

## Pupil Attendance

### St John's CE First School

Version	2.3
Approving Body	Trust Board
Date ratified	March 2024
Date issued	March 2024
Review date	September 2024
Owner	Director of Education
Applies to	All Trust Schools, all Trust staff

Version	Date	Reason
1.0	April 2018	To establish a Trust wide policy
1.1	December 2020	Change ownership to DSI and review cycle from 3 yearly to annual.
1.2	March 2021	To include reduced timetables; study leave; Local Authority changes and updated government guidance
1.3	March 2022	To remove appendices. To include: professional judgement for welfare checks; procedures for tracking alternative provision; carers.
2.0	September 2022	To ensure legal compliance with new <a href="#">DfE guidance</a> .
2.1	September 2023	To encompass all relevant medical and governmental advice
2.2	January 2024	Minor amendments to sample letters 2, 3 & 4 at appendix B
2.3	March 2024	To include local authority penalty notice procedures

Throughout this policy, the term 'parent' means:

- all natural parents, whether they are married or not
- any person who has parental responsibility for a child or young person; and,
- any person who has care of a child or young person (i.e. lives with and looks after the child).

**Relevant legislation:**

- [The Education Act 1996](#)
- [The Children Act 1989](#)
- [The Crime and Disorder Act 1998](#)
- [The Anti-social Behaviour Act 2003](#)
- [The Education and Inspections Act 2006](#)
- [The Sentencing Act 2020](#)
- [The Education \(Pupil Registration\) \(England\) Regulations 2006](#)
- [The Education \(Parenting Contracts and Parenting Orders\) \(England\) Regulations 2007](#)
- [The Education \(Penalty Notices\) \(England\) Regulations 2007](#)

**Relevant government guidance:**

- [Parental responsibility measures for attendance and behaviour](#)
- [Children missing education](#)
- [Keeping Children Safe in Education](#)
- [Working together to safeguard children](#)
- [Elective home education](#)
- [Alternative provision: statutory guidance for local authorities](#)
- [Exclusion from maintained schools, academies and pupil referral units in England](#)
- [Supporting pupils at school with medical conditions](#)
- [Ensuring a good education for children who cannot attend school because of health needs](#)
- [Promoting and supporting mental health and wellbeing in schools and colleges](#)
- [Approaches to preventing and tackling bullying](#)
- [Summary of responsibilities where a mental health issue is affecting attendance](#)
- [Support for pupils where a mental health issue is affecting attendance Effective practice examples](#)
- [Toolkit for schools: communicating with families to support attendance](#)

Person responsible for the strategic approach to attendance at ST John's CE First School:

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## **Introduction**

Punctuality and regular attendance are crucial to a pupil's achievement at school and therefore, improving attendance is everyone's business. The foundation of securing good attendance is that school is a calm, orderly, safe, and supportive environment where all pupils want to be and are keen and ready to learn. However, any barriers to accessing education are wide and complex, both within and beyond the school gates, and are often specific to individual pupils and families. Schools within Initio Learning Trust are committed to work in collaboration with parents and children to ensure that all pupils benefit from regular attendance.

Good attendance is celebrated as part of our Trust wide vision and values - excellence, collaboration and respect. All staff in Trust schools communicate to pupils that their contribution to the school community is valued and respected; furthermore staff endeavour to make school a fruitful and enjoyable place to be so that a positive attitude to school and learning is fostered: through this, we aim to ensure that pupils want to attend school regularly in the first place. However, some pupils find it harder than others to attend school and therefore at all stages of improving attendance, schools will work collaboratively with pupils and parents to remove any barriers to attendance by building strong and trusting relationships and working together to put the right support in place.

## **Attendance and safeguarding**

The safeguarding of all pupils is of utmost importance. School provides a protective environment for those who attend. Schools are well placed to identify safeguarding issues early and regular attendance is vital for this. For those who don't attend regularly, and where all avenues of support have been facilitated, and the appropriate educational support has been provided but the unauthorised absence continues, it is likely to constitute neglect. Schools should be especially conscious of any potential safeguarding issues in these cases and where these remain, request that a full children's social care assessment is conducted.

When a pupil is absent and no reason has been given for the absence, the school will prioritise the safety of these pupils. See '*Where the school is not notified of an absence*' below.

## **The law on school attendance and right to a full-time education**

The law entitles every child of compulsory school age to an efficient, full-time education suitable to their age, aptitude, and any special educational need they may have. It is the legal responsibility of every parent to make sure their child receives that education.

Where parents have registered their child at school, they have an additional legal duty to ensure their child attends that school regularly. This means their child must attend every day that the school is open, except in a small number of allowable circumstances such as being too ill to attend or being given permission for an absence in advance from the school

## **Working with families and partners:**

School is committed to successfully treating the root causes of absence and removing barriers to attendance, at home, in school or more broadly. This requires local partners to work collaboratively with families.

School will work collaboratively to:

- identify patterns of poor attendance (at individual, cohort and school level) as soon as possible so all parties can work together to resolve them before they become entrenched.
- Ensure aspiration to high standards of attendance from all pupils and parents by building a culture where all can, and want to, be in school and ready to learn by prioritising attendance improvement across the school.

