



## St. James' C of E Infants School Attendance Policy

### January 2018

#### Introduction

This is a successful school and your child plays their part in making it so. We aim for an environment which enables and encourages all members of the community to reach out for excellence. For our children to gain the greatest benefit from their education it is vital that they attend regularly and so all children should be at school, on time, every day the school is open as long as they are fit and healthy enough to do so. It is very important therefore that parents/carers make sure that children attend regularly and this Policy sets out how together we will achieve this.

One of our basic principles is to celebrate success. Good attendance is fundamental to a successful and fulfilling school experience. We actively promote 100% attendance for all our pupils throughout the year.

We encourage children to attend, and to put in place appropriate procedures to support this. We believe that the most important factor in promoting good attendance is development of positive attitudes towards school and learning.

Why Regular Attendance is so Important:

- Learning - any absence affects the pattern of a child's schooling and regular absence will seriously affect their learning. Any pupil's absence disrupts teaching routines so may affect the learning of others in the same class.
- Relationships with other children and their ability to form lasting friendships
- Confidence to attempt new work and to learn alongside others

The Governors and Headteacher, in partnership with parents have a duty to promote full attendance at school.

#### Parental Responsibility

As a parent you have a legal duty to ensure that your child attends school regularly each day and arrives on time. Full attendance is essential to the all-round development of a child and they should be allowed to take full advantage of educational opportunities available to them by law. Poor attendance undermines their education and sometimes puts pupils at risk. The school will share the attendance percentage with parents at each parents consultation meeting and more frequently where there are concerns.

**It is your responsibility as parent to contact the school on the first day your child is absent. Failing to attend this school will be regarded as a safeguarding matter.**

Pupils are expected to arrive between 8.50 and 9.00am, when the doors are open and children should be in class at 9.00am. All pupils who arrive late must report to the school office where they are registered, their meal requirements noted and the reason for lateness is recorded.

#### Illness and Medical Appointments

When your child is unwell, you should contact the school before 9.15am on the first day of absence informing the school of the reason for absence. When a child is absent, the class teacher will record the absence in the register. As part of our Safeguarding Procedures, the school office will endeavour to contact the parent or carer and other emergency contacts if no message has been received regarding the reason for the absence to check on the safety of the child.

- Every effort should be made to arrange medical appointments outside school hours.
- An appointment card or verification by the doctor/ dentist/hospital is required.
- If it is necessary for a child to be out of school for this reason, the child should be returned to school directly after the appointment.
- If your child is absent due to vomiting or diarrhoea, they should not return to school for **the next 48 hours** after the last bout. This is to reduce the risk of infection to other children and adults at school.
- Medical certificates may be required for absence greater than five days.

#### Expectations of the School:

- Rewarding good attendance by class rewards, the newsletter and individual termly certificates.
- Regular, efficient and accurate recording of attendance; registers will be completed at the beginning of each morning and afternoon sessions.

- Early and sensitive contact with parents on occasions when a pupil is absent and where no appropriate reason for absence has been provided.
- Early and sensitive action to be taken to resolve any problems/issues of which the school is notified.
- Excellent and improved levels of attendance on the part of relevant pupils will be rewarded by termly attendance certificates and weekly class attendance awards. Attendance rates will form an integral part of celebrations in school.
- Positive staff attitudes to pupils returning following absence will be promoted.
- Regular evaluation of attendance procedures and levels of attendance by Senior Leadership Team and the school's Governing Body.
- Clear message to be sent that if a pupil is absent, he/she will be missed, including first day calling. This is completed by administrative staff.
- If a child is taken ill during the school day, the parent will be notified and should then arrange to collect the child from reception.

### **Expectations of Parents:**

- To actively encourage their children to attend school on a regular basis.
- To contact the school whenever their child is unable to attend school, on the first day of absence by 9.15am.
- To ensure that children arrive at school in good time for registration, dressed appropriately, with appropriate equipment and well prepared for the school day.
- To positively engage with the school and inform appropriate member of staff of any issue/problem which may hinder their child's regular attendance at school, including discipline and behaviour in school.
- Ensure that, unless absolutely necessary, any medical or dental appointments in respect of their child are made outside school hours but where such school-time appointments are made that evidence is provided to school staff. Parents should ensure that wherever possible, pupils return to school following such medical appointments.
- Parents are expected to co-operate with school staff and respond to calls and correspondence in relation to the attendance of their child/ren.

