



ATTENDANCE POLICY

Date written: August 2023

Updated: January 2024

Date of next review: August 2024

Introduction

For pupils to gain the greatest benefit from their education it is vital that they attend regularly. All pupils should be at school, on time, every day the school is open unless the reason for the absence is unavoidable.

We recognise that the foundation of securing good attendance is that school is a calm, orderly, safe, and supportive environment where all pupils want to be and are keen and ready to learn.

The law entitles every child of compulsory school age to an efficient, full-time education suitable to their age, aptitude, and any special educational need they may have. It is the legal responsibility of every parent to make sure their child receives that education either by attendance at a school or by education otherwise than at a school.

Where parents decide to have their child registered at our school, they have a legal duty to ensure their child attends school regularly. This means their child must attend every day that the school is open, except in a small number of allowable circumstances such as being too ill to attend or being given permission for an absence in advance from the school.

The senior leader responsible for the strategic approach to attendance in school is the Deputy Principal.

School attendance:

Pupils must arrive in school by 8.25am and will be considered late if they arrive after 8.30am. Registers close at 9am. The school day ends at 3.10pm.

Parents should report their child's absence each day by either email to absence@sjwms.org.uk or via the My Child at School app.

If no contact is received to explain an absence, the school's Attendance Officer will follow up the absence and make contact with parents.

Parents who want attendance support should contact the relevant pastoral office (lowerschool@sjwms.org.uk; middleschool@sjwms.org.uk; sixthform@sjwms.org.uk) or the school office (office@sjwms.org.uk).

Unauthorised Absence

Absence from school can only be authorised by the School; any absences **not** authorised by the School will, therefore, be deemed **unauthorised**.

Authorised Absence

If a pupil is absent through illness, authorisation can be given following the pupil's return to school. Authorisation for all other absences will only be given if the application for Leave of Absence is made two weeks in advance of the proposed date of absence.

Leave of Absence (other than for annual holiday)

Leave of Absence for medical, dental appointments, etc. will normally be authorised, providing the parent/carer with whom the child normally resides makes a request in writing prior to the appointment.

Leave of Absence for other reasons will be granted only in exceptional circumstances (as determined by the Principal).

All applications will need to be made in writing and, if authorised, the pupil will be issued with a "pupil pass".

Leave of Absence (for annual holiday)

Only exceptional circumstances warrant a leave of absence. We will consider each application individually taking into account the specific facts and circumstances and relevant background context behind the request.

If a leave of absence is granted, it is for the Principal (delegated to senior pastoral staff) to determine the length of the time the pupil can be away from school.

As the Principal (delegated to senior pastoral staff) will only grant leaves of absence in exceptional circumstances it is unlikely a leave of absence will be granted for the purposes of a family holiday.

All applications need to be made on the appropriate form available from the School Reception.

The decision of the Principal will be conveyed in writing to the parents concerned via the detachable reply slip at the bottom of the request form.

Promoting and incentivising school attendance

Individual pupil attendance rates are included on termly school reports. Students with 100% attendance are recognised with a certificate after each report. The lower school form group with the highest attendance rate each week is publicised. The importance of regular school attendance is highlighted in assemblies and tutorials. Our approach to developing pupils' character prioritises ambitiousness & excellence, which is underpinned by excellent attendance at school.

Children with low rates of attendance/ those who are persistently absent (more than 10% of school sessions).

We will look at attendance data each week and use this information to determine where we will target our attendance improvement efforts. Cause for concern letters, meetings with pastoral staff, requiring medical evidence for absences, meetings with the Attendance Office, attendance clinics and penalty notice will all be used.

Children Missing Education and Children Absent from Education

SJWMS recognises that all children, regardless of their circumstances, are entitled to a full time education that is suitable to their age, ability, aptitude and any special educational needs they may have. SJWMS is aware that a child absent from, or going missing from education is a potential indicator of abuse or neglect.

SJWMS has procedures in place for responding to unauthorised absence (see below) and for dealing with children that are absent from or go missing from education, particularly on repeat occasions, to help identify the risk of abuse and neglect, including sexual exploitation and criminal exploitation (particularly county lines), and to help prevent the risks of further absence or their going missing in future.

Communicating Attendance Data

Notice of term dates will be published at least a year in advance and will be posted on the school website.

Individual attendance rates, and the number of authorised/unauthorised absences, will be reported to parents/carers on an annual basis. This information may be recorded on any future reference.

Attendance Officer

The School is committed to reducing pupil absence to a minimum. In order to achieve this aim an Attendance Officer is employed who will be the first point of contact with the School for a parent/carer wishing to report an absence.

Unauthorised absence will be followed up by the Attendance Officer, who will work closely with pastoral staff to ensure that appropriate strategies/actions are initiated at the earliest opportunity. This may take the form of telephone calls home, invitations to attend meetings and attendance clinics, the necessity to provide medical evidence for any absence, and home visits.

Attendance Advisory Service

The school liaises regularly with Medway Council's Attendance Advisory Service and we will involve this service in cases where students' attendance falls below 96%.

Removing a Student from Roll

As per The Education Regulations Act 2006 Section 8, when all possible actions have been taken we will remove the student from school roll due to continued serious absence.

Where a pupil has failed to attend the school within 10 school days, immediately following an authorised leave of absence, and there are no reasonable grounds for the pupil not to attend, the school and Local Authority will make reasonable enquiries to ascertain where the pupil is, and if unable to establish the pupil's whereabouts we will remove from roll. ([Education \(Pupil Registration\) \(England\) Regulations 2006](#))

Where a pupil has failed to attend the school for 20 school days or more and absence is unauthorised, and there are no reasonable grounds for the pupil not to attend, the school and Local Authority will make reasonable enquiries to ascertain where the pupil is, and if unable to establish the pupil's whereabouts we will remove from roll. ([Education \(Pupil Registration\) \(England\) Regulations 2006](#))

Penalty Notices

The School is a strong supporter of the fixed penalty initiative and will provide whatever data/documentation is necessary to enable the Attendance Advisory Service to issue Fixed Penalty Notices whenever appropriate.

Regular and punctual attendance of pupils/academies is both a legal requirement and essential in order for students to maximise the opportunities available to them. The Attendance Advisory Service to Schools and Academies will continue to investigate cases of regular non-attendance from school and following appropriate casework, instigate action if applicable.

These penalty notices will require the recipient to pay a fine, currently £60 if paid within 21 days, or £120 if paid with 28 days

The issuing of penalty notices is considered appropriate:

1. In cases of absence from school/academies when the pupil has been taken on a holiday that has not been approved by the school /academy and recorded as unauthorised absence and contributes to a total of at least 10 unauthorised absence sessions (5 days) during any given six week period. In such a case, each parent /carer with day to day care and responsibility may receive a separate Penalty Notice for each child taken out of school/academy.
2. Following a School Attendance Sweep (formerly known as Truancy Patrol), enquiries will be undertaken with the school/academy of all pupils stopped. In cases where the school/academy have recorded the absence of the pupil as unauthorised and when added to other unauthorised absences already recorded in the register, the total attendance amounts to 10 unauthorised sessions (5 days) then a Penalty Notice may be served on the parent

In the early stages of casework an Attendance Advisory Practitioner might form the opinion that the serving of a Penalty Notice is appropriate e.g. in cases where a parent continually fails to provide an explanation for their child's absence in accordance with the school procedures and absence is recorded as unauthorised in the register of at least 10 sessions in any previous six week period.'