

St John's Highbury Vale CE Primary School



Attendance and Punctuality Policy

St John's Highbury Vale CE Primary School
Vision for Education:

*"I can do all things through
Christ who strengthens me."*

Philippians 4:13

This can be lived out through our school moto,
'every child, every opportunity, every day.'

At the heart of our school vision is a desire for an authentic and life-giving relationship with one another and with God. We believe that it is through Christ who gives us the strength, all can achieve within a learning environment where every child is valued as a unique individual created in the image of God, and where teaching and learning is of a consistently high standard.

Aim

The aim of St John's Highbury Vale attendance policy is to enable the school to provide a consistent practice that encourages and facilitates the regular attendance of all pupils. Regular attendance at school is key to steady pupil progress and enjoyment of learning, and for this reason the school is dedicated to ensuring its attendance policy is adhered to.

St John's Highbury Vale takes a whole-school approach to maintaining excellent attendance and it is the joint responsibility of parents/carers, pupils, and all staff members to ensure that children are attending school as they should be. We endeavour to work with families to make sure that any problems or circumstances which may lead to poor attendance are given the right attention and appropriate support.

This policy is supported by our policies on *safeguarding, anti-bullying, behaviour, and SEN*.

Legal framework

The Education Act 1996 states that:

The parent/carer of every child of compulsory school age shall cause them to receive efficient full-time education suitable —

- a) to their age, ability and aptitude, and
- b) to any special educational needs they may have, either by regular attendance at school or otherwise.

A person begins to be of compulsory school age —

- a) when they attain the age of five, if they attain that age on a prescribed day, and
- b) otherwise at the beginning of the prescribed day next following their attaining that age.

A person ceases to be of compulsory school age at the end of the day which is the school leaving date for any calendar year —

- a) if they attain the age of 16 after that day but before the beginning of the school year next following,
- b) if they attain that age on that day, or
(unless paragraph (a) applies) if that day is the school leaving date next following their attaining that age.

St John's Highbury Vale is dedicated to complying with attendance laws set out by the DfE legal framework and has set out this attendance policy accordingly. We have also considered the 'Working together to improve School attendance Guidance' May 2022, to inform this policy.

Roles and responsibilities

Governing body

As part of our whole-school approach to maintaining a high level of attendance, the governing body will:

- Recognise the importance of school attendance and promote it across the school's ethos and policies;
- Set high expectations of all leaders, staff, pupils and parents
- Recognise that attendance improvement does not happen in isolation and therefore ensuring it is prioritised in wider improvement strategies, such as raising attainment, behaviour, special educational needs and disabilities, wellbeing, and safeguarding.
- Regularly review attendance data, discussing and challenging trends, focusing on improvement efforts for individual pupils or cohorts who need it most;
- Nominate or identify a committee of the governing body who will take the lead role in monitoring attendance and coordinating provision and policies for attendance;
- Ensure school staff receive adequate training on attendance;
- Ensure that all legislation regarding attendance is complied with and that up-to-date guidelines are communicated to parents/carers, children, and staff;
- Take time at governors' meetings to review and discuss attendance issues that have arisen in order to stay on top of expected attendance targets for the year;
- Ensure that the school is implementing effective means of recording attendance and organising that data, including for children who are educated off-site;
- Ensure that they are clear on how to analyse attendance data and how to communicate the findings effectively to parents and staff.

School leadership team

As part of our whole-school approach to maintaining a high level of attendance, the school leadership team will:

- Be active in their approach to promoting good attendance to pupils and their parents/carers, which includes forming positive relationships with families;
- Ensure that the school's teaching and learning experiences encourage regular attendance and that pupils are taught the value of high attendance for their own progress and achievement;

- Coordinate with the governing body to monitor the implementation of the attendance policy and its effectiveness, with regular policy review;
- Ensure that all staff are up to date with the school's attendance policy and government legislation, and that staff are fully trained to recognise and deal with attendance issues;
- Ensure that government legislation on attendance is complied with and that they (the leadership team) are up to date with any legislation changes and how to implement them;
- Nominate or appoint a senior manager to take on the responsibility of overseeing and monitoring attendance provision and ensure that this person has sufficient time and resources to give to this job; this person is now named as Lindsey Hodgson, Head of School.
- Report to the governing body each term and to the CFC Committee, which is responsible for attendance, half-termly on data and provision.
- Ensure that systems to record and report attendance data are in place and working effectively;
- Develop multi-agency relationships to help with poor attendance and support families who are having difficulties getting their child to attend;
- Document any specific interventions or steps taken to work with families to improve their child's attendance in case of future legal proceedings.