- Listen to families to understand barriers to attendance and agree how all partners can work together to resolve them.
- Remove barriers in school where practically able and help pupils and parents to access the support they need to overcome the barriers outside of school.
- Escalate concerns where the voluntary support is not having an impact by explaining the consequences of non attendance clearly and ensuring support is also in place to enable families to respond.
- Enforce attendance through statutory interventions or prosecution to protect the pupil's right to an education where support is not having an impact or not being engaged with

More details on roles and responsibilities can be found in appendix A

**Schools' overall approach takes these six graduated stages:**

<b>1</b>	<b>Expect</b>	High expectations that all children will attend well
<b>2</b>	<b>Monitor</b>	Closely monitor the attendance of all pupils to spot problems early
<b>3</b>	<b>Listen / Understand</b>	Work with pupils and parents to understand any barriers to good attendance
<b>4</b>	<b>Facilitate support</b>	Remove barriers in school and help pupils and parents overcome the barriers outside of school
<b>5</b>	<b>Formalise support</b>	Formalise support where informal, voluntary approaches are not working
<b>6</b>	<b>Enforce</b>	If all else fails, enforce attendance through statutory intervention and prosecution

**Why regular attendance is so vital:**

There is a clear and proven link between attendance and achievement. The pupils with the highest attainment have higher rates of attendance than those achieving lower grades. Pupils who miss a substantial amount of school, fall behind their peers, and struggle to catch up as most of the work they miss is never made up, which can lead to big gaps in their learning.

Poor attendance often starts at first/ primary school, and children who fall into this pattern are likely to underachieve at upper / secondary school.

Friendships can be negatively affected by absence, too: it can be hard for a child who misses lots of school to form relationships with their peers.

For the most vulnerable pupils, regular attendance is also an important protective factor and the best opportunity for needs to be identified and support provided. Research has shown associations between regular absence from school and a number of extra-familial harms. This includes crime (90% of young offenders had been persistently absent) and serious violence (83% of knife possession offenders had been persistently absent in at least 1 of the 5 years of study).

*These tables show the impact of absence on a child's education*

Overall attendance level	Number of days lost each year	Impact on child's education
97%+	5 days or less	These children have every chance to make really strong progress at school.
95%	10 days	These children benefit from strong overall attendance and are well placed to make good progress at school. We aim for every child to have at 96% attendance overall.
90%	19 days	Children in this group are missing a month of school per year; it will be difficult for them to achieve their best
85%	29 days	Children in this group are missing six weeks of school per year; there is a real risk that this lower attendance will hinder children's progress. Absence below 90% is considered to be persistent absenteeism.
80%	38 days	Children in this group are missing a year of school over five years of education. They are not benefitting from their right to be educated. Parents / carers of young people in this group could be issued with a penalty notice.

Minutes late per day =	days of learning lost per year
5	3.2
10	6.5
15	9.5
20	12.5
30	19

### **Monitoring attendance / punctuality and responding to concerns**

All staff have a duty to informally monitor the children's attendance / punctuality and to report any concerns that they may have about a pupil. In this way, pupil attendance is being monitored in the schools at all times. Concerns can then be triangulated with any other information held about the pupil such as child protection issues, mental health difficulties, SEND, caring responsibilities etc. and appropriate support can be put in place.

Best practice is that attendance is dealt with proactively using strong links with the families. For those pupils where a pattern of lateness or non attendance has been identified, pre-emptive phone calls can be a powerful tool to encourage attendance.

All Initio Learning Trust schools will follow more formal procedures for the regular and systematic monitoring of pupil attendance with particular emphasis on those who are classed as vulnerable.

Attendance and punctuality will be monitored formally using data from registers and from the information held on MIS for the purpose of providing effective interventions to improve the whole school, specific cohort and individual attendance and punctuality. Our school attendance monitoring procedures are:

#### **St John's CE First School.**

- The Attendance Lead will monitor attendance daily.
- The Attendance Lead will analyse attendance data weekly and will follow the process if attendance / punctuality is identified as an area for improvement (see threshold section below).
- Different cohorts of pupils will be analysed to identify any patterns and allow the school to effectively respond with appropriate support.
- Levels of persistent absenteeism will be scrutinised for school, cohort and individual responses.

#### **Expectations for punctuality and attendance**

##### **Punctuality**

Schools will actively discourage late arrivals and will be alert to any patterns of late arrival in order to start an early discussion with the family to provide appropriate support. Registers start at 8:55am and close at 9:05am for morning sessions and 1:15pm for afternoon sessions. It is the expectation that all pupils will arrive in time for morning and afternoon registration. If a pupil arrives after registers open but before they close, they will be marked as '*late arrival before registers close*' (L) If a pupil arrives after registers close, they will be marked as '*unauthorised absence*' (U) or another more appropriate attendance code.

##### **Attendance**

All pupils will be expected to attend school on every day that it is open. If an unexpected absence occurs, there are expectations that relate to pupil safety. A parent MUST notify the school on 01202 883675 or through Parentmail by 9:30am on the first day of the absence detailing the pupil's name, class and nature of absence. If the absence is prolonged, there is an expectation that the parent will notify the school by 9:30am at the latest on each day of absence.

##### **Appointments during the day**

Parents must avoid arranging appointments for their child during the day. However, if it is unavoidable, parents must notify the school of the appointment details. A child should only be taken out of school for their own appointment, not because another family member has an appointment. This includes collecting a child early so a family member can attend an appointment.

##### **Pupils with medical needs and/ or SEND**

Initio Learning Trust understands that some pupils face greater barriers to attendance than their peers. These can include pupils who suffer from long term medical conditions or who have special educational needs and disabilities. However, their right to an education is the same as any other pupil and therefore our attendance ambition for these pupils will be the same as they are for any other pupil.

Although our ambitions are the same for all pupils, we are mindful of the unique barriers that these pupils may face and we are committed to putting support in place where necessary to help them access full time education.

Parents of pupils with medical needs and / or SEND who are struggling to attend school should contact the school office, [office@stjohnsfirstschool.org](mailto:office@stjohnsfirstschool.org) as soon as they can in order for the school to understand the support required. This could include making reasonable adjustments or having Individual Healthcare Plans (IHCP) with Medical Absence Plans (MAP). In some cases, advice and support may be sought from external partners such as health services. Our work with families in these instances is crucial to ensuring specific support approaches, including supporting home routines and encouraging external professionals to schedule appointments outside of the school day. For families suggesting part time attendance, please see the section on part-time timetables.

