



# Sir James Smith's Community School

*Aspiration • Ambition • Achievement*

## Attendance and Punctuality Policy\*

*MARCH 2018*

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*Aspirational target: to achieve 96% attendance by 2018*

## Attendance Policy – March 2018

**Purpose:** Improving school attendance and reducing absence are key elements in our drive to secure high achievement for all.

### 1.0 Background

1.1 By law, all children of compulsory school age (between 5 and 16) must get a proper full-time education and it is the parents/carers' responsibility to make sure their child(ren) attend school regularly. It is the responsibility of the Local Authority to ensure that parents/carers meet these responsibilities.

1.2 The school is responsible for monitoring and controlling school attendance through the maintenance of two registers:

1. An admission register (known as the school roll) this ensures a child is registered at an educational establishment;
2. An attendance register which should be taken at least twice a day, once at the start of the morning session and once during the afternoon session. This register is to record that a child actually attends the educational establishment where they are registered.

1.3 Registers matter because amongst other things they are legal documents which may be required in a court of law. Additionally, the admission register and the attendance register of every school must be available for inspection during school hours by:

- Her Majesty's Inspectors of Schools
- Local Authority officers including Education Welfare Officers.

1.4 Each term every school is required to submit to the DfE details of the level of absence within their school. Schools are required to inform how many half days were missed due to authorised and unauthorised absence. This data contributes to local and national absence tables and is an indicator of performance used by Ofsted to compare schools. Very poor whole school attendance may initiate an Ofsted Inspection.

1.5 To ensure schools fulfil their legal obligation, it is expected that each school has a clear policy on attendance, which is known to staff and parents/carers. This policy should be reviewed annually and staff, students and parents/carers reminded of its contents.

1.6 The legal position of children in care is that the LA is the corporate parent with full responsibility for all aspects of the child's development and welfare, including attendance. In the event of an attendance issue the school will inform the carer first, followed by the EWO and will ensure that the LA and relevant social services personal are kept fully informed.

### 2.0 Statement of intent

- The school will strive to provide a welcoming, caring environment, whereby each member of the school community feels valued, safe and secure.
- We are working towards:
- All school staff working in partnership with students and their families/carers to ensure each child attends school regularly and punctually.
- The school establishing an effective system of incentives and rewards which acknowledges the efforts of students to **maintain** high levels of attendance and punctuality and the efforts of students to **improve** their attendance and punctuality.
- Challenging and holding accountable students and parents/carers who give a low priority to attendance and punctuality.

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- The staff at Sir James Smith’s Community School establishing an effective and efficient system of communication with students, parents/carers and appropriate agencies to provide mutual information, advice and support
- The link between attendance, motivation in the classroom and achievement demanding a curriculum which is relevant, differentiated to the needs of the students and motivating

### 3.0 Key objectives

- To improve the overall percentage attendance of students at school
- To make attendance and punctuality a priority for all those associated with the school including: students, parents/carers, staff and governors.
- To develop a management framework which defines agreed roles and responsibilities and promotes consistency in carrying out designated tasks.
- To provide support, advice and guidance to parents/carers and students
- To develop a systematic approach to gathering and analysing attendance related data
- To further develop positive and consistent communication between home and school
- To implement and carry out a system of rewards and sanctions
- To promote effective partnerships with the Education Welfare Service and with other services and agencies
- To work closely with partner primary schools and the EWO to facilitate early intervention on transition.
- To recognise the needs of individual students when planning reintegration following significant periods of illness.

### 4.0 The importance of regular attendance

Regular attendance at school is a prerequisite for student achievement. Absence, whether it be long term, frequent or occasional leads to missed experiences, incomplete coverage of the taught curriculum and may cause fractured social relationships which encourage an increased pattern of non-attendance. Research provides irrefutable evidence of the link between low attendance and low attainment and increasingly involvement in crime.

