

Attendance Policy



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1. Aims

Regular school attendance is essential if pupils are to achieve their full potential. St John's believes that regular school attendance is the key to enabling pupils to maximise the educational opportunities available to them and become resilient, confident and competent adults who are able to realise their full potential and make a positive contribution to their community.

St John's values all pupils and we will work with families to identify the reasons for unsatisfactory attendance and try to resolve any difficulties.

St John's aims to meet its obligations regarding school attendance by:

- Promoting good attendance
- Reducing absence, including persistent absence
- Ensuring every pupil has access to full-time education to which they are entitled
- Acting early to address patterns of absence

We will support parents to perform their legal duty to ensure their children of compulsory school age attend regularly and will promote and support punctuality in attending lessons.

2. Legislation and guidance

This policy meets the requirements of the [school attendance guidance](#) from the Department for Education (DfE), and refers to the DfE's statutory guidance on [school attendance parental responsibility measures](#). These documents are drawn from the following legislation setting out the legal powers and duties that govern school attendance:

- [The Education Act 1996](#)
- [The Education Act 2002](#)
- [The Education and Inspections Act 2006](#)
- [The Education \(Pupil Registration\) \(England\) Regulations 2006](#)
- [The Education \(Pupil Registration\) \(England\) \(Amendment\) Regulations 2010](#)
- [The Education \(Pupil Registration\) \(England\) \(Amendment\) Regulations 2011](#)
- [The Education \(Pupil Registration\) \(England\) \(Amendment\) Regulations 2013](#)
- [The Education \(Pupil Registration\) \(England\) \(Amendment\) Regulations 2016](#)
- [The Education \(Penalty Notices\) \(England\) \(Amendment\) Regulations 2013](#)

This policy also refers to the DfE's guidance on the [school census](#), which explains the persistent absence threshold.

3. School procedures

3.1 Attendance register

By law, all schools (except those where all pupils are boarders) are required to keep an attendance register, and all pupils must be placed on this register.

The attendance register will be taken at the start of the first session of each school day and once during the afternoon session.

See appendix I for the DfE attendance codes.

Every entry in the attendance register will be preserved for 3 years after the date on which the entry was made.

Pupils must arrive in school by 08:25am on each school day.

The register for the first session will be taken at 08:40am and will be kept open until 9.00am. There are two second registration times as students have a split lunch.

Years 7, 8, 12 and 13 Register opens at 12.20 and closes at 12.30

Years 9, 10, and 11 Register opens at 13.10 and closes at 13.20.

On arrival after the close of register, pupils must immediately report to reception to ensure that we can be responsible for them whilst they are in school. The absence will only be authorised if a satisfactory explanation for the late arrival can be provided; for example, attendance at a medical appointment.

The absence will be recorded as unauthorised if the pupil has arrived late without justifiable cause.

3.2 Unplanned absence

Parents must notify the school on the first day of an unplanned absence – for example, if their child is unable to attend due to ill health – by 08:30 or as soon as practically possible (see also section 6).

Absence due to illness will be authorised unless the school has a genuine concern about the authenticity of the illness.

If the authenticity of the illness is in doubt or has been longer than 5 days the school may ask parents to provide medical evidence, such as a specialist's letter, prescription, appointment card or other appropriate form of evidence. We will not ask for medical evidence unnecessarily.

If the school is not satisfied about the authenticity of the illness, the absence will be recorded as unauthorised and parents will be notified of this.

3.3 Medical or dental appointments

Missing registration for a medical or dental appointment is counted as an authorised absence; advance notice is required for authorising these absences.

Please call the pupil absence line **01672 515081** on the morning of every absent day. However, we encourage parents to make medical and dental appointments out of school hours where possible. Where this is not possible, the pupil should be out of school for the minimum amount of time necessary.

Applications for other types of absence in term time must also be made in advance. Information relating to whether the school can authorise such absences can be found in section 4.

YEARS 7 – 11 PUPIL ABSENCE LINE – 01672 515081

YEARS 12 – 13 PUPIL ABSENCE LINE – 01672 517830

3.4 Following up absence

The school will follow up any absences to ascertain the reason, ensure proper safeguarding action is taken where necessary, identify whether the absence is approved or not and identify the correct attendance code to use. If we do not have a reason for absence, it will be recorded as unauthorised.

3.5 Reporting to parents

Attendance data will be sent out to parents in all school reports.

