



Attendance Policy



September 2021

Important coronavirus (COVID-19) update

This policy has been updated in line with the current guidance from the UK government. From the 1st September DfE informed schools that they would be fully open for the **compulsory attendance of all pupils**.

When pupils are in school full time, schools can refer to the provisions within the main body of this policy. However, in the circumstance of a further partial or full lockdown and re-opening, the way attendance will be recorded will be guided by local arrangements.

The DfE coronavirus helpline is: 0800 046 8687 Monday to Friday from 8:00am to 6:00pm and weekends 10:00am to 4:00pm. You can also email the helpline on

DfE.coronavirushelpline@education.gov.uk

Date for Review: September 2022

James Montgomery Academy Trust

Statement of intent

The James Montgomery Academy Trust (thereafter referred to as JMAT) believes that in order to facilitate teaching and learning, good attendance is essential. Pupils cannot achieve their full potential if they do not regularly attend school.

JMAT is committed to following the framework set in Section 7 of the Education Act 1996, which states that:

“The parent of every child of compulsory school age shall cause him/her to receive efficient full-time education suitable:-

- (a) To age, ability and*
- (b) To any special educational needs he/she may have*

Hooton Pagnell All Saints Church of England Primary School and the JMAT are committed to providing an education of the highest quality for all pupils and endeavour to provide an environment where all pupils feel valued and welcome. Parents and pupils play a part in making our school so successful. Every child has a right to access the education to which he/she is entitled by law. We actively promote 100% attendance and will use a variety of weekly, termly and annual awards to promote good attendance and punctuality.

The whole school community – pupils, parents and carers, teaching and support staff and school governors – have a responsibility for ensuring good school attendance and have important roles to play. The purpose of the policy is to clarify everyone’s part in this.

For children to take full advantage of the educational opportunities offered it is vital that they are on time every day unless the absence is unavoidable. High attainment, confidence with peers and staff, future aspirations and future careers depend on good attendance. The routines that children develop around attendance and punctuality are the same as the expectations of any future employer, therefore setting good patterns of attendance/punctuality in education prepares children for the world of work.

Good Attendance is important because:

- Statistics show a direct link between under-achievement and absence below 95%
- Good attendance and punctuality are vital for success at school and to establish positive life habits necessary for future success.
- Good attendance and punctuality minimise the risks of pupils conducting anti-social behaviour or becoming victims or perpetrators of crime or abuse.
- Regular attendance encourages children to build friendships and develop social groups, working together as a whole team, sharing ideas and developing life skills.
- Children's social skills are similarly enhanced by regular attendance (linking into the personal development of pupils).
- Non-attenders will not only miss out on essential learning but also other social events taking place (linking into the personal development of pupils).
- Regular attenders make better progress, both socially and academically
- Regular attenders are more successful in transferring between primary school, secondary school, higher education, employment and training.

School Attendance Lead: **Laura Carr**

Named Safeguarding Governor: **Ian Hutchinson**

Legal Framework

This policy has due regard to legislation, including, but not limited to, the following:

- Education Act 1996
- Children Act 1989
- Equality Act 2010
- Education (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2006 (as amended)
- Children (Performances and Activities) (England) Regulations 2014
- Children and Young Persons Act 1963
- Keeping Children Safe in Education 2020
- Children Missing Education 2016
- Education and Inspections Act 2006
- Coronavirus Act 2020

This policy also has regard to non-statutory DfE guidance, including, but not limited to, the following:

- DfE (2019) 'School Attendance'
- DfE (2015) 'Child performance and activities licensing legislation in England'
- DfE (2015) 'Supporting Pupils with Medical Conditions'
- DfE (2019) 'A guide to Absence Statistics'
- DfE (2020) Guidance for full opening: schools

Roles and Responsibilities

The Local Governing Body (LGB)

The Local Governing Body (LGB) has overall responsibility for the implementation of the Attendance Policy and procedures of JMAT in its schools. They have the overall responsibility for ensuring that the attendance policy, as written, does not discriminate on any grounds, including, but not limited to, ethnicity/national origin, culture, religion and gender,

The Headteacher

The Headteacher is responsible for the day-to-day implementation and management of the Attendance (pupils) Policy and procedures of the school and only the Headteacher can authorise absence using a consistent approach. **The Headteacher is not obliged to accept a parent's explanation and a letter or telephone message from a parent does not in itself authorise an absence.**

Responsibilities of the School Attendance Lead

The attendance lead will oversee, direct and co-ordinate the school's work in promoting regular and improved attendance and will ensure the attendance policy is consistently applied throughout the school. The Attendance Lead will also ensure that attendance is both recorded accurately and analysed. They will ensure that attendance issues are identified at an early stage and that support is put in place to deal with any difficulties. If a child is absent and no reason has been provided, parents should be contacted on the first day of absence by phone call. If a parent cannot be contacted, First Day Calling procedures are initiated and it is expected that school is aware of the reason for absence before start of the afternoon session. If absence is frequent or continuous, except where a child is clearly

unwell, the attendance lead will make sure that contact is made with parent(s) to discuss reasons for their child's absence.

