



# ***Attendance Policy***

Effective : September 2020

## Introduction and Background

Jolesfield CE Primary School recognises that positive behaviour and good attendance are essential in order to raise standards of pupil attainment and to give every child/young person the best educational experience possible.

This policy is written with the above statement in mind and underpins our school ethos to:

- promote children's welfare and safeguarding
- ensure every pupil has access to the full time education to which they are entitled
- ensure that pupils succeed whilst at school
- ensure that pupils have access to the widest possible range of opportunities at school, and when they leave school

For our children to gain the greatest benefit from their education it is vital that they attend regularly and be at school, on time, every day the school is open unless the reason for the absence is unavoidable. It is a rule of this school that pupils must attend every day, unless there are exceptional circumstances and it is the headteacher, not the parent, who can authorise the absence.

Any absence affects the pattern of a child's schooling and regular absence will seriously affect their learning. Any pupil's absence or late arrival disrupts teaching routines and so may affect the learning of others in the same class. Ensuring a child's regular attendance at school is a parental responsibility and permitting absence from school without a good reason creates an offence in law and may result in prosecution.

This policy has been developed in consultation with school governors, teachers, the Local Authority and parents and carers. It seeks to ensure that all parties involved in the practicalities of school attendance are aware and informed of attendance matters in school and to outline the school's commitment to attendance matters. It details the responsibilities of individuals and groups involved and the procedures in place to promote and monitor pupil attendance.

Our policy aims to raise and maintain levels of attendance by:

- Promoting a positive and welcoming atmosphere in which pupils feel safe, secure and valued.
- Raising awareness of the importance of good attendance and punctuality
- Ensuring that attendance is monitored effectively and reasons for absences are recorded promptly and consistently.

## Promoting Regular Attendance

Helping to create a pattern of regular attendance is the responsibility of parents, pupils and all members of school staff.

To help us all to focus on this we will:

- Give parents/carers details on attendance in our newsletters
- Report to parents/carers annually on their child's attendance with the annual school report.
- Contact parents/carers should their child's attendance fall below the school's target for attendance.
- Celebrate excellent attendance by displaying and reporting individual and class achievements
- Reward good or improving attendance
- Understanding Types of Absence

Every half-day absence from school has to be classified by the school (not by the parent/carer), as either AUTHORISED or UNAUTHORISED. This is why information about the cause of any absence is always required.

Authorised absences are mornings or afternoons away from school for a good reason like illness (although you may be asked to provide medical evidence for your child before this can be authorised), medical or dental appointments which unavoidably fall in school time, emergencies or other unavoidable cause.

Unauthorised absences are those which the school does not consider reasonable and for which no 'leave' has been given. This type of absence can lead to the Local Authority using sanctions and/or legal proceedings. Unauthorised absence includes:

- parents/carers keeping children off school unnecessarily e.g. because they had a late night or for non-infectious illness or injury that would not affect their ability to learn.
- absences which have never been properly explained
- children who arrive at school too late to get a mark on the attendance register
- shopping trips
- looking after other children or children accompanying siblings or parents to medical appointments
- their own or family birthdays
- holidays taken during term time without leave- 5 days unauthorised absence will lead to a penalty notice being triggered by the Local Authority
- day trips
- other leave of absence in term time which has not been agreed

## School Attendance and the Law

There is no entitlement in law for pupils to take time off during the term to go on holiday. In addition, the Supreme Court has ruled that the definition of regular school attendance is “in accordance with the rules prescribed by the school”.

The Education (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2006 were amended in September 2013. All references to family holidays and extended leave have been removed. The amendments specify that headteachers may not grant any leave of absence during term time unless there are “exceptional circumstances” and they no longer have the discretion to authorise up to ten days of absence each academic year.

It is a rule of this school that a leave of absence shall not be granted in term time unless there are reasons considered to be exceptional by the headteacher, irrespective of the child’s overall attendance. Only the headteacher or his/her designate (not the local authority) may authorise such a request and all applications for a leave of absence must be made in writing on the prescribed form provided by the school. Where a parent removes a child when the application for leave was refused or where no application was made to the school, the issue of a penalty notice may be requested by this school.

