



St. John's Infant and Nursery School  
Fair Field Junior School

# Attendance, Absence and Punctuality Policy

## Statement of Intent

The Poppy Academy Trust is committed to improving the life chances of all our children. We will nurture a passion for learning to enable them to thrive in an ever-changing world.

We have shared values across the Trust which we teach explicitly and throughout the curriculum to the children. At our Church school, these values are rooted in our Christian ethos and distinctive Christian character.

This is reflected in all our relationships between staff, children, parents, governors and the local community. It is reflected in how we teach, what and how our pupils learn within and beyond the classroom.

<b>Attendance, Absence and Punctuality Policy</b>	
Written by:	Davinia Leggett & Lana Gillam
Date:	03.02.2025
Approved by:	St John's and Fair Field LGBs
Date:	03.02.26
Review frequency:	Annually
Target Audience:	All stakeholders

**This policy is adapted from the Hertfordshire County Council Model Policy 2022.**

Our Local Governing Bodies are dedicated to the promotion of high standards of educational achievement. We are committed to eliminating discrimination, advancing equality of opportunity and fostering good relations between different groups. These factors were considered in the formation and review of this policy and will be adhered to in its implementation and application across the whole school community.

## 1. Introduction

**At the Poppy Academy Trust we are committed to promoting excellent levels of attendance and punctuality, enabling our pupils to take full advantage of the educational opportunities available to them. Excellent attendance helps the children in our school community to maximise their learning and all round personal development.**

**This policy is a joint policy for St John's Nursery and Infant School, and Fair Field Junior School. There are many shared families across the two schools and the leadership teams (including governors) have agreed a joint policy to ensure consistency for all families.**

We recognise that positive behaviour and good attendance are central to raising standards and pupil progress. Research shows that pupils with good attendance at primary school are more likely to go on to achieve well at GCSE and beyond. Good attendance helps the children in our schools' community to maximise their learning. This policy aims to support us all to achieve high levels of attendance and punctuality.

Our aims are:

- To encourage and assist all pupils and families to achieve excellent levels of attendance of 96% or higher.
- To ensure excellent punctuality where the children are in their classroom, equipment ready and sat at desk before the register and the first lesson begins.
- To reduce Persistent Absence [*Persistent Absence is defined as an overall absence rate of 10% or higher.*]

## 2. Responsibilities & Expectations

The schools will:

- provide a safe learning environment and support families where necessary.
- communicate a clear vision which is shared with and understood by all staff, families and pupils.
- maintain records of attendance according to legislation and guidance on a daily basis.
- Report attendance and punctuality to governors 3 times a year, through the Headteacher's report.
- Follow up all instances of poor attendance and punctuality.
- Send timely notification of unauthorised absence to parents and carers.
- Send half termly letters to parents and carers where there is an attendance or punctuality concern.
- Provide attendance details on every child's annual report.
- Discuss attendance and punctuality as needed at Parents' Consultation Evenings.
- Authorise absence upon advanced request in exceptional circumstances; in accordance with Government guidelines. This authorisation will be given by the Headteacher or Head of School only.
- Details of poor attendance/punctuality will be reported to any subsequent schools attended by the child.
- The school will engage with the Local Authority Attendance Officer (LAO) where required and arrange parent/carer meetings to support attendance and punctuality.

The governors will:

- Ensure they are provided with an accurate view of school attendance.
- Support leaders on driving excellent attendance.

Parents/carers:

- have a legal obligation to ensure their child attends school and do not automatically have the right to take them on holiday during term time. Absences from school affect the whole school community, not just the child concerned.
- are expected to ensure their child attends school regularly, on time, properly dressed and equipped and in a fit condition to learn.
- must inform the school on **every day** of absence, before 8.45am, giving a reason for the child's absence. Parents/carers will also maintain **daily** contact with the school until child returns to school.\* Messages can be left on the answering machine, which is available 24 hours a day.
- are expected to inform relatives and friends of the school attendance policy so they are aware that leave of absence may not be taken during term time.
- will ensure the school has up to date contact details.
- will ensure their child(ren) are ready to learn by making sure they are well rested and have eaten breakfast or made use of breakfast club.

\*If a child is unwell for a prolonged period, an agreement will be made about contact between the family and the school.

### 3. If a Child is Absent

#### The school will:

- record notification of absence onto the school register.
- if notification is not received, telephone parents/carers **by 10am** and record the outcome of the call. If there is no reply, this call will be followed up by an email/text message.
- maintain regular contact with parents/carers throughout the child's absence.
- keep written notification from parents/carers on file.
- inform parents/carers in writing if a child's attendance falls below 95%.
- write to parents/carers requesting a reason for absence if it has not been provided.
- ask for proof of absence if required. Eg. Change of flight details / medical appointments.
- record any absences as authorised or unauthorised according to current DfE guidelines.

