

# **The Academy at St. James**

## **Attendance Policy**

All stakeholders, pupils, parents, staff, governors and friends of The Academy at St. James have a duty of care to support good attendance and punctuality from all pupils.

Good attendance and punctuality are vital for success at The Academy at St. James; they ensure a child's learning is maximised and gaps in learning are minimised, they also help build positive life habits which are necessary for future success. Regular attendance encourages children to build friendships, develop social groups, work together in a team, share ideas and develop life skills. Good attendance also minimises the risks of pupils conducting anti-social behaviour or becoming victims or perpetrators of crime or abuse.

The school displays a positive and proactive ethos that places high value on attendance and punctuality and values its partnership with parents/carers to promote good attendance.

We acknowledge our responsibility, particularly in the early years, to foster in children and their parents/carers good habits of regular attendance and punctuality.

This policy has been re-written in light of the government's changes to the definition of persistent absence for the 2015-2016 academic year.

The Department for Education announced that the threshold for Persistent Absence will increase from 85% to 90% from September 2015. The current persistent absence (PA) threshold, of around 85%, means a pupil has to be absent from school for around 28 days or more to meet the classification, running the risk of pupils with potentially troubling absences not being systematically identified.

Definition of terms:

Persistent absence - Less than 90% of sessions attended

Poor attendance - Less than 95% of sessions attended

Punctuality - Arriving in school by 8.55am\*

\*Doors open at 8.50am to allow children time to be settled in class by 8.55am when school starts and the morning learning begins. Children arriving after 9.00am are given a late mark on the register (L). The register closes at 9.20am and any arrivals after that have to be recorded as unauthorised absence (U) for the morning session.

### **Aims**

- To share the responsibility for promoting school attendance amongst everyone at St James' Church Primary School.
- To work with parents, encouraging them to understand the importance of regular attendance and punctuality in the learning process.
- To promote and attain the highest possible levels of attendance, commensurate with the pupil's health.

- To record, monitor and report school attendance on a regular basis.

### **Legal Requirements**

It is a legal obligation of all parents/carers to ensure their child attends regularly; by law all children of compulsory school age must get a proper full time education.

This policy meets the legal requirements contained in The Education (Pupil Registration)

Regulations 1995 and in the 1996 Education Act, which states:

“The parent/carer of every child of compulsory school age shall cause him to receive efficient full-time education suitable—

(a) to his age, ability and aptitude, and

(b) to any special educational needs he may have, either by regular attendance at school or otherwise“

### **Responsibilities**

The governing body is legally responsible for many aspects of school management including the attendance register. However, the Headteacher manages the day-to-day running of the School and in so doing takes responsibility for the day-to-day implementation of this policy.

### **The Governing Body**

To discharge their agreed responsibilities, Governors should:

- Meet to discuss whole school attendance regularly (at least termly).
- Monitor the school’s annual attendance target and its progress towards this on a termly basis.

### **The Headteacher**

The Headteacher will oversee the implementation of this policy by:

- Approving, or otherwise, requests for term-time leave of absence.
- Ensuring this policy is followed by all stakeholders including the Deputy Headteacher, the Mentor responsible for attendance and all other staff.
- Monitor attendance.
- Lead assemblies.
- Where necessary, meet with parents regarding attendance issues and set targets for children’s attendance with parents.
- Sign off letters to parents for 100% & below 90% attendance.
- Meet DHT to be updated on issues.

### **The Deputy Headteacher will...**

- Meet with the Headteacher to provide updates on attendance issues.
- Meet regularly with the Mentor responsible for attendance to discuss attendance issues.

- Monitor the attendance of those children whose attendance was below 90% in the previous half term.
- Determine when improvement letters need to be sent to parents of children with attendance issues.
- Attend panel meetings with parents regarding poor attendance.
- Liaise with school nurse and or other organisations for family support to improve attendance.
- Meet with the parents of children with poor attendance at parents' evenings if contact has not been made before then.
- Meet with the Educational Social worker (ESW) and make referrals to them when necessary.

### **Class Teachers**

Class teachers can contribute greatly to the reduction of unauthorised absence by delivering interesting and engaging lessons and insisting on punctuality for themselves, colleagues and pupils.

#### **Class teachers will...**

- Complete class registers, twice each day, in accordance with the legal requirements and school procedures.
- Record unexplained absences on the class fire register sheet which is prominently displayed in the classroom.

### **The Mentor responsible for Attendance**

The School Mentor responsible for attendance will...

