

St. John the Baptist RC Primary School



Attendance Policy

St John the Baptist Roman Catholic Primary School Milton Lane Dartmouth TQ6 9HW Tel: 01803 832495			
Approved Date	Headteacher Signature	Chair of Governors Signature	Review Date
November 2021	LH		November 2022

Aim of the Policy

To enable each child to reach their full potential, St John the Baptist School stresses the importance to both children and parents / carers of the need for maximum attendance and punctuality.

Rights and Responsibilities

We

- expect pupils to attend school regularly and to arrive in a fit condition to learn.
- will encourage good attendance and will investigate all absences.
- will require that staff will set a good example in matters of attendance and punctuality
- will promptly investigate all absenteeism and lateness.
- will work closely with parents / carers should attendance / punctuality give cause for concern.

Pupils:

- will ensure that they attend regularly and on time.
- will have individual records of attendance / punctuality acknowledged by the school.

Parents / Carers:

- are responsible for ensuring their children attend school regularly, punctually and are properly dressed and in a fit condition to learn.
- are responsible for informing the school as early as possible of the reason for any absence (by letter, phone call or personal visit).
- are required to complete an Absence Request Form (S2) and obtain authorisation before a planned absence. Authorisation of holidays within term time is not automatic.
- can expect the school to keep them fully informed of their child's attendance.

Authorising Absence

All absences (except those for which prior approval has been granted) must be explained by a message left at the school on the day of absence before 9.00am at the School Office, with a parental note on return to school. The school will then decide whether or not it will authorise the absence. All absence-related messages received by any member of staff will be conveyed to the school office. If no

information from home is forthcoming, the school office will contact the child's parents / carers. The school office will pay particular attention to the possibility of unauthorized absence and take speedy action if this is suspected.

Absence from school will be authorised if it is for the following reasons:

- Sickness
- Unavoidable medical / dental appointments (but try to make these after school if at all possible)
- Days of religious observance
- Exceptional and unavoidable circumstances such as bereavement
- Seeing a parent who is on leave from the armed forces
- External examinations
- When Traveller children go on the road with their parents

Absence from school will not be authorised for:

- Any type of shopping
- Looking after brothers, sisters or unwell parents (an exception to this might be where a child is looking after a disabled parent)
- Minding the house
- Birthdays
- Resting after a late night
- Relatives visiting or visiting relatives

Holidays

The school holiday dates are published in advance and we strongly advise parents/carers to book their family holidays during the school holidays and not during term time as this has a detrimental impact upon the child's education. No parents/carers can demand leave of absence for their child/children as a right. If a family holiday in term time is unavoidable, a holiday form must be completed prior to the holiday. This can be obtained from the school office. The Head and/or Head of Teaching and Learning will then decide whether or not to authorise the absences on exceptional/compassionate grounds. The Local Authority advises Headteachers to only authorise absence for holidays in exceptional circumstances. As previously stated absence from school (whatever the reason) can adversely affect a child's ability to benefit fully from their educational opportunities and to keep up with programmes of study. The Head teacher/Head of Teaching and learning will decide whether or not to authorise the absence having considered:

- The child's record of attendance;
- The time of the holiday, ensuring that it would not prevent the child from missing any important examinations/ assessments.

The Governing Body has agreed that the school will not authorise any absence for holidays:

- If your child has an attendance level below 93% calculated over the previous twelve months.
- In the first two weeks of the school year (this is a crucial time when all children should be settling in to their new classroom routines and missing this time is detrimental to forming new relationships and routines in a new class)
- At any time in May before or during assessments such as SATs (this is a time when it is important that all children are in school as it is a period during which National assessments are taken by children in Y2 to 6, organized by the Department for children, School and Families. The Y6 tests cannot be taken at any other time).

Term Time

Parental Request for Authorised Absence in Term Time

A parent must complete an Absence Request Form in advance of booking a holiday or other occasion which requires absence from school. This form is obtained from the school office or the school website in the Parents section. The school will always put the education of the child first when deciding whether or not to authorise an absence. In doing so, the school will take into account the child's age, stage of education, educational progress and the date of absence in relation to critical school times (eg internal assessment weeks) as well as the child's previous attendance and pattern of attendance, the reason for any request and the nature and frequency of any event or trip for which the absence is requested (eg whether it is a 'one off' or likely to become a regular occurrence).

