

# St John Fisher RC Primary School

## Attendance Policy



## LOVE LEARN ACHIEVE

### St John Fisher Mission Statement

The school, in partnership with parents, carers and with the parish of St John Fisher, offers to each one of its children a Catholic education centred on Christ, which enables them to grow in God's love, learning to be the best they can be in accordance with Christian values.

**Approved by:** Mrs. K. Blom

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## Contents

1. Aims .....	2
2. Legislation and guidance .....	2
3. Roles and responsibilities .....	3
4. Recording attendance .....	5
5. Authorised and unauthorised absence .....	7
6. Strategies for promoting attendance .....	8
7. Attendance monitoring .....	8
8. Monitoring arrangements .....	9
9. Links with other policies .....	9
Appendix 1: attendance codes .....	9

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### 1. 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.

### 2. 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.

## 3. Roles and responsibilities

### 3.1 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

### 3.2 The headteacher

The headteacher 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

### 3.3 The designated senior leader responsible for attendance

The designated senior leader is responsible for:

- 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
- Delivering targeted intervention and support to pupils and families

The designated senior leaders responsible for attendance are Janine Kenna and Claire Ellerker and can be contacted via [school@st-johnfisher.merton.sch.uk](mailto:school@st-johnfisher.merton.sch.uk)

### 3.4 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 designated senior leader responsible for attendance and the headteacher
- Working with education welfare officers to tackle persistent absence
- Advising the headteacher when to issue fixed-penalty notices

The attendance officer is Mrs M Aldred and can be contacted via 020 8540 2637 or [admin.officer@st-johnfisher.merton.sch.uk](mailto:admin.officer@st-johnfisher.merton.sch.uk)

### **3.5 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 immediately after registration on a daily basis by 9:10am in the morning and immediately after children return to class from lunchtime.

### **3.6 School admin staff**

School admin staff will:

- Take calls from parents and carers about absence on a day-to-day basis and record it on the school system
- Inform teachers and senior leaders where needed, in order to provide them with more detailed information and support on attendance
- Organise first day calling/texts and record on registers

### **3.7 Parents/carers**

Parents and carers are expected to:

- Make sure their child attends every day on time
- Call the school to report their child's absence before 8:50am on the day of the absence (and each subsequent day of absence), and advise when they are expected to return
- Provide up to date contact numbers and change of address
- Provide the school with more than 1 emergency contact number for their child
- Ensure that, where possible, appointments for their child are made outside of the school day
- Provide medical evidence indicating attendance at the dentist, doctor or optician before the arranged appointment unless an emergency situation has arisen. Whenever possible all appointments should be made outside of school hours
- Ensure that their child arrives at school on time each day
- Let the school know if their child is going to be late, e.g. if a car breaks down; if an urgent appointment has been made
- Understand the importance of good attendance and punctuality and promote this with their child, aiming for 100% attendance each year
- Provide written explanations of any absence and medical evidence for whole day appointments as well as medical evidence for persistent absence from school due to alleged illness
- Only request leave of absence if it is for an exceptional circumstance

### **3.8 Pupils**

Pupils are expected to:

- Attend school every day on time

## **4. Recording attendance**

### **4.1 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 8:50am on each school day (8:30am/12:30pm for Nursery)

The register for the first session will be taken by 9am and will be kept open until 9:10am. The register for the second session will be taken at the following times:

YrR/Yr1 - 12:45, Yr2/3 – 1pm, Yr4 - 1:15pm, Yr5 – 1:30pm, Yr6 – 1:45pm and will be kept open ten minutes past that staggered time.

#### **4.2 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 8:50am or as soon as practically possible by calling 020 8540 2637 or emailing the school admin staff [school@st-johnfisher.merton.sch.uk](mailto:school@st-johnfisher.merton.sch.uk) (see also section 7).

We will mark absence due to illness as authorised unless the school has a genuine concern about the authenticity of the illness.

With the majority of the absences attributed to illness the school may request that medical evidence be provided for any subsequent illness to enable that absence to be recorded as authorised. The request will be in writing and will detail what could be acceptable as medical evidence, for example, an appointment card, copy of prescription or sight of the finished prescribed medicine bottle/container with the child's name on it or other appropriate form of evidence.

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.

### 4.3 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.

Absence for medical reasons should be made either in writing or by email ([school@st-johnfisher.merton.sch.uk](mailto:school@st-johnfisher.merton.sch.uk)) as far in advance as possible.

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 5 to find out which term-time absences the school can authorise.

