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CHURCH OF ENGLAND LEARNING TRUST

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ATTENDANCE POLICY

adopted by

St John's C of E Middle School

2021 – 2022



This policy was reviewed/updated by Richard Upwood (Assistant Head & Tara East (Attendance Officer)
@ St John's Middle School and is reviewed annually by the Trust

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Next Review: December 2022



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Safeguarding and Promoting the Welfare of Children

Section 175/157 of the Education Act 2002 places a duty on schools to make arrangements for its pupils and states that:

“proprietors/governors of independent schools (which include Academies and Free schools) must make arrangements to safeguard and promote the welfare of pupils at the school.”

Working Together to Safeguard Children (HM Government January 2019) requires all schools to follow the procedure for protecting children from abuse. This Attendance Policy was written with reference to Keeping Children Safe in Education (September 2021) which defines safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children as:

- protecting children from maltreatment;
- preventing impairment of children’s mental and physical health or development;
- ensuring that children grow up in circumstances consistent with the provision of safe and effective care; and
- taking action to enable all children to have the best outcomes.

Safeguarding children is consequently more than contributing to the protection of individual children and the school is committed to the development of policy and practice that supports children, and their families to be safe, be healthy, enjoy and achieve, contribute positively and achieve economic wellbeing.

The Spire Educational Trust strives to promote the welfare of our pupils by:

1. Creating and maintaining a safe learning environment
2. Identifying child welfare concerns and taking appropriate action
3. Using the curriculum to enable our children to develop keep safe strategies
4. Operating safe recruitment and selection procedures to prevent unsuitable people working with our children.

It also states that “Governing bodies and proprietors should put in place appropriate safeguarding responses to children who go missing from education, particularly on repeat occasions, to help identify the risk of abuse and neglect, including sexual abuse or exploitation, and to help prevent the risk of them going missing in future.”

This policy also follows the DfE [School attendance parental responsibility measures: statutory guidance](#) which states that “Local authorities and all schools have legal powers to use parenting contracts, parenting orders and penalty notices to address poor attendance and behaviour in school. In addition to using these powers, local authorities and schools can develop other practices to improve attendance. Local authorities, police constables, school governing bodies, school head teachers (and staff authorised by the head) and teachers-in-charge of pupil referral units are required by law to have regard to the relevant parts of this guidance when carrying out their functions in relation to parenting contracts, parenting orders and penalty notices. This means that while the guidance does not have the force of law, there is an expectation that it will be followed unless there is good reason to depart from it.”

The school policies including this attendance policy are designed to meet these needs and are available on request or via the school website. This policy applies mostly to points 1 and 3 above and reflects current legislation, accepted best practice and complies with government guidance.

1. Introduction

For your child to gain the greatest benefit from their education it is vital that they attend regularly and your child should be at school, on time, every day the school is open unless the reason for the absence is unavoidable.

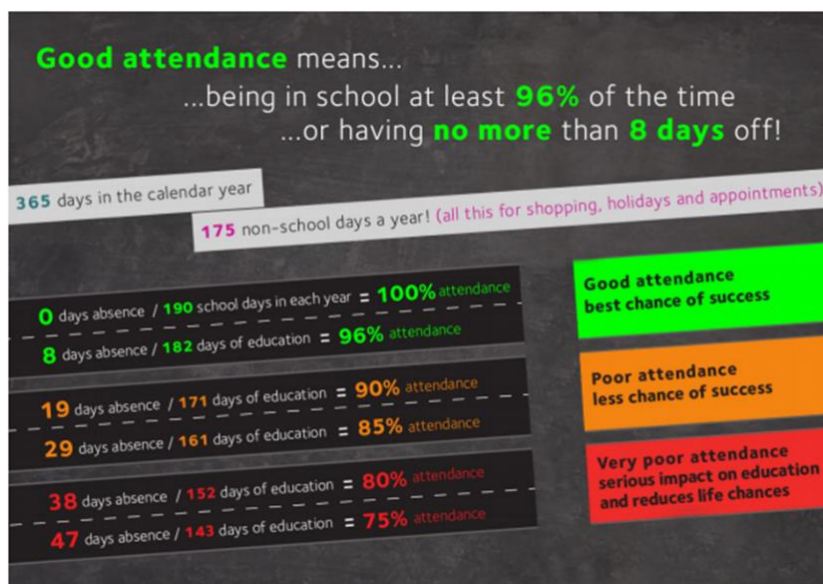
It is very important therefore that you make sure that your child attends regularly and this policy sets out how, together, we will achieve this.

