



The Academy at
St James
Aspire, Achieve, Believe

ATTENDANCE POLICY

Headteacher: Mr C Tolson

Governor Approval: Governing Body

Date: January 2022

Review Date: January 2024



This policy applies unless overridden by any other emergency response guidance, in place.

Vision Statement

All are inspired to achieve their full potential in our loving community of life-long learners, where:

- Everyone is valued;
- Every chance is provided for all to flourish in the security of God's love; and
- Every day brings the enjoyment of life in all its fullness.

Core Values

At The Academy at St. James our six key values flow:

- Peace
- Forgiveness
- Community
- Courage
- Respect
- Trust

Introduction

It is a government legal requirement that all children attend school for 190 days. It is also a government requirement that as a school we monitor and apply the legal requirement. Pupils need to attend school regularly if they are to take full advantage of the educational opportunities available to them by law. The Academy at St. James fully recognises its responsibilities to ensure children are in school and on time, therefore having access to learning for the maximum number of days and hours.

All children of compulsory school age have the right to an efficient full-time education, regardless of age, aptitude, ability and any special needs they may have and schools have a responsibility to monitor and promote the regular attendance of pupils. Irregular attendance seriously disrupts continuity of learning, undermines educational progress, can lead to underachievement and low attainment and impedes the child's ability to develop friendship groups within school.

Aims and 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.

We expect that all pupils will:



- Attend school every day;
- Attend school punctually;
- Attend school appropriately prepared for the day (PE kits, reading books, etc.) Through this policy we aim to:
 - Improve pupils' achievement by ensuring high levels of attendance and punctuality
 - Achieve a minimum of **96%** attendance (in line with National average) for all children, apart from those with chronic health issues. Annual school target is set above national average.
 - Create an ethos in which good attendance and punctuality are recognised as the norm and seen to be valued by the school
 - Identify and support persistently absent children through monitoring systems.
 - Raise awareness of parents, carers and pupils of the importance of uninterrupted attendance and punctuality at every stage of a child's education
 - Work in partnership with pupils, parents, staff and 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, and valued, and encourage in pupils a sense of their own responsibility
 - Uphold the value Aspire, Achieve, Believe
 - Establish a pattern of monitoring attendance and ensure consistency in recognising achievement and dealing with difficulties

Responsibilities

Parents and carers

Parents and carers have a legal responsibility to ensure that their children attend school regularly. If a child is in the care of foster parents or in a residential home, it is important that the carers recognise their parenting role where attendance at school is concerned.

What is expected of parents and carers with regard to attendance?

- 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
- Talking to the school as soon as possible about any issues which may be affecting their child's attendance

School

What is expected of school with regard to attendance?

- To create a school ethos that pupils want to be part of
- To meet the legal requirements set out by the Government
- To record authorised and unauthorised absences within the guidance of the law
- To give a high priority to punctuality and attendance
- To follow procedures that enable the school to identify, follow up and record unauthorised absence, patterns of absence and parent condoned absence with effective monitoring and intervention
- To encourage open communication channels between home and school
- To encourage good attendance and punctuality through a system of rewards and recognition
- Inform parents/carers via a series of letters regarding their child's punctuality and poor attendance

Celebrating Achievements

All children achieving 100% attendance at the end of the academic year will be rewarded with a 'Gold' attendance certificate and sticker. Children achieving the school's attendance target – 99.9% inclusive, will be rewarded a 'Silver' attendance certificate and sticker. Children achieving 96% (National Average) – school's attendance target inclusive, will be rewarded with a 'Bronze' attendance certificate and sticker. All 'Gold' awards will be presented during a special assembly at the end of the year and 'Silver and Bronze' by the class teacher in the classroom.

All children who achieve above the school's attendance target, for each half term, will receive a certificate and sticker, which will be presented in class. As there is a half termly attendance award, children who have had poor attendance during part of the year will still have the opportunity to feel success, if their attendance increases.

Policy Implementation

Registers

Attendance registers are marked at the beginning of each morning and afternoon session through an electronic software package (SIMS) which is supported by the Local Authority. As part of Safeguarding procedures, attendance is monitored daily with phone calls made to understand unreported absences. If contact cannot be made by 9.30am, then an email will be sent to the Head and DSL in school explaining that no contact has been made and the child's whereabouts are currently unknown. It is for the Head and DSL to make a decision regarding next steps and this may involve a home visit. Should the school make a home visit and still no contact can be made with a family member the DSL may ring the police for a welfare check to be made.



Children missing in education

In-line with Keeping Children Safe in Education 2020, all staff should be aware the children going missing, particularly repeatedly, can act as a vital warning sign of a range of safeguarding possibilities. This may include abuse and neglect, which may include sexual abuse or exploitation and child criminal exploitation. It may indicate mental health problems, risk of substance abuse, risk of travelling to conflict zones, risk of female genital mutilation or risk of forced marriage. Early intervention is necessary to identify existence of any underlying safeguarding risk and to help prevent the risks of a child going missing in future. Staff should be aware of their school's unauthorised absence and children missing from education procedures.

If the school is not notified of a reason for absence and contact cannot be made with the family, then after 10 days the school will refer the child to the Local Authority as a child missing in education. They remain on the school's register until the child is enrolled in a new setting or the family informs the school that the child is being 'home-schooled'. The Local Authority must be informed of any correspondence with the family.

Punctuality

Punctuality is crucial. Lateness into school causes disruption to that individual's learning and to that of the other pupils in class as well as their self-esteem.