- Meet and greet parents and children in the morning and discuss, as appropriate, any attendance issues.
- Assist with the registering of late children.
- Make immediate telephone contact with the parents of those absent from school.
- Record unexplained absences as unauthorised absences.
- Monitor attendance, liaising with Deputy Head teacher and where necessary invite parents to a panel meeting and implement an individual plan for improvement.
- Arrange panel meetings with parents regarding persistent absence (those below 90%).
- Ring parents and send out letters regarding poor attendance to those between 90-95%.
- Assist with the completion of 100% certificates at the end of each half term.

### **School office staff**

#### **The school office staff will...**

- Maintain an absence book
- Register late arriving children and report any concerns to the Mentor responsible for attendance.
- Order 100% gifts and prizes.
- Provide weekly attendance information for each class.
- Produce half termly update of reasons for absence sheet from SIMs.

- Compile attendance data for head teacher report to governors prior to governing body meeting.
- Compile 100% attendance letters to send at end of half term.
- Assist with the completion of 100% certificates at the end of each half term.

## **PUPILS**

- Pupils are actively encouraged to attend school regularly and to arrive punctually at school and at the start of lessons after break.
- Pupils should inform staff if there is a problem that may lead to their absence, e.g. bullying, racism, etc.
- Pupils should use their best endeavours to pass on absence notes from parents to their class teacher and to pass school correspondence to their parents.
- Pupils must be encouraged to understand the importance of attending school and know that it is compulsory to attend school regularly.
- Pupils should all understand that only 'real' illnesses can be a reason for absence.

## **Parents**

Parents are encouraged to...

- Ensure their children arrive at school on time each day.
- Inform the school office first thing in the morning if their child is unable to attend.
- Support the school in promoting the importance of good attendance.

## **Attendance Actions**

The school may choose to use all or some of the following actions when attendance becomes an issue and/or falls below acceptable levels.

- Letters to parents advising of poor attendance, reminding parents of responsibilities, inviting parents in to school for meetings etc.
- Home Visits – a visit to the family home by the school staff to discuss issues surrounding non-attendance and/or lateness in an attempt to solve the problem.
- Any formal discussions will also involve advice to parents/carers around the legal obligations of parents/carers to ensure good school attendance and possible consequences for non-compliance.
- Referral to the Education Social worker Team to follow up with parents/carers.
- Prosecution may be considered when other attempts to engage parents/carers and to improve attendance have failed.
- Parenting Orders (as a result of court action) - a legal requirement for a parent to undertake specific measures in order to improve the situation.
- Education Supervision Orders (as a result of court action) - this means that the court appoints a supervisor to help and give advice to the Parents and the child.

## **INITIATIVES TO IMPROVE ATTENDANCE RATES**

There are many reasons why pupils miss school without permission and there is no one solution to the problem of absenteeism. The school will implement numerous attendance initiatives which:

- Help children develop the habit of regular attendance.
- Show parents clearly that unjustified absence will be recorded and challenged.

The School has considered initiatives that are most appropriate e.g. setting reward schemes such as certificates for 100% attendance. Other helpful initiatives include:

- Implementing first day contact with parents/carers of children who are absent from school without prior knowledge. It is hoped that this sends a clear signal to pupils and parents that absence is a matter of concern and will be followed up.
- Regular attendance sweeps for pupils below 95%, followed up by formal contact with parents.
- Having a dedicated member of staff responsible for first day contact and the Head Teacher/Deputy Headteacher responsible for attendance overall.
- Formal meetings with target families following attendance sweeps and a further period of monitoring to ensure attendance improves.
- A weekly raffle for 100% attendance each week in the Celebration Worship.
- A weekly attendance award for the highest attending class (raising the profile of Attendance throughout school).
- 100% attendance certificates at the end of each ½ term for pupils who have full attendance.
- The presentation of awards for those children whose attendance increases significantly over the ½ term.

### **Reporting Attendance**

Each pupil's attendance record will form part of the annual curriculum report to parents, sent home at the end of the summer term.

The number of possible and actual authorised and unauthorised absences will be detailed.

The school's attendance figures will be printed in the School Profile and in the next year's prospectus.

As part of the induction process when pupils start school, the importance of regular attendance and punctuality will be stressed.

Regular school attendance will be valued and acknowledged informally by class teachers and celebrated in assemblies.

### **Retention of Registers**

All registers will be stored electronically.

Date for next review      July 2018