

# **St John Baptist (Southend) CE Primary School**



# **ATTENDANCE POLICY**

**Agreed: April 2016 (Autumn term)**

**Review Date: April 2021 (every 5 years or after change in legislation)**

**By: Curriculum and Pupil Welfare Committee**

## **St John Baptist (Southend) CE Primary School**

### **Attendance Policy**

The Governing Body at St John Baptist CE Primary School believes that everyone is created in the image of God and is of infinite worth. The Attendance Policy is based in Christian values. In our Christian community relationships are based on these core values: loving, caring, attitudes; concern for the whole person; justice and respect for others.

St John's is a happy, safe and inclusive school, where we aim to develop respect for the community and ourselves.

We deliver a creative, enriched and broad curriculum through high quality teaching and learning, that encourages all pupils to achieve their full potential.

### **Introduction and Background**

St John Baptist (Southend) CE Primary School recognises that positive behaviour and good attendance are central to raising standards and pupil attainment.

This policy is written with the above statement in mind and underpins our school ethos to:

- Celebrate and respect the diversity of cultures and beliefs in society;
- Create a safe and challenging environment
- Encourage each individual to reach their maximum potential
- With the help of prayer and reflection we aim to provide equality of opportunity for all to gain the skills and knowledge necessary to lead happy and successful lives.

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

Any absence affects the pattern of a child's schooling and regular absence will seriously affect their learning. Any pupil's absence or

late arrival disrupts teaching routines and so may affect the learning of others in the same class.

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

### **Promoting Regular Attendance**

Helping to create a pattern of regular attendance is everybody's responsibility – parents, pupils and all members of school staff and Governors.

#### **To help us all focus on this St John's will:**

- Give parents/carers details on attendance in our newsletters
- Report to parents/carers annually on their child's attendance with the annual school report
- Contact parents/carers should their child's attendance fall below 90%

### **Understanding Types of Absence**

Every half-day absence from school has to be classified by the school (not by the parents), as either Authorised or Unauthorised. This is why information about the cause of any absence is always required.

Authorised absences are mornings or afternoons away from school for a good reason i.e. illness, medical appointments which unavoidably fall in school time, emergencies or other unavoidable cause.

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 the local authority 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 authorised.

Whilst any child may be off school because they are ill, sometimes they can be reluctant to attend school. Any problems with regular non-attendance are best sorted out between the school, the parent and the child. If a parent thinks their child is reluctant to attend school then we will work together to understand why. We can use outside agencies to help with this, such as the Learning Mentor or Education Welfare Officer.

### **Persistent Absenteeism**

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 education and we need the parent's full support and co-operation to tackle this.

We monitor all absence and the reasons given thoroughly. Any case that is seen to have reached the persistent absentee mark or is at risk of moving towards that mark is given priority and we will inform the parents/carers immediately.

Persistent absentee pupils are tracked and monitored carefully. We combine this with academic tracking where absence affects attainment.

### **Absence Procedures**

#### **If your child is absent the parent/carer must follow the following procedures:**

- Contact us as soon as possible on the first day of absence before 09.20am.
- Parents/carers can also come into the school and report the absence with office staff.
- Provide a note explaining the absence once your child returns to school.

#### **If your child is absent we will:**

- Telephone you on the first day of absence if we have not heard from you.

Attendance is monitored monthly. If:

- A pupils absence falls to 90% or below the school will inform parents/carers by letter. This is known as the First Letter. It is expected that parents/carers will reply to this letter.
- Attendance continues to remain at 90% or falls below this figure, a Second Letter will be sent to parents/carers informing them that all absence from that date will be unauthorised. A meeting will be arranged for parents/carers to meet with the Head of School to discuss the absence.
- Attendance continues to be a concern, i.e. does not improve above 90%, the pupil will be referred to the Educational Welfare Officer (EWO).

Please Note: Any child whose attendance reaches 85% or under, will be referred to the EWO. Once a child is referred to the EWO, that child will be Fast Tracked to the Attendance Panel meeting.

Parents/carers who take their children out of school on holiday may be subject to a Penalty notice being issued under the Educational Penalty Notices (England Regs 2007) Act. An application for absence must be submitted to the school at least two weeks prior to the holiday departure date.

### **The Educational Welfare Officer (EWO)**

Parents/carers are expected to contact the school at an early stage and to work with the staff in resolving any problems together. This is nearly always successful. If difficulties cannot be sorted out in this way, the school may refer the child to the Educational Welfare Officer (EWO) from the Local Authority. The EWO will also try to resolve the situation by agreement but, if other ways of trying to improve the child's attendance have failed and unauthorised absences persist, the EWO can use 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 or the Local Authority.

Alternatively, parents may wish to contact the EWO themselves to ask for help or information. They are independent of the school and will give impartial advice. Their telephone number is available from the school office or by contacting the Local Education Authority.

### **Lateness**

Poor punctuality is not acceptable. If a child misses the start of the day they may miss work and so not spend time with their class teacher getting vital information and news for the day, therefore

impacting on their learning. They will also miss maths gym. Structure and routine are key to children's emotional development, particularly in Early Years. Late arriving pupils also disrupt lessons, can be embarrassing for the child and can also encourage absence. 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.

### **How we manage lateness**

The school day starts at 09.00 am and we expect our children to be in school before this time.

Registers are marked by 09.05 am and your child will receive a late mark if they are not in by that time.

At 09.30 am the registers will be closed. In accordance with the regulations, if your child arrives after this time they will receive a mark that shows them to be on site, but this will not count as a present mark and it will mean that they will have an unauthorised absence. This may mean that you could face the possibility of a penalty notice if this problem persists.

If your child has a persistent late record you will be asked to meet with the Head of School to resolve the problem, but you can approach the school at any time if you are having problems getting your child to school on time.

### **Holidays in Term Time**

**It is not a parental right to take leave during term time**, the decision lies solely with the Head of School. However, following DfE guidance Head of School cannot authorise leave in term time.

The school can request that the Educational Welfare Service consider issuing a penalty notice to each parent/carer for each child who is absent from school.

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.

### **Targets**

The minimum level of attendance for any child at St John's is 90% attendance.

Our target is to achieve 96.3% because we know that good attendance is the key to successful schooling.

Through the school year we monitor absences and punctuality to show us where improvements need to be made.

### **Summary**

St John's has a legal duty to publish its absence figures to parents and to promote attendance. Equally, parents have a duty to ensure that their child attend school.

All school staff are committed to working with parents and pupils as the best way to ensure as high a level of attendance as possible.