



# JAMES BATEMAN JUNIOR HIGH SCHOOL

Attendance Policy v3  
Reviewed February 2018

"Where Pupils Achieve and Excel"

## **Introduction**

The school's policy has been written following the principles and procedures outlined in the Staffordshire Attendance produced by Staffordshire County Council and reflects the DFE's requirements for behaviour and attendance.

## **Principles**

Promoting excellent attendance is the responsibility of the whole school community. All children are expected to be at school, on time, every day the school is open, unless the absence is unavoidable. Good attendance is essential if a child is to make the most of the educational opportunities offered by our school.

Parents have a legal duty under the Education Act of 1996 to ensure children of a compulsory school age attend school on a regular and full time basis. Unauthorised absence from school is an offence and parents can be reported to LA when there are persistent attendance problems.

Any problems that arise with attendance are best resolved between the school, the parents and the child. If a child is reluctant to attend, it is never better to cover up their absence or to give in to pressure to excuse them from attending. This gives the impression that attendance does not matter and may make things worse.

Our Attendance Policy is designed to promote and safeguard the welfare of pupils.

Schools are required to take an attendance register twice a day, and this shows whether the pupil is present, engaged in an approved educational activity off-site, or absent. If a pupil of compulsory school age is absent, every half-day absence from school has to be classified by the school, as either AUTHORISED or UNAUTHORISED. Only school can authorise the absence, not parents. This is why information about the cause of each absence is always required, preferably in writing.

Authorised absences are mornings or afternoons away from school for a good reason like illness or other unavoidable cause.

Unauthorised absences are those which the school does not consider reasonable and for which no "leave" has been given. This includes:

- **Parents keeping children off school unnecessarily**
- **Unauthorised holidays**
- **Truancy before or during the school day**
- **Absences which have never been properly explained**
- **Children who arrive at school too late to get a mark**

The Local Authority has the statutory powers under the Education Act 1996 to ensure children attend school and if they cannot successfully engage with the family to achieve this, they may use statutory powers to enforce parents/carers responsibility regarding their child's school attendance.

The Anti-social Behaviour Act 2003 amended section 444 of the Education Act 1996 to allow parents to be issued with a penalty where they failed to ensure their child of compulsory school age (5-16) and school registered regular attendance.

A penalty notice is initially for £60. If this £60 is not paid within 21 days from the date of issue it rises to £120. If, after 28 days of the date of issue the £120 is not paid the Local Authority will prosecute the parents under section 444(1) of the Education Act 1996. This will lead to a hearing in the Magistrates Court and may result in a fine of up to £1,000 per parent.

Parents whose children are experiencing difficulties should contact the school at an early stage and work with staff to resolve any problems. If difficulties cannot be sorted out in this way, the school or the parent may refer the child to the Education Welfare Worker from the County Council. He/She will also try to resolve the situation with voluntary support, if other ways of trying to improve the child's attendance have failed, these Officers can issue Penalty Notices or use court proceedings to prosecute parents or to seek an Education Supervision Order on the child. The maximum penalty on conviction is a fine of £2500 and/or 3 months imprisonment.

Alternatively, parents or children may wish to contact the EWW themselves to ask for help or information. They are independent of the school and will give impartial advice. Their telephone number is available from the school office or by contacting the Local Education Authority.

#### Leave of Absence during Term Time

As of 1 September 2013 there has been a change in The Education (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2006. Where there used to be the option for Headteachers to grant leave of absence during term time in 'special circumstances' of up to ten days in a year, this has been removed.

Leave of absence in term time is discouraged. Parents are not automatically allowed to take their child out of school on holiday. Headteachers are now only allowed to authorise any leave of absence when an application has been made in advance and it is felt to be for an exceptional circumstance; the annual family holiday would not be deemed an exceptional circumstance. The Headteacher will consider each case individually.

#### What should parents do if they wish to request a leave of absence?

Parents should contact the school to find out how to make a request for permission. We would strongly recommend that this is done before planning any leave of absence.

#### What happens if a child goes on holiday in term time or takes leave of absence for other reasons without permission from the school?

The absences will be marked in the school register as unauthorised absences and this may result in a Penalty Notice of £60 (rising to £120) per parent per child being issued by the Local Authority. In some cases, parents may be prosecuted for the offence of failure to ensure regular attendance at school.

Circumstances where a Penalty Notice may be issued:

- A Penalty Notice can only be issued in cases of unauthorised absence.
- There will be no limit on the times a Penalty Notice for unauthorised leave of absence can be used in an academic year.
- In cases where there is more than one pupil in a family with unauthorised absences, Penalty Notices may be issued for more than one child.
- The presence of an excluded child in a public place at any time during school hours in the first five days of exclusion.

Penalty Notice for leave of absence (holiday) in term time:

- Previously our approach was to only issue a Penalty Notice if the pupil's overall attendance was below 87%. This threshold has now been removed.
- Previously only one Penalty Notice per pupil was issued within an academic year. This limit has been removed so more than one Penalty Notice could be issued for repeated absence without permission during term time.
- Previously pupils missing 10 sessions or five days taken together risked a Penalty Notice. Now a combined total of ten sessions (not necessarily grouped as 5 consecutive days) could trigger a Penalty Notice.
- Instead of monitoring and totalling holiday absences taken across each academic year, they will now be monitored across the previous three terms, regardless of academic year.

