

St John the Baptist Primary School

Attendance Policy and Procedures

Reviewed Annually Autumn 2024 Governor Approved Yes Next Review due Autumn 2025 Safeguarding Policies
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Reviewed and updated Oct 17 – appendix 1 added and other minor changes made
Reviewed 2019 – minor changes
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Reviewed 2021 – COVID link updated
Reviewed 2022 – changes in line with ‘Working together to improve school attendance’
Reviewed 2023 – minor changes to role titles
Reviewed 2024 – minor changes to role titles

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Vision Statement

Statement of Intent

At St John the Baptist Primary School we believe that regular school attendance cannot be overestimated. Regular attendance is vital to a good education. Securing it must therefore be a high priority of the school, governors, Local Authority, parents and the pupils themselves. By failing to attend school regularly, pupils lessen the impact of the education provided for them. Pupil absence may seriously disrupt the continuity of teaching for themselves and others.

The aim of St John the Baptist Primary School is to facilitate our pupils' regular and sustained attendance at school by providing a full and efficient educational experience for all pupils.

Parents and carers have a vital role to play and there is a strong emphasis on maintaining home-school links and good communication systems that can be utilised whenever there is concern about attendance. The barriers to accessing education are wide and complex, both within and beyond the school gates, and are often specific to individual pupils and families. All staff work to remove these barriers.

School Attendance – The Statutory Framework

Education Act 1944 – Establishes the duty of parents to ensure regular attendance of pupils.

Education Act 1996 – Establishes the duty of LA's to enforce school attendance (Section 444). The Act states that "The parent of a child of compulsory school age registered at school and failing to attend regularly is guilty of an offence punishable by law".

Pupil's Registration Regulations 1986 – Establishes the criteria for the maintenance of Attendance Registers.

The Education (Pupils' Attendance Records) Regulations 1991.

Framework for the Inspection of Schools (OfSTED) – 2011.

The Education (Pupil Registration) Regulations 1997 (amended) provides the new registration categories of Approved Educational Activity. (Amending Regulation 3 (2), (3), (5) of the Education Regulations 1995).

Registration Regulations 1995 (Amended) gives schools discretionary powers to grant leave for the purpose of a family holiday in term time.

Education Act 2002 (Section 53) enables an overall absence target to be set, covering authorised and unauthorised absence, supporting school improvement and raising community awareness of the issue (September 2003)