### 5.0 A statistical definition of good attendance

5.1 Good attendance means that a student is at school for the majority of the 190 days available. Assuming that few children achieve 100% attendance for a variety of reasons – illness, special events – good attendance is set at 96% or above equating to less than 8 days absence throughout the year. The critical threshold recognised by many is 90% or 19 days absence; attendance below this figure is deemed to impact on learning and requires EWO attention/action.

5.2 Where the attendance level falls to below 85% it is assumed that individual student is unlikely to achieve 2 levels of progress across the relevant key stage. This is important for whole school statutory target setting.

5.3 When considering the significance of percentage attendance rates it is important to place the data into its chronological context, see Table 1.

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Table 1		Number of days absence from school				
Term	Days	10	15	20	25	30
AUTUMN	65	84.60%	77%	69.29%	61.54%	53.85%
SPRING	130	92.30%	88.46%	84.64%	80.77%	76.93%
SUMMER	190	94.74%	92.11%	89.48	86.85%	84.22%
% figures represent absence relative to position at the end of each term.						

Table 1 shows that a student taking 10 days family holiday in the autumn term has a attendance rate of just 85% at the end of the first term which seems to place them below the critical threshold requiring referral to the EWO. Over the course of the year, with no other absences, this student manages to achieve 95% just short of the 96% target.

5.4 Other useful ways to illustrate percentage attendance include:

- 90% is the same as missing 1 day every fortnight (10 days)
- 80% is the same as missing 1/5 of schooling; over 5 years this equates to ONE school year.

### 6.0 Family Holidays.

In line with government expectations, the Headteacher will not give permission for a family holiday during term time, except in exceptional circumstances.

### 7.0 Travelling Families

Where the absence of a child from a Traveller family is causing concern the Attendance Officer with liaison with the Traveller Education Service through the Assistant Headteacher Pastoral.

### 8.0 Leaving school 'unofficially'

Where a child has not attended for 20 days and it is suspected the family has left the area the EWS will be informed. The child will then be removed from the school roll.

### 9.0 Collection of data

#### Registration

An accurate and consistent registration system to both school and lessons is essential. The following practice should be adopted.

#### Start of Sessions

AM registration is from 8.25 am – 8.40 am and is taken by tutors.

PM registration is at the start of period 5 – 1.30 pm and is taken by subject teachers.

A student is late when they arrive after the tutor has started calling the register. Students arriving after 8.25am must sign in at Reception. If a student is not in the form room at the time the register is taken they must be regarded as absent.

The DCSF recommends that the morning register is closed 30 minutes after the start of school; any student turning up after this time – 9.00 am - should be regarded as absent.

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Absences are to be indicated using the appropriate symbol (N).

### **During Lessons**

For each lesson the class teacher is required to keep a record of attendance/lateness.

### **10.0 Use of Data**

The efficient and speedy collection of the data is essential to the development of effective strategies for action. Data is required to monitor individual absence and lateness to both school and lessons. Data will also be interrogated to highlight patterns of lateness and absence and the identification of trends by: group and year as well as seasonal patterns and patterns and nature of unauthorised absence

### **11.0 Authorised and Unauthorised Absence (truancy)**

11.1 Authorised absence is where the school accepts there is good reason for absence. An authorised absence requires a written communication or telephone call from the parent/carer on the morning of the absence.

11.2 Unauthorised absence, or truancy, is defined as 'absence from school for any period as a result of premeditated or spontaneous act by the pupil or parent or both. This includes parentally condoned absence.' Unauthorised absence is any absence which does not fall into the following categories:

1. Absence due to illness or other unavoidable cause
2. An absence for religious observance sanctioned by the religious body to which the parents/carers belong
3. There is no acceptable LA transport and the school is not within walking distance
4. A holiday may only be agreed by the Headteacher, in exceptional circumstances. On completion of the relevant permission forms, the Headteacher will then decide whether to make the absence authorised or unauthorised.