Penalty Notice for persistent absence:

- Parents whose child is repeatedly absent will now only receive one warning notice period to bring about improvement in attendance in a single academic year. If attendance deteriorates again then no further formal warning notice will be issued and the Local Authority can automatically consider other statutory actions if unauthorised absence re-occurs.

### Changes to the Code of Conduct for Penalty Notices Commencing 1<sup>st</sup> January 2018

- **Penalty Notice for leave of absence (holiday) in term time**

Any period of unauthorised leave may result in you as a parent receiving a penalty notice fine. The head teacher will continue to be the only person able to authorise leave in term time, but this will apply only in exceptional circumstances. Any unauthorised absence will be referred by the head teacher to the EWO.

- **Penalty Notice for persistent lateness**

Previously a pupil had to achieve 20 unauthorised late marks before a penalty notice warning could be issued. **This has now changed to 10 marks**, and late marks do not have to be one after the other in order for the penalty notice to be issued.

- **Period of time used to measure persistent absence and lateness**

If your child has had 10 days unauthorised absence or is late 10 times over a twelve week period, you may receive a penalty warning notice and also potentially a fine.

## Procedures

James Bateman Junior High School applies the following procedures in deciding how to deal with individual absences:

- Parents are advised that students are expected to be in school for the full 190 days that we are open to students. The importance of good attendance is stressed through written and oral communications with students and parents.
- Colour coded letters are sent out to parents with the termly progress reports.
- Students who arrive late are expected to sign in at the school office giving reasons for their lateness. We carry out 'Late on the gate' every day and will issue sanctions to those who are repeatedly late. Persistent lateness (over 20 times) may prompt a penalty notice being served.
- Parents are discouraged from making non urgent medical and dental appointments during school time. If this is unavoidable, please make appointments at appropriate times so that pupils can attend school for part of the day. The school also requests doctor's notes or hospital appointment cards for any appointments taken in the school day.
- Students who need to leave school during the day must have a note explaining the reason. This must be given to reception when the pupil signs out.
- All requests for known absences from school must be made in writing.
- Holidays during term time are actively discouraged and will only be authorised in exceptional circumstances.
- All absences through illness must be backed up by a note explaining the nature of the illness or a telephone call to the office by 9:30am.
- The office will contact the parents or carers of any pupil absent without explanation. If the parent cannot be contacted or the explanation is unsatisfactory, the absence will be marked as unauthorised.
- For any unauthorised absence a letter is sent out asking parents to explain the reasons for their child's absence. If there is no response from parents the absence will remain as unauthorised and future absence will be carefully monitored.
- We work closely with Attend EDC, a private attendance company. They monitor attendance carefully and work closely with parents and carers, and the school. They will attend meetings, offer advice and do home visits.
- Where concerns about individual students occur these are addressed with parents through the Form tutor in the first instance. If concerns about attendance persist then the school may then involve Attend, the Education Welfare worker or Local Support Team. Throughout this process the staff will be looking to identify and address the reasons for attendance issues so that the pupil can return to school (with support if necessary) as quickly as possible.
- Attendance is regularly monitored by all staff at school. Letters will be issued as soon as a pupils' attendance starts to become a concern.
- When an individual pupil's attendance level falls below 90% in any term without good reason, a referral to the EWW may be made by the school. Following investigation any unresolved issues could result in the parent receiving a Penalty Notice or ultimately a prosecution under the Education Act 1996 s.444.

## **Persistent absence**

Persistent absentees are defined as those missing 10% or more of the typical amount of possible sessions across a given period.

The school is committed to reducing persistent absence (less than 90% attendance) and has specific procedures for dealing with this.

1. PA data is monitored weekly to track and review the attendance of PA students so that concerns can be addressed.
2. SLT contacts the parents/carers of PA students as soon as they are absent.
3. Regular meetings are held with the Local support team (LST) to discuss existing cases and any new concerns.
4. Parents, the child, Attend and LST are all spoken to about concerns relating to PA.
5. Referrals may be made to the Education Welfare Worker (EWW) if concerns persist.
6. Actions are taken by EWW in line with Staffordshire Policy.

## **Admissions Register:**

School keeps an admission register which records the date that each child joined the school and their personal details including those of their parents and of their previous school.

All schools must keep a record of attendance register entries for at least 3 years and inform their local authority of any pupil who is going to be deleted from the admission register.

A pupil can lawfully be deleted from the admission register on the grounds prescribed in regulation 8 of the Education (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2006 where they:

- Have been taken out of school by their parents and are being educated outside the school system e.g. home education (see below on home educated children);
- Have ceased to attend school and no longer live within reasonable distance of the school at which they are registered;
- Have a medical condition certified by the school medical officer that the pupil is unlikely to be in a fit state of health to attend school;
- Are in custody for a period of more than four months due to a final court order and the proprietor does not reasonably believe they will be returning to the school at the end of that period; or,
- Have been permanently excluded.