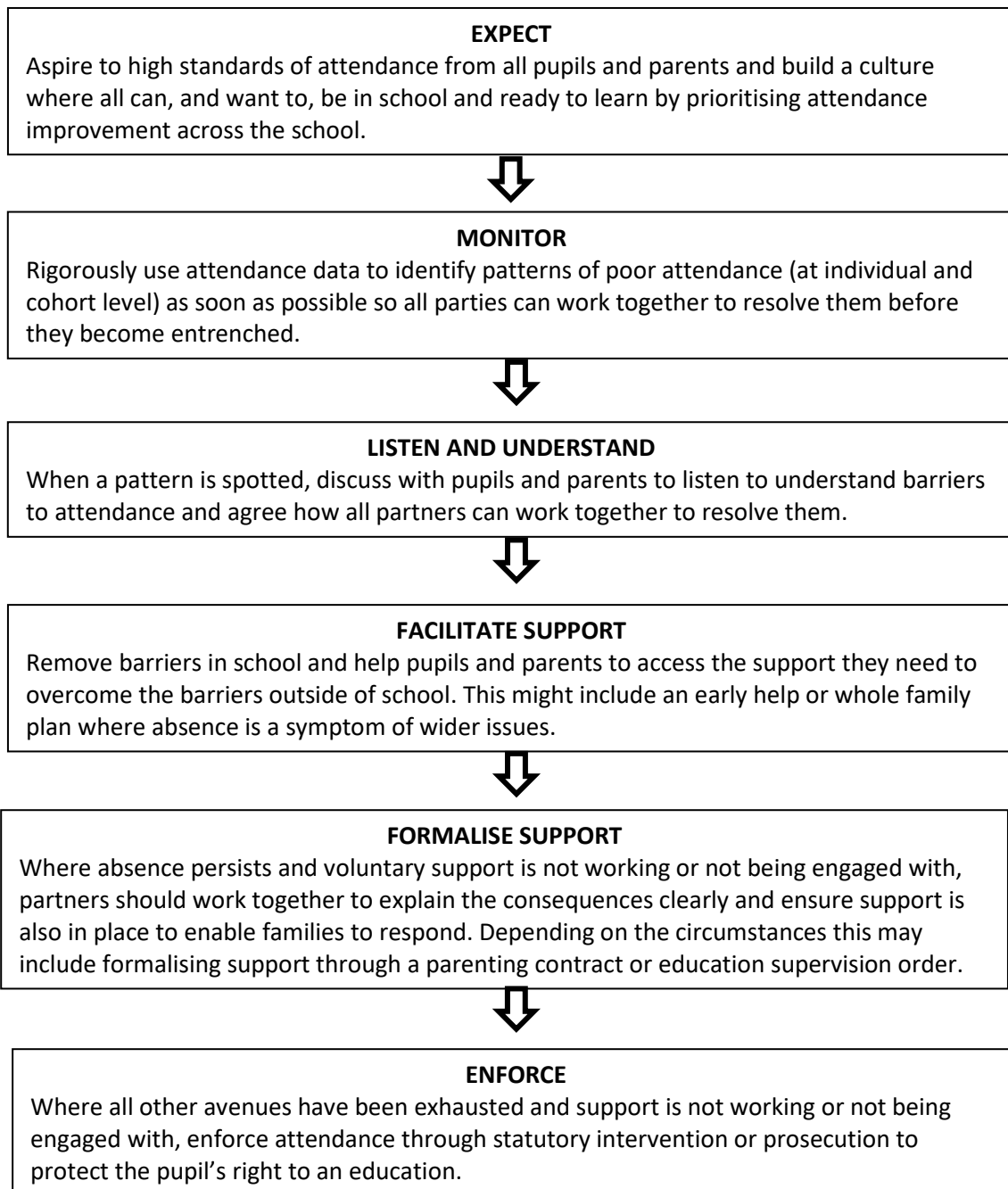
Pupil Registration Regulations 2006, revokes previous Regulations of 1995 and the subsequent amendments of 1997 and 2001 (England only). It places a requirement on schools to put pupils on the admissions and attendance registers on the first day that they are expected to attend not, as previously, when they first attend.

The statutory Guidance from the DfE, published in August 2013 gives further recommendations that Headteachers should NOT authorise absence during term time.

Working Together to Improve School Attendance – September 2022

Working together to improve attendance

Successfully treating the root causes of absence and removing barriers to attendance, at home, in school or more broadly requires schools and local partners to work collaboratively with, not against families. All partners should work together to:



Registration

In accordance with current legislation, each class in school has an attendance register. St John the Baptist uses electronic SIMS registration which is accessible by the school office at all times.

The doors open at 8.40am and close at 8.45 for registration. Children must be in school for 8.45 as this is when learning starts. If you arrive after this time you must report to the school office and complete a 'Late form' stating the reason and your child will be given a late mark on the register. If your child is more than 15 minutes late after registration, this will be recorded as an unauthorised absence.

There is a legal requirement upon schools to keep an attendance register on which, at the beginning of each morning and afternoon sessions, pupils are marked present or absent. The Education (Pupils Attendance Record) Regulations 1991 introduced a further requirement that attendance registers must show whether an absence of a pupil of compulsory school age is authorised or unauthorised. This is shown on our computer records.

Both staff and pupils should see the taking of registers as an integral part of the school day, as was indeed intended in law. Particular attention should be paid to accurate registration and to the preservation and security of registers.

