



ST JAMES
C.E. PRIMARY SCHOOL

DREAM • BELIEVE • LEARN • ACHIEVE

"With God, there is no limit to what you can do. There is no obstacle you can't overcome. Through Him, all things are possible."

Matthew 19:26

Attendance Policy

Prepared by: Lisa Belfield (Headteacher)

Reviewed: April 2023

Next Review Date: September 2024

1. Introduction

At St James Primary School, we provide an environment and curriculum that enables and encourages all members of our school family to flourish. Our Christian vision from Matthew 19:26 states that “With God, there is no limit to what you can do. There is no obstacle you can’t overcome. Through Him, all things are possible.” We thoroughly believe that it is possible for all children to achieve well from their varied starting points. This can only happen if children have good school attendance so that they access the education that they are entitled to.

2. Aims

We are committed to meeting our obligation with regards to school attendance through our whole-school culture and ethos that values good attendance, including:

- Promoting good attendance
- Reducing absence, including persistent and severe absence
- Ensuring every pupil has access to the full-time education to which they are entitled
- Acting early to address patterns of absence
- Building strong relationships with families to ensure pupils have the support in place to attend school

We will also promote and support punctuality in attending lessons.

3. Legislation and guidance

This policy meets the requirements of the [working together to improve school attendance](#) 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:

- Part 6 of [The Education Act 1996](#)
- Part 3 of [The Education Act 2002](#)
- Part 7 of [The Education and Inspections Act 2006](#)
- [The Education \(Pupil Registration\) \(England\) Regulations 2006 \(and 2010, 2011, 2013, 2016 amendments\)](#)
- [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.

4. Roles and responsibilities

The governing board

The governing board is responsible for:

- Promoting the importance of school attendance across the school’s policies and ethos
- Making sure school leaders fulfil expectations and statutory duties
- Regularly reviewing and challenging attendance data
- Monitoring attendance figures for the whole school
- Making sure staff receive adequate training on attendance
- Holding the headteacher to account for the implementation of this policy

Mr John Waring is the link governor for attendance.

The headteacher

The headteacher (who is also the designated senior leader responsible for attendance) is responsible for:

- Implementation of this policy at the school
- Monitoring school-level absence data and reporting it to governors
- Supporting staff with monitoring the attendance of individual pupils
- Monitoring the impact of any implemented attendance strategies
- Issuing fixed-penalty notices, where necessary
- Leading attendance across the school
- Offering a clear vision for attendance improvement
- Evaluating and monitoring expectations and processes
- Having an oversight of data analysis
- Devising specific strategies to address areas of poor attendance identified through data
- Arranging calls and meetings with parents to discuss attendance issues
- Ensuring appropriate intervention and support to pupils and families is in place

The head teacher/designated senior leader responsible for attendance can be contacted via 01204 572587 or by emailing office@st-james-farnworth.bolton.sch.uk.

The attendance officer

The school attendance officer is responsible for:

- Monitoring and analysing attendance data (see section 7)
- Benchmarking attendance data to identify areas of focus for improvement
- Providing regular attendance reports to school staff and reporting concerns about attendance to the headteacher/designated senior leader responsible for attendance
- Working with Bolton's Early Intervention Team to tackle persistent or severe absence
- Advising the headteacher when to issue fixed-penalty notices
- Overseeing daily attendance, ensuring registers are completed correctly and in a timely manner
- Supporting the headteacher/designated senior leader for attendance with arranging calls and meetings with parents to discuss attendance issues
- Supporting the headteacher/designated senior leader for attendance with providing appropriate intervention and support to targeted pupils and families

The attendance officer is Debra McKinnon (Pastoral Care Officer) and can be contacted via 01204 572587 or by emailing office@st-james-farnworth.bolton.sch.uk

Class teachers

Class teachers are responsible for recording attendance on a daily basis, using the correct codes, and submitting this information to the school office as soon as possible on the same day.

Class teachers are responsible for noticing patterns of absence and speaking to parents about this as soon as concerns arise. Class teachers are also responsible for reporting these concerns to the attendance officer.

School office staff

School office staff will:

- Take calls from parents about absence on a day-to-day basis, record it in the pupil absence book (update attendance registers on SIMs if required) and inform the attendance officer when necessary
- Transfer calls from parents to the attendance officer (Pastoral Care Officer) in order to provide them with more detailed support on attendance

Parents/carers

Parents/carers are expected to:

- Make sure their child attends every day and on time
- Call the school to report their child's absence before 8:45am on the day of the absence and advise when they are expected to return
- Provide the school with more than 1 emergency contact number for their child and ensure that these contact details are up to date
- Ensure that, where possible, appointments for their child are made outside of the school day
- Work with the school when attendance becomes a concern, proactively engaging in any support offered

Pupils

Pupils are expected to attend school every day and arrive on time.

