



Attendance policy

**Independent school standards
and statutory guidance**

Paragraphs 7, 15 and 34.

DfE's 'Working together to
improve school attendance'
(August 2024)

Last updated by senior leaders

September 2025

Last reviewed by advisory board

October 2025

Next review due

September 2026

Introduction

- At St. John's Prep. and Senior School, we expect all pupils to attend every day, when the school is in session, if they are fit and healthy enough to do so. We do all we can to encourage pupils to attend, and to put in place appropriate procedures. We believe that the most important factor in promoting good attendance is development of positive attitudes towards education. To this end we strive to make our school a happy and rewarding experience for all pupils. We actively reward those pupils whose attendance is very good. We will also make the best provision we can for those pupils who, for whatever reason, are prevented from coming to school.
- As attendance is crucial to effective learning and the continuity of learning experiences, at St. John's we place great emphasis on this in our communication with parents and carers. These qualities of reliability are also important in adult life.
- Information on lateness, illness and absence is given to parents in the prospectus. This highlights the importance of being at school on time and notifying school if their child is absent for any reason.
- At the pre-school induction meetings held each year for children about to enter the reception class the importance of regular attendance is discussed and explained. This talk also includes parents and children arriving at school on time so that each child can be given the best possible start to each school day. Being picked up on time is also stressed, especially for young children who can be very upset if they are the only ones left.
- Pupils are also admitted to school at various times of the year, and into various year groups. All parents requesting a place are asked to make an appointment with the Principal or Headteacher. At this meeting the importance of regular attendance is always highlighted.
- We believe that pupils need to be in school for all sessions, so that they can make the best possible progress. Parents are asked to share any worries their child might have in school. Sometimes little things upset children, which means they become unhappy, and may not want to come to school. Parents need to be aware of this.
- Parents are reminded that they **must** arrange their family holidays within the school holidays, rather than in term time so that their child's education is not disrupted.

Attendance registers and codes

- We pay regard to the Department for Education's latest statutory attendance guidance, [Working Together to Improve School Attendance \(August 2024\)](#), including use of the required attendance codes. We ensure an attendance register records which pupils are present at the start of both the morning and the afternoon sessions of the school day. This register also indicates whether an absence was authorised or unauthorised.

Leave during term time

- St John's does not grant any leave of absence during term time unless there are exceptional circumstances. Any request must be made directly to the Principal or relevant Headteacher.

Common types of absence

- **Illness** (I code): In most cases a telephone call or a note from the parent informing the school that their child is ill will be acceptable. Parents may be asked to provide medical evidence where there are repeated absences due to reported illness.
- **Medical/dental appointments** (M code): Parents are advised where possible to make medical and dental appointments outside of the school day. Where this is not possible, pupils should attend school for part of the day. Parents should provide evidence of the appointment.
- **Other authorised circumstances** (C code): This relates to occasions where there is cause for absence due to exceptional circumstances, for example a family bereavement.

Authorised absence

- An absence is classified as authorised when a pupil has been away from school for a legitimate reason and the school has received notification from a parent and agrees that the absence is acceptable. For example, if a pupil has been unwell and the parent writes a note or telephones the school to explain the absence. Only the school can make an absence authorised; parents do not have this authority. Consequently, not all absences supported by parents will be classified as authorised.
- We welcome messages informing us in advance of a pupil's absence, for example, if they have a booked medical appointment.

Unauthorised absence

- An absence is classified as unauthorised when a pupil is away from school without the permission of both the school and a parent. Therefore, the absence is unauthorised if a pupil is away from school without good reason, even with the support of a parent. For example, if a parent takes a child out of school for a day trip on their birthday or at the end of terms before a school holiday, this will be unauthorised.
- Parents are reminded that pupils' attendance to calendared whole-school events, such as sports events, concerts, trips and swimming galas, is compulsory. As attendance is not optional, absence from such events without an acceptable reason will be marked as unauthorised and followed up accordingly.

Long-term absence

- When pupils have an illness that means they will be away from school, the school will do all it can to send material home, or provide remote access to lessons, so that they can keep up with their schoolwork.

