Nottinghamshire County Council

James Peacock
Infant & Nursery School

Attendance Policy

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Introduction
At James Peacock Infant and Nursery school we fully believe that a pupil's regular and punctual attendance at school every day is of vital importance to ensure the best possible outcomes for all our children. ALL children regardless of additional needs or background, need to attend school regularly and on time so they can take full advantage of the learning, skills and ongoing knowledge that is carefully planned for each individual child in order to make the best possible progress.

We believe that making attendance and punctuality a high profile will ensure the children have the necessary knowledge for their future life and work place. All staff and governors recognise that education is the key to achievement for pupils and that **poor attendance rates and persistent lateness puts children at an educational disadvantage.**

Legislation and guidance
This policy meets the requirements of the school attendance guidance from the Department of Education (DfE), and refers to the DfE's statutory guidance on school attendance parental responsibility measures.

Our policies and procedures are based on requirements set out by Working Together to Improve School Attendance Guidance for Maintained Schools, Academies, Independent Schools and Local Authorities 2022.

Aims

- To ensure that every child is safeguarded and their right to education is protected.
- To promote good attendance and reducing absence, including persistent absence
- To raise standards and ensure that every child reaches their full potential, through a high level of school attendance and punctuality.
- To make attendance and punctuality a priority for all stakeholders, governors, parents, pupils and staff by ensuring that they receive regular communication emphasising their importance.
- To provide a framework which defines agreed roles and responsibilities and promotes consistency in carrying out all attendance procedures.
- To keep accurate, up-to-date records and have a robust and systematic approach to gathering and analysing attendance related data to facilitate prompt swift action.
- To identify causes of low attendance/punctuality with individuals, classes and groups pf pupils and address them.
- To promote effective partnerships with external agencies in order to address barriers and provide support in approving attendance.

At James Peacock Infant and Nursery School we aim to work in complete partnership with our parents/ carers to ensure good attendance and work with families to establish solutions to ensure good attendance wherever we can. We also expect parents and carers to work with us and do all they can to make the home school partnership work and to ensure good attendance for their children at school. We are a school that prioritises relationships with all stakeholders and will do all we can to nurture excellent relationships with children so that they want to come to school every day. We foster excellent relationships with parents and work with parents to ensure a shared understanding of the importance of excellent school attendance.

We are committed to meeting our obligations with regards to school attendance by:

- Having high aspirations and targets for school attendance.
- Ensuring attendance is the responsibility of everyone in the school community.
- Key members of staff will work with all stakeholders to improve children's attendance.
- Providing an environment in which pupils feel valued and welcome with an exciting curriculum that children want to be a part of.
- Regularly collecting and analysing attendance data and acting promptly.
- Employing a range of strategies to encourage good attendance and punctuality.
- Informing parents and carers promptly of any concerns that may arise over a child's attendance.
- Acting early to address patterns of absence and will promptly investigate all absenteeism.
- Supporting parents/carers and pupils with their attendance as much as possible including pupils and families that are experiencing difficulties through offering prompt support from the class staff, the Inclusion Team and Headteacher.
- Showing consistency in the application of the school's registration and attendance procedure.

Strategies for Promoting Attendance
As a school with the youngest of children, we have a pragmatic approach to attendance. We recognise that children in early years can often suffer from illnesses when they start school as they begin to mix with other children, this can sometimes affect attendance. Illness attendance rates can improve as the children move through school. Our children at James Peacock Infant and Nursery School love school and enjoy coming. We recognise that it is often through no fault of their own at such a young age if they have poor attendance and as such, our strategies for promoting attendance focus

on working in the best interests of our children and working with families.

Roles and Responsibilities

Improving attendance at James Peacock Infant and Nursery School is the responsibility of everyone in the school community including pupils, parents and staff.

Pupils

All pupils are expected to attend school regularly and punctually. Pupils who experience attendance difficulties will be offered prompt and sympathetic support, initially from their class teacher and, if the need should arise, from the Headteacher.

The Headteacher

The Headteacher is responsible for:

- Implementation of this policy at the school
- Monitoring school-level absence data and reporting it to governors
- Supporting staff with monitoring the attendance of individual pupils
- Working with external agencies where necessary
- Informing the LA where required
- To consider the use of Penalty Notices, in line with Nottinghamshire Local Authority policies and procedures

Class Teacher

Class teachers are responsible for recording attendance on a daily basis, using the correct codes, and submitting this electronically, via Arbor, to the school office. Class Teachers will initially offer prompt and sympathetic support to pupils and families around punctuality and attendance.