5. Recording attendance

Attendance register

We will keep an attendance register, and place all pupils onto this register.

We will take our attendance register at the start of the first session of each school day and once during the second session. It will mark whether every pupil is:

- Present
- Attending an approved off-site educational activity
- Absent
- Unable to attend due to exceptional circumstances

Any amendment to the attendance register will include:

- The original entry
- The amended entry
- The reason for the amendment
- The date on which the amendment was made
- The name and position of the person who made the amendment

See appendix 1 for the DfE attendance codes.

We will also record:

- Whether the absence is authorised or not
- The nature of the activity if a pupil is attending an approved educational activity
- The nature of circumstances where a pupil is unable to attend due to exceptional circumstances

We will keep every entry on the attendance register for 3 years after the date on which the entry was made.

Pupils must arrive in school by 8:45am each school day

The register for the first session will be taken at 8:45am and will be kept open until 9:15am. In the nurseries, the first session's register will be taken at 8:30am and closed at 9:00am.

The register for the second session will be taken at 1:00pm and will be kept open until 1:15pm. In the nurseries, and Reception class, the second session's register will be taken at 12:30pm and closed at 12:45pm.

Once the register has been taken, children arriving after this, but before the close of the register will be marked as late.

Unplanned absence

The pupil's parent/carer must notify the school of the reason for the absence on the first day of an unplanned absence by 8:45am or as soon as practically possible by calling the school office on 01204 572587.

We will mark absence due to illness as authorised unless the school has a genuine concern about the authenticity of the illness. If the authenticity of the illness is in doubt, the school may ask the pupil's parent/carer to provide medical evidence, such as a 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/carers 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/carer notifies the school in advance of the appointment. Please inform the school office either in person or via 01204 572587.

However, we encourage parents/carers 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/carer must also apply for other types of term-time absence as far in advance as possible of the requested absence. Go to section 6 to find out which term-time absences the school can authorise.

Lateness and punctuality

A pupil who arrives late:

- Before the register has closed will be marked as late, using the appropriate code L
- After the register has closed will be marked as absent, using the appropriate code U

If a child has 5 late marks, parents will be contacted by the attendance officer to discuss these concerns and the support that can be put in place.

Parents will need to come to the school office to sign their child in as late after the registers have closed at 9:15am. School office staff will enquire why the child is late.

Periodically, school will also run a 'late gate' where the attendance officer will speak to parents at the school door to discuss lateness.

Following up unexplained absence

Where any pupil we expect to attend school does not attend, or stops attending, without reason, the school will:

- Call the pupil's parent/carer on the morning of the first day of unexplained absence to ascertain the reason. If the school cannot reach any of the pupil's emergency contacts, the school may carry out a home visit, contact any relevant social workers (assigned to individual children), the Integrated Front Door (Bolton social services) or police if there are serious concerns about a child's wellbeing.
- School will contact Bolton's Early Intervention Team each day a child, who is subject to a child protection plan, does not attend school.
- Identify whether the absence is approved or not.
- Identify the correct attendance code to use and input it as soon as the reason for absence is ascertained – this will be no later than 5 working days after the missed session.
- Call the parent/carer on each day that the absence continues without explanation to ensure proper safeguarding action is taken where necessary. If absence continues, the school will consider contacting Bolton's Early Intervention Team for support and guidance. School may also begin to follow its procedures for children missing in education.

Reporting to parents/carers

The school will regularly inform parents about their child's attendance and absence levels through:

- half termly attendance cards.
- Following the school's 'attendance flowchart' which starts with a drop from 95%.
- Providing parents/carers with a full attendance report at the end of each academic year.

6. Authorised and unauthorised absence

Approval for term-time absence

Valid reasons for **authorised absence** include:

- Illness and medical/dental appointments (see section 5 for more detail).

- Religious observance – where the day is exclusively set apart for religious observance by the religious body to which the pupil's parents belong. If necessary, the school will seek advice from the parents' religious body to confirm whether the day is set apart.
- Traveller pupils travelling for occupational purposes – this covers Roma, English and Welsh gypsies, Irish and Scottish travellers, showmen (fairground people) and circus people, bargees (occupational boat dwellers) and new travellers. Absence may be authorised only when a traveller family is known to be travelling for occupational purposes and has agreed this with the school, but it is not known whether the pupil is attending educational provision.

