



St John's Mead School

Valuing Effort, Valuing Others, Valuing Self

ATTENDANCE POLICY

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**St JOHNS MEAD
ATTENDANCE POLICY**

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1 INTRODUCTION

The School and governors believes that attendance at school is vital and that every day counts – your child should come to school every day. The following policy outlines the reasons for and management of attendance at school

2 RATIONALE:

At the heart of everything we do at St John’s Mead is a child’s learning, but children cannot learn if they are absent. We therefore aim to ensure that our children take full advantage of the educational opportunities available to them and raise standards by promoting regular attendance and punctuality of pupils. We have adopted the following policy and procedures in consultation with parents, children, staff and governors.

3 AIMS:

- To improve attendance and punctuality across the school.
- To create a culture that encourages regular attendance and makes attendance and punctuality a priority for all.
- To monitor and support children whose attendance is a cause for concern and work in partnership with parents and carers to resolve any difficulty.
- To keep parents and staff informed of their responsibilities for attendance and punctuality

4 GUIDELINES

Parental Roles and Responsibilities for School Attendance

Parents are legally responsible for ensuring their child attends school regularly and punctually. We expect the parent/carer to:

- Understand the importance of good attendance and punctuality and promote this with their child
- Provide up to date contact numbers and changes of address

- Notify the school when their child is unable to attend, with a reason, on the first day and every subsequent day of the absence
- Provide a letter, email or phone call indicating absence due to illness, medical/ dental appointments which unavoidably fall in school time or emergencies
- Ensure that their child arrives at school on time each day
- Let the school know if their child is going to be late, e.g. if a car breaks down; if an urgent appointment has been made

Staff Roles and Responsibilities for School Attendance and Lateness The School will:

- Give attendance and punctuality a high priority.
- Ensure all new parents are made aware of the Policy and information on attendance in the School Prospectus and through the website.
- Provide and promote a welcoming and positive atmosphere so that children feel safe and their presence is valued.
- Work to ensure that there is enjoyment and commitment to learning among the children.
- Encourage the children to have a positive attitude towards attendance and punctuality.
- Ensure that attendance is effectively monitored and any unexplained absences are followed up promptly.
- Contact individual parents where there is concern about their child's attendance or punctuality.
- Investigate whether there are any home or school factors (or both), which are affecting a child's school attendance.
- Report to parents on the child's attendance in the end of year.
- Share with parent/carers at parents' evening the children's attendance rates in Autumn and Spring, if they are causing concern.
- Reward good or improving attendance through letters home, and stickers and certificates in celebration assembly.
- Liaise with the Education Welfare Officer, and other agencies, when necessary to promote good attendance.
- **STATUTORY FRAMEWORK:**

Under Section 7 of the 1996 Education Act, parents have the primary responsibility for ensuring that children of compulsory school age must receive suitable education whether by regular school attendance or otherwise.

The school is obliged by law to differentiate between authorised and unauthorised absence. A letter or telephone message from a parent does not in itself authorise an absence. Only if the school is satisfied as to the validity of the explanation offered by the letter/message will the absence be authorised.

5 AUTHORISED/UNAUTHORISED ABSENCE:

It is vital that all staff apply the same criteria when deciding whether or not to authorise an absence.

5.1 Authorised

An authorised absence is where the school has either given approval in advance for a pupil of compulsory school age to be away, or has accepted an explanation offered afterwards as satisfactory justification for absence (adhering to DoE Guidelines). This includes children being educated off site. Absences can only be authorised by the Headteacher. Parents are asked to telephone the school before 8.40am on the first day of absence. If we do not receive a telephone call, the office will telephone to establish the reason. It is anticipated that by making these first day calls, and following up on all absences, parents will get into the habit of calling the school to notify of any absences.

Absence can be **authorised** if.

- ◆ the pupil is away from school for a good reason such as illness or other unavoidable causes. e.g. a day of religious observance, a family bereavement, the pupil is attending an approved off-site activity or special off-site tuition.

5.2 Unauthorised

All other absences will be treated as unauthorised, for example, shopping trips, holidays in term time, occasions where the school feels a child is being kept home without good reason or where a child is late a long time after registration has finished and the parent/carer fails to provide an acceptable explanation. In the event of no message being received on the first day of absence and after reasonable attempts by the school no explanation for an absence is received, the absence will be recorded as unauthorised.

Absence will be **unauthorised** if: -

- ◆ no explanation is forthcoming;
- ◆ the school does not consider the absence reasonable and for which no permission has been given. e.g. the pupil stays at home to mind the house or look after siblings; the pupil is shopping during school hours;

6 SCHOOL PROCEDURES:

6.1 Registration:

Registers are taken twice a day using the electronic register at 8:55 am and after lunchtime. Registers show whether any absence is authorised or unauthorised using the codes provided in SIMS (schools information management system) The school office staff will follow up any missing marks in the electronic register as soon as this has closed to ensure parental awareness and the child's safety.