4. Authorised and unauthorised absence

4.1 Granting approval for term-time absence

The school will only **authorise** a medical absence if the circumstances are unavoidable. The school may request medical evidence if a parent contacts the school to confirm the pupil is unwell in the form of a medical appointment card with one appointment entered, letter from a professional, medication prescribed by a doctor, copy of prescription.

Whenever a pupil is to be taken out of school for a medical appointment, the parent must call the pupil absence line **01672 515081** and write a note of explanation. All pupils are to show the note at Reception when signing out.

The Principal may not authorise medical absence without this evidence.

The Principal will only authorise Leave of Absence if there are exceptional circumstances. However, the parent must contact the Principal in advance to secure authorisation, by completing a Pupil leave of Absence Form. We define 'exceptional circumstances' as work related interviews and meetings with external agencies (i.e. - CAMHS). The Principal **may** also authorise events where pupils are involved in any supervised sporting events or trials, theatre performances and participation in acts of religious worship.

Unauthorised absence - Absence will not be authorised unless parents have provided a satisfactory explanation and that it has been accepted as such by the Principal.

Examples of unsatisfactory explanations include:

- Family holidays.
- A pupil's/family member's birthday.
- Shopping for uniform.
- Having their hair cut.
- Closure of a sibling's school for INSET or other purposes.
- "Couldn't get up".
- Illness where the child is considered well enough to attend school.

The school considers each application for term-time absence individually, taking into account the facts, circumstances and relevant context behind the request. A leave of absence is granted entirely at the Principal's discretion.

Reluctance to attend school

Sometimes pupils seem anxious about leaving home to go to school. They may tell you that they feel unwell or give another reason to not attend. You may notice that they are worried from things that they say e.g. that they do not want to do particular subjects, feel that they have no friends or are being bullied. If this is the case, please contact the school as soon as possible to speak to the relevant Head of Year:

- Year 7 Mrs Nuala Hawkins
- Year 8 Mrs Sarah Parry
- Year 9 Mr Dean Evans
- Year 10 Mr Kevin Jefferies
- Year 11 Mrs Vicki Light

4.2 Legal sanctions

Schools can fine parents for the unauthorised absence of their child from school, where the child is of compulsory school age.

If issued with a penalty notice, parents must pay £60 within 21 days or £120 within 28 days. The payment must be made directly to the local authority.

The decision on whether or not to issue a penalty notice ultimately rests with the Principal, following the local authority's code of conduct for issuing penalty notices. This may take into account:

- A number of unauthorised absences occurring within a rolling academic year
- One-off instances of irregular attendance, such as holidays taken in term time without permission
- Where an excluded pupil is found in a public place during school hours without a justifiable reason

If the payment has not been made after 28 days, the local authority can decide whether to prosecute the parent or withdraw the notice.

5. Strategies for promoting attendance

- Mark the registers in accordance with the law twice a day (but for every lesson in addition).
- Inform any parents/carers who have not contacted the school, of the absence of their child on a particular day.
- Maintain records and monitor attendance of pupils on a regular basis.
- Authorise absences in accordance with the government guidelines. Please note that **only** the Principal can authorise absence.
- Contact parents/carers when the attendance falls below acceptable levels and/or when particular patterns of absence are causing concerns.
- Work with external agencies to maintain good attendance and to support the pupil/family with any issues that may affect attendance and punctuality to school.
- Provide reintegration support for pupils returning from long-term absence.
- Maintain a range of strategies to encourage good attendance by means of rewards.
- Work with relevant external agencies if a pupils' attendance becomes a concern, i.e. Social Care, CAMHS, Education Welfare Service and The Police.

5.1 Support Systems

School recognise that poor attendance can be an indication of difficulties in a child's life. This may be related to problems at home and or in school. Parents should make school aware of any difficulties or changes in circumstances that may affect their child's attendance and or behaviour in school, for example, bereavement, divorce/separation, incidents of domestic abuse. This will help the school identify any additional support that may be required.

St John's also recognises that some pupils are more likely to require additional support to attain good attendance, for example, those pupils with special educational needs, those with physical or mental health needs, and looked after children.