Responsibilities of Staff, including teachers, support staff and volunteers

All staff (teaching and support) in school have a key role to play in supporting and promoting excellent school attendance and will work to provide an environment in which all our pupils are eager to learn, feel valued members of the school community and look forward to coming to school every day. **Staff also have a responsibility to set a good example in matters relating to their own attendance and punctuality. This is now part of the National Standards for Teachers.**

School staff will:

- Ensure all pupils are registered accurately.
- Promote and reward good attendance with pupils at all appropriate opportunities.
- Liaise with the attendance leader on matters of attendance and punctuality.
- Communicate any concerns or underlying problems that may account for a child's absence.
- Support pupils with absence to engage with their learning once they are back in school.

Parental Responsibility

Parents have a legal duty to ensure their children attend school regularly (Section 444 of the 1996 Education Act). Permitting absence from school that is not authorised by the school creates an offence of law. Parents who are concerned about sending their child to school during the coronavirus pandemic must discuss their concerns with the Headteacher, so their worries can be addressed and mitigated where possible, using the risk assessments in place.

Regular attendance is essential for the all-round development of the child and they should be allowed to take full advantage of educational opportunities available to them to make good progress in their learning. Poor attendance undermines their educational progress and can sometimes affect their emotional health, well-being and social development.

Section 444 of the Education Act 1996 states that parents are guilty of an offence of failing to secure regular attendance at school unless they can prove that the child was absent due to:

- Leave being granted by school (authorised holiday)
- Sickness or any other unavoidable cause (the sickness or unavoidable cause must relate to the child, not the parent).
- Religious observance (authorised by the school)
- Failure by the local authority to provide transport.

Parents will:

- Inform the school on the morning of the first day if their child is absent
- Provide accurate and up-to-date contact details and update the school if their details change

- Discuss with class teacher/school staff any planned absences well in advance
- Support school with their child in aiming for 100% attendance each year.
- Avoid taking their child out of school for non-urgent medical or dental appointments. If a pupil has to attend an appointment during school time, they will attend school before and after the appointment wherever possible.
- Only request leave of absence if it is for an exceptional circumstance.

Authorised and unauthorised absence

Term-Time Leave

JMAT's aim is to prepare pupils for their future lives and careers. With this in mind, we require parents to observe the school holidays as prescribed.

The Headteacher is unable to authorise holidays during term-time.

The Headteacher is only allowed to grant a leave of absence in exceptional circumstances. Applications will be made in advance and the Headteacher will be satisfied by the evidence which is presented, before authorising term-time leave.

The Headteacher will determine the amount of time a pupil can be away from school during term time. Any leave of absence is at the discretion of the Headteacher.

Any requests for leave during term-time will be considered on an individual basis and the pupil's previous attendance record will be taken into account.

Request for leave will not be granted in the following circumstances:

- Immediately before and during assessment periods
- When a pupil's attendance record shows any unauthorised absence
- Where a pupil's authorised absence record is already above 10 percent for any reason

If parents take their child out of school during term-time without authorisation from the Headteacher, they may be subject to sanctions such as a fixed penalty fine.

The following reasons are also examples of when absence will not be authorised:

- Persistent non-specific illness e.g. poorly/unwell
- Absence of siblings if one child is ill
- Oversleeping
- Inadequate clothing/uniform
- Confusion over school dates
- Medical/dental appointments of more than half a day without good reasons
- Child's/family birthday
- Shopping trip
- Family holidays (with some rare occasions)

Lateness

JMAT understands that punctuality is of the utmost importance and lateness will not be tolerated and at Hooton Pagnell All Saints, the register is taken at 8.45am. Pupils arriving after this time must enter school by the main entrance and report to Reception where their name and the reason for lateness will be recorded. The register will close 35 minutes after the register has been taken. Pupils arriving after the register has closed will be marked as late after registration (Code 'U') and this will count as an unauthorised absence. Frequent lateness

after the register has closed (Code 'U') will be discussed with parents and could provide grounds for prosecution or a Fixed Penalty Notice.

Religious Observances

The school will take advice from local religious leaders of all faiths to establish the appropriate number of days of absence required for religious festivals. Parents are required to inform the school in advance if absences are required for days of religious observance.

Modelling, sport and acting performances/activities

Under Section 37 of the Children and Young Persons Act 1963, all pupils engaging in performances/activities (whether they, or another person, receives payment or not), which require them to be absent from school, are required to obtain a license from the LA which authorises their absence(s).

Where a pupil requests to be absent for a performance or activity, the individual or organisation responsible for organising, producing or running the activity/performance is required to request a license from the pupil's home LA.

Legal Sanctions

JMAT supports the Doncaster MBC Code of Conduct for the issuing of Fixed Penalty Notices (FPN).

In law, an offence occurs if a parent fails to secure a child's attendance at a school at which they are a registered pupil and that absence is not authorised by the school. Fixed Penalty Notices supplement the existing sanctions currently available under Section 444 of The Education Act 1996, Section 103 of the Education and Inspections Act 2006 or Section 36 of The Children Act 1989 to enforce attendance at school where appropriate, subject to statutory defences. The Early Help and Family Engagement Service, within the Local Authorities' Children's Services deliver this responsibility.

