions missed:** \_\_\_\_\_

As part of our commitment to improving the attainment of our pupils we monitor attendance on a regular basis and identify any pupil whose attendance record causes concern.

Your child's attendance has fallen below the national average of 96%. Each time a child misses a school session, they miss out on essential learning, and we must ask you to ensure your child's attendance improves.

We will monitor \_\_\_\_\_'s attendance over the next four weeks. If there is no improvement, we will ask you to meet with us in school to see how we can help you to improve your child's attendance.

If you would like to discuss this letter, please contact the school office on 01706 647195.

Yours sincerely,

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Mr M.D. Unsworth  
Head teacher



Dear \_\_\_\_\_,

**Re:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Current Attendance:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Number of school sessions missed:** \_\_\_\_\_

As part of our commitment to improving the attainment of our pupils we monitor attendance on a regular basis and identify any pupil whose attendance record causes concern.

We would like to discuss this matter with you and an appointment has been made for you at school with Mrs Steed on \_\_\_\_\_ at \_\_\_\_\_. At the meeting we will discuss how we can work together to improve your child's attendance.

It is very important that you attend this meeting and work with us to improve your child's attendance. A failure to improve attendance will lead to the involvement of the Education Welfare Officer.

We look forward to meeting with you.

Yours sincerely,

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Mr M.D. Unsworth  
Head teacher



Dear \_\_\_\_\_,

**Re:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Current Attendance:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Number of school sessions missed:** \_\_\_\_\_

Since we met on \_\_\_\_\_, your child's attendance has failed to improve significantly and their attendance is still well below what we expect.

On-going poor attendance is a factor often linked to low levels of academic success. It is important that this is dealt with as early as possible to ensure \_\_\_\_\_ achieves their potential and to prevent him/her from developing poor habits of attendance.

I am now required to discuss this matter with the Education Welfare department which has the statutory duty to investigate matters of persistent poor school attendance.

Yours sincerely,

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Mr M.D. Unsworth  
Head teacher