

St. John's C of E (VA) Primary School **Punctuality and Attendance Policy**

Date: October 2011
Date of next review: September 2012

Philosophy:

St. John's is a successful school and every child plays their part in making it so. We expect good attendance and punctuality from all pupils, in order for them to make the most of the opportunities that the school has to offer. We rely on our partnership with parents/carers to ensure that this is achieved.

The school's ethos and environment should encourage pupils to want to attend school through providing effective teaching and a relevant and interesting curriculum; thus ensuring that all pupils enjoy and achieve. For our children to gain the greatest benefit from their education it is vital that they attend regularly and all children should be at school, on time, every day the school is open unless the reason for the absence is unavoidable.

Any lateness/absence affects the pattern of a child's schooling and regular lateness/absence will seriously affect their learning. Any pupil's lateness/absence also disrupts teaching routines and so may affect the learning of others in the same class. It is the legal responsibility of parents/ carers to ensure their child's punctuality and regular attendance at school. Permitting absence from school without a good reason creates an offence in law and may result in prosecution.

Aims of the policy:

This aim of this policy is to

- achieve high attendance for all pupils at St. John's. Good attendance helps children to make good, consistent progress in their school work.
- instil in pupils a commitment to attending regularly, helping them to develop positive habits that will continue to be a pattern for them in their later life, at secondary school, college and work.

Punctuality:

The school day starts at **8.55am** and we expect all children to be settled in class at that time. Registers are marked shortly after this. Pupils who are not present for registration, but arrive before 9.30 will be marked as late.

At **9.30am** the registers will be closed. In accordance with the regulations, if a child arrives after that time he/she will receive a mark that shows them to be on site, but this will **not** count as a present mark and it will mean they have an unauthorised absence. This may mean that parents/ carers could face the possibility of a Penalty Notice if the problem persists.

If a child has a persistent late record parents/ carers will be asked to meet with the Head Teacher to resolve the problem. Parents/ carers can also approach school at any time if they are having problems getting their child to school on time.

Poor punctuality is not acceptable. If a child misses the start of the day, he/she can miss work and not spend time with their class teacher getting vital information and news for the day. Late arriving pupils also disrupt lessons and whole school collective worship; this can be embarrassing for the child and can also encourage absence.

Absence:

Parents/carers should contact the school by notifying all absences on the first day. Any absence which is known in advance, for example, hospital appointments, should be notified to the school in writing beforehand, with the appointment letter or card from the hospital.

Every half- day absence has to be classified by the school (not the parents), as either AUTHORISED or UNAUTHORISED. All schools are required to show the difference between authorised and unauthorised absence. This is why information about the cause of any absence is always required, preferably in writing.

Authorised absences are mornings or afternoons away from school for a good reason and **can be:**

- Sickness;
- Unavoidable medical or dental appointments which cannot be arranged outside school hours;
- Emergencies;
- Days of religious observance;
- Leave of absence agreed by the Head Teacher (see below for procedures);
- Leave to sit exams or school entrance tests.

Unauthorised absences are those which the school does not consider reasonable and for which no authorisation has been given. These include:

- Parents/carers keeping children off school unnecessarily;
- Truancy during the school day;
- Any absence which the school has not been informed about, either by letter or telephone;
- Shopping or birthdays;
- Children arriving at school too late to receive a register mark;
- Absences which have never been properly explained;
- Any absence which the Head Teacher has not authorised;
- Day trips and holidays which have not been authorised.

An unauthorised absence can lead to the Local Authority (LA) using sanctions and/or legal proceedings.

Absence Procedures

If a child is absent **parents/carers must** contact the school office as soon as possible on the first day of absence;

If a child is absent the school will:

- Telephone or text parents/carers on the first day of absence if we have not heard from them;
- Invite parents/ carers in to discuss the situation with the Head Teacher if absences persist;
- Refer the matter to the Attendance Welfare Officer if attendance moves below 85%.

There are a number of reasons (including absence) for which we need to contact parents/ carers. Therefore we need to have up to date contact numbers at all times. Parents/carers should please make sure they inform school when any of their contact details change.

Promoting good attendance and punctuality:

Parents/carers should always contact the school at an early stage to resolve any difficulties they may be having with respect to their child's attendance. Whilst any child may be off school because they are ill, sometimes they can be reluctant to attend school. If a child is reluctant to attend, it is never better to cover up their absence or to give in to pressure to excuse them from attending. This gives the impression that attendance does not matter and usually make things worse. Any problems with regular attendance are best sorted out between the school, the parents/carers and the child. If attendance difficulties are related to bullying or cyber bullying, it is important to contact school staff immediately. Early intervention is important and school staff will be able to support parents/ carers and their child with attendance issues.