Fines for Unauthorised Absence

It is now Devon County Council policy to issue Penalty Notices or fines for unauthorised absence. Details of the implementation of fines can be found in Devon County Council's Penalty Notice Code of Conduct, of which the following is an extract: "Following the implementation of the Anti Social Behaviour Act 2003 it is possible that certain cases of unauthorised absence can be dealt with by way of a Penalty Notice. Penalty Notices will require the parent of a child of

compulsory school age, whose attendance has been unsatisfactory, to pay a fine, currently £60.00 if paid within 28 days or £100.00 if paid within 42 days.” These Penalty Notices, which can result in a criminal record if unpaid, can be issued for unauthorized holidays within term time and unauthorised absence from school when the circumstances appear to have been avoidable, (e.g. child too tired after a late night, a birthday treat, family friends/relatives visiting).

Strategies for Promoting Attendance and Punctuality

- Parents, carers, pupils and staff are to be made aware of the importance of good attendance including distribution of Local Authority generated information where appropriate. Pupils are to be constantly reminded of the importance and value of good attendance.
- The school will award termly certificates to pupils whose attendance / punctuality is 100%.
- Parents or carers of pupils whose attendance is causing concern, whether through a repeated pattern of poor attendance or because attendance falls below 95%, may be invited in to school by the Head teacher/ Head of Teaching and Learning to discuss strategies to improve their child’s attendance.
- Structured meetings will be held at appropriate times with the school’s Educational Welfare Officer (‘EWO’) in order to identify and support those pupils whose attendance / punctuality is a source of concern [persistent absence].
- Pupils whose attendance falls below 90% will be referred to the EWO.

Equal Opportunities

We aim to offer an education and working environment appropriate to each individual pupil’s needs regardless of their race, colour, ethnic or national origins, gender, sexuality, disability or religious beliefs.

Appointments

Children’s appointments, where possible, should be made after the end of the school day. If this is not possible, information will be required in relation to:

- Who the appointment is with (e.g. the doctor, the dentist, the optician, the hospital)
- The length of time out of school required
- The expected time of return
- Whether or not the child will require a school meal that day

Appointment cards, where possible, should be shown at school. If parents or carers need to collect their child from school, it is important that school has been informed beforehand. Children will not be allowed to leave school during the school day if they are unaccompanied. The parent / carer or authorised adult should collect their child from the school office and it is the responsibility of office staff to ask the parent or carer to complete the sign-out book for the child.

Procedures for Following up Absence / Lateness.

1. Teachers, having the daily contact with the children and registers, make note of absences on the register and follow up initial concerns and letters with the school office. It is not expected that teachers would follow-up absence or lateness.
2. All unexplained absences are followed up by contact verbally with the parents / carers to establish reasons for absence. This is done as soon as possible by the school office.
3. If an explanation for an absence cannot be established for some time (i.e. at the end of a week a number of telephone calls have resulted in 'no answers'), a letter may be sent by post to the parent / carer requesting that the parent / carer come into school to discuss their child's absence and the EWO may be contacted if unauthorised reason for absence is suspected. If concerns are raised about the child's welfare and parents / carers cannot be contacted to establish reasons for absence, then the relevant authorities will be contacted.
4. Regular head teacher-administrator discussions will occur with reference to the register. If a child's attendance falls below 90% an initial meeting / telephone call with the parent / carer will be requested to discuss the absence record if an explanation for the absence is not known or unauthorised. In these cases, upon each further absence or lateness, a call to the child's parent / carer will be completed to ascertain the reason for absence or lateness.
5. Any serious concerns or recurring concerns will be discussed with the Head teacher and referred to the EWO
6. Pupils whose attendance falls below 93% will always be referred to the EWO.
7. Where there is a concern that a child may be truanting, contact will be made with the parents / carers immediately.