

James Dixon Primary School

James Dixon
Primary



Attendance and Punctuality

September 2023

Attendance & Punctuality Policy

Introduction

James Dixon Primary School is committed to the continuous raising of achievement of all our pupils. Regular attendance is critical if our pupils are to be successful and benefit from the opportunities presented to them.

One of our basic principles is to celebrate success. Good attendance is fundamental to a successful and fulfilling school experience. We actively promote 100% attendance for all our pupils and we use a variety of weekly, termly and annual awards to promote good attendance and punctuality.

The Governors, Head of School and Staff in partnership with parents have a duty to promote full attendance at James Dixon Primary School.

Aims

Improve and maintain the attendance of pupils and ensure attendance and punctuality is a high priority for all staff, parents, pupils and governors.

Target

Achieve 97% overall school attendance at the end of the year.

Parental Responsibility

Parents have a legal duty to ensure that their children attend school regularly and arrive on time. Regular attendance is essential to the all-round development of the child and they should be allowed to take full advantage of educational opportunities available to them in order to make good progress in their learning. Poor attendance undermines their educational attainment and progress and, sometimes, puts pupils at risk by encouraging anti-social behaviour.

It is the parents/carers' responsibility to contact the school on the first day their child is absent. This is a safeguarding issue requirement so that all parties know that your child is safe and their whereabouts is known. Parents/carers should regularly update the school and inform the school when their child is returning.

Pupils are expected to arrive by 8.45am. All pupils that arrive late must report to the late door where the reason for lateness is recorded.

The Role of the School Staff

At James Dixon there is a whole school responsibility and approach for improving school attendance, with specific staff taking individual responsibility.

The Head of School has overall responsibility for monitoring attendance issues.

Class teachers or Teaching Assistants complete a register at the beginning of each morning and once during the afternoon session. Marking the attendance registers twice daily is a legal requirement. (The Education (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2006). Teachers mark pupils present, absent or late. The class teacher or teaching assistant notifies the school office of children whose attendance is causing concern.

It is the responsibility of Ms Toni Oakham (Attendance Manager) to ensure:

- Attendance and lateness records are up to date
- If no reason for absence has been provided, parents are contacted on the first day of absence by phone call.
- Where there has been no communication, a text message with a link to the google pupil absence form is sent to parents requesting reasons for absence.
- The appropriate attendance code is entered into the register (see National Attendance Codes)
- Parents are informed termly of the child's attendance figure

Timeline of the Staged Approach for Managing Poor Attendance

- 95 - 100% attendance – the class teacher notifies the office staff of concerns. Ms Toni Oakham to contact parent/carer if appropriate.
- 90 - 95% attendance - school intervention email/meeting with parents
- Where the level of absence has not improved and there are unauthorised absences, the school will make a referral to the EWS (Educational Welfare Service). If it is not clear a referral to the Service is appropriate, the school will consult with the Local Authority School Liaison Officer for advice.
- For the cases that require intensive family support, the school may make an Early Help Notification.

Children Missing Education

No child should be removed from the school roll without consultation between the Executive Headteacher/Head of School and the EWS (Educational Welfare Service) when appropriate. Please see the circumstances below:-

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

- If the whereabouts of the child is unknown and the school has failed to locate him/her.
- The family has notified the school that they are leaving the area but no Common Transfer Form (pupil file) has been requested by another school.

Lateness

At James Dixon the bell is rung at 8:30am. Registers will remain open until 8:45am. Pupils arriving after this time must enter school by the main entrance and report to the late door where their name and the reason for lateness will be recorded.

The register will close at 8:45am and 1:10pm. Pupils arriving after the register has closed will be marked as late after registration, with an unauthorised absence code U. Frequent lateness after the register has closed (U) will be discussed with parents/carers and could provide grounds for prosecution or a Penalty Notice.

Penalty Notice Proceedings for Lateness

- 10 incidents of late arrival (U) after the registers have closed during any possible 100 school sessions leads to a Penalty Notice Warning Letter.
- The Penalty Notice Warning Letter sets out 15 school days during which no unauthorised absence is to be recorded
- If unauthorised absence is recorded during the 15-day period, a Penalty Notice(s) will be issued (one per parent per child)
- Where a Penalty Notice is not paid within 28 days of issue the Local Authority will instigate court proceedings

Authorising Absence

Only the Head of School can authorise absence using a consistent approach. The Head of School is not obliged to accept a parent/carer's explanation. A letter or telephone message from a parent/carer does not in itself authorise an absence. If absences are not authorised, parents will be notified.

If no explanation is received, absences will not be authorised.