Office Staff

School office staff are responsible for:

- receiving calls and emails from parents about absence and recording it on the school system
- following up absences when there has been no message received

Parents/Carers

Parent/carers have a duty to ensure that their children receive full time education. Should a parent fail to ensure that his/her child attends that school regularly then the parent is guilty of an offence. Parents/carers are legally responsible for ensuring that their child attends schools regularly, punctually, properly dressed and equipped and in a fit condition to learn.

The Education Act 2002 places the responsibility for enforcing school attendance on the Local Authority. Legal action will be instigated against parents/carers in relevant circumstances using the wide range of available options including:

- Penalty notices;
- School attendance orders;
- Section 444(1) and (1) (a) of the Education Act 2002.

If a child is prevented for any reason from attending or is late, parent/carers are requested to notify the

school as soon as possible on the morning of the absence. A pupil's absence from school must be considered as unauthorised until a satisfactory explanation is forthcoming from parents/carers.

Attendance Support
Parents whose children are experiencing difficulties with attendance should contact the school at an early stage and work together with the staff in resolving any problems.

Support may be provided in a number of ways as appropriate to the child/family including:

- ARNA (Anxiety Related Non Attendance) Pathway also known as 'Attend'
- Healthy Families Teams
- Mental Health Support Team (MHST)/CAMHS
- Schools & Families Specialist Support (SFSS)
- Health Related Education Team
- Neurodevelopmental Behaviour Support Service
- Concerning Behaviours Pathway

Alternatively, parents or children may wish to contact the Healthy Family Team 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 Authority. The school or the parent may refer the child to the Healthy Family Team at the County Council.

Monitoring Attendance and Punctuality
The data which is extracted from accurate and up-to-date attendance records will be used to support the more effective management of whole-school attendance matters. Attendance is examined on a continual basis through regular meetings with the he DSL Team and Headteacher. We look for:

- Patterns of unexplained absences
- Patterns of authorised absences
- Any persistent lateness
- Attendance below 90% (including late after registration is closed)

Attendance and Punctuality Reports are provided termly to governors, outlining the attendance and punctuality rates.

Safeguarding
Child Protection and safeguarding concerns will be acted on immediately, in line with the school Child Protection and Safeguarding Policy.

Procedure for following up absence – First Day Response
If pupils are unable to attend school for whatever reason we **expect** parents to let us know this before the close of registration at 9:00am by leaving a message on the answerphone or via a phone call.

As a safeguarding measure, parents must contact the school on every day of absence, even when the absences are on consecutive days, in order for us to ensure safe arrival to school has taken place for all pupils.

As a vigilant and caring school, when any child we expect to be in school does not attend, or stops attending, we operate a first-day response to pupil absence. This means that if a child is reported as absent after the registers have closed in the morning, and the school has not been made aware by the parent/carer of the reason for absence, the school will contact the parent/carer to ascertain the reason for their child's absence.

If we cannot make contact with the parent by phone we will then send a text message asking them to contact us as soon as possible.

If we are still unable to contact a parent/carer we will call other contact/s who are on our system to ascertain a reason for absence.

If no contact has been successful and school still has not been notified of the reason for absence by 11am a decision will be made in consultation with the Headteacher on the agreed course of action. If

we are concerned about a child and their reason for not being in school then we may follow this up with a call to all other emergency contacts and may choose to follow this up with either a home visit, a phone call to social care if appropriate or in some instances, the local police.

IT IS THE RESPONSIBILITY OF THE PARENT/CARER TO INFORM US OF REASONS FOR ABSENCE. IF WE ARE NOT INFORMED THE ABSENCE WILL GO DOWN AS UNAUTHORISED AND COULD LEAD TO A PENALTY NOTICE BEING ISSUED.

The law states that only the school can approve absence, not parents. If doubts remain about the explanation offered - or where no explanation is forthcoming at all - the absence must be treated as unauthorised. School is obliged by law to differentiate between authorised and unauthorised absence.

Types of Absence
The parent/carer of a child of compulsory school age is required by law to ensure that the child regularly attends the school at which he/she is registered. Should a parent fail to ensure that his/her child attends that school regularly then the parent is guilty of an offence. When a child of compulsory school age is absent from school, the attendance register must indicate whether the absence is **authorised** or **unauthorised** and the appropriate register code will be used. James Peacock Infant and Nursery school will decide on how an absence is to be recorded according to 'School Attendance: Policy and Practice on categorisation of Absence' DFE (1994).

Authorised Absence
If your child is ill or unable to attend school, you should contact the school by phone to notify them.

Depending on the reasons for absence, the Headteacher will decide whether the absence can be authorised or not. In extreme cases, where absence is sickness related, we may require medical certification if there are concerns regarding attendance. Only if the Headteacher is satisfied as to the validity of the explanation offered by the call/email will the absence be authorised.