All children should be in the playground ready for the bell by 8.50am. The external doors will be closed at 8.53am and any child arriving after this time will need to be escorted by an adult to the main office where their attendance can be logged. Pupils who are not present at the start of the school day will be marked absent initially. If they arrive within 25 minutes (by 9.20am) this will be changed to an 'L' code. The parents/carers of any pupil arriving after this time will need to provide a verbal explanation to a member of the office staff. All reasons for lateness will be recorded. Lateness of more than 25 minutes is likely to be marked as an unauthorised absence 'U' for the morning session.

COVID 19

Due to staggered start times to allow for children to enter the grounds socially distanced, external doors will open at either 8.40 - 8.50am or 8.50 – 9am depending on the year group. Children who arrive after their start time will enter school via the main office and taken to class by an adult. Registers will close at their normal time and late codes will apply as normal.

Leave of absence requests

Any leave of absence for a child of statutory school age must be applied for, in writing, to either the Headteacher or Deputy Headteacher. Upon receipt of an application, the school staff will invite parents/carers into school to discuss the absence in question. Headteachers should only authorise leave of absence in exceptional circumstances and each leave of absence request will be considered separately.

Absence due to illness

Parents are required to provide a reason for any period of absence before 9.30am on the first day of absence. The school will then decide if it wishes to record the absence as authorised or unauthorised based on the guidance set out in the Education (Pupil Registration) Regulations. School reserves the right to request documentation of absence and where a child's attendance levels is a cause for concern, only absences with evidence will be authorised. Children who are at risk of being considered a 'persistent absentee' (attendance below 90%) may be placed on an attendance contract with a fixed penalty fine issued if attendance does not significantly improve.

Authorised absence

An absence is classified as authorised if the school has either given approval in advance for a pupil of compulsory school age to be away, or has accepted an explanation offered afterwards as justification for the absence with the necessary supporting documentation.

Parents and carers are asked to make every effort to arrange medical appointments outside school hours.

COVID 19

Although school attendance is mandatory from the start of the autumn term, there are some circumstances where pupils cannot attend school due to coronavirus (COVID-19).

To make sure schools record this accurately and consistently, changes have been made to the regulations governing school attendance registers to add a new category of nonattendance – 'not attending in circumstances related to coronavirus (COVID-19)'.

This category must only be used to record sessions that take place in the 2020 to 2021 academic year where a pupil does not attend because their travel to, or attendance at, school would be:

- contrary to guidance relating to the incidence or transmission of coronavirus (COVID19) from Public Health England (PHE) and/or the Department of Health and Social Care (DHSC)³
- prohibited by any legislation (or instruments such as statutory directions) relating to the incidence or transmission of coronavirus (COVID-19)

In line with the Secretary of State's expectation that no parent will be penalised for following official public health advice for their child not to attend a given session, this new category of non-attendance will not count as an absence (authorised or unauthorised) for statistical purposes.

From the beginning of the new academic year, schools should return to using the attendance and absence codes in use before the outbreak (set out on page 9 of the attendance guidance) in addition to the new category of 'not attending in circumstances related to coronavirus (COVID-19)':

- pupils not attending a session who meet the criteria for 'not attending in circumstances related to coronavirus (COVID-19)' should be recorded using code X

- schools should continue to use code X for non-compulsory school aged pupils who are not expected to attend a session, as they did before the outbreak

Unauthorised absence

An unauthorised absence is where a school is not satisfied with the reasons given for the absence. Family holidays are not viewed as exceptional circumstances and as such will be recorded as unauthorised.

This type of absence can lead to the Local Authority using sanctions and or legal proceedings.

The issuing of a Penalty Notice is considered appropriate in the following circumstances:

- Overt truancy (including pupils caught on truancy sweeps)
- Parentally-condoned absences
- Unauthorised leave of absence/holidays in term time
- Excessive delayed return from authorised holidays without prior school agreement
- Persistent late arrival at school (after the Register has closed)

Penalty Notices may be issued if the child has at least 6 sessions (3 school days) lost to unauthorised absence in a period of 6 school weeks.

School reserves the right to request medical evidence for those children where parents have reported them ill and who are suspected as being on holiday. School will make daily phone calls to check for the child's wellbeing and may make home visits to ensure that the child is where they are reported to be. Where contact cannot be made, the DSL may phone the police for a welfare check to be made. A fixed penalty referral may still be made if school are not satisfied with the evidence provided and the local authority will have the final decision as to whether they wish to prosecute.

Monitoring Attendance

The Inclusion Leader will review the attendance of all the school's pupils on a regular basis and reports will be completed for the Head teacher and Governors.

- All children falling below 92% will be highlighted on a half termly basis. Parents will receive a letter advising them of their child's attendance if below 92%.
- Children with attendance below 90%, including unauthorised absence, will be monitored until their attendance returns to a satisfactory level.
- Once a letter has been issued, the attendance of the child will continue to be monitored on a halftermly basis; where concerns still exist, parents will be invited to a meeting to discuss the issue and hopefully resolve any reasons preventing the pupil from attending.

- The Inclusion Leader, in collaboration with the Head teacher and Governors, will decide when it is applicable to refer parents for a Penalty Notice.

Related policies

This policy should be read in conjunction with the following policies

- Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy
- Anti-Bullying Policy
- Equality Policy
- PSHCE and Sex and Relationships Policy

- COVID Action Plan

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