



*Kirkstall St Stephen's  
Church of England (VA)  
Primary School  
Attendance &  
Punctuality Policy  
October 2023*

This school is committed to safeguarding and the wellbeing of all children, and expects our staff and volunteers to share this commitment.

# **Kirkstall St Stephen's Primary School**

## **Attendance & Punctuality Policy**

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## **Rationale**

It is the legal responsibility under Section 7 of the Education Act 1996 that 'the parent of every child of compulsory school age shall cause him/her to receive efficient, full-time education'. It is also the duty of staff in line with our safeguarding policies to encourage good attendance and punctuality.

Consequently, parents should ensure that their children attend school, on time, every day the school is open unless the reason for absence is unavoidable. 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.

In addition at Kirkstall St Stephen's Primary School we believe that in order for our pupils to gain the greatest benefit from their education it is vital that they attend regularly.

### **Why good attendance and punctuality is so important?**

Regular attendance enhances the learning opportunities that students have, therefore greatly increasing their chances of being successful. Poor attendance and punctuality often leads to lack of self-esteem, disaffection and can have an adverse effect on a school leaver's achievement.

## **Safeguarding**

Your child may be at risk of harm if they do not attend school regularly. Safeguarding the interests of each child is everyone's responsibility and within the context of this school, promoting the welfare and life opportunities for your child encompasses: - Attendance Behaviour Management Health and Safety Access to the Curriculum Anti-bullying. Failing to attend this school on a regular basis will be considered as a safeguarding matter.

## **Aims**

The aim of this policy is to ensure that all stakeholders are aware of their roles and responsibilities with regards to attendance and punctuality. Helping to create a pattern of regular attendance and good punctuality is everybody's responsibility. Parents, pupils, governors and all members of school staff.

### **Our current attendance target for 2023-24 is 96.5%**

Promoting good attendance and punctuality is a priority at Kirkstall St Stephen's Primary School and is dependent upon us nurturing and maintaining good relationships with our pupils and their parents/carers. Our school engages in many school-based activities that promote good attendance:

- ✓ A small team of staff with responsibility for attendance & punctuality regularly monitor and follow up attendance & punctuality issues on a weekly basis.

- ✓ The School sets attendance and punctuality targets and uses a wide variety of strategies to achieve them.
- ✓ The School reports attendance for each class on the weekly newsletter
- ✓ Absence and lateness is followed up promptly. For attendance we will use the First Day Cover system, and require reasons why there has been an absence from the relevant parents/carers.
- ✓ Barriers to pupil attendance and punctuality are promptly investigated in order to seek workable and swift solutions.
- ✓ Classes are rewarded with certificates, a trophy and praise for good attendance and punctuality. We also participate in city wide attendance initiatives, such as the 'Give it 100%' initiative in March and November, whereby children who have 100% attendance or no unauthorized absences each week are rewarded and there is an overall award for the month.
- ✓ We recognise that some children with medical issues and long term conditions might not achieve attendance targets and we do not discriminate against them in attendance reward schemes.
- ✓ Parents/carers are informed about school procedures and criteria for authorizing absence through regular attendance & punctuality reminders. The school prospectus given to new parents and published on the school website details the requirement for pupil attendance and punctuality.
- ✓ Registers are completed fully and accurately using the Scholarpack program and are monitored regularly.
- ✓ The School works closely with the Attendance Strategy Team to support identified individuals and families who are struggling with maintaining good attendance and punctuality.
- ✓ The Pupil Support governor sub-committee will work with the Senior Leadership Team to ensure the successful implementation of the attendance and punctuality strategies and procedures. The Governing Body will then be updated on the success of attendance and punctuality through the Head Teacher's report and will be made aware of any changes in the strategies and procedures.

### **Important Attendance & Punctuality Communication**

One of the most important keys to success with attendance & punctuality is about developing and maintaining effective communication and dialogue between pupils, parents and the Local Education Authority. Kirkstall St Stephen's School strives to work towards a holistic approach to attendance & punctuality and we will work hard to maintain the following systems for communication:

#### **Communication with parents:**

- ✓ Parents/carers will be informed of regular/persistent lateness.

- ✓ Parents/carers will be informed about attendance and punctuality campaigns.
- ✓ Reminders will be sent home about the importance of coming to school regularly and on time.
- ✓ Parents/carers are expected to contact school before 9:15am in the event of **all** absences and lateness.
- ✓ School staff will contact parents/carers where absence is unexplained, initially by text with follow up calls where necessary.
- ✓ Unexplained absence may lead to a home visit from a member of the school safeguarding team in order to establish the reason for non-attendance in school.
- ✓ Displays on attendance will be visible to all parents/carers in the school hall to promote good attendance by all.

