



**Mexborough St John the Baptist C of E Primary
School**

Attendance Policy

September 2023

Date for Review: September 2024

Statement of intent

The James Montgomery Academy Trust (thereafter referred to as JMAT) believes that in order to facilitate teaching and learning, and for pupils to reach their full potential, regular attendance at school is vital. JMAT schools are child-centred, inclusive and distinctive, delivering excellence in education, sharing best practice and building aspiration.

JMAT is committed to following the framework set in Section 7 of the Education Act 1996, which states that: *“The parent of every child of compulsory school age shall cause him/her to receive efficient full-time education suitable:-*

- (a) To age, ability and*
- (b) To any special educational needs he/she may have*

Mexborough St John the Baptist School and the JMAT are committed to providing an education of the highest quality for all pupils and endeavour to provide an environment where all pupils feel valued and welcome.

Parents and pupils play a part in making our school so successful. Every child has a right to access the education to which he/she is entitled by law. We actively promote 100% attendance and will use a variety of weekly, termly and annual awards to promote good attendance and punctuality.

The whole school community – pupils, parents and carers, teaching and support staff and school governors – have a responsibility for ensuring good school attendance and have important roles to play. The purpose of the policy is to clarify everyone’s part in this.

Good Attendance is important because:

- Statistics show a direct link between under-achievement and absence below 95%
- Good attendance and punctuality are vital for success at school and to establish positive life habits necessary for future success.
- Good attendance and punctuality minimise the risks of pupils conducting anti-social behaviour or becoming victims or perpetrators of crime or abuse.
- Regular attendance encourages children to build friendships and develop social groups, working together as a whole team, sharing ideas and developing life skills.
- Children's social skills are similarly enhanced by regular attendance (linking into the personal development of pupils).
- Non-attenders will not only miss out on essential learning but also other social events taking place (linking into the personal development of pupils).
- Regular attenders make better progress, both socially and academically
- Regular attenders are more successful in transferring between primary school, secondary school, higher education, employment and training.

School Attendance Lead: Mrs Vicky Elliss
Named Safeguarding Governor: Mrs Anna Steed

Legal Framework

This policy has due regard to legislation, including, but not limited to, the following:

- Education Act 1996
- Children Act 1989
- Children (Performances and Activities) (England) Regulations 2014
- Keeping Children Safe in Education 2023
- Children Missing Education 2016

This policy also has regard to non-statutory DfE guidance, including, but not limited to, the following:

- DfE (2019, updated 2021) 'School Attendance'
- DfE (2022) 'Working together to improve school attendance'
- DfE (2015) 'Supporting Pupils with Medical Conditions'
- DfE (2022) 'Summary table of responsibilities for school attendance'
- DfE (2023) 'Providing Remote Education'

Roles and Responsibilities

The Local Governing Body (LGB)

The Local Governing Body (LGB) has overall responsibility for the implementation of the Attendance Policy and procedures of JMAT in its schools. They have the overall responsibility for ensuring that the attendance policy, as written, does not discriminate on any grounds, including, but not limited to, ethnicity/national origin, culture, religion and gender,

The Headteacher

The Headteacher is responsible for the day-to-day implementation and management of the Attendance (pupils) Policy and procedures of the school and only the Headteacher can authorise absence using a consistent approach. **The Headteacher is not obliged to accept a parent's explanation and a letter or telephone message from a parent does not in itself authorise an absence.**

Responsibilities of the School Attendance Lead

The attendance lead will oversee, direct and co-ordinate the school's work in promoting regular and improved attendance and will ensure the attendance policy is consistently applied throughout the school. The attendance team will also ensure that attendance is both recorded accurately and analysed. They will ensure that attendance issues are identified at an early stage and that support is put in place to deal with any difficulties. If a child is absent and no reason has been provided, parents should be contacted on the first day of absence by phone call. If a parent cannot be contacted, First Day Calling procedures are initiated and it is expected that school is aware of the reason for absence before start of the afternoon session. If absence is frequent or continuous, except where a child is clearly unwell, the attendance lead will make sure that contact is made with parent(s) to discuss reasons for their child's absence.

