



st. John's C.E. Primary Academy
Attendance Policy

Introduction

This policy covers the attendance of all pupils at our school. Good attendance at school is important and responsibility for this is the shared duty of the whole school community - pupils, parents, staff and governors.

Aims

These are:

1. To promote positively the good attendance at our school of all pupils.
2. To provide agreed guidelines on the management of pupil attendance.

Principles

The policy for attendance is based on the clear principle that regular attendance is the key to enabling children and young people to maximise the educational opportunities available to them and become emotionally resilient, confident and competent adults who are able to realise their full potential and make a positive contribution to their community.

Where problems with regular attendance do occur, we will seek in the first instance to resolve the issue between school, parents and the pupil concerned. This will be done at the earliest opportunity possible, so as to avoid the impression that attendance does not matter and to help avoid the problem becoming worse.

We believe that full attendance for a pupil can be achieved, but where problems arise parents are expected to contact school at an early stage and to work with school in resolving any difficulties. If difficulties cannot be resolved, the school may refer the matter to the Local Support Team. In addition to this help and advice may also be sought from other local authority services.

Alternatively, parents or the child themselves may wish to contact the Local Support Team directly to ask for help or further information. The service is independent of the school. Contact name and details of how to contact this service are available to parents from the school office or directly from the local authority.

Recording Attendance and Absence

Registers of attendance will be maintained for each school session (two school sessions for each school day). This is the responsibility of class teachers, higher level teaching assistants or cover supervisors assigned to the class.

All half day absences from school will be recorded and classified by the school as either authorised or unauthorised. Authorised absences are mornings or afternoons

away from school for a good reason like illness or other unavoidable causes. This may include:

- The child being ill
- A religious observance
- The death of a close family member
- An urgent medical or dental appointment
- Where written leave of absence was requested in advance by the parent and the Principal having considered the request has determined that exceptional circumstances apply.

Unauthorised absences are those which the school does not consider reasonable and for which authorisation has not been agreed. This may include:

- Parents keeping their child off school unnecessarily
- Truancy
- Absences which have never been properly explained
- If a child arrives too late at school to get a mark for that session
- Written leave of absence requested in advance by a parent for their child, where the Principal does not consider that there are exceptional circumstances relating to the application.

Parents or Carers Responsibilities

Parents or carers have a legal duty to ensure that their children of compulsory school age attend the Academy regularly. For any attendance related concerns, please contact our Family Liaison Officer Miss Adamson at cadamson@st-johns-stafford.staffs.sch.uk or Mrs Davey at cdavey@st-johns-stafford.staffs.sch.uk in the first instance.

Parents or carers must ensure:

- They inform the Academy straight away if their child cannot attend and give the reason.
- They make medical, dental or other appointments outside the Academy day as far as possible
- The Academy is aware of any circumstances at home that may be likely to affect their attendance
- Good routines are encouraged at home which promote a healthy lifestyle including enough sleep
- To encourage their child to be on time and ready to learn.
- Talk to their child about the Academy and let us know if their child is worried about any issues such as difficulties with homework or friendship problems.
- They do not book holidays in term time.

- The Academy has all parent / carer up to date contact details. There must be a minimum of 2 contacts for each child.
- Encourage their child to enjoy the Academy and make the most of all the opportunities available to them.

Procedures

At our school the following procedures will normally apply to pupil absences:

- Absence notification - the parent should make telephone or email contact with the school office on the first and subsequent days of the absence (except when a prior written request for the absence has been agreed). If a phone call or email has not been received in school before 9.30 am, a member of the school administrative staff will try to make contact to determine the reason for the absence. The email address for reporting absences is admin@st-johns-stafford.staffs.sch.uk and messages can be left on the school answer phone at any time.
- If no contact is made with the first contact, the school office will use all contact numbers to ascertain why the child is not in school and ensure they are safe. If the school office is not able to make contact with any of the members of family / friends on the contact list, a home visit or referral to the local authority safeguarding team may be carried out.
- Late arrival - if a child arrives after the start of the school session, they must report to the school office where their late attendance will be recorded. All morning registers close at 9.20 am.

Requests for leave of absence

Requests for leave of absence should be submitted in writing to the Principal. This written request should be made by completing a 'Request for Leave during Term Time' form which is available from the school office. Any request must be made in advance of the actual period. Each request will be considered by the school individually and on its own merits. A written response will be sent to the parent when the request has been considered by the Principal.

If leave has been granted and your child does not return to school at the time they are expected to the absence will be recorded as unauthorised.