Teachers and support staff

As part of our whole-school approach to maintaining a high level of attendance, the school's teachers and support staff will:

- Be active in their approach to promoting good attendance to pupils and their parents/carers, which includes forming positive relationships with families;
- Ensure that the school's teaching and learning experiences encourage regular attendance and that pupils are taught the value of high attendance for their own personal progress and achievement;
- Ensure that they are fully aware and up to date with the school's attendance policy and government legislation and that they will speak to another member of staff or seek support if they are unsure how to deal with an attendance issue;
- Ensure that they are following the correct systems for recording attendance and that an attendance register is taken twice a day;
- Contribute to strategy meetings and interventions where they are needed;

- Work with external agencies to support pupils and their families who are struggling with regular attendance.

Parents and carers

As part of our whole-school approach to maintaining a high level of attendance, we request that parents/carers:

- Engage with their children's education – support their learning and take an interest in what they have been doing at school;
- Promote the value of good education and the importance of regular school attendance at home;
- Encourage and support their children's aspirations;
- Follow the school procedure for reporting the absence of their child from school and include an expected date for return;
- Do everything they can to prevent unnecessary school absences, such as by making medical and dental appointments outside school hours;
- Use the school as a support when they or their child are having difficulties, and work to form a positive relationship with the school so that there is easy communication when a problem arises;
- Keep the school informed of any circumstances which may affect their child's attendance;
- Enforce a regular routine at home in terms of home learning, bedtime, etc. so that the child is used to consistency and the school day becomes part of that routine. It is vital that the child receives the same message at home as they do at school about the importance of attendance;
- Do not take their children out of school during term time. If parents/carers would like to make a special request for this, they may do so to the Executive Head or the Head of School.

Pupils

As part of our whole-school approach to maintaining a high level of attendance, we request that pupils:

- Are aware of the school's attendance policy and when they are required to attend. This will be communicated to them through the school staff, parents/carers, and the school timetable;
- Speak to their class teacher or another member of staff if they are experiencing difficulties at school or at home which may impact on their attendance;
- Attend all lessons ready to learn, with the appropriate learning tools requested and on time for the class. Lesson times will be made clear through their school timetable;

- Follow the correct school procedure if they arrive late. Pupils are held responsible for this and it is made clear to all students what this procedure is by their class teachers. This will help the school to monitor attendance and keep accurate records for the child's individual attendance, and is also vital for health and safety in the event of a school evacuation.

Categories of absence and procedure for reporting absences

Absences will be treated as **unauthorised** unless a satisfactory explanation for the pupil's absence is given to the school. Parents/carers cannot authorise absences.

Office staff will make it clear on the school register when taking attendance whether a child's absence is authorised or unauthorised.

When a child is to be absent from school without prior permission, parents/carers should inform the school by telephone/email on the first day of absence and let them know what date they expect the child to return. *For an absence longer than 2 days this should be followed up with a written note from the parent/carer of the child.* Alternative arrangements will be made individually with non-English speaking parents/carers.

In the week prior to and directly after a school holiday, absences will be unauthorised unless a satisfactory explanation is given, or evidence is supplied to the school to indicate an illness.

Illness

Most cases of absence due to illness are short term, but parents/carers will need to make a phone call/email to alert the school on *the first day* of absence (by telephone, note to school or email). If a child is persistently absent due to illness, we may request proof of a doctor's appointment or prescription to authorise the absence.

Medical or dental appointments

Parents/carers should make every effort to ensure these appointments are made outside school hours. Where it cannot be avoided, children should attend school for as much of that day as possible.