When considering exceptional term time leave requests, the following factors may help to reach a decision:

- Time of the academic year when the leave has been requested
- Duration of the absence – number of school days being missed
- The child’s current attendance and punctuality rate
- Exceptional Term time leave requested/taken in previous academic years for a similar purpose
- Whether parent/carers have considered limiting the amount of time the child would be absent from school e.g. wrapping around school holiday
- Have alternative care arrangements been considered by the parent/carer to limit the time away from school
- Impact on any interventions, assessments or referrals being undertaken with the child or family e.g. family support, social care assessments, CAMHS, SEN
- The impact that the absence will have on the child.
- Whether it falls within any key stage national tests or exams;

Examples of any exceptional circumstances where leave may be granted during term time are as follows:

- If a parent is service personnel and is returning from a tour of duty abroad where it is evidenced the individual will not be in receipt of any leave in the near future that coincides with school holidays.
- Where an absence from school is recommended by a health professional as part of a parent or child’s rehabilitation from a medical or emotional issue.
- The death or terminal illness of a close relative, only if Headteacher is satisfied that the

circumstances are truly exceptional;

- Out of school programmes such as music, arts or sport operating at a high standard of achievement. Documentary evidence of this event will be required.
- Religious observance – The Education Act 1996 S444(3) (c), states “on any day exclusively set apart for religious observance by the religious body to which his/her parent belongs”;
- To attend a wedding or funeral of a close relative if the Headteacher is satisfied that the circumstances are truly exceptional; Leave should only be authorised for this purpose when a Headteacher is satisfied that there is a persuasive reason for holding the wedding during term time and there WILL be an onus on parents to show clear evidence that this absence is absolutely an exceptional circumstance.
- In difficult family situations the Headteacher may use his/her discretion in granting leave and each case should be addressed on its individual merits, taking into account the overall welfare of the child.

We will **not** agree leave during term time:

- at any time in September. This is very important as your child needs to settle into their new class as quickly as possible.
- during assessment and test periods in the school’s calendar affecting your child.
- when a pupil’s attendance record already includes any level of unauthorised absence or they have already been granted authorised leave within that academic year

Whilst any child may occasionally have time off school because they are ill, sometimes they can be reluctant to attend school. Any problems with regular attendance are best sorted out between the school, the parents and the child. If a parent thinks their child is reluctant to attend school then we will work with that family to understand the root problem and provide any necessary support. We can use outside agencies to help with this such as the School Nurse, Local Authority Officers or Child and Family Support Worker.

### **Persistent Absenteeism (PA)**

A pupil is defined by the Government as a ‘persistent absentee’ when they miss 10% or more schooling across the school year for whatever reason. Absence at this level will cause considerable damage to any child’s education and we need a parent/carer’s fullest support and co-operation to tackle this.

We monitor all absence, and the reasons that are given, thoroughly. If a child is seen to have reached the PA mark or is at risk of moving towards that mark we will inform the parent/carer. PA pupils are tracked and monitored carefully. We also combine this with academic tracking where absence affects attainment. All our PA pupils and their parents are subject to a school based meeting and the plan may include: allocation of additional support through the School Nurse, Local Attendance Adviser, Home School Liaison Worker, Local Authority, Family Solutions or Social Care. We may also use circle time, individual incentive programmes, individual targets and participation in group activities to support us in raising attendance.