Service pupils

The Ministry of Defence recognises that the educational needs of the Service children affected will always be a critical factor when determining whether term time absence should be granted. As well as operational tours overseas, there are many situations where the unusual and often unpredictable demands of life in the Armed Forces may prevent Service families taking holidays together outside term

time. These demands may see Service personnel deployed for lengthy periods on training as well as on operational activities. Alongside the request for leave, military personnel can submit a letter from welfare to support their application.

Amendments to the Education Regulations 2006 make it clear that head teachers should only grant a leave of absence during term time if there are exceptional circumstances to justify this.

If a request for leave has not been received and we have reason to believe a pupil is on holiday, a home visit may be carried out and a letter will be sent to parents requesting medical evidence for the absence. If no medical evidence can be provided, the absence may be recoded as unauthorised, and a penalty notice request sent to the Local Authority.

Medical appointments require evidence of the appointment: for example: an appointment card, letter, text or a medicine label. Leave during term time forms are not required for medical appointments. The absence will be unauthorised without this evidence.

Penalty Notices

St John's CE Primary Academy follows the Staffordshire County Council Code of Conduct for issuing Penalty notices.

Changes to Penalty Notices for School Absence from 19th August 2024

The new National Framework introduces consistency in the use of Penalty Notices across England by introducing a new national threshold at which they are considered. The framework increases the amount of the Penalty Notice and introduces a new national limit of 2 Penalty Notices within a 3-year rolling period to break cycles of repeat offending. In line with the guidance, Staffordshire Local Authority will prioritise the 'support first' approach expecting that support will have been offered to families in cases where it is appropriate. However, Penalty Notices can be issued without a Notice to Improve in cases where support is not appropriate (such as leave of absence in term time) or when support has not been engaged with. Penalty Notices are requested by schools and academies and issued by the Local Authority to the parents/carers of statutory school age children, per parent, per child. For example: two children in a family absent from school for a leave of absence may result in each parent receiving a Penalty Notice for each child at the below rates.

- First offence - The first time a Penalty Notice is issued the amount will be: £80 per parent, per child paid within 21 days. This increases to £160 per parent, per child if paid after day 21, until day 28. Any non-payment of the Penalty Notice may be referred to the Magistrates Court.
- Second Offence (within 3 years) - the second time a Penalty Notice is issued the

amount will be £160 per parent, per child paid within 28 days. Any non-payment of the Penalty Notice may be referred to the Magistrates Court.

- Third Offence and Any Further Offences (within 3 years) - the third time an offence is committed a Penalty Notice will not be issued, and the case may be presented straight to the Magistrates' Court under s.444 of the Education Act (1996) or other legal interventions considered. The Magistrates' Court can order fines up to £2500 per parent, per child.

Leave of Absence (Holidays) Penalty Notices can be requested by schools for leave of absence in term time for 5 or more days. This can be consecutive absence, or non-consecutive. In line with the National Framework, the Local Authority retains the discretion to issue a Penalty Notice before the threshold is met. For example, when parents/carers are deliberately avoiding the national threshold by taking multiple term time holidays below threshold, or for repeated absence for birthdays or other family events, or a combination of non-attendance due to leave of absence and unauthorised absence.

Unauthorised Absence Penalty Notices can be requested by schools when there have been 10 sessions of unauthorised absence in a 10-week period. In these circumstances a Notice to Improve may be sent by the Local Authority on behalf of the school, this will stipulate the support that has already been implemented and the ongoing support that is available to the parent and child to improve school attendance. The Notice to Improve will also detail the expected improvements that must be made over a set time frame to prevent the Penalty Notice being issued. Further information on the National Framework can be found within *Working Together to Improve Attendance 2024*. The National Framework comes into effect from 19th August 2024. [Working together to improve school attendance \(applies from 19 August 2024\)](#) (publishing.service.gov.uk)

Penalty Notices may be considered appropriate if one of the following criteria is met:

- There is unauthorised persistent absence. "Persistent" means at least 20 sessions of unauthorised absence over a period of twelve school weeks, excluding holidays. These absences do not need to be consecutive.
- Persistent late arrival at school, i.e. after the register has closed. "Persistent" means at least 10 sessions of unauthorised late arrival over a period of 12 school weeks, excluding holidays. These late episodes **do not** need to be consecutive.
- The presence of an excluded child in a public place at any time during school hours in that child's first five days of exclusion. An "excluded child" is one who has been excluded from school for a given period under the Education and Inspections Act 2006.

- A Penalty Notice will not be issued in respect of children in the care of the LA with whom other interventions will be used.

Where a referral for poor or irregular patterns of attendance has been made to the Local Support Team the school will support any possible legal action taken by the local authority. The Local Academy Committee will review whole school attendance levels at least three times a year and on an annual basis review the school attendance policy.

This policy was approved on May 1st 2025. It will be reviewed in Summer 2026.