

JFS Policies – Attendance Policy - November 2023

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1. Our Approach:

We have drawn this policy in line with DfE September 2022 Guidance: Working together to improve school attendance

2. The law on school attendance and right to a full-time education:

It is the legal responsibility of every parent to make sure their child receives that education either by attendance at a school or by education otherwise than at a school. Where parents decide to have their child registered at school, they have an additional legal duty to ensure their child attends that school regularly. *This means their child must attend every day that the school is open, except in a small number of allowable circumstances such as being too ill to attend or being given permission for an absence in advance from the school.* For the most vulnerable pupils, regular attendance is also an important protective factor and the best opportunity for needs to be identified and support provided.

3. Working together to improve attendance:

Successfully treating the root causes of absence and removing barriers to attendance, at home, in school or more broadly requires *schools and local partners to work collaboratively with, not against families.*

We work with partners to:

- EXPECT: Aspire to high standards of attendance from all pupils and parents and build a culture where all can, and want to, be in school and ready to learn by prioritising attendance improvement across the school.
- MONITOR: Rigorously use attendance data to identify patterns of poor attendance (at individual and cohort level) as soon as possible so all parties can work together to resolve them before they become entrenched.
- LISTEN AND UNDERSTAND: When a pattern is spotted, discuss with pupils and parents to listen to understand barriers to attendance and agree how all partners can work together to resolve them.
- FACILITATE SUPPORT: Remove barriers in school and help pupils and parents to access the support they need to overcome the barriers outside of school. This might include an early help or whole family plan where absence is a symptom of wider issues.
- FORMALISE SUPPORT: Where absence persists and voluntary support is not working or not being engaged with, partners should work together to explain the consequences clearly and ensure support is also in place to enable families to respond. Depending on the circumstances this may include formalising support through a parenting contract or education supervision order.
- ENFORCE: Where all other avenues have been exhausted and support is not working or not being engaged with, enforce attendance through statutory intervention or prosecution to protect the pupil's right to an education.

We believe that attendance and punctuality at JFS is vital to the wellbeing and prospects of all our students. This policy provides the framework within which all staff, parents, pupils, carers, and external agencies collaborate to the development and maintenance of a school culture where high attendance and excellent punctuality is the basic expectation which forms the solid foundation for student success.

4. Our Aims:

We ensure that we:

- Develop and maintain a whole school culture that promotes the benefits of high attendance.
- Have a clear school attendance policy which all staff, pupils and parents understand.
- Accurately complete admission and attendance registers and have effective day to day processes in place to follow-up absence.
- Regularly monitor and analyse attendance and absence data to identify pupils or cohorts that require support with their attendance and put effective strategies in place.
- Build strong relationships with families, listen to and understand barriers to attendance and work with families to remove them.
- Share information and work collaboratively with other schools in the area, local authorities, and other partners when absence is at risk of becoming persistent or severe.
- Improve the overall percentage attendance and reduce unauthorised absence.
- Establish a clear system for maintaining full attendance and excellent punctuality and that this is clearly communicated to all school staff, students and parents who are all working to agreed routines and standards.

- Develop a learning environment for the school where students are encouraged to attend regularly and to be punctual because students feel valued members of the school community and that they are safe and secure.
- Ensure that attendance is monitored effectively and reasons for absences are recorded promptly and consistently.
- Offer students and parents/carers strong support, advice and guidance on the importance of good attendance and punctuality.

5. JFS Attendance Policy sets out:

- The attendance and punctuality expectations of pupils and parents, including start and close of the day, register closing times and the processes for requesting leaves of absence and informing the school of the reason for an unexpected absence.
- The school's day to day processes for managing attendance, for example first day calling and processes to follow up on unexplained absence.
- How the school is promoting and incentivising good attendance.
- The school's strategy for using data to target attendance improvement efforts to the pupils or pupil cohorts who need it most.
- The school's strategy for reducing persistent and severe absence, including how access to wider support services will be provided to remove the barriers to attendance and when support will be formalised in conjunction with the local authority.
- The point at which Fixed Penalty Notices for absence and other sanctions will be sought if support is not appropriate (e.g. for an unauthorised holiday in term time), not successful, or not engaged with.
- Whilst every pupil has a right to a full-time education and high attendance expectations should be set for all pupils, the attendance policy should account for the specific needs of certain pupils and pupil cohorts. The policy should be applied fairly and consistently but in doing so schools should always consider the individual needs of pupils and their families who have specific barriers to attendance.
- Gita Patel (Head of Safeguarding) and Aaminah Hassam (Head of KS3 Safeguarding) are the leaders responsible for the strategic approach to attendance in school. Pupils and parents should contact Rebecca Bull (Attendance Officer) about attendance on a day to day basis

6. Responsibilities:

For students

- To ensure that students maximise their learning potential by taking responsibility for achieving excellent levels of attendance and punctuality.