Monitoring and encouraging attendance is an integral part of the Head teacher's role. Head teachers have primary responsibility for monitoring the attendance of pupils' in the class groups. Head teachers also have responsibility for ensuring contact is made with home regarding concerns about attendance and punctuality and also ensuring that accurate registers of attendance and information explaining absences is gained. The Deputy Head is the person that the Head Teacher designates to complete these tasks and reports to the Head Teacher.

Absence

It is the parent/carer's responsibility to inform school of the reason for a child's absence. We ask that parents/carers notify school before 9am each morning their child is absent to discuss the reason for the absence. The following methods can be used to notify us of an absence:

- Phone the school office (from 8am) – 01642 607123
- Facebook Message
- WhatsApp/Text Helen Conroy (Welfare Lead) - 07496368035

If medical treatment has been received, the parent should present this medical evidence (e.g. prescription/ appointment card) to explain the absence. We will ask for an expected return date to school.

It is a fact that parentally-condoned unjustified absence is a serious problem in some schools. This can be every bit as damaging as the more traditional forms of truancy.

Only the school, within the context of the law, can approve absence, not parents. The fact that a parent has offered a note or other notification (telephone call or personal contact) in relation to a particular absence does not, of itself, oblige the school to accept it if the school does not accept the explanation offered as a valid reason for absence. If, after further investigation doubt remains about the explanation offered – or where no explanation is forthcoming at all the absence must be treated as unauthorised. Where parentally condoned unjustified absence appears to be a problem in relation to a particular pupil, school will initiate Early Intervention procedures, at the earliest opportunity, and involve the Attendance Officer if necessary.

An excessive amount of absence can also seriously disrupt continuity of learning and encourage disaffection. We must be alert to emerging patterns of absence. We may authorise absence retrospectively where we are satisfied as to the explanation offered. Absences of pupils of compulsory school age without valid reason or for which no explanation has been provided will be treated as unauthorised and school attendance procedures followed.

Section 444 of the Education Act 1996 provides that no offence is committed where a pupil of compulsory school age is prevented from attending school by reason of illness. If school is satisfied that a pupil is absent as a result of illness the absence will be treated as authorised.

Where we have reason to doubt the validity of an explanation offered in respect of a particular absence, further information will be requested by the school from the child's parents. If the school continues to be dissatisfied then the absence will be treated as unauthorised.

Where there is doubt about the authenticity of absence attributed to illness, school will seek the advice and support of the School Health Service or may wish to seek permission from the child's parent to consult with their GP. If a pupil is absent for a prolonged period or the school notices a pattern emerging, early contact will be made with the Pastoral Team and/or the School Health Service.

We encourage where possible parents to only take children out of school for dental and medical appointments where this is an emergency or essential (i.e. planned hospital appointment). Leave for scheduled medical or dental appointments during the school day will not be given (ie. The absence will NOT be authorised).

All parents/carers are asked to sign an Attendance Contract with school where they agree to keep their child's attendance at 96% or above.

Reporting of Absence Procedure

Once we receive a reason for an absence, we may authorise that absence by inserting the correct symbol on the computer records.

Reporting reasons for absence by telephone, Facebook message, text, verbally to a member of staff or a note are all acceptable. We expect that parents will contact the school by and report the reason for absence on the first day of absence before 9am. St John the Baptist Primary School operates a first day calling system. If we have not received a reason for absence by 9am on the first day of absence a member of admin staff will contact the parent/carer to try to ascertain the reason for absence. If we are unable to contact the family, a member of the Pastoral Team may conduct a home visit. Where concerns continue, the family will be invited in for a meeting with a member of the Welfare Lead (and the Deputy Head of applicable) and an Attendance Support Plan will be put in place. If concerns and absences continue, or no contact can be made, a referral will be made to the Local Authority 'Locality Team' under attendance / children missing education procedures.

The school administrators will record all notes and notes of telephone messages and a note of any verbal explanations on the SIMS registration tool.

