

# St James' CE Aided Infant School

## Introduction

St James' CE Aided Infant School is committed to providing an education of the highest quality for all its pupils. This can only be achieved by supporting and promoting excellent school attendance for all pupils. By attending school regularly and punctually children will be able to take full advantage of the educational opportunities available to them. The whole school community has a responsibility for ensuring good school attendance and has important roles to play. The purpose of the policy is to clarify everyone's part in this.

### 1. When does my child need to be in School?

Your child should be at school in good time for registration. The cloakroom doors open from 8.45am. The morning register will be called promptly at 9.00am and the afternoon register at 1.20pm.

### 2. What happens if my child is late?

Registration finishes at 9.10 . If your child arrives after 9.10am he/she will be marked as absent. Pupils who arrive after 9.00am should report to the school office. Excessive unauthorised "lates" will be referred to the Education Welfare Officer (EWO).

### 3. Does the School need letters explaining my child's absence or will a phone call do?

We would expect a parent to telephone the school on the first day of absence. If you do not phone us, we will contact you by mid-morning. This is because we believe it is our responsibility to ensure your child's safety as well as their regular school attendance.

### 4. Who authorises an absence?

Every half day absence from school has to be recorded and classified with a code by the school, as either authorised or unauthorised. **Only the school** can make this decision and record it.

### 5. What reasons will the school accept for absences?

- Illness
- Emergency dental/medical appointment (Please make routine appointments after school or during the Holidays)
- Specialist appointments by negotiation
- Day of religious observance
- Family bereavement
- Leave of absence in exceptional circumstances (only when prior approval has been given — see question 7)
- Extended family visits abroad (only when prior approval has been given — see question 7)

Except in the case of illness, you should ask for permission for your child to miss school well in advance, giving full details in writing to the headteacher. In cases of recurring absences you may be asked to produce a medical certificate/evidence. If we are concerned about aspects of your child's attendance or punctuality we will contact you to discuss the best way forward.

### 6. What is unacceptable?

The school will not authorise absence for:

- Parents/carers keeping their child away from school unnecessarily
- No explanation given by the parent or the school is not satisfied with the explanation
- Late arrival **after** the close of registration
- Shopping trips, weekend trips away or birthday treats
- Day trips and holidays in term time that have not been agreed
- The pupil is absent due to a parent or sibling being unwell

## St James' CE Aided Infant School

### 7. Can we take family holidays during term-time?

No -family holidays should be taken during school holidays. Headteachers may not grant any leave of absence during term time unless there are exceptional circumstances.

The governors will consider authorising leave of absence for:

- service personnel and other employees who are prevented from taking holidays during non term-time;
- when a family needs to spend time together to support each other during or after a crisis;
- parents who are subject to a strict and un-negotiable holiday rota and evidence is provided to this effect (by an employer).
- an extended trip overseas to visit close family relatives

Requests for holidays for the following reason will **not** be authorised:

- cheaper cost of holiday;
- availability of the desired accommodation;
- poor weather experienced in school holiday periods; and
- overlap with beginning or end of term.

### 9. What will happen if my child is absent without authorisation ?

- a) Holidays - Holiday taken without authorisation, or failure to return on the agreed date, will mean that the absence is unauthorised. Where this has created a period of unauthorised absence in the current term of at least 10 sessions (equivalent to 5 days), parents will be liable to a penalty notice.
- b) Other reasons - The school may also ask for a case to be referred to the Education Welfare Officer when a pupil has an unauthorised absence of more than 20 sessions (10 school days) in any academic year.

### 10. What is a Penalty Notice?

A penalty notice will be issued when at least 10 sessions (5 school days) are lost to unauthorised absence during one (old style) term.

A penalty notice will be issued to **each parent liable for the offence**. For example, if two siblings were absent at the same time for more than 10 sessions then four penalties would be issued.

Section 23 of the Anti Social Behaviour Act 2003 empowers designated LEA Officers, Headteachers and the Police to issue penalty notices in cases of unauthorised absence from school. The Education Regulations 2004 (Penalty Notices - England), came into force on 27 February 2004.

From January 2005, Kent County Council has issued Penalty Notices in the following circumstances:

- (a) overt truancy (including pupils caught on truancy sweeps)
- (b) parentally-condoned absences
- (c) excessive holidays in term time
- (d) excessive delayed return from extended holidays without prior school agreement
- (e) persistent late arrival at school (after the register has closed)

There is no restriction on the number of times a parent/carer may receive a formal warning of a possible issue of a penalty notice for unauthorised absence. Parents must, from 1 September 2013, pay £60 within 21 days or £120 within 28 days. This brings attendance penalty notices into line with other types of penalty notices and allows local authorities to act faster on prosecutions. Failure to pay will result in prosecution (possibly a fine of up to £1000 and a criminal record).

### 11. Will the school authorise absence due to flexible schooling?

The school will only authorise absence if it cannot meet the educational needs of the pupil concerned or if the pupil is taking part in a regular enrichment activity that cannot be met as part of the National Curriculum in school. This would need to be documented by written evidence. It will also only be approved at the discretion of the headteacher.