The school will implement a range of strategies to support improved attendance. Strategies used will include:

- Discussion with parents and pupils
- Counselling
- Attendance report cards
- Referrals to support agencies
- Learning mentors
- Pupil Voice activities
- Friendship groups
- PSHE
- Reward systems
- Time limited part time time-tables
- Additional learning support
- Behaviour support
- Use of the inclusion area
- Reintegration support packages

Support offered to families will be child centered and planned in discussion and agreement with both parents and pupils. Where parents fail or refuse to engage with the support offered and further unauthorised absence occurs, St John's will consider the use of legal sanctions.

6. Attendance monitoring

The Attendance Officer monitors pupil absence on a daily basis.

Parents are expected to call the school on every morning if their child is going to be absent due to ill health (see section 3.2).

If a pupil's absence goes above 4 days, we will contact the parents to discuss the reasons for this.

If after contacting parents a pupil's attendance continues to drop, we will consider involving the Local Authority.

The persistent absence threshold is 10%. If a pupil's individual overall absence rate is greater than or equal to 10%, the pupil will be classified as a persistent absentee.

Pupil-level absence data is collected each term and published at national and local authority level through the DfE's school absence national statistics releases. The underlying school-level absence data is published alongside the national statistics. We compare our attendance data to the national average and share this with governors.

7. Roles and Responsibilities

7.1 The Governing board

The governing board is responsible for monitoring attendance figures for the whole school on at least a termly basis. It also holds the Principal to account for the implementation of this policy.

7.2 The Principal

- The Principal is responsible for ensuring this policy is implemented consistently across the school, and for monitoring school-level absence data.
- The Principal will report on attendance data to the governors and the Excalibur Academies Trust Board.
- The Principal also supports other staff in monitoring the attendance of individual pupils and issues fixed-penalty notices, where necessary.

7.3 Assistant Vice Principal (Attendance)

- Will report to SLT on all aspects of attendance and punctuality
- Will establish annual attendance targets for the whole school and individual Year Groups
- Will regularly review Attendance and Punctuality data through the spreadsheet in consultation with Attendance Officer and Heads of Year.
- Will have bi-weekly meetings with the Attendance Officer.

7.4 The Attendance Officer

- Monitors attendance data at the school and individual pupil level.
- Works with the Assistant Vice Principal and Year Heads to tackle persistent absence.
- Arranges calls, meetings and home visits with parents to discuss attendance issues.
- Conducts SAMs (School Attendance Meetings) and liaises with Education Welfare Officer.
- Attends LAMs (Local Authority Meetings)
- Gathers necessary evidence to issue fixed-penalty notices.

7.5 Parents will be asked to:

- Talk to their child about school and education.
- Take a positive interest in their child's work and educational progress.
- Instil the value of education and regular school attendance within the home environment.
- Encourage their child to look to the future and aspire.
- Contact the school if their child is absent to let them know the reason why and the expected date of return. Follow this up with a note where possible.
- Try to avoid unnecessary absences. Wherever possible make appointments for the doctors, dentists etc. outside of school hours.
- Ask the school for help if their child is experiencing difficulties.
- Inform the school of any change in circumstances that may impact on their child's attendance.
- Support the school; take every opportunity to become involved in their child's education, form a positive relationship with school and acknowledge the importance of children receiving the same messages from both school and home.
- Encourage routine at home, for example, bedtimes, homework, preparing school bag and uniform the evening before.
- Not keep their child off school to go shopping, to help at home or to look after other members of the family.
- Avoid taking their child out of school during term-time, where this is unavoidable, and only in exceptional circumstances send a written leave request to the Principal in good time.

8. Monitoring arrangements

This policy will be reviewed annually by the Assistant Vice Principal and Attendance Officer. At every review, the policy will be shared with the governing board.

9. Links with other policies

This policy is linked to our Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy.

Appendix I: attendance codes

The following codes are taken from the DfE's guidance on school attendance.

Code	Definition	Scenario
/	Present (am)	Pupil is present at morning registration
\	Present (pm)	Pupil is present at afternoon registration
L	Late arrival	Pupil arrives late before register has closed
B	Off-site educational activity	Pupil is at a supervised off-site educational activity approved by the school
D	Dual registered	Pupil is attending a session at another setting where they are also registered
J	Interview	Pupil has an interview with a prospective employer/educational establishment
P	Sporting activity	Pupil is participating in a supervised sporting activity approved by the school
V	Educational trip or visit	Pupil is on an educational visit/trip organised, or approved, by the school
W	Work experience	Pupil is on a work experience placement