Children Missing Education

Knowing where children are during school hours is an extremely important aspect of safeguarding. Missing school can be an indicator of abuse and neglect and may also raise concerns about other safeguarding issues, including the criminal exploitation of children.

We monitor attendance carefully and address poor or irregular attendance without delay. We will always follow up with parents/carers when pupils are not at school.

Children Missing Education (CME) are defined as children of compulsory school age who are not on a school roll and who are not receiving a suitable education elsewhere: for example, at home, privately, or in alternative provision. (Education and Inspections Act 2006)

Children referred as Missing from Education should only be removed from the school roll on the advice of and following consultation with the Children Missing Education Officer and authorisation from the service.

Where a child is missing from education, Local Authority guidance will be followed, by completing a Child Missing Education referral form for the following circumstances:-

- The child fails to attend without explanation
- The child is expected to start at school but does not arrive
- The child does not return from a planned holiday (authorised or unauthorised)
- The child leaves the authority without a destination. (Rotherham MBC CME policy February 2018) – (Appendix 3)

Young Carers

JMAT understands the difficulties that face young carers. The school will endeavour to identify young carers at the earliest opportunity from enrolment at the school and throughout their time at the school. The school takes a caring and flexible approach to the needs of young carers and each pupil will be examined on a case-by-case basis, involving other agencies if appropriate.

Children with Special Education Needs and Disabilities

Pupils should not be penalised if their absence from school is related to their medical condition, such as attending hospital appointments. In order to avoid being fined for non-attendance, parents must obtain permission from the school in advance of the appointment, so that the absence can be treated as authorised. An absence can also be authorised if the child is too ill to attend school and the school is notified of that as soon as possible.

Although school staff should use their discretion and judge each case on its merits with reference to the child's individual healthcare plan, it is not generally acceptable to:

- penalise children for their attendance record if their absences are related to their medical condition, e.g. hospital appointments'. (Supporting Children with medical conditions 2015, Statutory Guidance, Department for Education)

JMAT suggest that a child who has time away from school for unavoidable medical appointments during school time (for example child development assessments) should still be appropriately rewarded for attendance in order to encourage and promote good attendance.

Attendance Monitoring Procedures

- JMAT has adopted the following attendance monitoring procedures, to ensure that pupils' attendance meets the expected standard, and effective intervention is provided where pupils' attendance falls below the standard
- Attendance is discussed by classroom staff and pupils on a regular basis. Any attendance/punctuality trends noticed by classroom teachers are passed on immediately to SLT.
- Contact is made with parents on the first day of absence for any pupil absence not reported. (School should ensure that they have at least 4 contact numbers for pupils).
- If contact cannot be made to ascertain why the pupil is not in school then a Safe and Well home visit should be considered especially if there are already safeguarding concerns.
- School should arrange calls and meetings with parents to discuss attendance issues.
- School should monitor attendance and where necessary refer to and work with the Local Authority/JMAT Attendance Consultant to tackle persistent absence.
- School should send out letters to parents raising concerns if a pupil's attendance falls below 96%.

- School should consider using the local authority guidelines for attendance if a child's attendance falls below 92%.

Monitoring and review

This policy is reviewed annually by the **School Attendance Lead** and the **Safeguarding Director**.

Any changes made to this policy by the above will be communicated to all members of staff. The policy is available for public view on the JMAT website.

All members of staff are required to familiarise themselves with all processes and procedures outlined in this policy as part of their induction programme.

The next scheduled review date for this policy is **September 2022**.

CODE	DESCRIPTION	MEANING
/	Present (AM)	Present
\	Present (PM)	Present
B	Educated off site (NOT Dual registration)	Approved Education Activity
C	Other Authorised Circumstances (not covered by another appropriate code/description)	Authorised absence
D	Dual registration (i.e. pupil attending other establishment)	Approved Education Activity
E	Excluded (no alternative provision made)	Authorised absence
F	Extended family holiday (agreed)	Authorised absence
G	Family holiday (NOT agreed or days in excess of agreement)	Unauthorised absence
H	Family holiday (agreed)	Authorised absence
I	Illness (NOT medical or dental etc. appointments)	Authorised absence
J	Interview	Approved Education Activity
L	Late (after registers closed)	Present
M	Medical/Dental appointments	Authorised absence
N	No reason yet provided for absence	Unauthorised absence
O	Unauthorised absence (not covered by any other code/description)	Unauthorised absence
P	Approved sporting activity	Approved Education Activity
R	Religious observance	Authorised absence
S	Study leave	Authorised absence
T	Traveller absence	Authorised absence
U	Late (after registers closed)	Unauthorised absence
V	Educational visit or trip	Approved Education Activity
W	Work experience	Approved Education Activity
X	Non-compulsory school age absence	Not counted in possible attendances
Y	Enforced closure	Not counted in possible attendances
Z	Pupil not yet on roll	Not counted in possible attendances
#	School closed to pupils	Not counted in possible attendances