## Absence Procedures

If a child is absent from school the parent/carer must follow the following procedures:

- Contact the school on the first day of absence before 9.00 am. The school has an answer phone available to leave a message if nobody is available to take your call, or call into school personally and speak to the office staff
- Contact the school on every further day of absence, again before 9.00am
- Ensure that your child returns to school as soon as possible

If your child is absent we will:

- Telephone or text you on the first day of absence if we have not heard from you. If we have not heard from you by 9.15 am then we will start to call all the contact numbers that you have provided in order to gain an explanation for the absence. If we still have not been able to ascertain where your child is then we will make a home visit. However, if we still haven't been able to get a response then we will report it to the police as your child will then be classed as a 'missing child'.
- Write to you if your child's attendance is below 95%
- Invite you in to school to discuss the situation with the classteacher, SENCO or deputy headteacher or Headteacher if absences persist
- Refer the matter to the Local Authority to request a formal School Attendance Meeting if attendance deteriorates following the above actions

## The Pupil Entitlement Service

Parents are expected to contact school at an early stage and to work with the staff in resolving any problems together. This is nearly always successful. If difficulties cannot be sorted out in this way, the school may refer the child to the Local Authority. Local Authority Officers work with schools, families and other professionals to reduce persistent absence and improve overall attendance. If attendance does not improve, legal action may be taken in the form of a Penalty Notice (see Annex A for the Essex Code of Conduct), prosecution in the Magistrates Court or the application of an Education Supervision Order, designed to strengthen parental responsibilities and ensure improved attendance.

## Lateness

Poor punctuality is not acceptable. If a child misses the start of the day they can miss work and do not spend time with their class teacher getting vital information and news for the day. Late arriving pupils also disrupt lessons, can be embarrassing for the child and can also encourage absence. Good time-keeping is a vital life skill which will help our children as they progress through their school life and out into the wider world

How we manage lateness:

The school day starts at 8.50 am when children can begin to come into school. Registers are taken at 8.50 am and your child will receive a late mark if they are not in by that time. Children arriving after 8.50 am are required to come in to school via the school office if accompanied by a parent or carer, the parent/carer will sign them into our 'Late Book' and provide a reason for their lateness which is recorded. The school may send home 'late notes' in order to keep parents and carers informed. From time to time the Child and Family Support Worker, Headteacher or Assistant Headteacher will undertake a 'Late Gate' check, greeting late arrivals at the main entrance to the school.

At 9.15 am the registers will be closed. In accordance with the Regulations, if your child arrives after that time they will receive a mark that shows them to be on site, but this will not count as a present mark and it will mean they have an unauthorised absence. This may mean that you could face the possibility of a Penalty Notice if the problem persists. If your child has a persistent late record you will be asked to meet with the School Welfare Officer and/or Child and Family Support Worker, but you can approach us at any time if you are having problems getting your child to school on time. We expect parents and staff to encourage good punctuality by being good role models to our children and celebrate good class and individual punctuality.

If leave of absence is authorised, the school will not provide work for children to do during their absence. Parents are however advised to read with their children and encourage them to write a diary while they are away.

## **Deletion from Roll**

For any pupil leaving Jolesfield CE Primary School, other than at the end of year 6 parents/carers are required to inform the school in writing including the following information: Child's name, class, current address, date of leaving, new home address, name of new school, address of new school. This information is essential to ensure that we know and safeguard the whereabouts of all of our pupils.

## **Summary**

The school has a legal duty to publish its absence figures to parents and to promote attendance.

Equally, parents have a duty to make sure that their children attend school, on time, every day.

All school staff and the Governing Body are committed to working with parents and pupils as the best way to ensure as high a level of attendance as possible.

## **Addendum during Covid-19 Pandemic**

The most up to date guidance from the Department for education states that it is 'vital for all children to return to school to minimise as far as possible the longer-term impact of the pandemic on children's education, wellbeing and wider development.'

School attendance is mandatory from the beginning of the autumn term 2020.

School will be following the rules set out in the attendance policy including:

- All children who are not displaying standard COVID19 symptoms are expected to attend
- Parents responsibility to ensure their child attends a school where the child is a registered pupil
- Recording attendance using codes set out in Appendix 2. Following up absence using the first-day calling procedure and referrals to the named CSAWs Officer and School Family Support Worker if needed.
- Referring absences to West Sussex Pupil Entitlement which may lead to fixed penalty notices being issued.