#### **Communication with children:**

- ✓ Children will take part in assemblies promoting good attendance
- ✓ Termly rewards will be given to pupils with 98%+ attendance.
- ✓ All children, when appropriate, can take part in city wide attendance campaigns.

#### **Communication with staff:**

- ✓ Guidance on registration, authorization of absences, absence returns and general attendance procedures to be conveyed to staff through staff meetings and briefings.
- ✓ Revised attendance and punctuality policy available for all staff to see in school staffroom, school office and on the school website.
- ✓ Weekly procedures by responsible staff to co-ordinate and monitor punctuality, attendance and absence reports.
- ✓ Staff to ensure the accurate and prompt recording of registers.

### **Attendance & Punctuality procedures in place at Kirkstall St Stephen's**

Poor punctuality is not acceptable. If a pupil misses any part of a school day they can miss work and do not spend time 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.

## **Registration, lateness and referrals to the Attendance Strategy Team, (AST)**

The school bell rings at 8.55am. Class teachers mark the pupils **present** in class by 9.00am.

Children that arrive at school after 9.00am will need to enter school by the school office and their lateness will be recorded. The admin staff and school attendance team will ensure that the late registers are kept up-to-date with the details of pupils as appropriate and record how many minutes late. The admin staff & school attendance team will also monitor those who arrive late, leave school during the day or collect late at the end of the school day.

Children who arrive after 9.00am, but before 9.15am will also get a mark, but this will show up as a **“late”** mark.

At 9.15am the registers will be closed. In accordance with the regulations, if a child arrives after that time they will receive a mark that shows them to be on site but a **“U”** code will be entered into the Scholarpack SIMS system, which indicates late after registers closed. They will not receive an attendance mark for that session and it will be recorded as **“unauthorized absence”**. This means they could face the possibility of a penalty notice if the problem persists.

\* Important – should school be unable to resolve an on-going lateness issue we reserve the right to bring forward the close of the register. This could mean that a child’s lateness would be recorded as unauthorized which could result in the local authority considering enforcement proceedings against parent / carers of individual children.

The register information is input by hand onto the school’s Scholarpack **“SIMS”** system where all our attendance data is collected and can be used for easy referral.

Admin staff record latecomers daily and where lateness becomes persistent will invite parents into school, to discuss the matter with their class teacher. This letter will remind parents that they have a legal responsibility to ensure that their child attends school on time and warn them if their punctuality does not improve that they have to meet with the class teacher.

A second letter should be sent to all parents for any further unauthorized late arrivals / collections. This should include a running total of the minutes late for the school year. This letter will also inform parents to make an appointment with the class teacher. At this meeting the parents will be asked to explain the reasons for their poor punctuality record and be informed that all future lateness will be monitored and a further meeting with the school attendance team will be arranged if the situation shows little or no improvement.

After this meeting the school attendance team will monitor the punctuality record very carefully and arrange to meet with parents / carers if the situation continues. At this meeting a member of the school attendance team will outline expectations, responsibilities, and consequences and the parents’ legal responsibilities to ensure their children arrive on time. The school attendance team will then monitor these families.

A third letter will be sent out from the governing body in which they may be asked to meet with a Governors and the Headteacher to explain their poor punctuality record and

inform them that we will be referring all future lateness to the Local Authority for them to consider any censure and financial penalty

## **First Day Absence contact, (also known as First Day Cover)**

Parents are expected to contact school before 9.15am on the first day of absence, except for medical or dental appointments that school has already been informed of.

### **Parents should make contact with the school:**

- ✓ by telephone
- ✓ by another nominated parent or responsible adult

The school will then text or phone the child's home if there has been no parental contact with school to confirm the reason for absence.

### **Authorised Absence:**

**From September 1<sup>st</sup> 2013 schools are no longer allowed to authorize any requests for children to be taken out of school for a holiday during term time.** Amendments have been made to the 2006 regulations in the Education (Pupil Registration) (England) (Amendment) Regulations 2013.

The amendments, re: the removal of any reference to family holiday and extended leave as well as the statutory threshold of ten school days. The amendments are clear that Headteachers may not grant any leave of absence during term time unless there are *exceptional circumstances* and they will determine the number of school days a child can be away from school if the leave is granted. A holiday cannot be considered as an exceptional circumstance. The legislation also states that any application for leave must be made to the school at least 10 school days in advance of the proposed leave as the DFE have instructed schools that they cannot authorize any absences after they have been taken.

There are many situations which may constitute exceptional circumstances but generally the school and governors interpret "exceptional" in this context as being of unique and significant emotional, educational or spiritual value to the child, which outweighs the loss of teaching time. This interpretation will have different parameters from one case to another, and whilst it is important to look at the whole situation in making decisions about any individual request, the normality will be that requests will be refused. Parents will be asked to respect these new legislations and if there is a need to take their child or children out of school during term time, they (the parents / carers) will be expected to demonstrate how the circumstances are exceptional.

