WHOLE SCHOOL ATTENDANCE POLICY
ST JOHN’S STONEFOLD PRIMARY SCHOOL

Introduction
St John’s is a successful and caring school and every child plays their part in making it so. We aim for an environment which enables and encourages all members of the community to reach out for excellence. For our children 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.

Why is Regular Attendance so important:
Any absence affects the pattern of a child’s schooling and regular absence will seriously affect their learning. Any pupil’s absence also disrupts teaching routines so may affect the learning of others in the same class.
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.

Aims
We will:
- Make attendance and punctuality a priority for all those associated with the school including pupils, parents, teachers and governors.
- Further develop positive and consistent communication between home and school.
- We will develop a procedural framework which defines agreed roles and responsibilities for parents and carers, pupils, school staff, Governors.

This framework will include guidance on:
- Registration.
- What constitutes unauthorised absence.
- Consistent use of symbols for authorised leave.
- Absences in term time.
- Systems for monitoring attendance and punctuality for individual pupils.
- Systems for dealing with absences.
- Systems for reintegrating pupils who have been absent.
- Systems for monitoring whole school attendance and action planning.
Registration

Morning registration is between 08:50am and 09:00am
Afternoon registration is between 13:00pm and 13:05pm

Each class Teacher is responsible for marking children present in the register in the morning and in the afternoon. The registers are completed promptly and returned to the school office by 09:05am. At 09:00am the outer classroom doors are locked and any late pupils have to report to the main office and parents must also complete the late signing in book.

School guidelines state that any pupil who arrives between 08:50am and 09:00am will get a "L" (late mark) in the register. This code is classed as a present (authorised) mark but displays that the pupil arrived late. Any pupil who arrives after the registers have closed at 09:00am will be given a "U" (late after registers closed) mark in the register. This code is classed as an unauthorised late but that the pupil is physically present in school.

Lateness

In addition to using the L and U codes, office staff may also use the facility within the SIMS attendance module to record the number of minutes late for each pupil, on each occasion. This facility will allow school staff to monitor and manage developing patterns of lateness more effectively and make a clear link between lateness and missed curriculum and share such information with parents.

The fact that the U code is classed as an unauthorised absence means that when it is used pupils are likely to be missing significant amounts of schooling, putting their educational progress at risk. For this reason the use of this code will be considered as serious as any other unauthorised absence and will attract the interest of external agencies, including referral to the local authority attendance team and consideration of the use of legal measures, in just the same way.

Authorised and Unauthorised Absence

In every instance it is the Headteacher who determines whether an absence is recorded as authorised or unauthorised. This decision is made based on information provided by parents/carers. However, because the register is a legal document, the Headteacher has responsibility to ensure that it is completed accurately and in accordance with the legislation. For this reason it is not sufficient for an absence to be recorded as authorised based entirely on information provided by parents/carers. Therefore, there may be occasions when it will be necessary for parents to provide evidence of reasons for absence before authorisation is granted. For example, in the case of absence due to illness or medical appointment, evidence may be requested in the form of: sight of a prescription, prescribed medication, a medical appointment card or similar.

If a child is absent and no contact has been made by the family, the school office will contact the family on the first day of absence. If contact cannot be made, the Headteacher will be informed and, in the case of prolonged or repeated absence without justification being given, the Headteacher will determine whether a home visit or referral to the Pupil Attendance Support Team should be made.

In line with latest guidance, parents must provide at least two numbers for different adults/family members.
The school office is responsible for maintaining records of reason and length of absence. Office staff will also use the comments facility within SIMS in order to log specific reasons for absence. This facility will allow school staff to monitor and manage developing patterns of absence more effectively and share such information with parents.

Examples of authorised absence:
- Medical or Dental appointments, which relate directly to the pupil and unavoidably fall during the school day. If your child has a medical appointment, evidence must be provided to the office)
- Illness- Parents/Carers are required to contact the school office before 09:00am on the first day of absence, advising of the reason for the absence and expected return date: if known.
- Leave which has been authorised by the Headteacher due to exceptional circumstances.