For the purpose of this policy the definition of a parent is:

- All natural parents, whether they are married or not;
- Any person who has parental responsibility for a child or young person; or,
- Any person who has care of a child or young person i.e. lives with and looks after the child.

2. Why Regular Attendance is so Important

Learning: Any absence affects the pattern of a child's schooling and regular absence will seriously affect their learning. (See appendix 1)



Absence disrupts the education of the individual pupil and the whole class. Children who do not attend regularly:

- do not achieve well
- find it difficult to maintain friendships
- are more likely to become involved in crime
- miss out on opportunities in further education and the world of work

Ensuring your child's regular attendance at school is your legal responsibility and permitting absence from school without a good reason creates an offence in law and may result in prosecution.

Safeguarding: Your child may be at risk of harm if they do not attend school regularly. Safeguarding the interests of each child is everyone's responsibility and within the context of this school, promoting the welfare and life opportunities for your child is paramount. Therefore, failing to attend school on a regular basis may be considered a safeguarding concern.

3. Understanding Types of Absence

Every half-day absence from school must legally be classified by the school as either AUTHORISED or UNAUTHORISED. This is why information about the cause of any absence is always required, preferably in writing.

Authorised absences are mornings or afternoons away from school for a good reason like illness, medical/dental appointments which unavoidably fall in school time, emergencies or other unavoidable causes.

Unauthorised absences are those which the school does not consider reasonable and for which no 'leave' has been given. This type of absence can lead to using sanctions and/or legal proceedings. This includes:

- parents/carers keeping children off school unnecessarily
- truancy before or during the school day
- absences which have never been properly explained
- children who arrive at school too late to get a mark
- shopping, looking after other children or birthdays
- day trips and holidays in term time which have not been agreed.

It is recognised that any child may be off school, provided school has been notified, because they are ill. However, sometimes they can be reluctant to attend school for other reasons. Any problems with regular attendance are best sorted out between the school, the parents and the child. If your child is reluctant to attend, it is never better to cover up their absence or to give in to pressure to excuse them from attending. This gives the impression that attendance does not matter and usually make things worse. Instead contact should be made initially with the form tutor or school office. (see the school's [Early Help offer](#) and [Behaviour for Learning and Positive Relationships Policy](#) as these outline how school can support.)

4. Persistent Absenteeism (PA)

A pupil becomes a 'persistent absentee' when they miss 10% or more schooling across the school year for whatever reason. Absence at this level is doing considerable damage to any child's educational prospects and we need parents' fullest support and co-operation to tackle this.

For every day of school missed by a pupil it will reduce their attendance by 0.5%.

We monitor all absence thoroughly. Any case that is seen to have reached the PA mark or is at risk of moving towards that mark is given priority and you will be informed of this immediately.

PA pupils are tracked and monitored carefully through our pastoral system and we also combine this with academic mentoring where absence affects attainment.

All our PA pupils and their parents are offered support from our Social Inclusion and support Manager with a view to tackling any barriers to good attendance.

Q When is **90%** NOT considered to be a positive outcome?

A When it is linked to **attendance**

- ▶ **90%** attendance = **1/2 day** missed every week!
- ▶ **1 school year** at 90% attendance = **4 weeks** of learning missed!
- ▶ Over **5 years** of school = **1/2 school year** missed!

Poor attendance = less chance of success

Good attendance means...

BEING IN SCHOOL At least **96%** of the time* Best chance of success

5. Absence Procedures

If your child is absent you must:

- Telephone the school office (selecting option 1) or message (via ParentMail) **by 9:10am** on the first day of absence.
- Unless the date of return is known, please update the school office on a daily basis.
- Send a note to explain the reason for absence on return to school

If your child is absent we will:

- Telephone or text via Group Call on the first day of absence if we have not heard from you;
- Conduct a welfare visit* to the home if we cannot make contact with you. Parent Mail and Epraise are our Primary contact methods. It is the Parent's duty to notify school immediately of any change in contact details or address and ensure that we have more than one person that we can contact on our system. (Anyone with Parental Responsibility should be on our contact list unless documentation, such as a court order, has been seen by school.)
- Invite you in to discuss the situation with the school Attendance Officer your and/or Pastoral Leaders if absences persist;
- Refer the matter to the Senior Leader responsible for attendance if attendance doesn't improve or continues to cause concerns.