Absence (for example leave for holidays) during term time can only be approved in "exceptional circumstances". The following reasons are examples of absence that will not be authorised:

- Persistent nonspecific illness e.g. poorly/unwell
- Absence of siblings if one child is ill
- Oversleeping
- Inadequate clothing/uniform
- Confusion over school dates
- Medical/dental appointments of more than half a day without very good reasons
- Child's/family birthday
- Shopping trip
- Family Holidays (with some rare exceptions)

Persistent unauthorised absence (10% or more of the school year) may result in a referral to the EWS (Educational Welfare Service) for consideration of prosecution. The school will follow procedures prior to referral and parents will be notified in writing.

When a referral is made, the child's Registration Certificate, copies of all letters sent to parents and minutes of any meetings need to be attached to the completed AS1 referral form with any other relevant information.

Local Authority Action may include:-

- Attendance Improvement Meeting
- Home visits
- Liaison with other agencies
- Fast Track to Prosecution

Penalty Notices Proceedings for Poor Attendance

Penalty Notices are issued in accordance with Bromley Local Authority Penalty Notices Code of Conduct effective from September 2016.

- A Penalty Notice can only be issued in cases of absence for 10 or more half day sessions (5 school days) without authorisation during any 100 possible school sessions or period of 50 days of schooling – these do not need to be consecutive.
- A Penalty Notice can also be issued where an excluded child is found in a public place during school hours.
- After the appropriate request for a Penalty Notice is received, the London Borough of Bromley Inclusion and Attendance Service will issue a warning letter setting out 15 school days during which no unauthorised absence is to be recorded
- If unauthorised absence is recorded during the 15-day period a Penalty Notice will be issued (one per parent per child)

Exceptional circumstances could include:

- Service personnel returning from a tour of duty abroad where it is evidenced the parent 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/carer's or child's rehabilitation from a medical or emotional issue.
- The death or terminal illness of a person close to the family.
- To attend a wedding or funeral of a person close to the family.
- Any strong personal reasons why a family might need to take a child away from school for a short break.

Any examples provided are illustrative rather than exhaustive. It is acceptable to take a pupil's previous record of attendance into account when the school is making decisions. The fundamental principles for defining 'exceptional' are rare, significant, unavoidable and short. And by 'unavoidable' it implies that an event could not reasonably be scheduled at another time. It is important to note that Headteachers/Heads of Schools can agree the absence of a child in exceptional circumstances and this discretion can be used also to determine the length of the authorised absence.

Where Penalty Notices are imposed, the regulations state that the penalty will be £120 to be paid within 28 days, reduced to £60 if paid within 21 days. Penalty Notices are issued to each parent of each child. Failure to pay the penalty in full by the end of the 28-day period will result in prosecution by the Local Authority.

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

- with leave (the school has given permission)
- due to sickness or any unavoidable cause (the sickness or unavoidable cause must relate to the child, not the parent)
- religious observance
- failure by the Local Authority to provide transport

In law, these are the only acceptable reasons for a child being absent from school.

The Head of School may authorise absence in “exceptional circumstances” but this must be requested in advance and agreement to each request is at the discretion of the Head of School, acting on behalf of the Governing Body (Education (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2006). Each case will be judged on its merits and the Head of School’s decision is final. Once the decision not to authorise leave is taken, it cannot be authorised retrospectively.

If the absence is not authorised and the holiday is taken anyway, the case may be referred to the Educational Welfare Office (EWO) who may issue a Penalty Notice to each parent for each child taken out of school.

Failure to pay the penalty in full by the end of the 28-day period will result in prosecution by the Local Authority.

Attendance & Punctuality Meetings

At the first meeting the attendance officer will discuss the following:

- ✓ Enquire the reasons for absence or persistent lateness
- ✓ Identify areas of need and offer support
- ✓ Remind parent of the school policy and expectations
- ✓ Set achievable targets
- ✓ Use incentives and rewards

At the second meeting the attendance panel will meet which includes the attendance officer, a governor and the Headteacher who will discuss the following:

- ✓ Enquire why the previously set targets have not been met
- ✓ Discuss attainment and progress of the pupil
- ✓ The link between good progress and good attendance to be made clear
- ✓ Identify any areas of need and offer support

The attendance policy will be referred to, to remind parents/carers of the school's and Ofsted expectations. Failure to meet targets will result in parent penalty notices or parent prosecution proceedings being initiated.

Resources

In order to achieve and maintain good levels of attendance and punctuality the school will utilise the following:

- ✓ Registers
- ✓ Assemblies
- ✓ Late book
- ✓ First Day calling – the attendance officer will call the parent/carer of pupil not on school after 9:15am and information and reasons will be recorded
- ✓ Attendance letters/phone calls
- ✓ will be sent to address attendance issues
- ✓ Attendance meetings
- ✓ School attendance panel
- ✓ Incentives and rewards
- ✓ 100% Attendance Trophy
- ✓ 100% Termly badges
- ✓ Bouncy Castle for best attendance

Monitoring and Evaluation

The school's attendance policy will be reviewed every year.

Links to the other policy include:

Child Protection & Safeguarding Policy

Special Educational Needs Policy