Code	Definition	Scenario
Authorised absence		
C	Authorised leave of absence	Pupil has been granted a leave of absence due to exceptional circumstances
E	Excluded	Pupil has been excluded but no alternative provision has been made
H	Authorised holiday	Pupil has been allowed to go on holiday due to exceptional circumstances
I	Illness	School has been notified that a pupil will be absent due to illness

M	Medical/dental appointment	Pupil is at a medical or dental appointment
R	Religious observance	Pupil is taking part in a day of religious observance
S	Study leave	Year 11 pupil is on study leave during their public examinations
T	Gypsy, Roma and Traveller absence	Pupil from a Traveller community is travelling, as agreed with the school
X	Circumstances related to coronavirus.	Pupil not attending in circumstances related to coronavirus (COVID-19)

Not attending in circumstances relating to coronavirus (COVID-19)

For the school year 2020 to 2021, a new category has been added to record instances when a pupil is 'not attending in circumstances relating to coronavirus (COVID-19)'.

Code X: not attending in circumstances relating to coronavirus (COVID-19)

(This code is not counted as an absence in the school census)

Unauthorised absence		
G	Unauthorised holiday	Pupil is on a holiday that was not approved by the school
N	Reason not provided	Pupil is absent for an unknown reason (this code should be amended when the reason emerges, or replaced with code O if no reason for absence has been provided after a reasonable amount of time)
O	Unauthorised absence	School is not satisfied with reason for pupil's absence
U	Arrival after registration	Pupil arrived at school after the register closed

Code	Definition	Scenario
X	Not required to be in school	Pupil of non-compulsory school age is not required to attend
Y	Unable to attend due to exceptional circumstances	School site is closed, there is disruption to travel as a result of a local/national emergency, or pupil is in custody
Z	Pupil not on admission register	Register set up but pupil has not yet joined the school
#	Planned school closure	Whole or partial school closure due to half-term/bank holiday/INSET day

Appendix 2 COVID – 19 Addendum

Attendance expectations

From the start of the autumn term 2020 pupil attendance will be mandatory and the usual rules on attendance will apply, including:

- parents' duty to ensure that their child of compulsory school age attends regularly at the school where the child is a registered pupil
- schools' responsibilities to record attendance and follow up absence
- the ability to issue sanctions, including fixed penalty notices, in line with local authorities' codes of conduct

Not attending in circumstances related to coronavirus (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, we have made changes to the regulations governing school attendance registers to add a new category of non-attendance – '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 (COVID-19) 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.

Pupils who have symptoms should self-isolate and get a test.

If a pupil tests negative and if they feel well and no longer have symptoms similar to coronavirus (COVID-19), they can stop self-isolating and return to school. If the pupil remains unwell following the test (such as with a different illness), then they should be recorded as code I – illness, as would usually be the case. Code X should only be used up until the time of the negative test result. Schools should not retrospectively change the attendance register due to a negative test result.

If a pupil tests positive, they should continue to self-isolate for at least 10 days from the onset of their symptoms. They should only return to school if they do not have symptoms other than a cough or loss of sense of smell or taste (anosmia). This is because a cough or anosmia can last for several weeks once the infection has gone. Code X should be used for the period of self-isolation until the test. After the pupil tests positive they should be recorded as code I (illness) until they are able to return to school.

If someone in the pupil's household has symptoms, the household should self-isolate and the member of their household should get a test.

If the member of the household tests negative, the pupil can stop self-isolating and can return to school. Code X should only be used up until the time of the negative test result when the pupil can return to school.

If the household member tests positive, the pupil should continue self-isolating for the full 14 days from when the member of their household first had symptoms. Code X should be used during this period.

In all cases of self-isolation, schools should ask parents to inform them immediately about the outcome of a test. Schools should not require evidence of negative test results or other medical evidence before admitting children or welcoming them back after a period of self-isolation.

Pupils who are required to self-isolate because they are a close contact of someone who has symptoms or confirmed coronavirus (COVID-19)

Pupils may not have symptoms themselves but may be required to self-isolate if they are a close contact of someone with coronavirus (COVID-19).

The [NHS test and trace](#) guidance states that a person should self-isolate for 14 days if they have had recent close contact with a person who has tested positive for coronavirus (COVID-19). In the event of a confirmed coronavirus (COVID-19) case in the school community, the local health protection team will provide advice on who this applies to, advising them to self-isolate for 14 days since they were last in close contact with the person that has tested positive when they were infectious. Code X should be used for these pupils during this period.