In addition to this new legislation there are also new regulations from September 1<sup>st</sup> 2013 in which the imposition of penalty fines for parents and carers taking children out of school in unauthorized circumstances will be imposed more strictly. Parents and carers

do not have the right to take their child out of school during term time. By law parents / carers must ask permission for their child to miss school. If they fail to gain the school's permission they risk receiving a fixed penalty notice. The cost of these notices will be £60.00, payable within 21 days; if unpaid the penalty increases to £120.00 with a further 7 days to make the payment. The penalty applies to each child for which permission has been refused.

Authorised Absence includes the following:

- ✓ Sickness.
- ✓ Medical and dental treatment.
- ✓ Bereavement.

**Unauthorised absence:**

- ✓ Truancy, defined as an unauthorised absence from school, for any period, as a result of premeditated or spontaneous action on the part of the parent/carers, pupil or both.
- ✓ Unexplained absence.
- ✓ Family holidays or events where permission has not been given by school.

We as a school now have the power to issue **Penalty Notices and warning letters** to parents/carers, which precedes the issuing of a fine for unauthorised absence or poor attendance. If these actions are ineffective, then we can instigate steps towards the possible prosecution of parents/carers at Leeds Magistrates Court.

- ✓ In extreme cases refer families to Social Care.

Staff dealing with attendance need to keep the Headteacher informed at all times (particularly before deciding to issue a penalty notice) The Head will keep the Chair of Governors informed of developments.

- ✓ Patterns in non-attendance, or persistent non-attendance and poor punctuality could signify safeguarding concern and will be identified as a concern for the School Child Protection and Safeguarding Team

The school attendance team and key staff work hard to solve attendance & punctuality problems with families, often working in tandem with the Attendance Strategy team. The Early Help Plan, (EHP), will also be used in school to help families deal with attendance & punctuality related issues. When school has internally exhausted all possible avenues of help and intervention without success, we will then call on the Attendance Strategy Team to intervene.

## **Practices that support the attendance & punctuality policy**

- ✓ The Headteacher and attendance team assume the responsibility for attendance and punctuality.
- ✓ Data is thoroughly and regularly analyzed to identify patterns and need for actions.
- ✓ There is effective use of rewards for good attendance and punctuality.
- ✓ Bullying is identified and tackled effectively, under a separate policy.

Kirkstall St Stephen's Primary has a positive approach to recognizing and rewarding good attendance and good punctuality for all pupils:

- ✓ Certificates for 98%+ excellent attendance and for improved attendance.
- ✓ Praise and rewards in celebration assemblies

## **Roles and Responsibilities**

**Pupils** should:

- ✓ Take part in discussions about punctuality and attendance, in groups, as a class or individually.
- ✓ Carry out any school work set and agreed upon during the leave period.

**Parents** should:

- ✓ Discuss plans with school well in advance in order to support continuity of learning including support available during leave and on return.
- ✓ Provide whatever support is necessary for the child's continuity in education.

**School** should:

- ✓ Maintain the attendance policy.
- ✓ Analyse attendance and punctuality rates and target individual pupils who are a cause for concern.
- ✓ Maintain a data base on persistent absence and lateness identifying individual pupils, rates and reasons.
- ✓ Communicate concerns and celebrations with parents regularly.

- ✓ Communicate the policy regularly to parents, particularly at the beginning of the year, to new parents/children and through displays and leaflets.
- ✓ Ensure that application forms are correctly completed, offering help where necessary.
- ✓ Operate within Leeds City Council guidance
- ✓ Check that pupils return to school within the timescales given.
- ✓ Refer to Attendance Strategy Team in cases of unauthorised absence or where concerns arise.
- ✓ Ensure that accurate figures for attendance are to be included in all school reports.

**Attendance Strategy Team should:**

- ✓ Establish and maintain a good working relationship with school and families.
- ✓ Monitor and analyse data provided by school.
- ✓ Work alongside the school attendance team to implement strategies and solve problems.
- ✓ Provide training for staff on attendance issues.
- ✓ Support children/families who are having difficulty with attendance.
- ✓ Support School in moving actions to the next level if necessary.
- ✓ Celebrate success with the school, pupils and families and inform the nominated governor of developments, issues, concerns and successes.

**Governors should:**

- ✓ Ensure that the Attendance & Punctuality Policy is adhered to.
- ✓ Agree targets for improvement and report to the Pupil Support Committee to evaluate, monitor and report to the full governing on a termly basis to monitor whether they are achieved.
- ✓ Head and Chair to meet with parents for those whose attendance and punctuality has persistently fallen below the required standards and the other interventions have not proved successful in addressing the concerns.