



ATTENDANCE POLICY

OVERVIEW

St James' Catholic Primary School is committed to promoting the welfare and education of all our pupils through excellent school attendance and punctuality. We know that every day lost to education and/or lateness can have a serious impact on your child's attainment and overall progress in school.

We are therefore fully committed to promoting school attendance and punctuality by encouraging an environment and ethos where children feel safe and can build positive relationships with their peers and with staff.

We are also committed to meeting our obligations with regards to school attendance, including those laid out in the Department for Education's (DfE's) statutory guidance on [working together to improve school attendance \(applies from 19 August 2024\)](#). **Parents have a legal duty under section 444 of the 1996 Education Act, as amended by Section 72 of the Criminal Justice and Court Services Act 2000, to ensure their children attend school regularly and punctually.**

St James' Catholic Primary attaches great importance to children attending school regularly and punctually. To this end we will do all we can to encourage parents/carers to ensure that the children in their care achieve maximum possible attendance and that any problems that prevent full attendance and good punctuality are identified and acted on promptly.

PURPOSE

This document is a statement of the aims, principles and strategies for monitoring pupils with the aim:

- To improve attendance
- To reduce unauthorised absence
- To improve punctuality
- To regularly monitor attendance levels within individual classes and across the whole school.
- To inform and support parents/carers where attendance gives cause for concern.

OBJECTIVES

- To ensure that all children attend school and are punctual every day.
- To work in partnership with parents/carers in ensuring that their children attend school and that they arrive on time.
- To ensure that the school attendance target of 96% is achieved.
- To keep accurate records of attendance through the school registers and to take prompt action to follow up absences.
- To work effectively with the LA and other external agencies to follow up attendance issues efficiently.
- To monitor closely children with attendance and punctuality issues and to work with parents/carers and where appropriate other agencies to bring about improvement.

EXPECTATIONS

We expect all parents/carers to:

- Ensure their child attends has good school attendance
- Be aware of their legal responsibilities regarding attendance
- Ensure their child attends school punctually, no later than 8:55am
- Discuss with their child's Class Teacher or our Pastoral Manager any problems preventing them from attending school
- Ensure their child attends school appropriately dressed in school uniform and is prepared for the day

- Ensure that they contact school on the first day of the child's absence by 9:30am
- Try to make appointments outside of the school day or during half term.
- Provide medical evidence or appointment cards where possible.

We expect the school staff will:

- Provide a welcoming atmosphere and a safe learning environment for the children
- Set high expectations for the attendance and punctuality of all pupils
- Promote good attendance and the benefits of good attendance
- Promote and support punctuality in attending lessons
- Keep regular and accurate records of attendance for all pupils twice daily
- Monitor all pupil's attendance
- Contact parents as soon as possible when a pupil fails to attend where no message has been received to explain the absence
- Act early to address patterns of absence
- Build strong relationships with families to make sure pupils have the support in place to attend school
- The school day begins at 8:55am with registers closing at 9am. Pupils arriving after this time will receive a late mark
- If the school has not heard from a parent by 9:30am, our Pastoral Manager or Office Manager will attempt to contact the family to seek reassurance that the child is indeed at home
- Conduct a home visit if we have concerns about absence and/or parents have not been in contact.
- Liaise with a Tameside LEA attendance officer and the Pastoral Manager will meet at least once a year to discuss strategies for further improving attendance
- Send an update of pupil attendance to parents each half term
- Provide a full attendance summary with the end of year report
- Celebrate good attendance and improving attendance with prizes and certificates on a termly basis

UNPLANNED ABSENCE

We will mark absence due to physical or mental illness as authorised, unless the school has a genuine concern about the authenticity of the illness. Where the absence is longer than 5 days, or there are doubts about the authenticity of the illness, the school will ask for medical evidence, such as a doctor's note, 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 in advance.

PLANNED ABSENCE

Attending a medical or dental appointment will be counted as authorised as long as the pupil's parent notifies the school office in advance of the appointment.

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.

The pupil's parent must also apply for other types of term-time absence as far in advance as possible of the requested absence.

AUTHORISED ABSENCE

Absence will be authorised by the headteacher for:

- Genuine cases of illness (proof of illness may be required)
- Medical appointments which can only take place during school hours (evidence required)
- On compassionate grounds or for exceptional circumstances e.g. to attend a funeral

Routine medical appointments where possible should be planned for times outside school hours and family holidays should be taken in the school holidays.

APPROVAL FOR TERM-TIME ABSENCE

The headteacher will allow pupils to be absent from the school site for certain educational activities, or to attend other schools or settings. The headteacher will only grant a **leave of absence** to a pupil during term time if the request meets the specific circumstances set out in the [2024 school attendance regulations](#). These circumstances are:

- Taking part in a regulated performance, or regulated employment abroad
- Attending an interview
- Study-leave
- A temporary, time-limited part-time timetable
- Exceptional circumstances

A leave of absence is granted at the headteacher's discretion, including the length of time the pupil is authorised to be absent for.

HOLIDAYS DURING TERM TIME

- Holidays during term time will be classed as unauthorised absence.
- Exceptional circumstances will be taken into consideration by the headteacher.
- Parents will be advised if the absence is to be authorised.
- Holiday dates must be put in writing to the headteacher.