Examples of unauthorised absence:
- 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 after the register has closed
- Shopping, looking after other children or birthdays
- Day trips and leave in term time which have not been agreed
- Days that exceed the amount of leave agreed by the Headteacher

Absence during term time
Following the September 2013 amendment to The Education (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2006, schools cannot authorise any leave other than in exceptional circumstances. If the leave is being taken for a holiday, approval should be obtained prior to making any booking.
Leave of absence WILL NOT be granted unless:
- A request for leave form has been completed in advance and the Headteacher considers that the leave of absence meets the criteria for exceptional circumstances.

Additional Factors for Consideration
Pupils attend school for a maximum of 190 days each academic year. Regular attendance is vital for your child’s educational progress. The Local Authority expects that all parents/carers ensure their children attend school whenever possible. Absence during school time is largely prohibited by regulation and hinders academic progress. Even in exceptional circumstances, the following factors may be taken into account when considering an application for leave:
- Will leave at this point in time be detrimental to the pupil’s education?
- Will he/she miss any national tests or examinations?
- Is his/her attendance a cause for concern?
- Is the proposed absence during the month of September or any other transition period?
- Has he/she already had leave during term time this year?
- Did he/she have leave of absence during term time in the previous school year(s)?
- Does he/she have any absences which have been recorded as unauthorised this year?

Parents/Carers who need to request leave during term time should complete an application form, available from the school office as soon as possible prior to the first proposed date of absence. The Headteacher will consider the request and advise in writing within 5 days whether the absence will be authorised or not. The Headteacher may also request a meeting with parents before any period of leave is authorised.

St John’s takes unauthorised absence very seriously and, particularly in the case of repeated unauthorised absences, will undertake further liaison with the family, pupil, School Attendance Consultant and the Pupil Attendance Support Team as appropriate.

**Persistent Absenteeism (PA)**

A pupil becomes a “persistent absentee” when they miss 15% or more schooling across the school year for whatever reason. Absence at this level is doing considerable damage to a child’s educational prospects and we need parents’ fullest support and co-operation to tackle this.

**The use of Penalty Notices**

St John’s Governing Body is currently considering the use of penalty notices. This means that parents could be issued with a fixed penalty notice of £60 per parent per child for any unauthorised leave in excess of 5 days.

**Monitoring and Analysis**

St John’s will monitor the attendance of pupils each half term. The information will be analysed by the Headteacher and Office Manager and letters will be sent home to the parents of pupils whose attendance or punctuality is a cause for concern. Our school target attendance is 96% and we operate the attendance “Traffic Light” system.

- **Pupils 96% and over** - **GREEN LETTER**
- **Pupils between 95% and 90%** - **AMBER LETTER**
- **Pupils below 90%** - **RED LETTER**

If pupils have below 90% then parents will be invited to a meeting with either the Office Manager or the Attendance Family Liaison officer Mr M. Woods where we may consider using the following strategies to help support parents in improving their child’s attendance and/or punctuality:

- Meetings in school between parents, pupils, pastoral staff and the Headteacher
- Home visits
- Use of parenting contracts
- Use of the common assessment framework (CAF) and/or referral to outside agencies (including the local authority school attendance team)
- Use of attendance panels
- Referrals for legal action
The Local Authority School Attendance Service
If difficulties cannot be sorted out using in-school strategies, the school may refer the child to the Pupil Attendance Support Team (PAST). PAST will also support school in trying to resolve the situation by agreement and will work to support school and parents in achieving improved levels of attendance.

Religious Absence
The school will authorise one day of absence per religious festival, e.g. Eid, (i.e. the day set aside by the religious body of which the parent is a member) and this will be marked as 'R' in the register. Parents must request any additional leave in advance and this can only be authorised if it is felt that exceptional circumstances apply; this would be marked in the register as 'C'.

Alternative provision
There are a range of reasons why pupils might be required to access educational provision at a venue other than their main school. The main reasons are:

- Pupils who have been excluded, either for a fixed period of more than 5 days or permanently;
- When a pupil is unable to access provision at their main school for medical reasons;
- When a pupil is required to attend another venue for the purpose of improving behaviour; either on a temporary basis or with a view to making a permanent move to the alternative provision (managed move);
- When a pupil is required to attend alternative provision for the purposes of improving behaviour, the governors of the main school must issue a written 'direction' informing all parents of the alternative provision which their child is required to attend. Where a pupil is required to attend alternative provision for all other reasons, the issuing of a written direction is considered best practice.