Authorised absences

There may be some instances where the school will authorise absence in exceptional circumstances. If a parent or carer wishes to request authorised leave, they must obtain a form from the school office and return it completed at least two weeks in advance of the leave request.

Exclusion

Exclusion is treated as an authorised absence. *The Head of School/class teacher will arrange for work to be available to be collected from the school office to be completed at home or at a neighbouring school.*

Family Holidays and Extended Leave

Parents/carers should ensure that family holidays and extended leave are arranged outside of school term time. Parents/carers do not have the automatic right to remove their child from school during term time for this reason. Requests for leave from school must be made in writing to the Executive Head or the Head of School two weeks in advance of being taken.

In the case of unforeseen circumstances, such as a family bereavement that requires the child to travel to another country, this will be taken into consideration.

Retrospective applications will not be considered and this time taken will be processed as unauthorised absence.

All requests for authorised absence will be responded to in writing, and will outline the details of when the child is expected to return to school. Parents/carers should contact the school immediately if there will be a cause for delay from the stated date of return.

When deciding whether to authorise absence, the following will be taken into account:

- That your request is exceptional and/or cannot be avoided
- Your child has no history of term time holidays
- Your child's current attendance is good (above 96%)
- You have sought to minimise the amount of time missed from school
- The timing of the leave is such that your child will not miss any important examinations

If permission is not granted, but the child is still absent, the absence is classed as unauthorised and parents/carers may be issued with a penalty notice.

Religious Observance

St John's Highbury Vale recognises that there may be times where children of different faiths observe religious festivals that fall outside of school holidays and weekends, and will allow authorised absence for these times. Parents/carers will be aware of these dates and should give the school written notification in advance.

Children Missing in Education

As a result of daily admissions registrations, schools are particularly well placed to notice when a child has gone missing.

Initially we would try to contact the parents or carers to establish what has happened if we were concerned about a child's absence. If this is not possible the school's DSL should be informed and an assessment should be made on the child's level of vulnerability, where concerns will be passed onto Children's Services.

Where a leave of absence has been granted and the pupil has not attend school within the ten days immediately after the end of the period granted and the school does not have reasonable grounds to believe that the pupil is unable to attend due to sickness or any other unavoidable cause, a referral to Children's Services will be made.

Further information about school's safeguarding responsibilities can be found in the schools Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy and also 'Keeping Children Safe in Education 2021' DFE document.

Late Arrival (Punctuality)

Schools must take an attendance register at the start of each morning session of a school day and once during each afternoon session. In the morning, registration begins when the bell is rung at **8.55am**. The school gates close at 9am and the register closes at 9.05am. Pupils who arrive after this time will be marked as late, they should go straight to the school office to sign in and give a reason for their lateness. It is vital that pupils sign in at the office to ensure that appropriate health and safety regulations are followed and that all pupils are accounted for.

Afternoon sessions start at 1pm for children in Reception class up to Year 4. Sessions start at 1.30pm for years 5 and 6. All children are expected to be in

their classrooms for afternoon registration. If they are not, they are marked late when they do return.

Children who turn up to school more than thirty minutes after the closing of the register will have their lateness recorded as an unauthorised absence.

School Action: Following Up Absences

Class registers are passed to the school office or saved on SIMs at the end of the registration period. Where there are unexplained or unauthorised absences, the school will contact the parents/carers. The school holds more than one emergency contact number for each child and will use them all in relation to the absence of a child. If a pattern of unauthorised absences emerges, the Executive Head, Head of School or School office will contact the parent/carer to discuss possible reasons and school support systems that could help.

Parents/carers will be contacted if a pupil gives a reason for an unauthorised absence and there is doubt about the truth of the excuse.

The school will take disciplinary action, after investigation, against any pupils who are discovered to be truanting and parents/carers will be contacted to discuss possible reasons and school support systems that could help.