Authorised absence is where the school has either given approval in advance for the child to be absent or where an explanation offered afterwards has been accepted as satisfactory justification for absence.

Absence will generally be authorised for the following reasons:

- The pupil was absent due to illness or injury
- The absence occurred on a day exclusively set aside for religious observance by the religious body to which the pupil's parents belong
- The absence was due to a medical or dental appointment that **could not be undertaken outside of the school day.** In some cases the Headteacher may ask for the parent/carer to provide proof of medical appointments for the absence to be authorised.
- Exceptional family circumstances e.g. sudden injury, serious illness or death of a close relative. (However, we will expect the parent to make suitable arrangements for their child to attend school as soon as possible.)
- For a child to attend the wedding of their parent(s) or for a close family member (close family member is an immediate relative, such as grandparent, sibling, aunty and uncle), where approval might be given for the day of the wedding.

In addition, the school *will consider authorising* absence in the following cases:

- The pupil is participating in an approved public performance, tuition or a musical event.
- The pupil is involved in an **exceptional** special occasion (e.g. if a pupil is attending the graduation of an older sibling).

Absence for Medical Reasons
Pupils are not expected to attend school when they are not well enough to do so whether as a result of short term, long term or recurring illnesses. But they should not be kept away from school when they are well enough to go to lessons or when they have minor ailments which do not prevent them from taking part in their education.
As a school we have the right to consider whether to accept the parent/ carers explanation with regard to medical absence as there are occasions when parents report parentally condoned absence

to the school as medical absence. If the school has concerns that the illness may not either be genuine or warrant the amount of absence occurring, the school may ask the parent to substantiate the illness by asking to see additional evidence such as an appointment card or medical certificate. This will only happen when there are real concerns as we recognise the additional burden this could place on parents and the health services. It is not the responsibility of the school to chase or gather medical evidence from a GP or other medical professional on behalf of a parent whose child is missing school.

Applications to miss Education for Religious Reasons
Applications for leave of absence for religious reasons can be made to the Headteacher. The school will authorise one day of absence per religious festival, up to a maximum of 3 days in any one academic year, on the day specifically set aside by the religious body of which the parent/carer is a member and this will be marked as 'R' in the register. If parents/carers require an additional day this must be requested in advance and this may only be granted in certain cases e.g. travelling abroad for religious purposes with proof (this would be marked in the register as 'C').

Approved Educational Activity
Children who are educated off site, dual registered, or who are engaged in supervised educational activities away from the school premises need not be marked as authorised absent and will be recorded as on an approved educational activity. This means that for statistical purposes activities such as educational visits, or approved sporting activities can be counted as 'present'. The nature of the activity must, however, be recorded by use of appropriate code. This is important in order to ensure that an accurate record of those children physically present on site at any given time is instantly available. All absences will need an authorised legal confirmation letter from an appropriate leader.

Unauthorised Absence
Unauthorised absence is where no explanation has been given for the child's absence or where the explanation offered is considered by the school to be unacceptable.

The school will not authorise absence in the following cases: (not an exhaustive list)

- Holiday leave in term time
- Child not attending because the parent/carer is ill or cannot get the child to school
- Child not attending because the sibling is ill
- The pupil is absent for his or her birthday
- Oversleeping
- If the child is absent for a medical appointment that does not relate directly to the child (e.g. relates to the sibling or the parent)
- No explanation is forthcoming
- The Headteacher is dissatisfied with the explanation for absence

No reason for absence or an unacceptable reason given
Where no reason for absence has been notified and we have been unable to contact a parent/carer to authorise a child's absence and have not received this information on the child's return to school, such absence will be treated as unauthorised.
If a child has reached above 6 sessions/3 days unauthorised absence over a rolling 6-week period, the school can issue a warning letter. The letter will make it clear that any further absence may result in the issuing of an Educational Penalty Notice to each parent for each child to whom persistent absence applies.

If the unauthorised absence persists and then rises to 5 days (10 sessions) over a 6 week rolling period then a penalty notice may be issued to each parent for each child to whom persistent absence applies. In these cases, the Local Authority may also consider what services or measures may be provided to prevent or reduce further unauthorised absence including support and interventions through the Early Help Service.

Absence for holiday in term time
Holiday leave in term time will not be authorised.
Holidays taken during term-time impact on a child's education in the following ways:

- Learning in infant school provides the building blocks on which their future education is based and these building blocks may not be taught again the same way.