Responsibilities of Staff, including teachers, support staff and volunteers

All staff (teaching and support) in school have a key role to play in supporting and promoting excellent school attendance and will work to provide an environment in which all our pupils are eager to learn, feel valued members of the school community and look forward to coming to school every day. **Staff also have a responsibility to set a good example in matters relating to their own attendance and punctuality. This is part of the National Standards for Teachers.**

School staff will:

- Ensure all pupils are registered accurately.
- Promote and reward good attendance with pupils at all appropriate opportunities.
- Liaise with the attendance leader on matters of attendance and punctuality.
- Communicate any concerns or underlying problems that may account for a child's absence.
- Support pupils with absence to engage with their learning once they are back in school.

Parental Responsibility

Parents have a legal duty to ensure their children attend school regularly (Section 444 of the 1996 Education Act). Permitting absence from school that is not authorised by the school creates an offence of law. Parents who are concerned about sending their child to school during the coronavirus pandemic must discuss their concerns with the Headteacher, so their worries can be addressed and mitigated where possible, using the risk assessments in place.

Regular attendance is essential for the all-round development of the child and they should be allowed to take full advantage of educational opportunities available to them to make good progress in their learning. Poor attendance undermines their educational progress and can sometimes affect their emotional health, well-being and social development.

Section 444 of the Education Act 1996 states that parents are guilty of an offence of failing to secure regular attendance at school unless they can prove that the child was absent due to:

- Leave being granted by school (authorised holiday)
- Sickness or any other unavoidable cause (the sickness or unavoidable cause must relate to the child, not the parent).
- Religious observance (authorised by the school)
- Failure by the local authority to provide transport.

Parents are expected to:

- Ensure their child attends every day the school is open except when a statutory reason applies.
- Inform the school on the morning of the first day if their child is absent
- Provide accurate and up-to-date contact details and update the school if their details change
- Only request leave of absence in exceptional circumstances and do so in advance.
- Support school with their child in aiming for 100% attendance each year.
- Book any medical appointments around the school day where possible.
- Avoid taking holidays in school time
- Know routines of the school day to avoid issues, e.g. ensuring children have their P.E. kits on the right days.

Authorised and unauthorised absence

In line with the DfE, the Headteacher will not authorise holidays during term-time.

The Headteacher is only allowed to grant a leave of absence in exceptional circumstances. Applications will be made in advance and the Headteacher will be satisfied by the evidence which is presented, before authorising term-time leave.

The Headteacher will determine the amount of time a pupil can be away from school during term time. Any leave of absence is at the discretion of the Headteacher and will be considered on an individual basis with the pupil's previous attendance record taken into account.

Any pupil who has an attendance figure which falls below national average for the previous three terms will be referred to the LA for a Fixed Penalty Notice to be issued to their parent(s), should the parent(s) remove their child from school for a holiday that has not been authorised by the Headteacher.

Request for leave will not be granted in the following circumstances:

- Immediately before and during assessment periods
- When a pupil's attendance record shows any unauthorised absence
- Where a pupil's authorised absence record is already above 10 percent for any reason

If parents take their child out of school during term-time without authorisation from the Headteacher, they may be subject to sanctions such as a fixed penalty fine.

The following reasons are also examples of when absence will not be authorised:

- Persistent non-specific illness e.g. poorly/unwell
- Absence of siblings if one child is ill
- Oversleeping
- Inadequate clothing/uniform

- Confusion over school dates
- Child's/family birthday
- Shopping trip
- Family holidays

Persistent absence, including children absent from education for a prolonged period

Parents are expected to:

- Work with the school and local authority to help them understand their child's barriers to attendance.
- Proactively engage with the formal support offered – including any parenting contract or voluntary early help plan to prevent the need for legal intervention.

Lateness and Punctuality

Lateness is not acceptable as it disrupts lessons and may lead to more serious absence. Punctuality is a life skill which must be taught and encouraged.

Pupils arriving after the normal start of the school day must report to the main school office where their name and the reason for lateness will be recorded. The register will close 30 minutes after the register has been taken (DfE May 2022). Pupils arriving after the register has closed will be marked as late after registration (Code 'U') and this will count as an unauthorised absence.

Dealing with lateness

School staff will monitor a child's lateness and may use a range of actions as follows:

- Class staff to monitor lateness and minutes lost
- Minutes lost letter sent to parents
- Meeting with parents to discuss reasons for lateness and how school can support improved timekeeping

If a repeated pattern of lateness continues, and is part of other safeguarding concerns for a family, then a referral may be made for further support from Early Help or social care.

Medical Appointments

Schools should encourage parents to make appointments out of school hours. Where this is not possible, they should get the school's agreement in advance and the pupil should only be out of school for the minimum amount of time necessary for the appointment.

