



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 all children should receive education, suitable to their age, ability, aptitude and any special needs they may have, either by regular attendance at school or otherwise.

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.

Procedures

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

- Absence notification - where possible the parent should make telephone contact with the school on the first day 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 from a parent, 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.
- 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 9.30 am.
- Requests for leave - parents who want the school to consider granting leave of absence in school term time are required to submit this 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. In considering a request, the school will take account of:
 - i) The exceptional circumstances stated that have given rise to the request being made.

- ii) The stage of the pupil's education and progress and the effects of the requested absence.
 - iii) The overall attendance pattern of the pupil.
 - iv) Frequency of similar requests.
 - v) Whether the parent made the request in advance.
 - vi) Pupils due to take SAT's will not normally be granted leave of absence in that period.
- Medical appointments require evidence of the appointment: for example: an appointment card, letter or text. Leave during term time forms are not required for medical appointments. The absence will be unauthorised without this evidence.

A written response will be sent to the parent when the individual request has been considered by the Principal.

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.

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.
- There is a period of absence (at least one day) not authorised by the Principal or in excess of the period authorised by the Principal (e.g. family holiday).
- 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.

Issuing of penalty notices is not influenced by previous good attendance. The rate of each penalty notice will be £60 if paid within 21 days, rising to £120 if paid between 21 and 28 days. If a penalty notice is not paid parents may be liable to prosecution at the Magistrates Court.

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 presented to and approved by the Local Academy Committee on 15 December 2020. It will be reviewed in summer 2021.