Pupils who are unable to attend school for medical reasons
The introduction of new statutory guidance on 1st September 2014 places much more emphasis on the role of governing bodies in ensuring that pupils with medical conditions are able to fully access education in the same way as other pupils. A key element of this responsibility is reducing the amount of time missed by these pupils; whether their condition is short or long term. The school will work with parents and other relevant professionals to minimise absence for reasons of ill health. This may be as a result of specific practices or resources used within school or by sourcing more appropriate provision at another establishment. When education is to be provided at an alternative location, this should always be done via the use of a direction (please see the relevant section of this policy).
Roles and responsibilities

Parents
- Ensure children attend regularly and punctually
- Contact school on 1st day of absence
- Ensure that school have up to date contact details and at least two emergency contacts who can be contacted in the event that parents are unavailable
- Avoid any leave in term time, but apply in advance using form if the reason for leave is unavoidable/exceptional
- Attendance at meetings at school and participation in parenting contracts and common assessment framework, and cooperate in support and interventions offered by school or other agencies.

Pupils
- Acknowledge behaviour needed out of school, e.g. early bedtime
- Attend school/registration punctually
- Speak to parents/teacher if issues arise that may have an effect on school attendance
- Cooperate and participate in interventions and support offered by school or other agencies

Headteacher / (School Attendance Lead)
- Take the lead in ensuring attendance has a high profile within the school
- Ensure there are designated staff with day-to-day responsibility for attendance matters
- Ensure adequate, protected time is allocated to discharge these responsibilities
- Take overall responsibility for ensuring the school confirms to all statutory requirements in respect of attendance
- Consider each request for leave against the school’s criteria, decide whether some or all of the leave will be authorised and notify parents of this decision

Office Manager:
- First day response: Contact parents if a reason for absence has not been provided and log this information accordingly. Contact emergency contacts if parents cannot be reached
- Input and update the attendance registers
- Regularly identify and monitor pupil, class and whole school attendance and punctuality levels, particularly that of vulnerable groups
- Regularly communicate pupil attendance and punctuality levels to parents
- Work with children and parents to remove barriers to regular and punctual attendance, following Absence Flowcharts 1, 2 and 3 (see appendix), and using parenting contracts where appropriate.

All School Staff:
- Provide a welcoming atmosphere for children and provide a safe learning environment
- Ensure an appropriate and responsive curriculum
- Provide a sympathetic response to any pupils’ concerns
- To be aware of factors that can contribute to non-attendance
- To see pupils’ attendance as the responsibility of all school staff
- Participate in training regarding school systems and procedures
Governors:

- Ensure compliance with The Education (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2006, as amended
- Adopt the whole-school policy and review regularly
- Monitor the consistent implementation of the attendance policy
- Set aspirational targets for improving the school’s attendance figures
- Authorise the Headteacher (or other designated person) to consider and make decisions regarding leave of absence requests
- Work with the head teacher in establishing criteria against which leave requests will be considered. This is important to ensure the process is equitable and consistent
FLOWCHART 1: PRIMARY SCHOOL PATHWAYS FOR ATTENDANCE ISSUES - DAYS 1-10

Day 1 of absence

- Telephone call from parent to explain absence
  - Yes
  - No → School to telephone parent (and additional contacts if needed) to establish reason for absence

  Record Absence in register and expected date of return
  - Yes
  - No → Reason obtained?
    - No → Repeat Day 1 procedure
    - Yes → If child is subject to CP plan or Looked After, contact allocated Social worker. Or, if there are any known concerns that may require urgent intervention, see footnote 1.

Has the pupil returned?

Day 2 of absence

- Yes → Repeat Day 1 procedure
  - No → Record in register and expected date of return
  - Yes → Telephone call required from parent to explain continued absence and expected date of return
  - No → Repeat Day 1 procedure. If no contact, send absence letter to parents. Retain copy or letter or record electronically.

Has the pupil returned?