Parents are expected to contact school at an early stage and to work with the class teacher, or most appropriate staff, in resolving any problems together (E-praise is the preferred way to make initial contact.) This is nearly always successful. It relies upon a positive relationship between school and the parent. If difficulties cannot be sorted out, or there is a lack of engagement in the supportive processes and procedures offered by school and unauthorised absences persist, the school may refer the child to the Local Authority Education Welfare Officer who may issue sanctions such as Penalty Notices or prosecutions in the Magistrates Court. Full details of the options open to enforce attendance at school are available from the school.

*** 2 members of the pastoral team visiting the home to ensure that the child is 'safe and well'**

6. Lateness

Poor punctuality is not acceptable. If your 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, can be embarrassing for the child and can also encourage absence.

Did you know that being 15 minutes late each day is the same as missing two weeks of school over the year. Lateness is just as serious as non-attendance and could also lead to a Fixed Penalty Notice. The start of the school day is an important time for children to develop their social skills with their peers, as well as preparing them for their learning.

How we manage lateness:

The school day starts at 8:50 am and we expect your child to be on school premises at that time.

If your child arrives after 8:50 am, they will receive a late mark on the electronic signing in system.

At 9.15am the registers will be closed. In accordance with Regulations, if your child arrives after that time they will receive a late mark on the electronic system that shows them to be on site, but this will not count as a present mark and it will mean they have an unauthorised absence. This may mean that you could face the possibility of a Penalty Notice if the problem persists.

If your child has a persistent late record you will receive a letter from the attendance officer, this will be monitored for 2 weeks and you may be asked to meet with the attendance officer if the problem continues. You can approach us at any time if you are having problems getting your child to school on time.

7. Holidays in Term Time

Taking holidays in term time will affect your child's schooling as much as any other absence and we expect parents to help us by not taking children away in school time.

Government regulations make it clear that parents do not have any right or entitlement to take a child out of school for the purpose of a term time holiday. **Headteachers are not allowed** to grant any leave of absence during term time for holidays **unless there are exceptional circumstances**.

In **exceptional circumstances**, pupils may be granted leave of absence during term time for **not more than one week (5 school days) in any calendar year**. If you wish to make an application for a planned absence **please obtain a form from reception**. The form should be completed and forwarded to the school **not less than six weeks before** the planned absence is due to begin.

Where the application for planned absence has been submitted within the timeframe, all carers with 'Parental Responsibility' will be notified in writing of the decision.

Any period of leave taken without the agreement of the school, or in excess of that agreed, will be classed as unauthorised and may attract sanctions such as a Penalty Notice.

8. Summary

The school has a legal duty to publish its absence figures to parents and to promote attendance. Equally, parents have a duty to make sure that their children attend.

All school staff are committed to working with parents and pupils to ensure as high a level of attendance as possible and that every child's welfare and life opportunities are promoted.

Appendix 1: The importance of good attendance.

Attendance during one school year	Equals this number of days absent in year	Which is approximately this many weeks	Which means this many lessons missed	Action
100%	0 days	0 weeks	0 lessons	Rewards. If attendance is greater than 96% and punctuality is good each half term then 75 points are awarded.
96%-99%	No more than 8 days	Up to 1 ½ Weeks	No more than 37 lessons	
95%	9 days	2 weeks	50 lessons	Attendance Officer Identification and prioritisation. Awareness letter sent home informing child has fallen below school target %
90%	19 days	4 weeks	100 lessons	Attendance Officer Identification Intervention needed – PA letter sent to parents, attendance monitored for 2 weeks, no improvement will result in parents invited to attendance meeting with AO and HOY.
85%	29 days	6 weeks	150 lessons	Next steps dependent on improvement, situation and engagement. Parents invited to attend meeting with AO and SLT. Step 1 – first notice given to parents. Step 2 – 15 day notice warning issued. Step 3 – Application for legal action made.
80%	38 days	8 weeks	200 lessons	

NB – Although percentages monitored, sudden changes in attendance or patterns are raised as an attendance concern to allow early intervention.