### **Roles and Responsibilities**

The School will operate a whole school policy for the management of attendance and in order that school procedures are efficiently and effectively implemented, the following members of staff will undertake the following responsibilities:

#### **The Head Teacher**

The Head Teacher shall have overall responsibility for attendance at St James C of E Infant School and be the attendance lead for attendance at the school, responsible for the day to day issues surrounding attendance and keeping the Governing Body informed of any key issues. The Head will meet the Education Investigation Officer (EIO), Attendance Solutions Officer and liaise with class teachers regarding priority students in their class.

#### **Class Teachers**

Teachers are responsible for marking the attendance registers in accordance with the registration system and guidelines employed by the school and also for bringing to the attention of Head any issues that they feel may be inhibiting attendance.

#### **Attendance Officer**

The Attendance Officer is responsible for ensuring that the school registers are completed correctly and for initiating first day contact in the event of any absence. The Attendance Officer is responsible for bringing any patterns of irregular attendance to the attention of the Head Teacher.

#### **All Staff**

All staff each have a responsibility to inform the Head of any issues relating to school attendance and punctuality in respect of any pupil of whom they are aware or with whom they are working. If recording a reason for absence; date, time of call, who they are speaking to and the reason for absence and should ensure that the Attendance Officer is informed.

#### **Governors**

Governors should:

- Monitor attendance levels, policy and procedures at the school.
- Place a standing item within the Head's Report at termly meetings of the Governing Body to continually review attendance. This policy will be reviewed on a biannual basis and governors will play an active part in the whole school community.
- Governors, in conjunction with the Head Teacher will help set realistic but challenging targets for improvements in school attendance.

## **Absence Procedures**

If a child is absent parents/carers must:

Contact us as soon as possible (by 9.15am) on the first day of absence;

If a child is absent we will:

If we have not received any contact from parents to explain an absence, the Attendance Officer will telephone parents to obtain an explanation for the absence

Absence rates will be reviewed on a daily, weekly and half termly basis.

Each half term, parents will receive a letter acknowledging their child's attendance according to a RAG rating. Red for attendance below 90%, Amber for attendance Above 90% but below 93%, Green for attendance above 93% but below 100% and Gold for 100%.

## **Action for Low Attendance**

Below 90% Unacceptable – Absence is causing serious concern. This is classified as persistent absence. It is affecting attainment and progress and is disrupting the child's learning. Meetings between home and school to share strategies for improvement will be called. If improvement is not achieved a referral is made to the Early Help Team.

A Penalty Notice may be considered where absence is not authorised in accordance with the Local Authority's Absence Enforcement Policy (revised February 2016).

Non-attendance is an important issue that is treated seriously. However each case is different and the school acknowledges that no one standard response will be appropriate in every case.

Consideration is given to all factors affecting attendance before deciding what intervention strategies to apply.

a) In every case, early intervention is essential to prevent the problem from worsening. It is vital that parents keep the school fully informed of any matters that may affect their child's attendance.

b) Prior to the engagement of the Early Help Team, the school may issue letters to parents clearly defining the concerns within school regarding a pupils' absence. It is hoped that a quick response and change in levels of absence will prevent the need for the Early Help Team involvement.

## **Children Missing Education**

If families move away from the area, or wish to transfer their child to another school, the Headteacher must be informed in writing. Children cannot be removed from the school roll until we have been notified by another school that a place has been offered and accepted. Children who stop attending and who cannot be traced cannot be removed from the school roll. They are reported to the local authority Attendance Service. Where a child is missing from education, Local Authority guidance will be followed.

## **Lateness**

The class registers are taken at 9.00am and at the start of the afternoon session at 1.15pm. Pupils arriving after these times must enter school by the main entrance and report to reception where their name and reason for lateness will be recorded. The pupil will be marked as late before registration has closed (Code 'L'). The registers will close at 9.30am and 1.35pm. Pupils arriving after the register has closed will be marked as late after registration (Code 'U') This national code counts as an unauthorised absence.

Frequent lateness is disruptive to learning, both for the child concerned and the class. This will be discussed with parents at parents evenings and may be referred to Children's Services.

## **Definitions**

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.

### **Authorised Absence**

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 writes a note or telephones the school to explain the absence, for medical appointments and for days of religious observance.