**Where the school is not notified of an absence**

Pupil safety is the priority for the systems in place to follow up on non notified absences.

Schools will use their knowledge of families to identify pupils who may be more vulnerable when absent and these families will be contacted first. These pupils will be communicated to staff so that all can be aware of their additional vulnerability pertaining to absence / punctuality.

Process for following up on unexplained absence:

- Parents will be informed of their child’s absence and asked to contact the school using a text message.
- If no contact is received by the school by 9:30am, a phone call will be made to the primary contact detailed on the pupil’s files.
- If there is no answer, contact will be attempted with other contacts detailed on the pupil’s file.
- If no contact can be made by 9:45am, the school will take every reasonable step to satisfy themselves that the pupil is safe. This may include *\*list not exhaustive* contacting sibling’s schools, contacting Social Care / Early Help if a worker is involved with the family, making a home visit and, in some cases, informing the police.
- The school should be satisfied with every absent child’s safety by 10am at the latest.

The school will hold a record of pupils that they deem to be additionally vulnerable when not in school, which could include knowledge of mental health difficulties either for the pupil or their family, child protection concerns or medical needs amongst others. The school will also produce a flow chart that details the process, including timings, for following up on unexplained absences to ensure every pupil’s safety.

**Absence thresholds**

All families will receive a letter at the beginning of the school year summarising the school’s expectations for attendance and punctuality; how the school is promoting and incentivising good attendance and punctuality and the process for reporting absence and requesting leaves or absence. This policy will also be available on the school’s website as well as being sent home at least annually or on update.

There is a tiered system to respond to low and/or falling attendance levels. These figures expressed as % attendance levels are intended as a guide. However, a decision may be made to intervene earlier at any stage if there is particular concern about a child’s attendance.

<b>Attendance below 95%:</b>	A standard letter is typically sent to any parent whose child’s attendance has dropped just below 95%. This letter is for information – it notifies the parent of this attendance level and explains that the school will continue to monitor the child’s attendance. Where the cause for a child’s attendance dropping below 95% is very specific and clearly known and evidenced to the school, we may decide that such a letter is not
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	required or appropriate. For example, where a child has had a known and confirmed medical issue and where this is the only substantial cause for the lower attendance. In such circumstances, the child's attendance will be closely monitored – further reduction in attendance may prompt this initial letter, without the need to wait for the next formal half- termly audit.
<b>Attendance between 90% and 94%</b>	The standard letter described above may be used again where a child's attendance sits at this level. This letter may be used twice in succession but if attendance remains at this level for a third time, it will be treated as for attendance which is below 90%.
<b>Attendance which is below 90%</b>	Attendance at 90% equates to 19 days absence through a year and is therefore a cause for concern. In such circumstances, parents will receive a specific letter which very clearly identifies that the attendance level is a significant cause for concern (except for in exceptional circumstances where the attendance is not a cause for concern, such as known medical conditions). Parents are requested to attend a meeting, the purpose of which is to explore the reasons for the child's low attendance and agree appropriate support. The content of this meeting will be used to draw up an attendance improvement plan which will be shared with the parents and a review date will be agreed. Participants in that meeting may vary according to the circumstances but may often involve staff such as the allocated lead within the school, class Teacher / tutor, SENCo and pastoral staff. The school may also invite the Local Authority Inclusion Lead. At this stage, school should make it known and confirm in writing that absences cannot be authorised without medical evidence unless there are exceptional reasons which render this inappropriate (for example, a known medical condition); school cannot routinely authorise absence where a child's attendance has reached this level of concern.
<b>Attendance which continues to decline from below 90%</b>	Unless there are specific circumstances, the school will not be authorising absences at this stage because attendance at 90% equates to 19 days absence through a year. If attendance is not showing reasonable improvement within three weeks of the last communication to parents, then schools will take further action which will involve further meetings with the parents. It is likely that a referral for intervention by the Local Authority will be appropriate; certainly advice from the LA Inclusion Lead will be sought.

Please see appendix B for sample letters.

### **Leaves of absence**

Headteachers have no discretion to grant a leave of absence during term time unless there are genuinely exceptional circumstances. The fundamental principles for defining 'exceptional' are rare, significant, unavoidable and short; 'unavoidable' should be taken to mean an event that could not reasonably be scheduled at another time. It is the parent's responsibility to ensure that the headteacher has all the information in writing to be able to determine whether the request is truly exceptional.

Any request for absence which might be considered as 'exceptional circumstances' should be put in writing to the headteacher as far in advance as possible. Parents should include any relevant supporting documents using the leave of absence form available [here](#). The decision whether to authorise leave, and if so, how much, remains with the headteacher. Parents will be notified of the headteacher's decision at the earliest opportunity. If the leave is not authorised and the leave of absence is still taken and is a leave of absence of 10 sessions (5 days) or more in a 12 week period, the school will need to refer to the Local Authority who will then make the decision whether to issue a penalty notice.



The following situations *might* be considered examples of 'exceptional circumstances'.

*Please note that this is dependent on context and is not an exhaustive list:*

- Return of parent from active service (Forces);
- Death or serious illness of a parent, step-parent or sibling;
- Young Carers;
- Disability or respite leave;
- Periods of obligatory religious observance;
- Approved public performances (with clear supporting evidence).