To support good attendance and punctuality, the school will provide:

- Regular articles in newsletters encouraging parents/carers to ensure that their children attend regularly and on time.
- Termly reports to parents showing attendance and punctuality
- Certificates rewarding pupils who have 100% attendance each half term.
- Feedback to the governing body on attendance rates and unauthorised absences.
- Opportunities for class teachers to discuss attendance at termly Pupil Progress Meetings.

The home/school agreement stresses the importance of regular and punctual attendance. There is an expectation that parents/carers sign this and agree to the contract.

Monitoring attendance:

- Registers are regularly checked and a record kept of absences and lateness.
- The monthly percentage figures for each class will be noted in the Head Teacher's report to Governors.
- The average percentage attendance for the whole school will be noted in the Head Teacher's report to Governors.
- Pupils whose attendance drops below 95% will be investigated and parents/carers contacted.
- The Education Welfare Service will maintain regular register inspections and support and advise the school and parents/carers when necessary.
- Once school procedures have been exhausted a referral will be made to the Educational Welfare Service.

The school secretary will be responsible for this monitoring, in close liaison with the Head Teacher.

Applications for Leave of Absence during term time.

Taking leave during term time will affect a child's schooling as much as any other absence and we expect parents/carers to help us by not taking children away in school time.

The Law also states that only the Head Teacher can only in "special circumstances" grant leave during term time for up to 10 days. The Law also states that requests for leave over 10 days can be only be granted in "exceptional circumstances"

Parents/carers should consider the impact that an absence may have on their child's progress and attainment. They should remember that any monetary savings they think they may make by taking leave in school time are offset by the cost to their child's education. There is **no** automatic entitlement in law to take time off in school time to go on holiday.

Requests for leave should only be made in exceptional circumstances. All applications for leave must be made in advance. In making a decision the school will consider the "special" or "exceptional" circumstances of each application individually, including any previous pattern of leave in term time. Annual holiday leave during term time will generally not be authorised unless there are exceptional circumstances preventing parents/carers from taking their annual holiday during school holidays. A letter from an employer must be submitted if an employer is being inflexible about holiday leave. Requests for leave must be made to the Head Teacher on the Application for Pupil Leave of Absence from School Form (Appendix A), a minimum of four weeks before the leave dates. Requests for long term leave of absence to visit relatives abroad or to go on a religious pilgrimage will be treated sensitively. When considering the request the Head Teacher will take into account:

- The child's current attendance record, including punctuality
- The age of the child (children aged 5 to 16 years are legally required to attend school)
- If previous requests have been made within the same school year for leave
- The nature of the absence (only extraordinary circumstances will be authorised)

Persistent Absenteeism (PA)

A pupil becomes a 'persistent absentee' when they miss 15% or more schooling across the school year for whatever reason. Absence at this level causes considerable damage to any child's educational prospects and we need parents'/carers' fullest support and co-operation to tackle this.

We monitor all absence thoroughly. Any case that is seen to have reached the PA mark or is at risk of moving towards that mark is given priority and you will be informed of this immediately.

PA pupils are tracked and monitored carefully through our pastoral system and we also combine this with mentoring where absence affects attainment.

All our PA pupils and their parents/carers are subject to an action plan and the plan may include: allocation of additional support through a Mentor, use of circle time, individual incentive programmes and participation in group activities around raising attendance. All PA cases are also automatically made known to the Attendance Welfare Officer (AWO).

The Attendance Welfare Officer (AWO)

Parents/carers are expected to contact school at an early stage and to work with the staff in resolving any problems together. This is nearly always successful. If difficulties cannot be sorted out in this way, the school may refer the child to the Attendance Welfare Officer from the Local Authority. He/she will also try to resolve the situation by agreement but, if other ways of trying to improve the child's attendance have failed and unauthorised absences persist, these Officers can use sanctions such as Penalty Notices or prosecutions in the Magistrates Court. Full

details of the options open to enforce attendance at school are available from the school or the Local Authority.

Alternatively, parents/carers or children may wish to contact the AWO themselves to ask for help or information. The AWO is independent of the school and will give impartial advice. Their telephone number is available from the school office or by contacting the Local Authority.

Fixed penalty fines and prosecution

Pupils with unauthorised absence may be referred to the Educational Welfare Service, who may consider:

- Issuing parents/carers with a fixed penalty of £50 (£100 if not paid within 28 days)
- The issuing of a fixed penalty notice for unauthorised holidays.
- The use of a Parenting Contract
- Prosecuting parents/carers under Section 444.1 or 444.1A of the Education Act 1996 for non school attendance (in extreme cases)

Designated person for attendance: Mrs Martina Martin (HT)

Link governor for attendance: Mrs Jenny Crook

Administrative support: Secretary: Mrs. L. Franklin

Attendance and Welfare Officer: Denise Pearl

School target for attendance 20011/20012 96%