### **Unauthorised Absence**

An absence is classified as unauthorised when a child is away from school without the permission of the Headteacher. Unauthorised absences are those, which the school does not consider reasonable and for which no authorisation has been given. This includes:

- Parents keeping children off school unnecessarily
- Truancy during the school day
- Absences that have never been properly explained
- Holidays not agreed

## Authorising Absence

Only the Headteacher can authorise absence for approved reasons. The absence must be unavoidable. The Headteacher is not obliged to accept a parent's explanation and if the absence is not authorised, parents will be notified.

Authorised absence codes will only be used after there has been some communication between the parent and school. The following reasons are examples of the kinds of absence that **will not be authorised**:

- Persistent non-specific illness e.g. poorly/unwell
- Absence of siblings if one child is ill
- Parental illness [alternative arrangements should be made to get children to school –emergencies excepted]
- Oversleeping
- Inadequate clothing/uniform
- Confusion over school dates
- Medical/dental appointments of more than half a day without very good reasons
- Child's/family birthday
- Shopping trip
- Holidays can only be authorised in **exceptional circumstances**

## Term-time Holidays

Amendments to **The Education (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2006** came into force on September 1<sup>st</sup> 2013. These amendments removed 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**.

The Head teacher 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, at least a month **in advance** of the intended holiday.

The Head Teacher 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

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
- overlap with beginning or end of term

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

## **Extended leave of absence**

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 minority ethnic families, where huge distances are involved
- where extended leave of absence is granted there will be an expectation that the pupil undertakes some school-set work during this period

## Fixed Penalty Notices

Parents should be aware that should attendance fall below expected standards or when holidays are taken during school term time without authorisation, then parents could be issued with a Fixed Penalty Notice to the amount of £120 per child, this amount will reduce to £60 per child if paid within 21 days, be issued with an Education Supervision Order issued by the family court or, prosecution in a Magistrates' court.

St James C of E Infant School will follow procedures outlined in Cumbria County Council's School Absence Enforcement Policy revised February 2016 for issuing such notices.

## Appendices

### National 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



## ATTENDANCE - A GUIDE FOR PARENTS

Amendments to **The Education (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2006** came into force on September 1<sup>st</sup> 2013. These amendments removed 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**. Parents who take their child out of school in term time could be issued with a fixed penalty notice.

### 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 **9.00am** and the afternoon register at **1.15pm**.

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

Registration finishes at **9.30am** in the morning and **1.35pm** in the afternoon.

If your child arrives between **9.00am** and **9.30am** he/she will be marked **late**.

If your child arrives after **9.30am** he/she will be marked **late after the register has closed** (which is an unauthorised absence).

*(Pupils who arrive after registration should report to the school office. If a pupil is persistently late a meeting will be arranged with the headteacher 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. **What is unacceptable?**

The school will not authorise absence for day trips, visiting relatives, shopping, birthdays or looking after brothers or sisters, etc.

### 6. **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.

If we are concerned about aspects of your child's attendance or punctuality we will contact you to discuss the best way forward.

### 7. **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 the Head 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 and if the Head Teacher then approves the visit, the school will set work for your child to complete while away.

As far as possible we will ensure the work set reinforces the educational value of such a visit.

**8. 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.

**9. 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 – difficulties with school work, bullying, friendship problems, family difficulties. It is important that we identify the reason for your child's reluctance to attend school and work together to tackle the problem.



*"Learning Together, Hand in Hand"*

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**St James' C of E Infant School**  
High Street, Whitehaven, Cumbria CA28 7PZ  
Tel: 01946 691970 Fax: 01946 696490  
Email: admin@st-james-inf.cumbria.sch.uk  
Website: www.st-james-inf.cumbria.sch.uk

**Head Teacher: Mr Michael Craig**  
**Assistant Head: Miss Stephanie Sapsed**

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Dear Parents/Carers

The law does not grant parents an automatic right to take their child out of school during term time. The Department for Education allows a Head Teacher the discretion to consider authorising a leave of absence in term time only in "exceptional circumstances".

Any absence from school will disrupt your child's learning. Please consider writing to your MP to campaign for the cost of holidays during authorised dates to be the same price as holidays taken during term time.

You may consider that a holiday will be educational but your child will still miss out on the teaching that their peers will receive whilst your child is away. Children returning from a leave of absence during term time are also unprepared for the lessons which build on the teaching they have missed. Teachers then have to give more time to help individual children catch up on missed work. This poses a potential risk of the under achievement for your child and other students in the class. This is something we all have a responsibility to avoid.