The following (*not exhaustive*) are examples of situations which would not typically be considered as exceptional:

- Family holiday/cheaper holiday dates;
- Educational visits arranged by family members during school time;
- Attendance at a wedding or christening of an extended family member or friend;
- Visiting relatives either abroad or in the UK;
- Limitations on parents / carers leave' entitlement or dates; parents / carers' profession or place of work making it difficult to coincide school and work holidays;
- A family member going for medical treatment abroad.

### **Penalty Notices**

For Dorset schools, penalty notices can be requested from the Local Authority when the following criteria can be evidenced:

**Leave, for the purposes of a holiday, during term time:**

- 3 or more consecutive school days (6 or more sessions) of unauthorised absence (G coded within the school's register) are recorded during the first ten days **from the date on which the school reopens at the start of a new academic year in September;**
- 5 or more consecutive school days (10 or more sessions) of unauthorised leave (G coded within the school's register) are recorded **AND** where the attendance level in the 10 school weeks immediately preceding the unauthorised leave falls below 90%, with the majority of absences within that period being recorded as unauthorised (O, U and/or G coded);
- Where a parent fails to make an application for leave during term time **AND** where a pupil has 5 or more consecutive school days (10 or more sessions) of unauthorised absence recorded (G coded within the school's register). **N.B. Previous attendance patterns will not be considered in such cases.**

**Other unauthorised absence/lateness:**

- Where a pupil has a total of 5 or more days (10 or more sessions) of unauthorised absence recorded across a 12 school week period and the absences have been coded using either O, U and/or G codes;
- Where a pupil regularly arrives to school late (after the attendance register has closed and where a U code has been entered into the register in line with the school's published attendance policy) **AND** where no valid reason is provided for the lateness, meaning that it

could have been avoided. Weather conditions and transport disruptions should be taken into consideration.

For BCP schools, penalty notices can be requested from the Local Authority when the following can be evidenced:

**Leave, for the purposes of a holiday, during term time:**

- Where a parent has taken the pupil on a leave of absence during term-time without the school's authorisation and there are unauthorised absences of at least 10 sessions (5 school days), or
- If more than one period of absence is taken during term-time within any 12 month period without the school's authorisation and there are unauthorised absences of at least 10 sessions (5 school days) overall, or
- Where the school has agreed to a specific number of sessions of leave during term-time due to exceptional circumstances, and any additional sessions of unauthorised leave have been taken outside of the agreed period.

**Persistent Absenteeism:**

- As an early intervention to prevent absenteeism becoming entrenched.
- Following work by the School/Academy with a family who fail to engage, and the pupil is persistently absent from School/Academy

For BCP schools, a Fixed Penalty Notice can be issued in lieu of prosecution in cases where there is persistent unauthorised leave in term time within any 12 month period (3 or more periods of absence, regardless of number of sessions missed).

***Schools in other Local Authorities will follow their Local Authority Penalty Notice Procedures which may differ to Dorset and BCP's detailed above.***

**Absence for performance**

The Headteacher may grant leave of absence for approved public performances provided that clear evidence is issued of the approved nature of this activity. The following will also be taken into account in reaching a decision:

- The nature and purpose of the performance;
- The frequency of absence requested and the likely impact on the child's education and progress; and
- The child's attendance record

Where licences are issued by the Local Authority, absences will be monitored to ensure that they comply with the permissions given in the licence. Where the licence specifies the dates that a child is to be away from school to perform, then the head teacher should authorise those days. However, where the terms of the licence do not specify dates, it is at the discretion of the Headteacher to authorise leave of absence. Headteachers should be sympathetic to requests that are supported by a

licence, as long as the school remains satisfied that this will not have a negative effect on a child's education. Any concerns will be communicated to the school attendance lead.

#### **Promoting and Incentivising good attendance and punctuality:**

Promoting good attendance and punctuality is an integral part of the school's culture. School will visibly demonstrate the benefits of good attendance throughout school life and the curriculum. School improvement strategies for attainment, behaviour, bullying, special educational needs support, supporting pupils with medical conditions or disabilities, safeguarding, wellbeing, and support for disadvantaged students will also consider how to promote good attendance and punctuality.

Incentives for good attendance and punctuality may also be used. These can include, but are not restricted to:

Whole school and class totals noted on the newsletter and displayed as posters around school.

Attendance award presented weekly to the class with highest attendance

#### **Off-site education, alternative provision or specialist provision**

Where a child's needs are recognised by the school, and specialist resources not available in school are required, the allocated lead within the school may authorise absence for specific times when such tuition or therapy may be given outside of school. For pupils using alternative provision or off site education, the allocated lead will ensure that the safeguarding and quality of education for the pupil is good or better by following Initio Learning Trust's procedures. All pupils placed in a more appropriate provision will have full time education and clearly defined outcomes agreed before the placement starts and attendance will be tracked by the provider and the school at which the pupil is on roll. Such pupils will be coded appropriately and, if in attendance at the agreed appropriate provision, will not be marked as absent. Stringent safeguarding checks will be carried out before and during the placement as well as checking safeguarding daily through the daily attendance phone call.

#### **Part-time timetables**

A part-time timetable will not be used to manage a pupil's behaviour. 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.

A part-time timetable will only be in place for the shortest time necessary and will not be treated as a long-term solution. Initio Learning Trust uses the advice from Government health officials when dealing with anxiety. A prolonged period of absence is likely to increase any anxiety. Because of this, part-time timetables are not appropriate to be used for those suffering with anxiety unless a medical professional recommends this. Where a part-time time table is considered in the pupil's best interests, there MUST be agreement from the family; if there is no agreement then it will be classed as an unofficial exclusion. If a pupil has a part-time timetable agreed, the Initio Learning Trust Part-Time Timetable process must be followed which includes a thorough safeguarding risk assessment, desired outcomes for the child, expectations of work completed when not on school premises and a six week timetable that is gradually increased to maintain full time education by the end of week six.