Requests for leave for other exceptional circumstances should be made using the request form which can either be picked up from the school office or downloaded from the website using the following link <https://www.st-johnfisher.merton.sch.uk/parents-and-carers/attendance-and-absence/>

### 4.4 Understanding types of absence coding

Every half-day absence from school has to be classified by the School as AUTHORISED or UNAUTHORISED and it is the Headteacher who decides whether an absence is authorised or unauthorised. This is why information about the cause of any absence is always required, preferably in writing. Medical evidence may also be required in the form of a copy of a prescription, GP note, etc. Types of absence that are likely to be authorised are illness, medical or dental appointments that unavoidably fall in school time, emergencies.

Examples of types of absence that are **not** considered reasonable and which will not be authorised under any circumstance are:

- Birthdays
- Day trips and holidays in term time unless there are exceptional circumstances that have been approved by the Headteacher
- Arriving at school too late to get a present mark (after the close of registration)
- Death of a pet

A school can, if needed, change an authorised absence to an unauthorised absence and vice versa, if new information is presented. Any changes will be communicated to parents/carers. An example of this would be where a parent states a child is unwell but on return to school there is evidence they have been on holiday.

### 4.5 Suspension from School

With effect from the 1<sup>st</sup> September 2022, any pupil who has been suspended from school, and provision arranged, if the student does not attend the provision this shall be recorded as an unauthorised absence. This may result in further action taken by the school, please see penalty notice section

### 4.6 Lateness and punctuality

A pupil who arrives late:

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

Ongoing punctuality issues will be identified by the school attendance officer who will liaise with parents, senior staff in school and the Education Welfare Officer.

#### **4.7 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 make reasonable enquiries to establish contact with parents/carers and the child, including making enquiries to known friends and wider family. In event of an absence of three or more days without contact from the family, a home visit will be made, either by senior leaders from St John Fisher or the School Education Welfare Officer to ascertain the safety and well-being of the child. The Headteacher will also take advice from Merton Early Help Hub.
- 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 involve the Education Welfare Officer.
- Once contact has been made, school will 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 session

#### **4.8 Parenting Contracts**

A Parenting Contract may be offered to support an improvement in attendance, and is a written agreement between the relevant parties, that may include the school, parents/carers, pupils and school's Education Welfare Officer (EWO).

Parenting Contracts should be in place for a minimum of 3 months and a maximum of 12 months. The aim is to offer support by listening to the reasons for absence and difficulties that prevent regular school attendance during a meeting with parents/carers, child, school staff and EWO where realistic achievable targets can be set. If there is no improvements against the targets set after 4 weeks the Parenting Contract can close.

#### **4.9 Ten Days' Absence**

We have a legal duty to report the absence of any pupil who is absent without an explanation for 10 consecutive days. If the child is not seen and contact has not been established with the named parent/carer then the local authority is notified that the child is at risk of missing education (CME). The Education Welfare Officer will visit the last known address and alert key services to locate the child. So help us to help you and your child by making sure we always have an up-to-date contact number. There will be regular checks on telephone numbers throughout the year.

#### **4.10 Children Missing from Education (CME)**

If a pupil moves too far from St John Fisher to attend the school/moves out of the area/abroad the parents must complete a school leavers form, available from the school office. This will provide school with the pupil's new home address, potentially their new school name and contact details and contact information for their parents/carers. If no/insufficient detail is provided to the school, the pupil will be referred to the local authority as a Child Missing from Education and the Local Authority will need to make appropriate checks.

#### **4.11 Ensuring a good education for children who cannot attend school because of health needs**

The school attendance officer will work together with the local authority and other relevant professional to ensure any child who is going to be absent for longer than 15 days due to medical reasons either consecutively or accumatively, will have access to relevant and

appropriate education. This includes public exam provision and the education of siblings where the family have had to travel and stay away from the home for medical reasons.

#### 4.12 Part-time Timetables

All pupils of compulsory school age are entitled to a full-time education. In very exceptional circumstances, where it is in a pupil's best interests, there may be a need for a temporary part-time timetable to meet their individual needs. For example, where a medical condition prevents a pupil from attending full-time education and a part-time timetable is considered as part of a re-integration package. <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/working-together-to-improve-school-attendance>

A part-time timetable must only be in place for the shortest time necessary and not be treated as a long-term solution. Any pastoral support programme or other agreement should have a time limit by which point the pupil is expected to attend full-time, either at school or alternative provision.

There should also be formal arrangements in place for regularly reviewing it with the pupil and their parents. In agreeing to a part-time timetable, a school has agreed to a pupil being absent from school for part of the week or day and therefore must treat absence as authorised and code in the register as a C, which is an authorised absence.