Where a pupil is present for registration but then has to attend an appointment, the school need take no action beyond recording the fact that (for the purpose of emergency evacuation) the pupil, although registered, is not physically present. Similarly the school must note the presence of a pupil (again for purposes of emergency evacuation) who was not there when the register was being taken but returns later from an appointment. The school clerk will make a note in the relevant day's column in the register as to the times the child came or left so that there is information on the child's whereabouts in the event of emergency evacuation.

Holidays in Term Time

- **Can I take my child out for a holiday?**

No. Parents DO NOT have an automatic right to take their children out of school for holidays in term time. The Pupil Registration Regulations state that Head teachers should NOT grant leave of absence unless in exceptional circumstances.

Parents are strongly urged to avoid taking family holidays during term time due to the disruption and impact of the missed education on the child.

The DfE states:

'You have to get permission from the head teacher if you want to take your child out of school during term time.'

You can only do this if:

- *you make an application to the head teacher IN ADVANCE*
- *there are exceptional circumstances**

*Exceptional circumstances have been agreed by Governors

- **How do I apply to take my child out of school?**

The application to the head teacher must be made in writing, using the holiday form, but it is encouraged that you discuss the reason in person prior to completing the form - particularly if you feel there is an exceptional circumstance.

Holiday forms should be completed and returned to the school office who will send it to the head/deputy head teacher for individual consideration. If you have discussed a sensitive reason for the absence in a meeting with the head/deputy head, and would prefer not to write it on the form, please state that you have discussed this with the head/deputy.

- **What will happen if I take my child out of school?**

The parent will receive written notification as to whether the holiday absence is authorised.

If your request is declined, and you still take your child out of school, each parent within your household will be issued with a £60 penalty notice for each child you have taken out of school.

Categorising Absence

Our policy deals in general with the categories of absence and cannot cover every eventuality. It will be necessary on occasion to exercise reasonable discretion when investigating some absences.

Some Key points: -

- registered pupils of compulsory school age are required by law to be in school;
- whilst it is right that schools should recognise that individual pupils and families have problems the aim should always be to expect regular attendance;

- lateness should be actively discouraged;
- where a pupil is absent without prior authorisation an explanation is required. If one is not forthcoming (for whatever reason) it must be treated as unauthorised and the register recorded accordingly;
- schools are not obliged to accept parental notes where there is reason to doubt the validity of the explanation offered;
- explanations such as minding the house, looking after other children, or shopping trips within school hours will not normally be acceptable reasons for absence;
- parents should not expect, or be led to expect, that, as of right, schools will agree to family holidays during term time. These will only be granted under exceptional circumstances, at the discretion of the Head Teacher;
- even where absence is authorised, schools should be alerted to emerging patterns of absence, which may seriously disrupt continuity of learning.
- in promoting regular attendance, schools should work closely with the Local Authority Attendance and Exclusion Team.

Punctuality

It is St John the Baptist School's policy to actively discourage late arrival. A pupil arriving late may seriously disrupt not only his or her continuity of learning but also that of others. In recognition of local circumstances (such as bad weather or occasional public transport difficulties), we may keep registers open for a reasonable period.

For registration to mean anything at all, a firm line must be taken on late arrivals. To do otherwise undermines the whole purpose of registration and may serve to encourage other pupils to arrive late. Particular attention will be paid to emerging patterns of late arrival.

Where a pupil does arrive late and misses registration, his or her presence on site will still need to be noted for purposes of emergency evacuation. Anyone arriving late must report to the main office and will be escorted to their class by a member of staff. A form will need to be completed giving the reason for the late arrival.

In responding to lateness, we will of course need to take account of the individual circumstances of each case. In some instances enquiries may reveal that the late arrival stems from difficulties at home or other genuinely unavoidable circumstances. Teachers of pupils who persistently fail to arrive on time with valid reason need to keep the Head teacher informed. Further action may be taken if there is no valid reason for this lateness.