In exceptional circumstances and with significant evidence that it is in the pupil's best interest, a part-time timetable may be extended for a further period of time. Weekly reviews of the part-time

timetable must occur with the family and school and stringent records kept of how successful the timetable has been.

**Study Leave**

Study leave, where used, will only be granted to pupils in year 11. Study leave will not be granted by default once tuition of the exam syllabus is complete. If a school does decide to grant study leave, provision will still be made available for those pupils who want to continue to come into school to revise. All pupils are different and have different requirements and preferences when preparing for examinations and this will be catered for.

**Staffing for monitoring and promoting good attendance**

Schools will identify appropriate key staff to undertake attendance monitoring and adhere to the following key principles:

- There will be a school attendance officer, usually within the administration team, who will ensure that careful records of attendance are maintained which conform to the codes set out by the Department for Education and provide information as requested by staff . This is daily for the most vulnerable, weekly for other vulnerable groups and three weekly for the whole school.
- The school will have an allocated Senior Leader for attendance who will have a close link with the school attendance officer;
- Schools will work in close partnership with the Local Authority through the Inclusion Leads for their locality;
- All staff will have training in attendance including how to complete registers, how to spot patterns of absence / punctuality, how to use other information about a pupil to see the wider context, how to report concerns and how to build relationships and offer support for families that struggle to maintain good attendance.

**Contacting staff about attendance**

<p><b>The Senior Leader with responsibility for attendance is:</b></p>	<p><b>Miss Michelle Prince</b></p>
<p><b>The attendance admin officer is:</b></p>	<p><b>Mrs Sarah Small</b> <b>Mrs Jane Wallis</b></p>
<p><b>To tell your school that your child is going to be absent, you should:</b></p>	<p><b>Please tell us by 9:30 am at the latest.</b> <b>Telephone the school on 01202 883675 and leave a message giving your child’s name, class and reason for absence. Or complete the absence notification on Parentmail</b></p>

<p><b>If a parent is concerned about their child's attendance, they should:</b></p>	<p>Speak with the child's teacher in the first instance. You can arrange that by contacting the school office or emailing through Google Classroom</p> <p>If you have already done that and remain concerned, you can speak to the Headteacher. You can arrange that by contacting the school office</p>
<p><b>Other key staff involved in supporting attendance are:</b></p>	<p>Mrs Sarah Elliot Parent Support Advisor.</p> <p>You can contact her by contacting the school office</p>
<p><b>If you wish to request a leave of absence for your child, you should:</b></p>	<p>Obtain the 'Request for Leave of Absence form' from the school website or office. Complete this form and give it to the school as early as possible <u>before</u> the requested absence is due to happen.</p>

**Wider support**

Wider support is available, please see links below for more information:

- [West Sussex website for resources to help Emotionally Based School Avoidance](#)
- [Dorset SENDIASS](#)
- [BCP SENDIASS](#)
- [Dorset Education Advice Line](#)
- [Is my child too ill for school?](#)

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**Appendices:**

**A) Summary of expectations**

<b>For ALL pupils:</b>			
<b>Parents / pupils are expected to:</b>	<b>School is expected to:</b>	<b>The Local School Committee is expected to:</b>	<b>The Local Authority is expected to:</b>
<p>Ensure their child attends every day the school is open except when a statutory reason applies.</p> <p>Notify the school as soon as possible when their child has to be unexpectedly absent (e.g. sickness).</p> <p>Only request leave of absence in exceptional circumstances and do so in advance.</p> <p>Book any medical appointments around the school day where possible.</p>	<p>Have a clear school attendance policy on the school website which all staff, pupils and parents understand.</p> <p>Develop and maintain a whole school culture that promotes the benefits of good attendance.</p> <p>Accurately complete admission and attendance registers.</p> <p>Have robust daily processes to follow up absence.</p> <p>Have a dedicated senior leader with overall responsibility for championing and improving attendance</p>	<p>Take an active role in attendance improvement, support their school(s) to prioritise attendance, and work together with leaders to set whole school cultures.</p> <p>Ensure school leaders fulfil expectations and statutory duties.</p> <p>Ensure school staff receive training on attendance.</p>	<p>Have a strategic approach to improving attendance for the whole area and make it a key focus of all frontline council services.</p> <p>Have a School Attendance Support Team that works with all schools in their area to remove area-wide barriers to attendance.</p> <p>Provide each school with a named point of contact in the School Attendance Support Team who can support with queries and advice.</p> <p>Offer opportunities for all schools in the area to share effective practice.</p>

<b>For pupils at risk of becoming persistently absent (95-90% attendance):</b>			
<b>Parents / pupils are expected to:</b>	<b>School is expected to:</b>	<b>The Local School Committee is expected to:</b>	<b>The Local Authority is expected to:</b>
<p>Work with the school and local authority to help them understand their child's barriers to attendance.</p> <p>Proactively engage with the support offered to prevent the need for more formal support.</p>	<p>Proactively use data to identify pupils at risk of poor attendance.</p> <p>Work with each identified pupil and their parents to understand and address the reasons for absence, including any in-school barriers to attendance.</p> <p>Where out of school barriers are identified, signpost and support access to any required services in the first instance.</p> <p>If the issue persists, take an active part in the multi-agency effort with the local authority and other partners. Act as the lead practitioner where all partners agree that the school is the best placed lead service. Where the lead practitioner is outside of the school, continue to work with the local authority and partners.</p>	<p>Regularly review attendance data and help school leaders focus support on the pupils who need it.</p>	<p>Hold a termly conversation with every school to identify, discuss and signpost or provide access to services for pupils who are persistently or severely absent or at risk of becoming so.</p> <p>Where there are out of school barriers, provide each identified pupil and their family with access to services they need in the first instance.</p> <p>If the issue persists, facilitate a voluntary early help assessment where appropriate. Take an active part in the multi-agency effort with the school and other partners. Provide the lead practitioner where all partners agree that a local authority service is best placed to lead. Where the lead practitioner is outside of the local authority, continue to work with the school and partners.</p>