## **Elective Home Education:**

If school receives written notification from parents that they wish to home educate their child then we will inform the Local Authority via Entrust at [enquiries@entrust-ed.co.uk](mailto:enquiries@entrust-ed.co.uk) of the decision to remove the child's name from the admissions register. Whilst school will not seek to prevent parents from choosing to electively home educate their child, neither will they seek to encourage them to do this - particularly as a way of avoiding exclusion or due to a poor attendance record.

## **Working Together to Improve Attendance**

Parents will be informed of any concerns that may arise over a child's attendance. We monitor attendance closely and will regularly send colour coded letters to parents. (See Appendix 1) The local schools have entered into a partnership to improve attendance which means that a 96% attendance

target has been agreed. Attendance letters have been standardised throughout the Biddulph schools. Praise postcards and congratulatory letters will be sent out as appropriate. Progress Leaders and Assistant Head Teacher are monitoring pupils whose attendance is a cause for concern and will send out letters when a child's attendance dips significantly without good reason or if a child's attendance is continually low. Incentives are offered to improve attendance and all pupils and staff are aware of these rewards.

Attendance problems are discussed with either Progress Leaders or the Assistant Head and a strategy is agreed for each student. At the discretion of the EWW, a letter of warning may be issued to remind parents of the law.

### **Attendance Welfare Worker**

The school buys into a Service Level Agreement with Attend EDC LTD. They visit the school to monitor attendance and provide welfare support. Attend EDC can be contacted at any time by the attendance officer if there are any additional concerns which could incur charges. Where concerns are identified regarding attendance/punctuality/welfare then a home visit might be made. Individual plans may be drawn up between the school/authority and the parent/carer and pupil to support improvements.

### **Rewards**

The school has adopted the attendance targets of 96% attendance. In order to achieve this target we will actively promote good attendance. Good attendance by pupils will be recognised appropriately by the use of regular praise and encouragement. There are many extra incentives available for improved or sustained attendance.

### **People Responsible for Attendance and Lateness**

The people responsible for attendance matters are:

- Mrs D Moss (First Day Contact and Admin Officer)
- Mrs H Dagleish (First Day Contact)
- Form Tutor
- Progress Leaders
- Mrs K Baggaley (Assistant Head)

### **Summary**

The school has a legal duty to publish its absence figures to parents and to promote attendance. Equally, parents have a duty to make sure that their children attend. School staff are committed to working with parents as the best way to ensure as high a level of attendance as possible.

### **Attendance Policy - Overview**

The school has a legal duty to publish its absence figures to parents and to promote attendance. Equally, parents have a duty to make sure that their children attend.

<b>Registration</b>	Pupils should be in school by 8:45am. The register closes at 9am.
<b>First day response</b>	If your child is absent, please contact school on the day. If we have not heard from you by 9:30am, we will contact you to establish a reason for the absence.
<b>Lateness</b>	Pupils arriving after the register has closed must report to the office. Lateness is monitored by staff and 3 lates will result in a sanction.
<b>Leaving school</b>	If a pupil needs to leave school, a note must be provided and presented to the office to be signed out.
<b>Leave of Absence</b>	Please avoid taking family holidays during term time. Holidays during term time will be unauthorised unless there are exceptional circumstances.
<b>Medical appointments</b>	Please make medical appointments outside of school hours. If this is unavoidable, please do not keep your child off for the day. Pupils with ongoing medical issues may be asked to provide evidence from a medical professional regarding their absence.
<b>Tracking</b>	Attendance is regularly monitored and tracked. Letters will be sent home informing you of any concerns or praising good attendance.
<b>External agencies</b>	Attend EDC AND the Local Support Team (LST) visits school regularly. We will refer any pupils causing concerns to the LST, if school interventions have not resulted in improved attendance.
<b>Rewards</b>	The biggest reward is your child getting the best results they can and achieving their full potential. However, we do offer signatures, extra breaks and annual prizes for those pupils with excellent attendance.
<b>People responsible for attendance</b>	Mrs D Moss/Mrs H Dalglish (First day contact) Form tutor Progress Leader Mrs K Baggaley (Assistant Head)

Policy Adoption and Revision Details				
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<b>Reviewed</b>	<b>7<sup>th</sup> February 2018</b>	<b>Review Date:</b>	<b>February 2019</b>	<b>Version 3</b>

## ATTENDANCE COLOUR CODES AND CONSEQUENCES

96% - 100%

WELL DONE! THIS IS EXCELLENT

If you are in the green group you have been absent for less than two weeks in the whole year or you may have attended school every day.

- Rewards
- Form group reward
- Annual awards ceremony
- Signatures each week

90 - 95.9%

BE CAREFUL

If you are in the yellow group, you could be missing more than 2 weeks of learning

- Attendance interviews
- Letters sent home
- Interviews with parents
- Attendance workshops

Below 90%

PERSISTENT ABSENCE PUPIL

You are now a Persistent Absence pupil and are missing more than 6 weeks of learning in the school year.

- Further letters and meetings
- Home visits
- Education Welfare for possible prosecution/fine