Procedure for lateness and unexpected absence ('same day calling')

1. Registration begins at 8.50am and the registers are submitted to the school offices by 9.00am, before the first teaching session of the day begins.
 2. When a pupil is absent, the class/form teacher will record the absence in the register (using an N code unless the absence is already known about in which case the correct code will be used and verified by colleagues in the school office).
 3. Pupils arriving late to school must sign in to the relevant school office, where they will be marked as late (L code) if arriving before the registers formally close at 9.20am or, if arriving after 9.20am, as arrived in school after the registers have closed (U code).
 4. After the registers have closed, colleagues in the relevant school office will triangulate those pupils marked absent with messages received from parents. If no message has been received, parents will be contacted by text message or telephone to ascertain why the pupil is not in school. Colleagues will then input the correct attendance code to the register.
 5. If it is not possible to contact the parent, further attempts will be made, including to the pupil's emergency contacts if necessary.
 6. A home visit is a last resort and will be undertaken if no contact can be made by midday.
 7. If necessary, contact will be made with social care services and/or the police.
- We actively discourage late arrival, are alert to and regularly analyse patterns of late arrival and always seek explanation from parents as to why their child is late to school.
 - When the pupil returns to school after a period of absence, a note should be brought from a parent to explain the absence. If the absence lasts longer than three days, then a doctor's certificate may be requested.

Truancy

- Truancy is not tolerated and as such is exceptionally rare. If there should ever be a concern that a pupil might be truanting then immediate action is taken by the relevant senior leader, usually the Principal or Headteacher, who will contact the parents in the first instance. Incidents of internal truancy are followed up by the relevant senior leader under the school's behaviour policy.

Repeated absence and lateness to school

- Leaders and class/form teachers are jointly responsible for monitoring the attendance of pupils in their class.
- Leaders regularly review attendance and punctuality rates on an individual pupil level. These are formally reviewed at leadership team meetings and the following actions are typically taken when attendance rates fall below 95% and/or the pupil is regularly late for school.
 1. If a pupil has attendance falling to between 91% and 94% and/or is regularly late to school, then the class/form teacher contacts the parent concerned to have an informal discussion about this in the first instance. The teacher registers their concern on our online system and leaders will monitor the pupil's attendance and/or punctuality with the class/form teacher.
 2. If attendance falls further to between 85% and 90% and/or the punctuality problem persists, the family will receive a warning letter asking them to attend a meeting with a leader and the class/form teacher.
 3. If attendance falls below 85% and/or punctuality is persistently poor and/or there is an urgent concern, the relevant senior leader, usually the Principal or Headteacher, will follow up the matter with the pupil, their parents and relevant leaders, including the designated safeguarding lead (DSL). In the most extreme cases, the Education Welfare Support Service will be informed.
- *If there is a longer-term general worry about the attendance of a particular pupil that may relate to worries or problems in school that might make the pupil not want to attend, these will be discussed with the class/form teacher and leaders, including the designated safeguarding lead as appropriate, in order for the appropriate supportive action to be taken.*

Uncollected pupil procedure for pupils who do not travel independently to and from school (for early years children please see separate early years policy)

In the event of a pupil not being collected at the end of the school day, the following steps are taken:

1. The responsible teacher/leader will check if a message has been received by the office and if not, will telephone the pupil's parents or emergency contacts.
2. In the unlikely event of no contact being made with parents or emergency contacts, the member of staff will defer to a senior leader on site, who will assume responsibility for the pupil's care if they continue not to be collected.
3. If the pupil's parents or emergency contacts have not been contacted by the evening, the senior leader will inform the DSL, Principal, and finally, as a last resort, social care services and/or the police, to agree a plan. The pupil will be supervised by a senior leader until a suitable plan is enacted, such as being escorted home or collected by an emergency contact, social care worker or the police.

Monitoring and reviewing attendance and absence

- It is the overall responsibility of the Principal to monitor overall attendance.
- The attendance registers and any patterns of absence are regularly reviewed by the Principal, senior leaders and advisory board.

The role of the local authority

- Parents are expected to work with St. John's collaboratively in order to resolve any attendance and/or punctuality problems.
- If, however, difficulties cannot be resolved in this way, we may work with the local authority to put formal support in place, in particular if absence is severe (below 50%). Though not all aspects of legal intervention are open to independent schools, the local authority has legal powers to prosecute families if their child/ren's unauthorised absence continues; this could include making the case for a community or parenting order.

Referrals to the local authority

- As per the latest guidance, we notify the local authority on a monthly basis of the following: a) any pupils who have been added to or deleted from the admission register outside of standard transition times; b) any pupils of compulsory school age who have failed to attend school regularly or have been absent for a continuous period of ten school days where their absence has been recorded with one or more of the codes statistically classified as unauthorised (G, N, O, and/or U); c) any pupils of compulsory school age who have been recorded with code I (illness) and who has missed, or the school has reasonable grounds to believe will miss, 15 days consecutively or cumulatively because of sickness.