Pupils with medical conditions or special educational needs and disabilities

Some pupils face greater barriers to attendance than their peers. These can include pupils who suffer from long term medical conditions or who have special educational needs and disabilities. Their right to an education is the same as any other pupil and therefore the attendance ambition for these pupils should be the same as they are for any other pupil. That said, in working with their parents to improve attendance, schools should be mindful of the barriers these pupils face and put additional support in place where necessary to help them access their full-time education. This should include:

- Having sensitive conversations and developing good support for pupils with physical or mental health conditions. For example, making reasonable adjustments where a pupil has a disability or putting in place an individual healthcare plan where needed. Considering whether additional support from external partners

(including the local authority or health services) would be appropriate, making referrals in a timely manner and working together with those services to deliver any subsequent support.

- Working with parents to develop specific support approaches for attendance for pupils with special educational needs and disabilities, including where applicable ensuring the provision outlined in the pupil's education, health and care plan is accessed. In addition, schools should work with families to help support routines where school transport is regularly being missed and work with other partners to encourage the scheduling of additional support interventions or medical appointments outside of the main school day.
- Establish strategies for removing the in-school barriers these pupils face, including considering support or reasonable adjustments for uniform, transport, routines, access to support in school and lunchtime arrangements.
- Ensure joined up pastoral care is in place where needed and consider whether a time-limited phased return to school would be appropriate, for example for those affected by anxiety about school attendance.
- Ensure data is regularly monitored for these groups including at board and governing body meetings and in Targeting Support Meetings with the local authority so that additional support from other partners is accessed where necessary.

Pupils with long term illnesses or other health needs may need additional support to continue their education, such as alternative provision provided by the local authority. Local authorities are responsible for arranging suitable education for children of compulsory school age who, because of health reasons, would otherwise not receive suitable education. Please see further information on <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/supporting-pupils-at-school-with-medical-conditions--3>.

In all cases, schools should be sensitive and avoid stigmatising pupils and parents and they should talk to pupils and parents and understand how they feel and what they think would help improve their attendance to develop individual approaches that meet an individual pupil's specific needs.

Part-time Timetables

All children are entitled to a full time education. However, there may be circumstances where a reduced timetable is needed. In exceptional circumstances we will inform the Local Authority (in line with their guidance) of any temporary reduced timetable we put into place. If one is needed it would be for the following pupils:

- A child in our EMS with complex medical conditions
- A child on a PDC placement who requires a reduced timetable to integrate into school and have a positive experience
- Any other exceptional circumstances in discussion with parent/carer

These children will usually be open to other agencies and it will be in agreement with any other relevant professionals.

Attendance Procedures

See Appendix 1 (Promoting Good Attendance Procedures) 3 stages:

Stage 1 – Early Intervention

Stage 2 – Attendance Support Plan

Stage 3 – Referral to attendance officer

Monitoring of attendance

The Deputy Head is responsible for the monitoring of attendance with the support of the PSA. Data and contextual information is used to target specific families to improve attendance. We will look for patterns in non-attendance or lateness. See Appendix 1 for procedures.

The Role of the LA Attendance Officer

The role of our designated Attendance Officer is to:

- liaise, where appropriate, between home and school;
- investigate irregular attendance or lateness which may give rise to concerns that a child may be at risk;
- complete a regular register check and provide school with advice on strategies to improve attendance;
- provide advice and support to parents through the initiation of attendance procedures
- work with children who are experiencing problems with Attendance and/or punctuality and/or are preparing to transfer to secondary school
- assist school in setting attendance targets;

Referral to the LA Attendance Officer:

The parent must not have a previous conviction for non-attendance and attendance procedures must not be currently instigated.