If a pupil is present at registration but has a medical appointment during the session in question, no absence needs be recorded for that session.

Pupils who have attended medical appointments and who arrive back in school during the morning or afternoon session will have their attendance code changed from Code M to Code U to ensure that the pupil is marked as present in school for the remainder of that session. This is to ensure the register is correct with the number of pupils who are present in school and to adhere to fire safety protocols.

JMAT suggests that a child who has time away from school for unavoidable medical appointments during school time (for example an ongoing medical need/condition) should still be appropriately rewarded for attendance in order to encourage and promote good attendance.

Scenarios where remote education should be provided

Circumstances where it might not be possible for pupils to receive in person education fit into two broad categories:

- **School closures or restrictions on attendance, where school access for pupils is restricted**
Providing remote education does not change the imperative to remain open or to reopen as soon as possible. Every effort should be made to ensure pupils can be taught in person by attending their school or if appropriate and possible, attending a safe alternative site.

- **Individual cases where a pupil is unable to attend school but is able to learn**

There should only be limited circumstances where a pupil is unable to attend school but is able and well enough to continue their education remotely. These circumstances should only involve a short-term absence and might include: pupils recovering from short-term infectious illnesses, pupils preparing for or recovering from some operations, or pupils recovering from injuries where attendance might inhibit recovery.

In some exceptional cases, these circumstances might also include pupils whose attendance has been affected by a special educational need or disability (SEND) or a mental health issue. In these circumstances, and after the pupil's absence from school has been established, schools should consider providing pupils with remote education on a case-by-case basis. This should be part of a plan to reintegrate back to school, and only when it is judged that providing remote education would not adversely affect the pupil's return to school. Further support on dealing with mental health and attendance challenges can be found in the Mental health issues affecting a pupil's attendance: guidance for schools.

Provision of remote education should be made as a short-term solution allowing absent pupils to keep on track with their education and stay connected to their teachers and peers. Pupils with long-term medical conditions or any other physical or mental health needs affecting attendance may require additional support to continue their education.

Further information can be found on the DfE's guidance 'Providing remote education' January 2023.

Children who are absent from school/first day calling procedures

We monitor attendance carefully and address poor or irregular attendance without delay. We will always follow up with parents/carers when pupils are not at school. If a child does not present at school by the close of the morning register, staff will initiate first day calling procedures and make every effort to contact parents/carers on the contact list. If they have not ascertained a reason for the child's absence by the start of the afternoon session, then a home visit will be carried out by two members of school staff. If this visit proves to be unsuccessful and the child still hasn't been seen by school staff, the DSL will contact police to request a safe and well check.

Children Missing Education

Knowing where children are during school hours is an extremely important aspect of safeguarding. Missing school can be an indicator of abuse and neglect and may also raise concerns about others safeguarding issues, including the criminal exploitation of children.

Children Missing Education (CME) are defined as children of compulsory school age who are not on a school roll and who are not receiving a suitable education elsewhere: for example, at home, privately, or in alternative provision. (Education and Inspections Act 2006). Children referred as Missing from Education should only be removed from the school roll on the advice of and following consultation with the Children Missing Education Officer and authorisation from the service.

Where a child is missing from education, Local Authority guidance will be followed, by completing a Child Missing Education referral form for the following circumstances:-

- The child fails to attend without explanation
- The child is expected to start at school but does not arrive
- The child does not return from a planned holiday (authorised or unauthorised)
- The child leaves the authority without a destination.
-

Young Carers

JMAT understands the difficulties that face young carers. The school will endeavour to identify young carers at the earliest opportunity from enrolment at the school and throughout their time at the school. The schools takes a caring and flexible approach to the needs of young carers and each pupil will be examined on a case-by-case basis, involving other agencies if appropriate.

Children with Special Education Needs and Disabilities

Pupils should not be penalised if their absence from school is related to their medical condition, such as attending hospital appointments. In order to avoid being fined for non-attendance, parents must obtain permission from the school in advance of the appointment, so that the absence can be treated as authorised. An absence can also be authorised if the child is too ill to attend school and the school is notified of that as soon as possible.

JMAT suggests that a child with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities who has time away from school for unavoidable medical appointments during school time (for example child development assessments) should still be appropriately rewarded for attendance in order to encourage and promote good attendance.