### 4. Punctuality

Lack of punctuality (lateness) means that a child misses important early information for the day of learning ahead and may have to make a conspicuous entrance into class or assembly; it is also disruptive for the children who arrive on time. A pattern of lateness gives a message to the child that punctuality is unimportant. The school is sympathetic to family circumstances, but punctuality is encouraged even when there are difficulties. At these times, it is especially important that a regular routine is followed.

- Registers are taken promptly at the start of the school day. Any child arriving after that will be recorded as 'late'. In the afternoon sessions punctuality is equally as important. Registers will close promptly. (see Appendix 1)
- When a pupil arrives late having missed registration, parents/carers will be expected to bring the child into the school office and sign the late book - giving a reason for their child's lateness.
- It is important that children are safe and therefore accounted for at all times during the day. Because of this, any unexplained absence is monitored very carefully.
- Parents/Carers whose children are regularly late for school will be contacted by a member of school staff who will work with parent(s) to bring about an improvement in punctuality.

### 5. Absence due to Illness

- Notification must be provided for all absences from school and the school will always follow this up. Absences are authorised by the Headteacher or Head of School only. In most cases, absence is genuine and marked as authorised on the register.
- ***The school operates a '1<sup>st</sup> day response' policy. This means that if we have not been notified by 8.45am to tell us why a child is not coming to school on that day we will contact their parents/carers.***
- Parents/carers must give specific reasons for absence – being 'ill' is not enough. This enables the school to monitor patterns and fulfil its obligation to inform the relevant health authorities of notable diseases. Tracking patterns also ensures we are able to identify individuals or groups' absences, attendance of siblings, etc. The school may ask to see parents/carers if attendance through illness is concerning. The school may also be able to refer to external professionals.
- Parents/carers may be asked to provide evidence that their child is too ill to attend school.
- Unless parents/carers have been given a particular duration of absence through illness by a doctor, they are expected to contact the school **each day** to let us know what is happening. The details of telephone calls are recorded and monitored.
- In the case of diarrhoea or vomiting, children should be kept at home for 48 hours after the last bout to prevent the spread of infection to other children and/or staff.
- Children with temperatures above 37.8C will be required to stay at home until the temperature has reduced.

### 6. Absence due to Medical/Dental Appointments

- We request that all medical and dental appointments are made outside of school hours, at weekends or during the holidays as far as possible.
- If a medical/dental appointment is unavoidable the school should be notified in advance and in writing and evidence provided. If an emergency appointment is needed the school should be notified before 8.45am.
- Notification must be given in advance if a child needs to leave school during the day. The relevant book must be signed at the office and again on return. Children should come into school before appointments and return afterwards.

## 7. Examinations and interviews

- The Headteacher or Head of School may authorise absence for the purpose of an interview or examination in preparation for 5+, 7+ or 11+, or for official external exams (for example, music exams). Please write in advance to request this. Evidence will be expected.
- The school expects that the child will return to school following their interview or examination. Failure to return from a morning appointment will result in the afternoon absence being unauthorised. Equally, failure to attend the morning session prior to an afternoon appointment will be unauthorised.
- Absence requests for the purpose of exam preparation or for a period of rest prior to/following an examination will not be authorised.

## 8. Days of Religious Observance

- Absence for religious observance will be authorised if the absence occurs on a day exclusively set aside for religious observance by the religious body to which the pupil's parent belongs.
- Parents should notify the school office before the date.
- Absence is not permitted for attending religious, pilgrimages or conferences.

## 9. Term Time Holiday

Only the Headteacher or Head of School can authorise an absence. The fact that a parent has provided a note or other explanation (telephone call or personal contact) in relation to a particular absence does not oblige the school to accept it. Amendments to the 2006 Pupil Registration (England) Regulations which came into effect on 1st September 2013 remove all references to family holidays and extended leave for holidays in term time. Therefore:

- **NO** leave of absence will be granted for holidays or family visits.
- Parents may make an application for leave of absence for an exceptional circumstance via the form available on the school's website. [Appendix 2]
- Leave of absence taken without permission will be unauthorised.
- St John's and Fair Field will decide what is deemed as an exceptional circumstance. Days of absence may be granted for some but not all of what has been requested.
- A child can be removed from the school's registers if they fail to return from a leave of absence where permission has been granted after both school and LA have tried to locate the pupil or if there are 20 days continuous unauthorised absences and both the local authority and school have failed to locate the pupil.

## 10. Failure to attend school before and after school holiday periods

It is hoped that parents/carers will give their support and cooperation on this matter and ensure their child attends all statutory school days. Therefore, the matter of fixed penalty notices should not need to arise.

- If a child is missing from school on the days before and after school holidays, the school will request additional evidence to support the claim to ensure the child is genuinely unwell and that a family is not extending a holiday.
- Please ensure if you are travelling abroad, you leave enough time to ensure flight delays do not affect your child's return date. Term dates are on the schools' website for reference.