Where children are not able to attend school due to self-isolation or positive test results of Covid 19, support will be offered via the schools blended learning programme.

Where parents have anxiety and concerns regarding children attending school, an appointment should be made with the Headteacher to discuss the concerns.

## Appendix 1

### Coronavirus related absences quick reference guide - September 2020

What to do if ...	Action needed	Code	Return to school when ...
... my child has coronavirus symptoms	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● <b>DO NOT COME TO SCHOOL</b></li> <li>● <b>contact school daily</b></li> <li>● Self isolate</li> <li>● Get a test</li> <li>● Inform school immediately about test result</li> </ul>	Code x	... if test result comes back negative and well enough
... my child tests positive for coronavirus	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● <b>DO NOT COME TO SCHOOL</b></li> <li>● <b>contact school daily</b></li> <li>● Self isolate for at least 10 days</li> <li>● Inform school immediately about test result</li> </ul>	Code l	... if they feel better. They can return to school after 10 days even if they have a cough or loss of taste/ smell. These symptoms can last for several weeks once the infection is gone.
... somebody in my household has coronavirus symptoms	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● <b>DO NOT COME TO SCHOOL</b></li> <li>● <b>Contact school daily</b></li> <li>● Self isolate</li> <li>● Household member to get a test</li> <li>● Inform school immediately about test result</li> </ul>	Code x	... the household member test is negative
... somebody in my household has tested positive for coronavirus	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● <b>DO NOT COME TO SCHOOL</b></li> <li>● <b>Contact school daily</b></li> <li>● Self isolate for 14 days</li> </ul>	Code x	... the child has completed 14 days of self isolation
... NHS test and trace have identified my child as a 'close contact' of somebody with symptoms or confirmed coronavirus	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● <b>DO NOT COME TO SCHOOL</b></li> <li>● <b>Contact school daily</b></li> <li>● Self isolate for 14 days</li> </ul>	Code x	... the child has completed 14 days of self isolation
... we/my child has travelled and has to self isolate a part of a period of quarantine	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● <b>Do not take unauthorised leave during term time</b></li> <li>● <b>Consider quarantine requirements and FCO advice when booking travel</b></li> <li>● <b>Provide information to school as per attendance policy</b></li> </ul> <p><b><u>Returning from a destination where quarantine is needed:</u></b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● <b>DO NOT COME TO SCHOOL</b></li> <li>● <b>Contact school daily</b></li> <li>● Self isolate for 14 days</li> </ul>	Code x	.. the quarantine period of 14 days has been completed.
... we have received medical advice that my child must resume	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● <b>DO NOT COME TO SCHOOL</b></li> <li>● Contact school as required by the pastoral team</li> <li>● Shield until you are informed that restrictions</li> </ul>	Code x	... school inform you that restrictions have been lifted and your child can return to school

shielding

are lifted and shielding is paused again.

again.

## Appendix 2

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

Code	Definition	Scenario
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
H	Authorised holiday	Pupil has been allowed to go on holiday due to exceptional circumstances
I	Illness	School has been notified that a pupil will be absent due to illness
M	Medical/dental appointment	Pupil is at a medical or dental appointment

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R	Religious observance	Pupil is taking part in a day of religious observance
S	Study leave	Year 11 pupil is on study leave during their public examinations
T	Gypsy, Roma and Traveller absence	Pupil from a Traveller community is travelling, as agreed with the school
<b>Unauthorised absence</b>		
G	Unauthorised holiday	Pupil is on a holiday that was not approved by the school
N	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)
O	Unauthorised absence	School is not satisfied with reason for pupil's absence
U	Arrival after registration	Pupil arrived at school after the register closed

Code	Definition	Scenario
X	Not required to be in school	Pupil of non-compulsory school age is not required to attend
Y	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
Z	Pupil not on admission register	Register set up but pupil has not yet joined the school
#	Planned school closure	Whole or partial school closure due to half term/bank holiday/INSET day