Attendance Monitoring Procedures

JMAT has adopted the following attendance monitoring procedures, to ensure that pupils' attendance meets the expected standard, and effective intervention is provided where pupils' attendance falls below the standard:

- Attendance is discussed by classroom staff and pupils on a regular basis. Any attendance/punctuality trends noticed by classroom teachers are passed on immediately to SLT.
- Contact is made with parents on the first day of absence for any pupil absence not reported. (School should ensure that they have at least 2 contact numbers for pupils).
- If contact cannot be made to ascertain why the pupil is not in school then a Safe and Well home visit should be considered especially if there are already safeguarding concerns.
- School should monitor attendance and where necessary refer to and work with parents/carers to tackle persistent absence.
- School will send out letters* to parents raising concerns if a pupil's attendance falls below the percentage agreed by school.

*Letters may vary from school to school, but must be used consistently for every attendance review in that school. Meetings with parents should take place when attendance falls below the attendance figure agreed within the JMAT attendance pod.

Attendance reviews will take place every half term and actions taken recorded on the child's chronology. It is recommended that school use a standard attendance review format and retain records and analysis in a central attendance file.

Intervening with attendance concerns:

Where there are concerns around a pupil's attendance school may intervene in one or more of the following ways:

- Attendance will be reviewed at the end of every half term by the attendance team, any pupils identified as a cause for concern or less than 90% attendance may be reviewed on a more frequent basis.
- An attendance letter (colour coded depending on % attendance) will be sent to the parents of any pupil identified as having attendance problems, informing them of the school's concerns and offering support to resolve any problems that may be impeding a child from attending.
- Where patterns are identified a phone call or meeting between the parent and the attendance team may take place to discuss the pattern and resolve any issues preventing attendance.
- An attendance meeting will be arranged with parents to discuss the concerns and issues around their child's poor attendance. This may involve the use of a Parenting Contract/Agreement to support parents to work with school to improve their child's attendance.

Doncaster Attendance & Pupil Welfare Service - 'Attendance Intervention Procedure'

In cases where school wish to follow a FPN referral for poor attendance (not holiday-related) they should consider using the Doncaster Intervention Procedure Schools ([See Appendix 1](#)). Schools should use the letters provided by the local authority when using the Doncaster Intervention Procedure ([See Appendices 2 and 3](#))

Celebrating Good and Improving Attendance

The half-termly attendance review will also identify children who:

- Have achieved 96% and above attendance
- Have an improving picture of attendance since the last review

These achievements will also be celebrated by school and could be in the form of a letter or phone call home, Dojo reward, class postcard home, etc.

Religious Observances

The school will take advice from local religious leaders of all faiths to establish the appropriate number of days of absence required for religious festivals. Parents are required to inform the school in advance if absences are required for days of religious observance.

Modelling, sport and acting performances/activities

Under Section 37 of the Children and Young Persons Act 1963, all pupils engaging in performances/activities (whether they, or another person, receives payment or not), which require them to be absent from school, are required to obtain a license from the LA which authorises their absence(s).

Where a pupil requests to be absent for a performance or activity, the individual or organisation responsible for organising, producing or running the activity/performance is required to request a license from the pupil's home LA.

Monitoring and review

This policy is reviewed annually by the **Trust Strategic Safeguarding and Attendance Lead**

Any changes made to this policy by the above will be communicated to all members of staff. The policy is available for public view on the JMAT website.

All members of staff are required to familiarise themselves with all processes and procedures outlined in this policy as part of their induction programme.

The next scheduled review date for this policy is **September 2023**.

Appendix 1- Attendance & Pupil Welfare Service

'Attendance Intervention Procedure'

Stage 1

School Intervention

- 97-95% Letter ([AL 1.1.0](#)) making parents aware with suggested improvements
- 95-90% Letter ([AL 1.2.0](#)) invitation to meeting in school.

At meeting:

- [Early Help Assessment](#) undertaken
- Inclusion Support Plan (ISP 1.1) agreed (4 weeks approximately)

Interim review after 2 weeks:

- Improvements made – praise and recognition given
- **No improvement – progress to Stage 2 ([APWS 1.1.0](#))**

Review after 4 weeks:

- **Improvements** made – praise and recognition given
- No improvement – progress to Stage 2 with referral to APWS ([APWS 1.1.0](#))

Pupil monitored until regular school attendance is achieved and outcomes are clearly evidenced.