For Parents and Carers

- To fully support students and the school to ensure excellent attendance and punctuality.
- To support the school and their child(ren) by not requesting authorised absence for holidays during term time and minimising where possible all other authorised absence, for example, dental appointments during the school day.
- To inform the school's attendance online form before 8:30am of any absences. If the absence is more than one day, the School should be notified on each day of the absence unless a date of return is known and the School is made aware.
- To ensure that student attendance remains above 95%.
- To ensure that their child arrives to school on time each day.
- Ensure their child only misses school for reasons which are unavoidable or justified, such as illness or days of religious observance.
- Talk to the School if they are concerned that their child may be reluctant to attend.
- Work in partnership with the school and/or Education Welfare Services if there is a concern about their child's attendance.

For Teachers

- To act as role models by being punctual to every lesson/registration and to be standing at the door of their room to greet students upon their arrival and ensure adherence to rituals and routines.

- Registers will be taken in the first 10 minutes of all lessons in line with the procedures outlined in this policy.
- To challenge lateness and any unauthorised absence from lessons, by monitoring the daily register and report any suspected truancy to the behaviour team via the 'missing from lesson' on-call.
- To encourage their students to take responsibility for their attendance and punctuality through monitoring and reinforcing the need for high levels of attendance and excellent punctuality.

For School Leaders

- To co-ordinate and monitor the policy and procedures for attendance and punctuality throughout the school.
- To promote excellent attendance and punctuality, for example, through the assembly programme and the reward systems that are put in place.
- To analyse and act swiftly in response to data to provide support to improve attendance.
- To ensure that the learning environment on offer to students, through the curriculum, personalised learning, behaviour policy and reintegration procedures, create the foundations for excellent attendance and punctuality.
- To ensure that the expectations of this policy are communicated to all stakeholders.

7. Absence:

Every half-day absence from school must be classified by the school (not by the parent), as either **authorised** or **unauthorised**. This is why information about the cause of any absence is always required. Each half-day is known as a 'session'.

a) If a child is absent from school the parent/carer must follow these procedures:

- The way to submit attendance is now done using a form on the website. Submit your attendance queries in advance via the following link: <https://jfs.brent.sch.uk/attendance>
- If we require you to provide evidence of an absence, you will receive an email after filling in the initial form asking you to attach proof. The preferred file forms are Word, Image File and PDF.
- Ensure that your child returns to school as soon as possible and you provide any medical evidence, if requested, to support the absence

b) Granting leaves of absence

The DfE Guidance September 2022 states: Only exceptional circumstances warrant a leave of absence. Schools should consider each application individually considering the specific facts and circumstances and relevant background context behind the request.

If a leave of absence is granted, it is for the headteacher to determine the length of the time the pupil can be away from school. *As head teachers should only grant leaves of absence in exceptional circumstances it is unlikely a leave of absence will be granted for the purposes of a family holiday.*

c) Authorised Absence

An authorised absence means that a student has had an absence from School for an approved reason. For example, a student may be on an educational visit or some other school activity that takes place out of School but during school time. Illness and urgent medical treatment are also authorised absences. JFS will need written explanation from parents in order to authorise these absences. Routine dental, optical and GP appointments should be made outside school hours. However, it is understood that specialist hospital, clinic, orthodontic and other exceptional appointments may have to be made during school hours. There may also be other exceptional circumstances where an absence may be authorised by the School but parents must contact JFS, at least two weeks in advance, to receive formal agreement **before** acting.

Please note: At certain times of the year, a Doctor's note will be required for a medical absence to be authorised. These include school weeks with fewer than five days (such as before a Jewish or Bank Holidays,) the two weeks leading up to Study Leave and the week proceeding and directly after a published school holiday (please note that

this list is not exhaustive).

d) Unauthorised Absence

Unauthorised absences are those which the school does not consider reasonable and for which no 'leave' has been granted. This type of absence can lead to the school referring to the Local Authority for penalty notices and/or legal proceedings.

Unauthorised absence includes, however is not exhaustive:

- Their own or family or friends Bar Mitzvah's,
- Parents/carers keeping children off school unnecessarily e.g. because they had a late night or for non-infectious illness or injury that would not affect their ability to learn
- Absences which have never been properly explained
- Children who arrive at school after the close of registration are marked using a 'U'. This indicates that they are in school for safeguarding purposes, however is counted as an absence for the session
- Shopping trips
- Looking after other children or children accompanying siblings or parents to medical appointments
- Their own or family birthdays
- Holidays taken during term time without leave, not deemed 'for exceptional purposes' by the Headteacher - may result in school applying to the local authority to issue a penalty notice or if you have previously been issued a Penalty Notice, the school may request a direct prosecution by the local authority
- Day trips
- Other leave of absence in term time which has not been agreed

e) Unexplained absences:

