



Attendance policy

Adopted: November 2021 **Next review:** every three years (or sooner, if required)

This policy follows Department for Education guidance and statute:

<http://www.gov.uk/school-attendance-absence>

https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/564599/school_attendance.pdf

School opens at: 08.50

Registers close at: 09.05

Mission

Attendance is defined as the participation in a programme of educational activities arranged by the school; this might include off-site provision such as a residential. A child's attendance record follows them throughout statutory education. Excellent attendance and punctuality are key to ensuring that children and young people have the best life chances and opportunities. Attending school is a safeguarding priority: when children are in school, we know they are safe.

In our federation, we strongly believe that having access to and receiving a good education is the best way we can ensure that all children achieve the best possible outcomes, empowering them to make the best and most positive choices about their future lives. It is the responsibility of school, parents/carers and pupils to work in partnership to ensure that all our children and young people receive an appropriate education suitable to their needs. We work with families to identify reasons for poor attendance and support them to resolve difficulties.

Our attendance policy should not be viewed in isolation. It is an integral aspect of our safeguarding procedures and it is part of all aspects of school provision and improvement, supported by other policies such as our Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy and our Positive Relationships Policy (which incorporates anti-bullying and behaviour).

Good attendance is important because:

- statistics show a direct link between under-achievement and absence below 95%
- regular attenders make better progress, both socially and academically
- regular attenders find school routines, school work and friendships easier to cope with
- regular attenders find learning more satisfying
- regular attenders are more successful in transferring between primary school, secondary school, and higher education, employment or training

% Attendance expressed in number of days absent

Attendance / absence is presented as a percentage figure, but it's helpful to equate this to number of days off:

98% = fewer than four days absent in a school year
95% = fewer than ten days absent in one school year
90% = 4 weeks absent in one school year (equates to a ½ day each week)
85% = 5.5 weeks absent in one school year (approaching a whole half-term in the school year)
80% = 7.5 weeks absent in one school year (equates to one day each week or a whole half-term)

Principles

Children must attend school as much as they can to:

- achieve their full potential
- feel safe and secure, benefitting from the routines of the school day and all the measures we take around safeguarding
- protect them from safeguarding issues that may arise from home or the wider community
- avoid disruption to their education and their social and emotional wellbeing

Over five years, children with an average attendance of 85-90% will have missed half a school year of education; children with an average attendance of 80% will have missed a whole school year.

Unauthorised absence can lead to prosecution.

Parental responsibility on reporting absence

A child not attending school is considered a safeguarding matter. This is why information about the cause of any absence is always required. If your child is absent, you must:

- contact school as soon as possible on the first day of absence
- medical evidence may be required if your child has above average illness; this could be a copy of a prescription, labelled medication or an appointment card

If your child is absent, we will:

- telephone or text you on the first day of absence if we have not heard from you – this is because we have a duty to ensure your child's safety as well as their regular school attendance
- we may refer the matter to Leeds City Council School Attendance Service if absence falls below 90%
- if we believe that your child is absent due to a holiday, we may refer the matter to the Attendance Service and you may be issued with a penalty notice of £120 per parent per child (reduced to £60 if paid early) (See Appendix 1: School-based interventions)

Persistent absences

Persistent absenteeism presents greater safeguarding concerns. The Department for Education regards attendance of 90% or below as persistent absenteeism. This means any child with 90% attendance is considered a persistent absentee. (The figure is based on a running total over the course of the year ie more than 10% of all possible school days spent away from school in that school year is regarded as persistent).

Communication

We want to work in partnership with parents/carers to ensure that all our children receive an appropriate education. To help with this, we communicate attendance at various times in the school year. If required, we work with families to identify reasons for poor attendance and support them to resolve difficulties.

Authorised absence is defined as:

- Genuine illness
- Medical or dental appointment (routine appointments should be arranged out of school time)
- Bereavement of close relatives (by 'close' we mean parents, siblings and other relatives with whom the child had frequent contact)
- Religious observance (no more than two days per academic year)
- Approved leave in term time where there are **exceptional circumstances, as agreed in advance** with the Head of Federation or Head of School

Unauthorised absence is defined as:

Please note the list below contains examples only and is not intended as an exhaustive list.

- Holidays in term time
- Absence in term time where permission has **not** been given by the school; this means that parents/carers do not have the right to take their child out of school during term time
- Late ie after registers have closed (in this circumstance, a 'U' code will be used)
- Unexplained absence, such as any absence that the school has not been informed of in person, or by email/letter, by telephone, or School Gateway
(please note: any child whose absence is on-going and remains unexplained for an extended period (20 consecutive school days) will be referred to the local authority as a child missing education – 'CME')
- Taking the rest of the day off before or after a medical appointment
- Staying at home to care for younger children or sick relatives
- Going shopping or having a haircut
- Birthdays, weddings or anniversaries
- Transport issues eg car broken down
- Travelling to airport to meet relatives/friends
- Translating

Punctuality

Being late to school has a significant impact on the amount of learning time lost over a school year. This table gives you an indication of how much time is lost if regularly late.

Minutes late per day	Number of days over a year
5 minutes	3.4 days
10 minutes	6.9 days
15 minutes	10.3 days
20 minutes	13.8 days
30 minutes	20.7 days

Pupils arriving after the register has closed receive a 'U' code to mean 'late'; this represents an unauthorised absence. In the federation, schools actively discourage late arrival and are alert to patterns of late arrival, which could provide grounds for prosecution.

Exceptional circumstances

Parents do not have the right to remove their children from school during term time.

Absence in term time will only be considered if parents/carers make a request to the school on the appropriate form (Appendix 2), giving **exceptional reasons** why the application for absence has been requested and provide information to support their application.

Please note that the definition of 'exceptional' means 'very unusual'. Therefore, a second request for absence based on 'exceptional circumstances' is extremely unlikely to be regarded as such and therefore will not be authorised.

The Head of School decides whether or not the absence will be authorised.

Unauthorised absences

Parents/carers, who take their children out of school during term time without authorisation, may be issued with a penalty fine of £120 per child, per parent. (This might be reduced to £60 per child, per parent if paid promptly.) Parents may also face a possible prosecution in court.

Continuing concerns regarding attendance

If attendance or lateness continues to be of concern (eg too many unauthorised absences; an attendance level classed as 'persistent; an unacceptable pattern), then this leads to a referral being made to Leeds City Council School Attendance Service. Ultimately, parents/carers can be held to account for failing to ensure that their children attend school punctually and regularly. Leeds City Council School Attendance Service carries out this statutory function on behalf of the local authority in order to uphold the right of children and young people to access their education. Where necessary, statutory action can and will be taken. This may take the form of a penalty notice; or prosecution of parents in the Magistrates Court resulting in a fine or statutory order.



St James' CE Primary only: Christian values

At St James' Church of England Primary School, our vision is to be a happy and healthy place to achieve and believe.

I came to give life – life in all its fullness. (John 10:10)

Our Christian values support us in achieving and maintaining our vision to be a happy and healthy place to achieve and believe – everything we do is underpinned by these values.

We aim to serve our community by providing an education of the highest quality within the context of Christian belief and practice, in such a way that people of all faiths or none are loved, respected and valued. We aim to serve all members of our community by supporting every child. We foster a love of learning, and provide a broad education which addresses the needs of the whole child in order that our children are healthy, safe, happy and successful.

By doing these things, we promote good attendance for our pupils, knowing that they are safe, happy and healthy at school for as much of the time as possible.