Attendance Categories and Actions

Percentage Attendance	Grading	Action
100%	Outstanding	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Monitored by teacher and attendance team• Positive rewards
97%+	Excellent	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Monitored by teacher and attendance team• Positive rewards
96%+	Good	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Monitored by teacher and attendance team• Positive rewards• Warning letters

<95-90%	Action needed	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Letter to parents/carers • Monitor for 4 weeks • Rewards available for improvement • Warning letters
<90%	Attendance Action Meeting	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Referral made to the Local Authority. • Meeting with parents/carers • Monitor for 4 weeks • Rewards available for improvement • Warning letters
86%	Improvement Essential Meeting	<p>Meeting with Attendance lead and Parents/Carers. Monitoring from the Local Authority. Possible fines or prosecution from Local Authority.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Warning letters
<85%	Serious Concern – referral to agencies	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Meeting with Attendance lead and Parents/Carers and Attendance & Engagement Team at the Local Authority • Parent Contracts • Warning letters

Monitoring Absence and Lateness

The attendance of all children is monitored every half term. Those identified as showing persistence absence or lateness are identified and letters are sent to parents or carers informing them of the schools expected attendance percentage and that of their child currently. In the first instance, the letter clearly identifies how much learning time a child may have lost from falling to an attendance percentage of 90% or below.

If attendance and/or lateness continues to be an issue a further letter is sent once again making parents or carer aware of a child's current attendance percentage and asking for a meeting to discuss what we can do as a school to support improving a child's attendance and/or lateness.

If attendance or lateness fails to improve, a referral to Bright Futures early help team may be made and the Access and Engagement Team from the Local Authority would be informed. Their involvement could result in parents and carers being issued with a fine or court summons.

Fixed Penalty Notices

The Local Authority can serve a fixed penalty notice on parents or carers as an alternative to a prosecution where they have failed to ensure that their child of compulsory school age regularly attends school. Fixed penalty notices can be used where a pupil's absence has not been authorised by the school.

Fixed penalty notices are intended to prevent the need for court action and will only be used when a parent or carer has not engaged with advice or support from the school, e.g. an improvement in low level attendance or high number of lateness, or unauthorised holidays in term time.

The penalty fine is £60 if paid within 21 days of receipt, rising to £120 if paid after 21 days but within 28 days. The payment must be paid directly to the Local Authority regardless of who issued the penalty notice.

If the penalty is not paid by the end of the 28 day period, the Local Authority must decide either to prosecute for the original offence to which the notice applies, or withdraw the notice. Parents can only be prosecuted if 28 days have expired, and full payment has not been made. There is no right to appeal by parents against a fixed penalty notice.

Persistent and Severe Absence

As a school, we will work closely with the Local Authority to make patterns of persistent and severe absence a focus on our regular data monitoring and will identify pupils or cohorts who need targeted attendance support as quickly as possible.

Where absence escalates and pupils miss 10% or more school (equivalent to 1 day or more a fortnight across a full school year) we will work closely

together with the Local Authority to put additional targeted support in place to remove any barriers to attendance.

Particular focus will be given to children who are absent from school more than they are present (those missing 50% or more of school). A concerted effort will be made across a range of services to prioritise support for these severely absent pupils, which may involve a family plan or an education health care plan.

Medical Conditions or Special Educational Needs

Pupils who are suffering from long term medical conditions or who have special educational needs or disabilities may need additional support to improve attendance. Where a healthcare plan has been put in place for a child due to illness, conversations can be held around the possibility for home learning whilst a child is receiving treatment or is recovering from an illness.

We will work with external agencies to make sure that the provision is right for the child and that parents are supported to develop the right approaches for attendance of their child. We will look to remove the in-school barriers that pupils may face, including considering support or reasonable adjustments for uniform, transport, routines, access to support in school and playtime and lunch time arrangements.

Joined up pastoral care will be in place where needed and consideration will be given as to whether a time-limited phased return to school would be appropriate.

Pupils with long term illness or other health needs may need additional support to continue their education, such as alternative provision provided by the local authority. The Local Authority (Islington) is responsible for arranging suitable education for all children of compulsory school age, who because of health reasons, would otherwise not receive suitable education.