### **12.0 Follow Up**

12.1 There is a range of situations where the school needs to respond to individuals or groups:

- Unauthorised or unexplained absence
- Unexplained absence of three days or more, when a pupil has not returned to school
- A pattern of absence, with parental notes, over a period of weeks
- Persistent lateness

12.2 It is important that parents/carers are aware of absences and lateness and of their responsibility to account for all such events, and that all action taken is documented by the member of staff concerned.

Action to be taken in the first instance is to contact the parent/carer by either:

- A letter requiring a response
- A telephone call

Action will be taken by:

- On the first occasion: School Attendance Officer – by parental contact
- Persistent infringement
  - Parent interview with Year Director, EWO and Attendance Officer
  - Referral to EWO

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- Agreed improvement plan

12.3 The key managers in this strategy are the Year Directors who have responsibility to coordinate the year attendance and punctuality programme.

This should include:

- Monitoring/interrogating data
- Follow up to internal assessment reporting points – letters of praise/concern
- Drafting attendance action plans
- Promoting consistency among tutor team
- Liaising with the Attendance Officer

12.4 On a regular basis the Year Directors should discuss, with tutors:

- Monthly attendance statistics for each Tutor Group to highlight trends
- Details of students undergoing attendance-related casework
- Details of EWO liaison, indicating
  - All referrals and reasons
  - Outcomes

### 13.0 Lateness

13.1 Persistent lateness is often a significant indicator of underachievement. Lateness to school or lateness to lessons must be acted upon and parents/carers made fully aware of the school's expectations concerning punctuality.

- Dealing with lateness to school is a Year Director responsibility
- Dealing with lateness to particular lessons is a curriculum area's responsibility
- Persistent lateness to a range of lessons should be identified by the Year Director through their regular monitoring and acted upon by them

13.2 The appropriateness of sanctions including detentions to encourage prompt attendance needs to be agreed, clear and consistent across teams. The triggers for particular forms of action also need to be agreed by the Year Director.

If a student does arrive late then they will need to sign the late book, which is held in the main reception. A student is expected to have a signed letter from a parent/carer explaining the reason for their lateness and this should be given to the Attendance Officer. Alternatively, a parent/carer may telephone the school explaining the reason for their child's late arrival.

If a student does not have a 'good' reason for being late (explained in a letter or telephone call) on three occasions within a half term, they will be expected to attend an after school detention.

Students who are 'late' on a regular basis will be staged. If a student is late up to six times, during the academic year, then the Educational Welfare Officer will be informed.

The procedure will hopefully result in far less disruption to our tutor programme and lessons, resulting in a better climate for learning for all students, as well as preparing students for 6<sup>th</sup> form/college and ultimately their working lives

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### 14.0 Rewards

The importance of good attendance should be regularly promoted through the tutorial programme and assemblies.

- In Years 7-11, good attendance, where the pupil achieves the attendance target over each term, should be rewarded by attendance certificates presented in a special attendance assembly organised by the Year Director assisted by the Attendance Officer.
- Individual certificates shall be available for improved attendance/punctuality.
- Letters of praise should be sent by Year Director to students who achieve 95% at internal assessment points or termly.
- Those students who achieve 100% attendance and punctuality together with consistent hard work throughout the academic year will receive an attendance award at an end of year assembly.
- Each half term those who have achieved 100% receive a certificate and 10 achievement points.

### 15.0 Parents/carers

15.1 Parents/carers have a responsibility for ensuring their child attends school regularly and punctually.

15.2 Parents/carers have a right to be provided in good time with the necessary information from the school which would enable them to meet these obligations. This includes:

- The times of the school day
- School dates and holidays
- School procedures relating to attendance and punctuality
- School expectations regarding lateness
- Prompt communication of matters causing concern

15.3 The school expects that all parents/carers communicate with the school in writing, giving a reason

- In advance of any planned absence
- Immediately following (the next session) any unplanned absence
- During any absence expected to last more than three days

15.4 To help parents/carers meet their legal responsibilities the school will:

1. Use newsletters to remind parents/carers how they can help the school to achieve good attendance and punctuality
2. Include information in the prospectus about the schools' expectations for attendance
3. Invite the EWS to parent's evenings to give advice on attendance and other welfare matters

15.5 Parents/carers who do not conform to the above should be contacted and requested to provide an explanation of their child's absence. Further non-compliance on the part of the parents /carers should be documented.