## 11. Persistent Absenteeism

A pupil is classed as a 'Persistent Absentee' when they miss **10%** or more schooling across the year for whatever reason. Absence at this level affects any child's educational potential and we will try to work with parents/carers to improve attendance rates quickly. Persistent Absentees are monitored carefully through our pastoral system and this is combined with academic support where absence adversely affects attainment. All persistent absentees will be made known to the LAAO.

## 12. Integrated Working

The Poppy Academy Trust will work with other agencies and professionals to ensure that our pupils receive all the support available to achieve good attendance.

## 13. Local Authority Attendance Officer (LAAO)

The allocated LAAO:

- is employed by Hertfordshire Integrated Services for Learning to improve attendance for individual pupils and the whole school.
- is allocated to the school to monitor attendance and support improvement where necessary.

- monitors the schools' attendance registers and records regularly.
- aims to work collaboratively with the schools and parents/carters to improve attendance.
- meets with the Headteacher and appropriate staff regularly to discuss and review attendance.

The LAAO can impose sanctions such as penalty notices (fines) or prosecution in the Magistrates' Court.

Parents and Carers may also contact the LAAO for impartial advice. Their contact number is available from the relevant school office.

### **Exceptional Circumstances**

- The school will actively seek to work with parents/carers where there is a genuine difficulty with attendance.
- Support strategies will be put in place for individual pupils where appropriate.
- When a child has an illness that means he/she will be away from school for over five days, the school will do all it can to send work home, so that they can keep up with their school work.
- If the absence is likely to continue for an extended period, or be a repetitive absence, the school will contact the home education support service, so that arrangements can be made for the child to be given some tuition outside school.

### **14. Fixed Penalty Notices issued by Hertfordshire County Council (Local Authority)**

- A penalty notice will be issued with regard to unauthorised absence if a pupil fails to attend school as required without a genuine explanation.
- The pupil must have at least **15 sessions** (half days) unauthorised absence in the current and/or previous term and the school must have sent a formal warning to the parent.
- **The amount payable is £60 (per parent) if paid within 21 days or £120 (per parent) if paid after 21 days but within 28 days of receipt of the notice. Separate notices are issued to each parent in respect of each child.**
- **The Local Authority will receive the fine, it does not go the school(s).**
- Primary responsibility for issuing penalty notices rests with the Local Authority and is not delegated. In Hertfordshire all parties agree that the Integrated Service for Learning Attendance Teams administer the scheme and issue penalty notices on behalf of police, schools, academies and other settings to ensure fairness and consistency and in the event that subsequent legal action may need to be taken.
- The issuing of penalty notices will comply with the code of conduct and practice as determined by the Local Authority. There is no statutory right of appeal once a penalty notice has been issued. The Local Authority may withdraw a notice if it has been issued incorrectly. If the penalty notice has been issued in accordance with Hertfordshire's Code of Conduct, there is no facility to overturn the decision to issue the notice.
- Failure to pay the fine within 28 days will result in either a prosecution for the offence to which the notice applies, or withdrawal of the notice (limited circumstances apply).
- In these circumstances the legal guardian could get a fine of up to £2,500, receive a community order or a jail sentence up to 3 months. The court also issues a Parenting Order.
- Prosecution will be taken by the Local Authority under the Education Act 1996, section 444. Any exceptional mitigating circumstances relating to the pupil's absence will be taken into account, when considering legal action. 'Exceptional mitigating circumstances' will be determined by the Central Attendance and Employment Support Team Manager on behalf of the Local Authority. 'Exceptional mitigating circumstances' might include the death of a close relative, certain medically recognised conditions, awaiting SEN placement, specific child protection concerns, change of provision. Legal proceedings can be considered at any stage if no progress has been made and no exceptional circumstances are deemed to exist.
- **All decisions to prosecute (or not) rest with the Local Authority.**

### **15. Staff Responsible for Attendance Matters**

- Headteacher/Head of School
- Senior Leaders
- All class teachers
- Office Staff
- Governing Body on behalf of the Trustees of the Poppy Academy Trust

## Appendix 1

### Individual School Timings

#### **St John's Infant and Nursery School**

- Morning - 8:45 soft start, register closes at 9:00
- Afternoon register – 1:15 (Reception and Key Stage 1), 12:15 for Nursery
- School ends – 3:20

#### **Fair Field**

- Morning - 8:30 soft start, register closes at 8:50
- Afternoon register - 1:15
- School ends - 3:10



## APPLICATION FOR PUPIL LEAVE OF ABSENCE DURING TERM TIME IN EXCEPTIONAL CIRCUMSTANCES

Name of pupil(s):

School:

Class(es):

Siblings (if different school) Schools attending:

I request permission for my child to be absent from.....to.....

Total school days.....

Exceptional circumstances for request: (this section must be answered in full)

Signature of Parent / Carer .....Date.....

For school use only:

Seen by Head teacher (signature).....Date.....

Date reply returned to parent (s) ..... Signed .....

Total number of absences to date	
Number of authorised absences to date	
Number of unauthorised absences to date	

Decision reached.....