Appendix 2: Strategies used to improve attendance/punctuality. (Recorded on Provision map)

This is not an exhaustive list but outline some examples of what strategies/provisions may be considered.

Strategy/Provision – Office/SLT	Strategy/Provision – Class Teacher/Head of Year
Targeted First Day Response	Customised Reward/Privilege
Reminder that parents must notify of absence by specified time	Highlight benefits of good attendance to child (See Child friendly policy)
Letters home	Ensure parents are on, and can use e-praise for attendance.
Remind of the Attendance policy (parents)	Ensure pupil is on, and can use e-praise for attendance.
Highlight benefits of good attendance to parents	Ask parents to bring pupil to a designated person by a set time each day.
Remind of Legal responsibility regarding attendance	Safe Place
Letter from Attendance Officer to outline concerns and explain how to support.	Self-regulation/time out card
Request GP certificate/letter from parent	Buddy (Peer)
Contact School Health Nurse	Assign special responsibility/task suited to the pupil
Extra-Curricular Activities /Breakfast Club	Signs of Success Plan
Involving Parents (Attendance Meeting)	Incentives
Starting Well Partnership (Parenting Support)	Attendance Charts
Referral to other agencies (See Early Help Offer)	Motional Assessment and Pastoral support Plan put in place.
Write to GP	On Attendance Report
Attendance Improvement plan	Assistance to catch-up with work
Welfare checks	Positive Reporting
Refer to Child Missing Education Team (CME)	Link person/mentor
Modification of Curriculum/Timetable	
Staged Reintegration	
Change of Tutor Group	

Appendix 3: Process Flow Diagram. (This process is linked closely to that followed in the Behaviour For Learning and Positive Relationships Policy as well as the Early Help Statement.)



This flow diagram is for use with each student whose attendance is causing concern. It suggests a process of action which may lead to an improvement in attendance. Intervention is likely to start with class teachers and progress as appropriate.

Addendum: recording attendance in relation to coronavirus (COVID-19) during the 2021 to 2022 academic year

Updated 27 September 2021 - This guidance will be reviewed before August 2022

Attendance expectations

Attendance is mandatory. The usual rules on attendance continue to 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
- the duty on local authorities to put in place arrangements for identifying, and to follow up with, children missing education

Pupils who are required to self-isolate as they have symptoms or confirmed COVID-19

Pupils who have symptoms of COVID-19, or have had a positive lateral flow device (LFD) test, should self-isolate and get a confirmatory polymerase chain reaction (PCR) test.

If a pupil tests negative and if they feel well, 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). 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 in line with public health guidance. 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.

Pupils who are a close contact of someone who has symptoms or confirmed COVID-19

Pupils who are a close contact of someone who has tested positive for COVID-19 do not need to self-isolate. They should instead get a PCR test, and should only self-isolate if they test positive. If they do test positive, they should be recorded as code I (illness) until they are able to return to school.

Pupils who are required by legislation to self-isolate as part of a period of quarantine

As usual, parents should plan their holidays within school breaks and avoid seeking permission to take their children out of school during term time. Families should also consider that their child may need to self-isolate following trips overseas that require a period of quarantine. If a pupil is required to be in quarantine on arrival in, or return to, the UK, the school should use code X in the register.

Pupils who are self-isolating but who have not had a PCR test

In line with public health advice, pupils with symptoms must self-isolate and schools should strongly encourage pupils to take a PCR test. Where the pupil is unable to take a PCR test, the school should record the pupil as code X in the register.

Schools should follow up with families if they are not satisfied with the reason as to why the pupil is not in school. Schools can request supporting evidence from the family. Where the school is not satisfied with the reason given for absence, they may record this using one of the unauthorised absence codes, in line with the [school attendance: guidance for schools](#).

Remote education

If a pupil is not attending school because their attendance would be contrary to government guidance or legislation around COVID-19, we expect schools to offer them access to remote education. Schools should keep a record of, and monitor engagement with, this activity, **but this does not need to be tracked in the attendance register.**

Signed.....
Mrs Rosie Shorter
Chair of The Spire CE Learning Trust

Date.....

Signed.....
Mr. Geraint Roberts
Executive Head (CEO)

Date.....