### 16.0 Students.

The school will improve attendance and punctuality by making students aware of its importance.

- By making it clear to students that registration is important

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- Giving rewards to students for good attendance
- Use assemblies to discuss attendance, present statistics and celebrate good attendees and improved attendees (resp of Year Director)
- Arrange displays showing attendance rates and targets (resp of Attendance Officer)

### 17.0 Staff

The school will improve attendance by making staff aware of their responsibilities.

- Their role as tutors promoting good attendance (see below)
- Through the House system
- As teachers through the provision of engaging and motivating lessons
- Working with the Education Welfare Officer (EWO) to secure good outcomes.

### 18.0 The role of the tutor

Although the school employs an attendance officer, tutors still have a critical role to play in helping promote attendance. They can do this by:

1. alerting the Attendance Officer to any problems or concerns regarding attendance
2. alerting the Main Office for the need to arrange the collection of work for children absent for prolonged periods
3. ensuring holiday absence forms are collected by the student from the Attendance Officer
4. taking opportunities to promote good attendance and insisting on punctuality
5. reminding students of the need to bring in notes to explain absences

### 19.0 Education Welfare Service (EWS)/ Education Welfare Officer (EWO)

19.1 Much of the LA's responsibilities to the school in the area of attendance are currently vested in the education welfare officers (EWOs). They provide an important bridge between home and school, by working with families to try to establish any underlying reasons for poor attendance and punctuality. For this partnership to be effective, it is important that the school and its EWO share a common agenda and understand each others roles and responsibilities.

19.2 The EWO will visit every two weeks (week A) for a meeting with the Attendance Officer and where appropriate, Year Directors.

19.3 When attendance drops to below 90% the EWO will be alerted by the Attendance Officer. When attendance is below 85% or there is a pattern of absence evident the EWO will take action where appropriate.

19.4 It is appropriate that EWOs are brought in at the stage where the Attendance Officer and a Year Director have held discussions with parents/carers that have not led to any significant improvement in attendance at school or when such discussions cannot be initiated. To facilitate this work it is essential that all action is clearly documented.

### 20.0 Reintegration

20.1 When long-term absentees return to school, it is important that they are sympathetically treated by all staff. For each student, a Year Director will oversee students who need a reintegration action plan; which will acknowledge the reasons for the student's absence and may involve a reduced timetable in the first

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instance and temporary additional support. All staff teaching the student need to be advised in advance of an anticipated return so that they can plan how to re-introduce the student to their scheme of work.

### 21.0 New Students

#### 21.1 Students commencing school in Year 7

- The importance of good attendance and punctuality is overtly expressed at the Parents/carers' Induction Evening and forms part of the learning contract between school and parents/carers.
- Primary records and liaison should be used to identify potential poor attendees who should be targeted for close monitoring from the beginning of term.
- In the case of Year 7 students, as soon as any indicator of unsatisfactory attendance is triggered, the parents/carers should be contacted and interviewed.
- At the end of the first term students with attendance less than 90% and with more than four interrupted weeks (other than holidays, or those with medical conditions) will have letters sent to parents/carers. This will then be repeated in April.

#### 21.2 In-year transfer - students who commence at a later date

- All in-year transfer students should be monitored over their first few weeks at school, including attendance and punctuality. As part of an interview for prospective entry, this review process should be clearly articulated as a support to the student and a means of directly informing the parent of the achievement of their child.

### 22.0 A Way Forward

An attendance policy is not a panacea to radically improve attendance overnight, but it does provide a consistent set of strategies within which the whole school can work. No House team can take on every attendance case at one time, but it is not unreasonable to expect a team to target a certain number of cases with the aim of improving the overall attendance rate.

*If you would like this in a different format please contact the school*

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Reviewed by – Lesley Grills/Jon Lawrence  
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