<b>For persistently absent pupils (below 90% attendance):</b>			
<b>Parents / pupils are expected to:</b>	<b>School is expected to:</b>	<b>The Local School Committee is expected to:</b>	<b>The Local Authority is expected to:</b>
<p>Work with the school and local authority to help them understand their child's barriers to attendance.</p> <p>Proactively engage with the formal support offered – including any parenting contract or voluntary early help plan to prevent the need for legal intervention.</p>	<p>Continued support as for pupils at risk of becoming persistently absent and:</p> <p>Where absence becomes persistent, put additional targeted support in place to remove any barriers. Where necessary this includes working with partners.</p> <p>Where there is a lack of engagement, hold more formal conversations with parents and be clear about the potential need for legal intervention in future.</p> <p>Where support is not working, being engaged with or appropriate, work with the local authority on legal intervention.</p> <p>Where there are safeguarding concerns, intensify support through statutory children's social care.</p>	<p>Regularly review attendance data and help school leaders focus support on the pupils who need it.</p>	<p>Continued support as for pupils at risk of becoming persistently absent and:</p> <p>Work jointly with the school to provide formal support options including parenting contracts and education supervision orders.</p> <p>Where there are safeguarding concerns, ensure joint working between the school, children's social care services and other statutory safeguarding partners.</p> <p>Where support is not working, being engaged with or appropriate, enforce attendance through legal intervention (including prosecution as a last resort).</p>

	Work with other schools in the local area, such as schools previously attended and the schools of any siblings		
<b>For severely absent pupils (less than 50% attendance):</b>			
<b>Parents / pupils are expected to:</b>	<b>School is expected to:</b>	<b>The Local School Committee is expected to:</b>	<b>The Local Authority is expected to:</b>
<p>Work with the school and local authority to help them understand their child's barriers to attendance.</p> <p>Proactively engage with the formal support offered – including any parenting contract or voluntary early help plan to prevent the need for legal intervention.</p>	<p>Continued support as for persistently absent pupils and:</p> <p>Agree a joint approach for all severely absent pupils with the local authority.</p>	<p>Regularly review attendance data and help school leaders focus support on the pupils who need it.</p>	<p>Continued support as for persistently absent pupils and:</p> <p>All services should make this group the top priority for support. This may include a whole family plan, consideration for an education, health and care plan, or alternative form of educational provision.</p> <p>Be especially conscious of any potential safeguarding issues, ensuring joint working between the school, children's social care services and other statutory safeguarding partners. Where appropriate, this could include conducting a full children's social care assessment and building attendance into children in need</p>

			and child protection plans.
<b>For pupils with medical conditions and / or SEND with poor attendance (below 95%)</b>			
<b>Parents / pupils are expected to:</b>	<b>School is expected to:</b>	<b>The Local School Committee is expected to:</b>	<b>The Local Authority is expected to:</b>
<p>Work with the school and local authority to help them understand their child's barriers to attendance.</p> <p>Proactively engage with the support offered.</p>	<p>Maintain the same ambition for attendance and work with pupils and parents to maximise attendance.</p> <p>Ensure join up with pastoral support and where required, put in place additional support and adjustments, such as an individual healthcare plan and if applicable, ensuring the provision outlined in the pupil's EHCP is accessed.</p> <p>Consider additional support from wider services and external partners, making timely referrals.</p> <p>Regularly monitor data for such groups, including at board and local school committee meetings and with local authorities.</p>	<p>Regularly review attendance data and help school leaders focus support on the pupils who need it.</p>	<p>Work closely with relevant services and partners, for example special educational needs, educational psychologists, and mental health services, to ensure joined up support for families.</p> <p>Ensure suitable education, such as alternative provision, is arranged for children of compulsory school age who because of health reasons would not otherwise receive a suitable education.</p>

<b>For pupils with a social worker:</b>			
<b>Parents / pupils are expected to:</b>	<b>School is expected to:</b>	<b>The Local School Committee is expected to:</b>	<b>The Local Authority is expected to:</b>
<p>Work with the school and local authority to help them understand their child's barriers to attendance.</p> <p>Proactively engage with the support offered</p>	<p>Inform the pupil's social worker if there are any unexplained absences and if their name is to be deleted from the register.</p>	<p>Regularly review attendance data and help school leaders focus support on the pupils who need it</p>	<p>Regularly monitor the attendance of children with a social worker in their area.</p> <p>Put in place personal education plans for looked-after children.</p> <p>Secure regular attendance of looked-after children as their corporate parent and provide advice and guidance about the importance of attendance to those services supporting pupils previously looked after</p>

## B) *Sample letters*

### Letter 1 – Attendance – New School Year

Dear Parents and Carers

Information for parents and carers on the importance of attendance and the attendance process.

**St John's First School** is committed to ensuring our pupils achieve the best possible outcomes and good school attendance is key to achieving this aim. We will work hard to provide a safe and welcoming environment for your child and will monitor attendance closely.

Good school attendance improves your child's chances of success in life. There is clear evidence of the link between good attendance at school and high levels of achievement. Children with no absence at key stage 4 are almost 2 times more likely to achieve 5 or more GCSEs than children who missed 10-15 percent of lessons.