#### 4.13 Reporting to parents/carers

The school will inform parents/carers about their child's attendance and absence levels on an annual basis and will contact parents/carers if those children whose attendance falls below 90% in line with half termly reviews of attendance as a concern arises.

## 5. Authorised and unauthorised absence

### 5.1 Approval for term-time absence

The headteacher will only grant a leave of absence to a pupil during term time if they consider there to be '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.

All requests for Leave of Absence in term time will be considered in their individual merits. The school considers each application for term-time absence individually, taking into account the specific facts, circumstances and relevant context behind the request.

Any request should be submitted as soon as it is anticipated and, where possible, at least 4 weeks before the absence, and in accordance with any leave of absence request form, accessible via the school website <https://www.st-johnfisher.merton.sch.uk/parents-and-carers/attendance-and-absence/> or from the school office. The headteacher may require evidence to support any request for leave of absence.

Valid reasons for **authorised absence** include:

- Illness and medical/dental appointments (see sections 4.2 and 4.3 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



Authorisation for absence will not be granted retrospectively. The department for Children Life Long Learning and Families make it clear that:

**Headteachers may not grant any leave of absence during term time unless there are exceptional circumstances.**

Education (Pupil Registration) (England) (Amendment) Regulations 2013-

On receipt of an application for leave on the appropriate form together with any supporting documentation, consideration will be given to the circumstance. The decision of the school will be sent to you within 7 days.

Leave of absence that is not authorised may result in the issuing of a Penalty Notice fine by the London Borough of Merton. The Penalty Notice carries a fine of up to £120.

## **5.2 Legal sanctions**

Leave of absence that is not authorised may result in the issuing of Penalty Notice Fine by the London Borough of Merton, where the child is of compulsory school age.

The fine, if issued, is for £120, per parent per child. In Merton, Penalty Notices are issued by the local authority at the request of the school in line with the Code of Conduct.

If the payment has not been made after 28 days, the matter will usually proceed to the Magistrates Court under s4441 Education Act 1996. If convicted the parent/carer may face a fine of up to £1000 and will receive a criminal record.

## **6. Strategies for promoting attendance**

Attendance will be reported to the whole school community on a weekly basis via 'Headlines' with incentive based rewards for the best punctuality / attendance. This is also celebrated in end of week whole school assembly.

## **7. Attendance monitoring**

Use of half termly visits to school by the Education Welfare Officer

### **7.1 Monitoring attendance**

The School will:

- Monitor attendance and absence data half-termly, termly and yearly across the school and at an individual pupil level
- Identify whether or not there are particular groups of children whose absences 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.

### **7.2 Analysing attendance**

The school will:

- Analyse attendance and absence data regularly 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

### **7.3 Using data to improve attendance**

The school will:

- Provide regular attendance reports 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

### **7.4 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
- Hold regular 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
- Write to parents/carers of all children who have less than 90% attendance at the end of each term
- Provide access to wider support services to remove the barriers to attendance
- Monitor the pupil's attendance closely and work in partnership with parents/local services to increase attendance

## **8. Monitoring arrangements**

This policy will be reviewed as guidance from the local authority or DfE is updated, and as a minimum annually by Headteacher and Chair of Governors. At every review, the policy will be approved by the full governing board.

## **9. Links with other policies**

This policy links to the following policies:

- Child protection and safeguarding policy
- Behaviour policy

## 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

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

<b>H</b>	Authorised holiday	Pupil has been allowed to go on holiday due to exceptional circumstances
<b>I</b>	Illness	School has been notified that a pupil will be absent due to illness
<b>M</b>	Medical/dental appointment	Pupil is at a medical or dental appointment
<b>R</b>	Religious observance	Pupil is taking part in a day of religious observance
<b>S</b>	Study leave	Year 11 pupil is on study leave during their public examinations
<b>T</b>	Gypsy, Roma and traveller absence	Pupil from a traveller community is travelling, as agreed with the school
<b>Unauthorised absence</b>		
<b>G</b>	Unauthorised holiday	Pupil is on a holiday that was not approved by the school
<b>N</b>	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)
<b>O</b>	Unauthorised absence	School is not satisfied with reason for pupil's absence
<b>U</b>	Arrival after registration	Pupil arrived at school after the register closed
<b>X</b>	Not required to be in school	Pupil of non-compulsory school age is not required to attend
<b>Y</b>	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

<b>Z</b>	Pupil not on admission register	Register set up but pupil has not yet joined the school
<b>#</b>	Planned school closure	Whole or partial school closure due to half-term/bank holiday/INSET day