Stage 2

Attendance & Pupil Welfare Service Interventions – 'Fast Track' Initiated

Referral received from School (APWS 1.1.0):

Criteria for involvement checked

- Evidence of school action – Acceptance letter sent ([APWS 2.1.0](#))
- No evidence of school action – Returned to school with advice and guidance ([APWS 2.1.1\(2\)](#))

Allocation to an Education Welfare Officer and 30 day warning issued ([APWS 2.2.0](#))
Initial meeting between EWO, pupil and parents

- Early Help Assessment considered (or reviewed)
- Inclusion Support Plan ([ISP 2.3.0](#)) or Early Help Plan agreed (for 30 day period) and signed

Mid point review between EWO, pupil and parents

- Inclusion Support Plan ([ISP 2.3.1](#)) or Early Help Plan reviewed if necessary

Final Review between EWO, School, Pupil and parent

- Attendance not improved – Progress to Stage 3
- Attendance improved – Further 30 days Inclusion Support Plan ([ISP 2.3.0](#)) or Early Help Plan – Fast Track suspended.

Pupil monitored until regular school attendance is achieved and outcomes are clearly evidenced. A penalty notice may be issued at any point during this stage.

Stage 3

Invite to local authority attendance panel issued by APWS ([APWS 3.1.0](#))

Attendance Panel:

- Chaired by Senior Officer, SLT member and other Agency on panel
- EWO presents case
- Response from parents

Open discussion

- Questions can be asked to case worker, parents, pupil and panel
- Inclusion Support Plan (ISP 3.1) agreed and signed by all parties
- Consequences of poor outcomes made clear by chair and panel
- Review meeting agreed ([APWS 3.2.0](#))

Final Review between EWO and Parent

- Attendance improved – Further 30 days Inclusion Support Plan (ISP 3.2) – Fast Track suspended.
- Interview conducted under P.A.C.E.
- Attendance not improved – Progress to Stage 4

Pupil monitored until regular school attendance is achieved and outcomes are clearly evidenced.

Stage 4

Invite parents to caution/legal meeting by the APWS (APWS 4.1.)

Caution or legal meeting:

- Reason for meeting explained to parents
- Evidence gathered from start of Stage 1
- Rights discussed with parents

Prosecution prepared:

- EWO produces witness statement and collates evidence
- APWS Service Manager approves case for prosecution
- Submitted to legal Services

Legal Services:

- Review case and ask for further evidence if required
- Court date set
- Summons issued to parents

Magistrates' Court:

- Case heard
- Outcome issued
 - Not Guilty
 - Guilty – progress to Stage 5

Appendix 2

Our Ref: APWS/ /AL 1.1.0

Your Ref:

Name:

Email:

Direct

Dial:

Date:

Dear

DOB:

At we are committed to providing high quality education and improving outcomes for all our pupils'. In order for a child to reach their full potential, we expect a high level of school attendance, so they are able to maximise their learning and achievement.

I enclose a copy of attendance record which shows an attendance of %.

As has fallen below the school target of %, we are expressing our initial concerns. It is appreciated young people sometimes become unwell, but as parents it is important to be aware of the level of your child's school attendance, as it may have a detrimental effect on their educational attainment.

I will continue to monitor attendance and, with your co-operation, I would anticipate an improvement. I may take the opportunity to speak with your child in school should I feel this is an appropriate action in raising attendance.

If you wish to discuss this matter further, or are experiencing any difficulties, please do not hesitate to contact me.

I look forward to your support in this matter.

Yours sincerely

Position in School

Enc.

C.C.

Appendix 3

Your Ref: / /
Our Ref: APWS/ /AL 1.2.0
Enquiries
To:
Tel Direct:
Email:
Date:

Dear ,

DOB

You may recall my letter dated expressing concern with current level of attendance. Since that letter there has not been the anticipated improvement and I would therefore like to invite you to a meeting in school on at . This will give us the opportunity to look at the issues causing irregular school attendance and if appropriate, put in a suitable support plan to help you with this.

I enclose a copy of the registration certificate for your information, which will form part of our discussion during the meeting.

I must also advise you that it is the decision of the Headteacher as to whether an absence is authorised or not, taking into account the reason provided. Due to continued irregular school attendance, we now require medical confirmation to support any future absences, which will enable us to make an informed decision whether to authorise the absence.

I look forward to meeting with you to discuss how we can work together to improve attendance.

If you are unable to attend the above appointment, please contact me as soon as possible so that an alternative date can be arranged.

Yours sincerely

Position in School