PROCEDURES FOR NON-ATTENDANCE

- Make initial enquiries to parents/carers of pupils who are attending irregularly, to express their concern and to clarify the schools and the LEA's expectations with regards to regular school attendance
- Inform you by letter if your child's attendance drops below 96%
- Attendance Panels may be called so that parents and staff can work together to improve attendance.
- Failure to comply with the expectations set by Tameside LEA may result in further action. (i.e. Penalty Warnings, Penalty Notices or Prosecution)

PROCEDURES FOR PERSISTENT ABSENCE

A pupil becomes a 'persistent absentee' when they miss 10% or more of their education for whatever reason, across the school year. Absence at this level will have a significant impact on a child's educational prospects. Severe absence is where a pupil misses 50% or more of school. Absence at this level will have a serious impact on a child's educational prospects. Reducing persistent and severe absence is central to the school's strategy for improving attendance. Persistent Absence (PA) pupils and pupils at risk of PA are carefully tracked and support will be put into place aimed at improving attendance, this may include an attendance plan. The Designated Safeguarding Lead will consider potential safeguarding issues and, where suspected or present, address them in line with Keeping Children Safe in Education.

The school will use attendance data to find patterns and trends of persistent and severe absence. School will hold regular meetings with the parents/carers of pupils who the school (and/or local authority) considers to be vulnerable or at risk of persistent or severe absence, or who are persistently or severely absent, to:

- Discuss attendance and engagement at school
- Listen, and understand barriers to attendance
- Explain the help that is available
- Explain the potential consequences of, and sanctions for, persistent and severe absence
- Review any existing actions or interventions
- Provide access to wider support services to remove the barriers to attendance, in conjunction with the local authority, where relevant
- Consider alternative support that could be put in place to remove any barriers to attendance and re-engage these pupils. In doing so, the school will sensitively consider some of the reasons for absence
- Implement sanctions, where necessary

PROCEDURES FOR A PUPIL ARRIVING LATE

When a pupil persistently arrives late, staff will investigate the reason for this and offer support where appropriate to rectify the situation. Where the arrival time is after the close of the registration period (30 minutes after the register was taken) the code U will be recorded. This unauthorised absence can be considered when requesting a Penalty Notice or a Penalty Notice Warning.

SANCTIONS

Our school will make use of the full range of potential sanctions – including, but not limited to, those listed below – to tackle poor attendance. Decisions will be made on an individual, case-by-case basis.

PENALTY NOTICES

The headteacher (or someone authorised by them), local authority or the police can fine parents for the unauthorised absence of their child from school, where the child is of compulsory school age, by issuing a penalty notice. If the school issues a penalty notice, it will check with the local authority before doing so, and send it a copy of any penalty notice issued.

Any absences taken without the agreement of the school, or in excess of that agreed, will be classed as unauthorised and may attract a penalty notice. **Warning and Penalty Notices Warning notices will be issued for unauthorised absences of 10 sessions or more, within a 10-week period.** The 2007 Education (Penalty Notices) regulations set out the procedures for issuing penalty notices (fines) to each parent who fails to ensure their children's regular attendance at school. Parents must pay £80 within 21 days or £160 within 28 days. Failure to pay may result in a prosecution under section 44 of the Education Act 1996. A separate penalty notice may be issued to each parent for each child even if they do not reside at the same address.

If a second penalty notice is issued to the same parent in respect of the same pupil, the parent must pay £160 if paid within 28 days.

A third penalty notice cannot be issued to the same parent in respect of the same child within 3 years of the date of the issue of the first penalty notice. In a case where the national threshold is met for a third time within those 3 years, alternative action will be taken instead.

A penalty notice may also be issued where parents allow their child to be present in a public place during school hours without reasonable justification, during the first 5 days of a suspension or exclusion (where the school has notified the parents that the pupil must not be present in a public place on that day). These penalty notices are not included in the National Framework, not subject to the same considerations about support being provided, and do not count towards the limit as part of the escalation process. In these cases, the parent must pay £60 within 21 days, or £120.

NOTICES TO IMPROVE

If the national threshold has been met and support is appropriate, but parents do not engage with offers of support, the school may offer a notice to improve to give parents a final chance to engage with support. Notices to improve will be issued in line with processes set out in the local code of conduct for the local authority area in which the pupil attends school.

They will include:

- Details of the pupil's attendance record and of the offences
- The benefits of regular attendance and the duty of parents under [section 7 of the Education Act 1996](#)
- Details of the support provided so far
- Opportunities for further support, or to access previously provided support that was not engaged with
- A clear warning that a penalty notice may be issued if attendance doesn't improve within the improvement period, along with details of what sufficient improvement looks like, which will be decided on a case-by-case basis
- A clear timeframe of between 3 and 6 weeks for the improvement period
- The grounds on which a penalty notice may be issued before the end of the improvement period

MONITORING BY GOVERNORS

It is the responsibility of the governors to monitor overall attendance and they will request this information from the headteacher. The governing body also has the responsibility for this policy and for ensuring that it is carried out. The governors will therefore examine closely the information provided to them and seek to ensure that attendance figures are reaching targets. Governors will monitor the attendance of pupils through the information in the Headteacher's Report. The governors have confirmed that they will follow statutory guidance and any unauthorised absence may result in a fine as outlined to parents/carers in letters and the term dates letter.

LINKS TO OTHER POLICIES

This policy links to the following policies:

- Child protection and safeguarding policy
- Behaviour policy

Revised and adopted by the Governing Body on July 2025

Review date: July 2026