If your child has an attendance level of 90%, they will have missed one day a fortnight in school. Over a school year this will represent four weeks of absence. If this level of absence were maintained for a five-year period it would mean half a school year would have been missed. We would really appreciate your help in ensuring that your child has good school attendance. If there is a concern, we will write to you and talk with you so that we can work together to identify any barriers that may be preventing your child from attending school and ensure support is put in place. We may also contact the Inclusion Team at Dorset / BCP Council for advice and support or other organisations that may be able to help. It is hoped that this will be successful in improving attendance.

Where support has failed to address attendance issues, we will contact you again to invite you to a meeting where we can identify the reasons why attendance has not improved and change or adjust the intervention where appropriate.

Here at **St John's** we are determined to ensure that all of our pupils have the opportunity to achieve success and have an excellent record of attendance. If following additional support attendance does not improve sufficiently, you will be invited to meet with the school and an Inclusion Lead from Dorset Council at an Inclusion Panel. Other professionals may also be invited where appropriate. This meeting is an opportunity to meet and discuss why your child has a high absence rate and seek solutions to any problems.

The Inclusion Panel can recommend several outcomes, which can include a further period of close monitoring with specified targets for attendance; issuing a £60 Penalty Notice, a Parenting Order or seeking prosecution which could result in a fine of up to £2,500.

It is hoped that such measures will not be needed and that your child will have a good record of attendance, is happy and achieves the best possible outcomes.

Please find a copy of our attendance policy [here](#) where contact details are provided for key staff and where the processes for monitoring attendance and punctuality are detailed. We look forward to welcoming your child into **St John's** this academic year.

Yours sincerely  
Miss M Prince  
Headteacher St John's First School

## Letter 2 - Initial Attendance Concerns

Date

Absences Matter and You Can Help

Dear **parent/carer's** name,

This is to inform you that **Pupil name** has missed more school than their classmates.

**Pupil name** was absent for **number days** so far this school year which equates to attendance of **insert percentage here.**

What does the attendance percentage really mean?

Attendance Percentage	Days of learning missed:	Lessons missed:
100%	0 days	0 lessons
97%	5 days	<b>X</b> lessons
94%	10 days	<b>X</b> lessons
90%	20 days	<b>X</b> lessons
85%	30 days	<b>X</b> lessons
80%	40 days	<b>X</b> lessons

We would really appreciate your support in ensuring **insert pupil name** attends school regularly. If there is any support that you think the school can offer, please let us know **insert contact details of staff member to contact here.**

Yours sincerely,  
Miss M Prince  
Headteacher St John's First School

### Letter 3 - Attendance Improvement

Date:

Dear **parent/carer's name**

Thank you for your support in ensuring that **insert pupil name's** attendance is improving. Their percentage attendance is currently **XXX**.

We really do appreciate your help as there is clear evidence that good school attendance improves a child's chance of success in life.

Please do contact us if you would like to discuss anything further: **insert name and contact details here**.

Yours sincerely  
Miss M Prince  
Headteacher St John's First School

## Letter 4 - Invitation to Attendance Meeting

Date:

### Attendance Matters and You Can Help

Dear **parent/carer's name,**

**St John's CE First School** is committed to ensuring our pupils achieve the best possible outcomes and good school attendance is key to achieving this aim.

Unfortunately, following our **letter/meeting/discussion** **child's name** attendance has not sufficiently improved. They have **number** absences which means that their attendance is currently **X%**.

We would really appreciate your help in improving this and are therefore inviting you to an attendance meeting **at location** on **date, time**. This meeting will be attended by **insert details**. It is really important that you attend this meeting so that any issues or concerns which may be contributing to **child's name** non-attendance can be discussed and appropriate support put in place to improve their attendance. You are welcome to bring someone along with you.

Please email or telephone us to confirm receipt of this letter and your intention to attend the meeting by contacting **insert name, e-mail address and telephone number**.

Please be aware that Dorset / BCP Council's Inclusion Team may be informed of **child's name** current attendance.

Yours sincerely  
Miss M Prince  
Headteacher St John's First School



## Letter 5 - Invite to Inclusion Panel

**Date:**

### Attendance Matters and You Can Help

Dear Parent/carer's name

**St John's CE First School** is committed to ensuring our pupils achieve the best possible outcomes and good school attendance is key to achieving this aim.

Unfortunately, following our meeting, **child's name** attendance has not sufficiently improved. They have **number** absences and so their attendance is currently **X %**.

Parents/carers have a legal responsibility to ensure that their child is receiving an education and attends the school at which they are registered regularly.

You are therefore required to attend an Inclusion Panel on **date, time** at **venue**. You are welcome to bring someone along to support you. This meeting will also be attended by **insert name from the school and insert name, Inclusion Lead, Dorset Council. Name of school** values the working partnership we have with parents and it is important that you attend this meeting so that any issues or concerns which may be contributing to **child's name's** non-attendance can be discussed. If you do not attend the meeting, we will discuss **child's name's** school attendance and a decision will be made, in your absence, on the appropriate action.

**PLEASE NOTE:** All further absences may be marked as unauthorised and all sickness absences should be supported with evidence such as a GP's appointment card or prescription, or hospital letter. Please telephone or email to confirm receipt of this letter, and your intention to attend the meeting by contacting **name and phone number/email**. Dorset / BCP Council has already been made aware of **child's name's** current attendance.

Yours sincerely  
Miss M Prince  
Headteacher St John's First School

## Letter 6 - Failure to attend Inclusion Panel Meeting

**Date:**

Dear **Parent/carer's name**

Failure to Attend – **Name of Child – DOB**

Following the Inclusion Panel on Date which you did not attend, please find enclosed the minutes of the meeting which include the actions and decisions of the panel.

**Insert Minutes Inclusion Panel outlining the agreed actions.**

Parents/carers have a legal responsibility to ensure that their child is receiving an education and attends regularly at the school at which they are registered. Parents/carers may be liable to prosecution under (s) 444 Education Act 1996 (as amended) if they fail to ensure that a child of compulsory school age attends regularly at the school at which the child is registered. You also have a responsibility to contact the school each day should the child be unable to attend for any reason.