Should a student have an unexplained absence the Attendance Officer will investigate the absence. This will comprise of a stepped process:

- Step 1: Attempt to contact a parent/carer of the student on the first and every day of absence. We will telephone emergency contact numbers
- Step 2: Should no contact be made within the first twenty-four hours, the school may send a member of staff to the home of the student as well as notify the local authority.
- Step 3: Should the school not be able to get an answer when visiting the student's home, then the Police should be contacted immediately. As part of the process for unexplained absence, the Attendance Officer should liaise with the Headteacher and Designated Safeguarding Leader (Gita Patel) regarding any absence that may present a safeguarding concern. In particular, staff should be alert to any possible unexplained absences or of a child missing from education (CME) that may indicate a further safeguarding concern (e.g. FGM, CSE, Peer on Peer abuse, homelessness, neglect, County Lines or other criminal activity).

f) Procedures For Registration

- All students are registered in form time.
- Registers are taken at 8.30am and your child will receive a late mark 'L' if they are not in by that time.
- Pupils arriving after 8.30am are required to come into school via the school office and they must sign in at reception.
- At 9.00am the registers will be closed. In accordance with the Regulations, if your child arrives after that time, they will receive a mark that shows them to be on site - 'U', but this will not count as a present mark and it will mean they have an unauthorised absence.
- The school may contact parents/carers regarding lateness.
- A member of school staff will undertake a daily 'Late Gate' check, greeting late arrivals at the main entrance to the school.

g) Punctuality and Truancy

- Students are expected to be in school by 8:30 am.
- Any students arriving after 8.30am will receive a detention.

- Truancy is not tolerated at JFS and will be dealt with swiftly in line with the sanctions detailed in the behaviour policy.

h) Escalation Procedures

Escalations	Guideline
1. General concern letter	3 absences
2. Year team call home	4-5 absences
3. Medical evidence letter	5-6 absences
4. Meeting with parents	Attendance between 93%-91% & Punctuality concerns
5. Meeting with the student	Punctuality & attendance targets
6. Review meeting	For every parent or EWO meeting
7. RF1 for unauthorised term time leave	Referral made to the Local authority for unauthorised term time leave
8. EPN meeting for unauthorised term time leave	Referral made to the Local authority for unauthorised term time leave or holidays
9. Discussion with the <i>Education Welfare Officer</i>	Attendance 90% and below, punctuality concerns, persistent absence and students with medical needs
10. Informal meeting with the <i>Education Welfare Officer</i>	Attendance at 90%, punctuality concerns, persistent absence and students with medical needs
11. Pre-referral meeting with the <i>Education Welfare Officer</i>	Attendance between 86%-89%
12. Stage 1 meeting with the <i>Education Welfare Officer</i>	Attendance below 85%

8. JFS takes the following approach towards promoting good attendance:

A range of strategies will be offered as support such as:

- A *first letter* will be sent home notifying parents/carers of a decline in attendance below the expected level.
- Involvement of the Attendance Lead to organise review meetings with persistent absentees. The Attendance Lead will focus on establishing targets for attendance and punctuality along with strategies for support in successfully reintegrating students back into school.
- Support parents to identify support networks to improve attendance such as Early Help and other organisations.
- Agreeing a student contract outlining targets and support to improve attendance.
- If the attendance is longer than a period of ten continuous days and is treated as unauthorised absence then the Local Authority will be informed.

- The Education Welfare Officer will be further informed if the students' absence is continuous for a further 10 days.
- Where students are absent for a period of 20 days and there is doubt over a student's location, the student will be reported as missing in education.
- Referrals may lead to the issue of a fixed penalty notice and possibly court action being taken if the Local Authority involvement does not lead to the student returning to school and improving their attendance.

9. Working with the Educational Welfare Service:

Our attendance is monitored by the Education Welfare Service. Our Education Welfare Officer has given the following guide for expected attendance:

100% Perfect

98 - 99% Excellent

95 - 97% Good

90 -94% Needs to improve and will be monitored closely within school

89% or less Poor - This will lead to a referral to the Education Welfare Officer, a subsequent meeting and potential legal action from the local authority. They scrutinise all records and registers and, with the Headteacher's agreement, contacts all those with attendance figures below 90%, as listed above. Attendance is monitored daily, weekly, monthly and half-termly by the Attendance Officer and Attendance Lead and they will then report all attendance concerns to the EWO.

10. Leave of Absence:

JFS does not support any holidays requested during term time. If a request is made for a leave of absence and this is not approved and the student does not attend school during the stated period the school will make referral to the Educational Welfare Service and parents risk receiving an Educational Penalty Notice (EPN). In the cases of all requests for leave of absence, the Headteacher's decision is final.