Day 3 of absence

- Yes → Repeat Day 1 procedure. If no contact, send absence letter to parents. Retain copy or letter or record electronically.
  - No → Repeat Day 1 procedure

Has the pupil returned?

Day 4 of absence

- Yes → Telephone call required from parent to explain continued absence and expected date of return
  - No → Record in register and expected date of return

Has the pupil returned?

Day 5 of absence

- Further absence letter sent to parent. If child is known to CSC, contact Social Worker. (Record actions/store electronically)

Has the pupil returned?

Days 6-10 of absence

- Continue to use school level support where appropriate (letters, telephone, liaise with family) to try to resolve issue. Seek further advice/support (from SAC) or support from external services if required e.g. PAST/CME/CAPSS etc.

Proceed to Flowchart 2

Side Note 1

Has parent sent a note giving a satisfactory explanation for the absence?

- Yes
  - Record reason and monitor future attendance
- No
  - Contact parents to obtain/challenge reason. Record and monitor future attendance.
If at any point there are concerns about the safety or welfare of the pupil, follow safeguarding procedures immediately.

1In some instances, more urgent notification to the local authority may be appropriate if contact with parents/carers is problematic e.g.
   - Children Looked After – schools should notify the CLA Service Manager
   - Children subject to a Child Protection plan – schools should notify the named social worker
   - Children in situations of known domestic violence – schools should consider whether safeguarding/child protection procedures should be followed.
   - Advice can be sought from the School Attendance Consultant at any time if this is required.
FLOWCHART 2: PRIMARY SCHOOL PATHWAYS FOR ATTENDANCE ISSUES

First day contact system in place
(for safeguarding reasons as well as attendance monitoring)
SEE FLOWCHART 1 for EARLY IN-SCHOOL INTERVENTION

Low level attendance issue identified by school
(no prescribed level of absence)

School Action 1:
Contact with parents and pupil as per tiers of intervention set out in the School Attendance Policy
(e.g. letters, phone calls and in-school meetings)

Has attendance improved?

No

School Action 2:
• Consider school based range of strategies (e.g. Parenting Contract, Attendance Panel) and agree appropriate target and timescale for review.
(Where appropriate, request advice from SAC or support from PAST)
• Review all information & consider need for CAF process (see Lancashire Continuum of Need) including discussion with parents.

Has attendance improved?

No

School Action 3:
Within two to four weeks, hold an in-school target review meeting to monitor progress and decide upon the next intervention.

Has attendance improved?

No

Refer to PAST (via PAST1 form)

Continue with in-school support

Undertake CAF process

School call a TAC meeting and parents attend

Action plan agreed and review progress against targets every four weeks or sooner if necessary.
Original concern addressed. Continue with in-school support if appropriate.

Criteria/needs/targets met

Yes

No

After third cycle of intervention (or earlier if appropriate)

Legal Intervention – go to Prosecution flowchart
**FLOWCHART 3: PRIMARY SCHOOL PATHWAYS FOR ATTENDANCE ISSUES HARD TO ENGAGE PARENTS**

Pupil absent from school: does parent contact school to explain?

- Yes
  - Monitor future attendance
  - Go to Flowchart 2
  - School Action 1

- No
  - Is the response satisfactory?
    - Yes
      - School Escalation 1:
        School contact home e.g.
        - Try phone
        - Try letter same day
        - Try additional letters if needed
      - Any existing known concerns that might require urgent intervention?
        - Yes
          - See footnote 1
        - No
          - School Escalation 2:
            Invite parents in for meeting
            - Parent(s) do not attend or reject support offered by school via CAF process
            - School Escalation 3:
              Request intervention from PAST due to lack of parental engagement (via PAST1 form).
              Inform parents of referral.
            - Does attendance improve?
              - Yes
                - School monitor future attendance
              - No
                - CAF referral and/or request for prosecution

- No
  - If school have to contact home on 3 separate occasions, consider further action

---

1 In some instances, more urgent notification to the local authority may be appropriate if contact with parents/carers is problematic e.g.

- Children Looked After – schools should notify the CLA Service Manager
- Children subject to a Child Protection plan – schools should notify the named social worker
- Children in situations of known domestic violence – schools should consider whether safeguarding/child protection procedures should be followed.