There are other occasions when the headteacher may grant authorised absence during term time. These occasions are known as '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.

We define 'exceptional circumstances' as one off events that are unavoidable, examples may include the death of a close relative, attendance at a funeral or a housing crisis that prevents attendance.

The school considers each application for planned term-time absence individually, taking into account the specific facts, circumstances and relevant context behind the request.

Any request for planned term-time absence should be submitted as soon as it is anticipated and, where possible, at least two weeks before the absence. This should be put in writing for the attention of the headteacher. The headteacher may require evidence to support any request for leave of absence.

Legal sanctions

The school or local authority can fine parents for the unauthorised absence of their child from school, where the child is of compulsory school age.

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

Penalty notices can be issued by a headteacher, local authority officer or the police.

The decision on whether or not to issue a penalty notice may take into account:

- The 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 or withdraw the notice.

Strategies for promoting attendance

To support the work that school does to develop and maintain a culture of promoting good attendance, we use the following incentives:

- 'Superclass' card awarded for any class that has 100% attendance that day
- Weekly class attendance trophy, certificates and stickers – the winning class also receives an extra playtime
- Weekly attendance chart on the school newsletter
- Termly certificates for 100% attendance (98% + depending on the circumstances of brief absence)
- Termly prize (raffle) for each key stage (£50 voucher) for attendance 96% and above

Attendance monitoring

Monitoring attendance

The school will:

- Monitor absence every day and contact parents/carers if no reason for absence has been given
- Monitor whole school attendance every week to identify the classes/pupil groups where attendance is strong or of concern
- Monitor attendance and absence data every three weeks for individuals (see appendix 2 for flow chart of processes school will follow)

- Monitor whole school attendance and absence data every half term to identify groups of children whose absence may be a cause for concern

Pupil-level absence data will be 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. The school will compare attendance data to the national average, and share this with the governing board, and when requested, with Trustees.

Analysing attendance

The school will:

- Analyse attendance and absence data regularly (see 'monitoring attendance' above) to identify pupils or cohorts that need additional support with their attendance, and use this analysis to provide targeted support to these pupils and their families
- Look at historic and emerging patterns of attendance and absence, and then develop strategies to address these patterns

Using data to improve attendance

The school will:

- Provide regular attendance reports every three weeks to class teachers, and other school leaders, to facilitate discussions with pupils and families
- Use data to monitor and evaluate the impact of any interventions put in place in order to modify them and inform future strategies

Reducing persistent and severe absence

Persistent absence is where a pupil misses 10% or more of school, and severe absence is where a pupil misses 50% or more of school.

The school will:

- Use attendance data to find patterns and trends of persistent and severe absence
- Will follow the relevant parts of the attendance flowchart to help tackle poor attendance (see appendix 2)
- Hold meetings with the parents of pupils who the school (and/or local authority) considers to be vulnerable, or are persistently or severely absent, to discuss attendance and engagement at school
- Provide access to wider support services to remove the barriers to attendance

Monitoring arrangements

This policy will be reviewed as guidance from the local authority or DfE is updated, and as a minimum every two years by the headteacher/designated senior leader responsible for attendance. At every review, the policy will be approved by the full governing board.

Appendix 1: 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
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

Attendance Procedures

95-100%

If your child's attendance is 95%-100% then this is fantastic news! Your child is attending well. School will monitor this to make sure it stays at this level. Children receive attendance awards in school for excellent attendance 99-100%.

If your child's attendance drops below 95% then we will send you a polite text message reminder to make sure you are aware. Please make sure your child's attendance improves to prevent further intervention from school.

**Below
95%**

**92-90%
or below**

If your child's attendance continues to fall and is between 92%-90% (or below) we will send you a letter to explain the next steps school will take to support you with your child's attendance. We call this Stage 1.

If your child's attendance does not show improvement, we will issue a second letter, which will ask you for medical evidence if you repeatedly report ill health for your child. We call this Stage 2.

**No
Improvement**

**Further
Decline**

If your child's attendance does not improve after Stage 1 and Stage 2, we will invite you into school to discuss attendance further. We call this Stage 3.

If a child has 10 unauthorised absences (at any stage within our procedures) we will send a penalty warning notice to you and may issue you with a fine.

**10
Unauthorised
Absences**

Parents/carers are invited to make an appointment with our Pastoral Care Officer responsible for attendance, Mrs McKinnon, if they are experiencing difficulties at any point with their child's attendance.