**PLEASE NOTE:** All further absences may be marked as unauthorised and all sickness absences should be supported with evidence such as a GP's appointment card or prescription, or hospital letter.

We will continue to monitor child's name's school attendance closely, including arriving on time for school. At **St John's**, we are determined to ensure that all our pupils have the opportunity to achieve their best and we want all our pupils to have an excellent record of regular and punctual attendance. We value the working partnership we have with parents and if you would like to discuss the Inclusion Panel minutes, please contact **name of person and contact details.**

We hope to see a significant improvement in **child's name's** school attendance. It is only through excellent attendance that your child will achieve all that they are capable of achieving and have the best opportunity for a rewarding and prosperous adult life.

Yours sincerely  
Miss M Prince  
Headteacher St John's First School

## Letter 7 - Lates Letter

### Punctuality Matters and You Can Help

**Date:**

Dear **Parent/Carer's name**

At St John's Ce First School, we are determined to ensure that **name of pupil** has the opportunity to achieve their best and we want them to have an excellent record of regular, punctual attendance. Pupil name has been late on **number** days so far this school year.

You can have a big effect on **pupil name's** punctuality this term, and we appreciate your help. We are sure that you are aware of the importance of punctual school attendance for **pupil's name:**

- When they are on time, **Pupil's name** will be part of all the important learning and hear all the instructions on how to complete a piece of work
- Social interaction with peers before school is important if **pupil's name** is to form
- friendship groups
- Arriving on time may be less embarrassing for **pupil's name**
- When **pupil's name** arrives on time they can settle more easily, this more likely to maintain a calm learning environment for them and their classmates

The school site is open for pupils to arrive from **time** and the children are expected to be in class ready to begin the school day by **time**. Our registers open at **time** and close at **time**; arrival at school between these times is classed as late and after registers close is classed as absent.

We value the working partnership we have with parents so, if you would like to discuss any aspect of your child's attendance or punctuality with us please contact **insert details here**.

Yours sincerely  
Miss M Prince  
Headteacher St John's First School

## Example of an Attendance Action Plan

**Pupil Name:**

**Year Group:**

**Address:**

**Name/s of parent/s:**

**Contact Number:**

**% Attendance during period of monitoring:**

**Sessions of unauthorised absence:**

**Details of supporting agencies:**

**Member of School Staff:**

**Role:**

The attendance action plan is a formal written agreement with the Parent(s), pupil, school, Local Authority and other agencies to support the following action to address the concerns we have around the school attendance of the pupil.

A meeting was convened to address the following issues:

1. *The reasons for the pupil's non-attendance at school*
2. *Actions that can or need to be taken by any or all of the people involved, to ensure the pupil's improved attendance at school.*
3. *To identify an agreed level or attendance for the pupil to achieve during the review period.*
4. *The potential consequence of legal action should the pupil's school attendance not improve.*

Date of action plan:

To be reviewed on:

Please note that if the issue of attendance (and punctuality) continues to be a problem, as a result of the action plan not being adhered to, this may be used as evidence in any legal action and may also be referred to social services.

Reasons for absence

Record of discussion

## ACTION PLAN

### The parent/carer agrees to:

Action:	Agreement (tick / sign)
Make sure the pupil attends school every day.	
Find out where the pupil goes when he/she is not in school and inform school or other so that action can be taken.	
Attend any further meetings regarding attendance.	
Notify the school on every day of absence, giving a reason and indicating an expected return date/time.	
Contact the school as soon as you become aware of concerns, issues or problems that you or the school have.	
Contact <b>XXX</b> if the pupil feels that the school is not dealing with an issue, or the pupil feels uncomfortable about discussing an issue with the school.	
Notify the school of any occasions when they know that the pupil will be late giving reasons.	
Keep the school updated with full contact details including, where possible, a phone number.	
Ensure that the pupil is seen by a GP when ill and provide medical evidence of any absence due to illness (i.e appointment cards, prescriptions, letters, etc.)	
Work with any professionals who are seeking to support the child/ family.	
Other actions (detail).	

**The pupil agrees to:**

Action:	Agreement (tick / sign)
Attend school as agreed and on time	
Be responsible for obtaining a registration mark even if they are late for school	
Attend any future meetings regarding attendance	
Be responsible for getting out of bed each morning, to get to school on time and be aware that if they are late there will be an agreed consequence	
Make sure they follow the conditions of any attendance report	
Tell their parent/carer or <b>XXX</b> of any concerns especially if they are likely to affect attendance.	
Contact <b>XXX</b> and let them know of any problems generally or regarding school work	
Any other actions (details)	

**The school agrees to:**

Action:	Agreement (tick / sign)
Provide appropriate education and support <b>(add details)</b>	
Ensure that the pupil's attendance is monitored on a daily basis	
Be available to discuss problems	
Place the pupil on an attendance report	

Liaise closely with the parent/carer and other professionals should there be any problem,, concern or issues regarding the pupil – including any unexplained absences	
On receiving a call from the parent/carer, check that the pupil is in school	
With parent/carer and pupil's agreement, make appropriate teaching staff aware of pupil's situation	
Respond to and/or deal with any problems raised by the pupil, parent/carer or other professionals	
If appropriate, consider alternative provision	
If appropriate, consider an amended timetable	
Any other actions(detail)	

**I agree to follow the above plan:**

<b>Signature</b>	<b>Name</b>	<b>Role</b>	<b>Date</b>
		parent	
		parent	
		pupil	
		school	
		school	
		Other professional (detail role)	
		Other professional (detail role)	