11. Monitoring and Evaluation of Attendance at JFS:

All schools are expected to:

- Monitor and analyse weekly attendance patterns and trends and deliver intervention and support in a targeted way to pupils and families. This goes beyond headline attendance percentages and looks at individual pupils, cohorts and groups (including their punctuality) across the school.
- Identify the pupils who need support and focus staff efforts on developing targeted actions for those cases (see paragraphs 34-39 of the Guidance).
- Conduct thorough analysis of half-termly, termly, and full year data to identify patterns and trends. This includes analysis of pupils and cohorts and identifying patterns in uses of certain codes, days of poor attendance and where appropriate, subjects which have low lesson attendance.
- Benchmark their attendance data (at whole school, year group and cohort level) against local, regional, and national levels to identify areas of focus for improvement.
- Devise specific strategies to address areas of poor attendance identified through data. This may, for example, include pupils in a year group with higher-than-average absence or for pupils eligible for free school meals if their attendance falls behind that of their more advantaged peers.
- Monitor in the data the impact of school wide attendance efforts, including any specific strategies implemented. The findings should then be used to evaluate approaches or inform future strategies.
- Provide data and reports to support the work of the board or governing body, as set out in section 3 of the Guidance.
- Decide which cohorts of pupils should be included in their data analysis based on their context and school population.

12. Building strong relationships with families, listen to and understand barriers to attendance and work with families to remove them:

In communicating with parents, we discuss the link between attendance and attainment and wider wellbeing, and challenge parents' views where they have misconceptions about what 'good' attendance looks like. Where a pupil or

family needs support with attendance, the best placed person in the school will work with and supports the family and wherever possible the person is kept consistent.

Where a pattern of absence is at risk of becoming, or becomes, problematic we draw on these relationships and listen to and understand the barriers to attendance the pupil or family is experiencing. In doing so, we take into consideration the sensitivity of some of the reasons for absence and understand the importance of school as a place of safety and support rather than reaching immediately for punitive approaches.

We support pupils and parents by working together to address any in-school barriers to attendance. Where barriers are outside of the school's control, partners work together to support pupils and parents to access any support they may need voluntarily. We meet with pupils and parents at risk of persistent or severe absence to understand barriers to being in school and agree actions or interventions to address them. This may include referrals to services and organisations that can provide support. These actions are regularly discussed and reviewed together with pupils and families.

Where absence intensifies, so does the support provided, which requires us to work in tandem with the local authority and other relevant partners:

- If the needs and barriers are individual to the pupil this may include provision of mentoring, careers advice, college placements, 1-2-1 tuition or out of hours learning, or where appropriate an education, health and care plan or alternative provision.
- Where the needs are wider and a whole family response is more appropriate, this is likely to include a voluntary early help assessment.
- Where engagement in support is proving challenging, we hold more formal conversations with the parents and the pupil. This is likely to be led by the senior leader responsible for attendance and may include the school's point of contact in the local authority School Attendance Support Team. These meetings clearly explain the consequences of persistent and severe absence to the pupil and family and the potential need for legal intervention in future, but also are an opportunity to continue to listen to and understand the barriers to attendance and explain the help that is available to avoid those consequences.

Where voluntary support has not been effective and/or has not been engaged with we work with the local authority to:

- Put formal support in place in the form of a parenting contract or an education supervision order.
- Issue a fixed penalty notice where support would not be appropriate or has not been successful or engaged with and it is likely to change the parents' behaviour.
- Intensify support through statutory children's social care involvement where there are safeguarding concerns, especially where absence becomes severe (below 50% attendance).
- Prosecute parents where all other routes have failed or are not deemed appropriate. This could include making the case for a community or parenting order where the parent is convicted to secure engagement with support. For further details, see section 5 of the Guidance.
- We monitor the impact of any intervention(s) and make adjustments where necessary in discussion with the pupil, parents and any other partners involved as part of any whole family plan or team around the family. Where interventions are failing, all parties work together to identify the reasons why and either adjust or change the approach.

13. Rewards

We promote excellent attendance through an extensive support, a rewards programme, and sanctions when appropriate. Some of the rewards are as follows:

- Emails home celebrating 100% attendance
- End of year rewards trip for all students who achieve 100% attendance.
- Monthly prize draws for all students that achieve 100% attendance that month
- End of year prize draw for all students that have achieved 100% over the course of the year.

14. Monitoring, Evaluation and Review of this policy

JFS monitors the effectiveness of this policy using data including its effectiveness when promoting the attendance of different groups such as SEND, Pupil Premium and LAC students as well as different demographics of students. The policy will be reviewed annually.

15. This Attendance Policy meets the DfE guidance.

The Governing Body:

- Annually reviews and agrees the Attendance Policy.
- Annually agrees attendance targets (including persistent absence).
- Takes a lead role in supporting JFS in the implementation of its approach to attendance and punctuality especially in response to parents in dealing with any unauthorised absence.

Review Date: September 2024