You need to request a leave of absence by completing the form on the reverse of this notification. If the holiday is not considered to be an exceptional circumstance, and you nevertheless take your child out of school for the leave of absence this **will be recorded as unauthorised leave**.

**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 and £120 (per parent per child) if paid between 21 and 28 days.** All leave of absence requests must be completed on the attached form, letters will not be accepted. This should be returned to the school at least 7 days before the start of the holiday. All requests must be made prior to the leave being taken. Leave cannot be authorised retrospectively.

In considering the decision whether to authorise, the following will be taken into account:-

- Reasons given for the holiday;
- Your child's previous attendance record; this includes attendance in the current academic year - which should be over 95% - as well as attendance in previous academic years.
- Whether your child will miss any tests/examinations (or important preparation for their tests)
- Whether your child is making good progress.

I hope you will support our efforts to raise attendance and attainment at our school.

Yours sincerely

*M Craig*

Mr M Craig  
Head Teacher



Pupil Name .....Class .....

Date of first day of absence .....am or pm

Date of return to school .....am or pm

Number of school days that your child will be absent from school .....

Please detail the exceptional circumstance for which you are requesting leave of absence

Dr/Mr/Mrs/ Ms Forename..... Surname .....

Signed ..... Dated .....

(Please ensure you are giving at least 7 days' notice of the proposed absence, retrospective applications cannot be authorised)

For school to complete: AUTHORISED UNAUTHORISED a) b) c) d) (refers to categories below)

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This slip to be returned to parents

**St James C of E Infant School - Request for a Leave of Absence During Term Time**

Dear.....,

Child's Name..... Class.....

Your request for absence on the following dates: \_\_\_/\_\_\_/\_\_\_ to \_\_\_/\_\_\_/\_\_\_ =.....days,

has been considered and is  AUTHORISED  UNAUTHORISED

- a) Their 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: An **unauthorised** absence may be reported to the Local authority and a Penalty Notice may be issued

Signed *Mr M Craig* Head Teacher

Date:



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Website: www.st-james-inf.cumbria.sch.uk

**Head Teacher: Mr Michael Craig**  
**Assistant Head: Miss Stephanie Sapsed**

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Dear Parent/Carer of .....,

**WELL DONE 100%!!!**

As you know attendance is a very important part of your child's school career. At St James' C of E Infant 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 you will receive a RAG letter (Red, Amber, Green) to highlight your child's attendance by colour.

I am pleased to inform you that ...'s attendance for the year is ..% which is excellent. Well done ... Please keep it up, so that we can send another "Green – 100%" letter next term too. All 100% attenders will earn a certificate and a special treat on Day 1 of next term.

We will continue to monitor attendance on a weekly basis and promote good attenders through our celebration assemblies and reward systems. As always, if you have any concerns please do not hesitate to contact me at any time.

Yours sincerely,

Mr M Craig  
Head Teacher





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Dear Parent/Carer of ...,

**WELL DONE!**

As you know attendance is a very important part of your child's school career. At St James' C of E Infant 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 you will receive a RAG letter (Red, Amber, Green) to highlight your child's attendance by colour.

I am pleased to inform you that ...'s attendance for the year is .. which is excellent. Well done .. Please keep it up, so that we can send another "Green" letter next term too.

We will continue to monitor attendance on a weekly basis and promote good attenders through our celebration assemblies and reward systems. As always, if you have any concerns please do not hesitate to contact me at any time.

Yours sincerely,

Mr M Craig  
Head Teacher





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**Head Teacher: Mr Michael Craig**  
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Dear Parent/Carer of ...,

### AMBER ALERT!

As you know, attendance is a very important part of your child's school career. At St James' C of E Infant 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 you will receive a RAG letter (Red, Amber, Green) to highlight your child's attendance by colour.

... has an attendance of ... for the year so far, which is below the Government target of 96.2% which has been set for all children. There may have been a good reason for this level of absence and we are grateful for your communication when your child is absent from school. However, we would ask you to encourage your child to aim for full attendance for the rest of the year.

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 will support us in this.

Yours sincerely,

Mr M Craig  
Head Teacher





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Dear Parent/Carer of ...,

**RED ALERT!!**

As you know, attendance is a very important part of your child's school career. At St James' C of E Infant 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 RAG letter (Red, Amber, Green) to highlight your child's attendance by colour.

... 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 ... 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 ...'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 M Craig  
Head Teacher