Referral to the Attendance Officer will be made in the following circumstances:

- A minimum absence of 10 sessions (5 school days) which are classed as unauthorised during the previous 8 school weeks must be on the pupils attendance register.
- Where a penalty notice warning letter is issued for 10 sessions of unauthorised absence in the previous eight school weeks the pupil's attendance will be monitored for 4 school weeks.
- If any unauthorised absence is recorded during this 4 week monitoring period the Attendance Team will consider the issue of a penalty notice to each parent where the threshold is met. Each parent will receive a separate penalty notice.
- a pupil has been absent for two consecutive weeks and the absence is unauthorised;
- the intervention by the school has failed to secure a pupil's regular attendance.
- an absence of 10 sessions (5 school days) for taking holiday leave during the current term without permission of the school has been accrued

A referral form will be completed for each pupil and given to the Attendance Officer.

The Attendance Officer will meet with the head teacher fortnightly and progress reports on referrals made reviewed and discussed.

Rewarding Good Attendance and Punctuality

As well as taking appropriate action against parents who fail to secure the regular attendance of their children, we will take steps to reward good attendance and punctuality at St John the Baptist School.

We recognise that at Primary School, children can't bring themselves to school and are reliant on their parents/carers. Therefore we aim to work with parents/carers to praise them for improving attendance verbally by staff.

Role of Governors

Improving attendance requires constant focus, and effective whole school approaches require regular ongoing support, guidance, and challenge. We therefore expect all trusts and governing bodies to:

- Recognise the importance of school attendance and promote it across the school's ethos and policies.
- Ensure school leaders fulfil expectations and statutory duties.
- Regularly review attendance data, discuss, and challenge trends, and help school leaders focus improvement efforts on the individual pupils or cohorts who need it most.
- Ensure school staff receive adequate training on attendance.

Appendix 1

St John the Baptist Primary School Procedures for promoting good attendance

School support

- First day calling to obtain a reason and an expected return date and a subsequent home visit if no answer
- Class staff have the best relationship with parents/carers and they are to discuss non-attendance with parents/carers and outline the impact on their child. If support is needed they can refer to the Welfare Lead.
- Meeting with the Welfare Lead to discuss any issues and overcome any barriers.
- Offer advice and sign-posting to different agencies and professionals e.g school nurse.
- Attendance support plans/Early Intervention initiatives/Home visits

Consecutive absences due to illness

First day of absence:

First day calling to obtain reason for absence and expected return date.

- Absence will be recorded as unauthorised unless medical evidence is provided by the parent/carer.
- If the expected date of return is 5 days, parents informed that they need to seek medical advice as 10 sessions (5 days) absence, without medical evidence, could result in in-school attendance procedures.

Expected date of return:

- If the child does not return on the expected date, school to contact the parent again to obtain the reason why.
- A home visit will be completed
- Parent/carer will be informed verbally that they should seek medical advice or further medical advice.
- If absence has reached 8 consecutive sessions (4 days), without medical evidence, parent/carer to be contacted, by phone and letter, to offer support in getting their child back to school.
- If absence continues, parent/carer to be invited to a meeting with a member of the pastoral team.

Accrued absence procedures

Non attendance reaches 6 sessions (3 days)

- When a child accumulates 6, non-consecutive, sessions (3 days) absence, within 3 weeks, the parent/carer will be contacted by letter/conversation outlining the different ways we can support them and informing them that they could be put on an attendance support plan if the child has another day off in the next x number of days in x number of weeks.

Non attendance continues

- Parents/carers invited into school to discuss their child's attendance with the Welfare Lead, and Deputy Head.
- Attendance support plan will be put in place.

Half termly monitoring

- Letters are to be sent to the families of children who have below 97% attendance outlining the importance of good attendance and the support we can offer. Any child who is classed as a Persistent Absentee will receive a PA Letter.

Attendance support plans

- These will last for 6 weeks and outline responsibilities of parents/carers and school support. Any absence in this period, without medical evidence, will result in a referral.
- These will be supportive and reviewed at fortnightly intervals with the parent/carer
- Parents/carers will not be put on a plan more than twice in an academic year.