6.2 Lateness:

Poor punctuality is not acceptable. If a child misses the start of the day, they can miss work and do not spend time with their class teacher getting vital information and news for the day. Late arriving pupils also disrupt lessons and this can be embarrassing for the child. Good time keeping is a vital life skill, which will help our children as they progress through their school life and out into the wider world.

- Pupils who arrive after the register has been called at 8.55 am and 12:55pm (Juniors)/1:15pm (Infants)1:pm will be considered as late.
- Pupils who arrive after the registers have closed must report to the office
- Pupils who arrive after 9.20am and 1.20pm(Juniors)/1:40pm (Infants) will be officially absent for the whole morning or afternoon session. This will be considered an unauthorised absence unless a satisfactory reason is given.
- Action to address lateness will be taken. A letter will be sent to parents and carers of children who are late on a regular basis.

6.3 Illness:

- Parents/carers are asked to contact the school on the first day of absence to provide a reason for the absence.
- Where office staff are not made aware of the reason for a child's absence they will, wherever possible, contact parents or carers by telephone on the first day of absence.

6.4 Medical or dental appointments:

- Absence from school due to a medical or dental appointment will be considered as an authorised absence. Parents and carers are requested to inform the class teacher in writing in advance of the appointment.
- Parents and carers are encouraged to make all medical appointments out of school hours.

6.5 Leave of Absence (including holidays) in term time:

Holidays in term time have had a significant part on school attendance figures. This is an issue for all schools in South Gloucestershire. Adaptations were made in September 2013 to the Attendance Regulations (2006). A key change was the removal of a school's option to authorise holiday. Therefore there is no automatic

entitlement in law for leave of absence during term time. Authorisation for leave of absence can only be authorised in 'exceptional circumstances'. Please note the following points:

- All requests for 'exceptional circumstances' leave of absence must be made in advance in writing to the Headteacher.
- Absence will be authorised for religious observance to a body which parents/carers and the child belong.
- Requests will only be granted in exceptional circumstances. The nature of an exceptional circumstance will be at the Headteacher's discretion.
- South Gloucestershire council has stated that any unauthorised leave of more than 5 days recorded in 7 school weeks can result in the school requesting the Local Authority issue a penalty notice.
- The notice is a fine of £60 per parent per child if paid within 28 days of receipt of the notice; but rising to £120 if paid after 28 days but within 42 days. 4
- The payment must be made in full – part payments will not be accepted – details of how to pay are printed on the Penalty Notice.
- If the fine remains unpaid after 42 days, the local authority will prosecute the parent for the nonattendance of the child at school. Leave of Absence will not be granted during the following weeks, for any reason.

In line with LA guidelines, holiday will NOT be approved during Terms 1 and 5 due to the importance of settling into a new school year in term 1 and National assessments in Term 5.

6.6 Any other absence:

Other absence from school will be considered on an individual basis and a decision will be made whether the absence will be authorised or unauthorised. Cases will be judged on their individual merits taking into account the following:

- 1) the nature of the event;
- 2) the frequency of requests;
- 3) the overall attendance pattern of the child.

These should be applied for using the 'Request for absence form' which can be obtained from the school office.

7 ATTENDANCE MONITORING

All absences, authorised and unauthorised, and lateness will be reported to the parent/carer at the end of the academic year within their child's report.

At the end of each term certificates are presented to all children with 100% attendance for that term in an assembly. As the year progresses certificates are given for one term of full attendance (bronze), two terms (silver) and all year (gold). Children with 96% or better attendance are also congratulated in these assemblies.

The school monitors the attendance of all pupils on a weekly basis. Where the school has identified that a child's attendance has fallen below the level of 90% after nearly two half terms and/or have had 4+ broken weeks in one half term, the school will contact the family either in person or by letter. This will make them aware of our concerns and the importance of consistent and regular attendance at school. If there is no subsequent improvement in the child's attendance after a period of one month a request will be made for a School Attendance Meeting with the parents and, where necessary, the Education Welfare Officer. The purpose of this meeting will be to discuss expectations and try to ensure that their child's attendance improves. Support and advice will be offered where necessary. If a child's attendance continues to cause concern and where there are some unauthorised absences a letter of referral will be sent to the Education Welfare Service. The school will endeavour to work with and support all children and families wherever possible. Children who have attendance of less than 90% are considered as persistent absentees by the Department of Education and the Local Authority.:

APPENDIX 1 - SPECIAL CIRCUMSTANCES

The school recognises and embraces the cultural heritage of the showman families. In order to accommodate the unique lifestyle of showman families and to support them to ensure children from these families achieve the best educational outcomes the school has consulted with these families and the LA to establish the following:

- Showman families can request up to 10 days authorised holiday. Any additional holiday taken will be marked as unauthorised.
- Showman families can request up to 5 additional days for celebratory events such as weddings and christenings. Any additional days will be marked as unauthorised.
- Attendance for children from showman families needs to be at least 100 days a year. Distance learning, where there is regular contact with the school, will be recorded using the B code and will count towards overall attendance.
- Where 10 or more unauthorised **sessions** are recorded the situation may need to be referred to the Education Welfare Officer.