- By taking a holiday in term-time parents and carers are giving children the message that it is acceptable to miss school for reasons other than genuine illness.
- Full school attendance encourages children to develop positive patterns of attendance, which will support them throughout their school career and beyond.

The law states that Headteachers are no longer permitted to agree a Leave of Absence during term time unless there are exceptional circumstances. Headteachers are not allowed to authorise holidays in term time. If a parent intends to take their child out of school for a leave of absence during term time, they must have requested this in 2 weeks in advance of the leave date and had their request agreed by the Headteacher. The Headteacher will then decide whether to agree the leave of absence (exceptional circumstances) and whether this is marked as authorised or unauthorised in the attendance register. If we receive absence requests out of this time frame and decline the leave of absence following this policy, parents may still receive the Penalty Notice. **Please note that Headteachers are only permitted to agree a leave of absence in term time for exceptional circumstances.**

In Nottinghamshire, parents can be fined if their child has in excess of **3 days unauthorised absence over a 6 week period**. Please see NOTTINGHAMSHIRE LOCAL CODE OF CONDUCT FOR PENALTY NOTICES ISSUED IN RESPECT OF TRUANCY AND EXCLUDED PUPILS If the school has evidence that the parent has removed the child from the school for the purpose of a holiday during term time without authorisation, and the level of absence is above 6 sessions/3 days in total over a rolling 6-week period, then the school will request the Local Authority to issue an Educational Penalty Notice to each parent of each child to whom unauthorised absence applies.

Any applications for leave of absence must be made in advance using the relevant forms which are available from the school website or the school office.

Registration

We keep an attendance register, and place all pupils onto this register. All staff are aware that the register is a legal document and must be completed twice daily. James Peacock Infant and Nursery School expects parents/carers to ensure that are on the school premises by 8:50am.

Registers will be called promptly at 9:00am and at 1.10pm electronically. Registers will close at 9.00am and at 1.20pm. If a child arrives in the morning after 9:00am they will have to access school through the main reception. After morning registration has taken place, any child being removed from school by a parent/carer so that they may attend an appointment (medical etc.) must be recorded by the school office on a daily record sheet with the appropriate reason stated. This will enable the class teacher to account for all children marked as present in the event of an evacuation. When the child returns into school they must be signed back on the daily record sheet. However, if that child does not return to school and is consequently marked as absent in afternoon registration then the appropriate absent code will be entered into the register.

In considering attendance levels, the class register is of paramount importance. Registers are legal documents. Should the parents/carers of a persistent non-attender be prosecuted by the Local Authority under Section 444 of the 1996 Education Act, then the information which the register contains will be the main source of evidence presented to the court. The regulatory requirements placed on schools with regard to the keeping of registers are to be found in the Education (Pupil Registration) Regulations 2006.

Lateness and Punctuality

Poor punctuality is not acceptable. If a child misses the start of the day they can miss work and do not spend time with their class teacher getting vital information and news for the day. Late arriving pupils also disrupt lessons, can be embarrassing for the child and can also encourage absence. Good time keeping is a vital life skill which will help our children as they progress through their school life and out into the wider world.

Morning school starts at 8:40am, the gates are closed at 9:00am and the register is taken at 9:00am.

If pupils arrive between 9:00am and 9:15am they receive a late mark **L** and need to be signed in late via the school office. Pupils arriving after 9:15am will sign in late at the office and receive a **U** mark which denotes 'Late after the register is closed' and shows they are present in school but were late

enough to affect their learning. This counts as an **unauthorised absence**.

All late arrivals must report to the School Office to be signed in the late book so that registers are accurate in the case of an emergency.

If your child has a persistent late record you will be asked to meet with the Headteacher or member of the Inclusion Team to resolve the problem, but you can approach us at any time if you are having problems getting your child to school on time. Cases may be referred to Early Help and .

In addressing punctuality at James Peacock Infant and Nursery School we:

- have clear procedures – school starts at 8:40am and registers close at 9:00am
- publicise this policy in school and communicate it to parents/carers
- acknowledge punctuality and improvements in punctuality
- ensure that teachers set a good example by arriving punctually for registration and for lessons
- follow up the reasons for lateness and be alert to any emerging patterns or problems.

Mid-Session Arrivals/Departures
It is recognised that children may arrive or depart mid-session for a variety of reasons which may be authorised:

- illness or accident in school resulting in a child going home
- medical or dental appointments
- unavoidable delays or reasons to leave early.

Pupils present for registration who leave early, or for part of a session, should be noted on the *sign in/out Log* in the school office for purposes of emergency evacuation. *The register itself is not altered.*

Pupils not present for registration who return later from an appointment should be noted on the *sign in/out Log* in the school office for purposes of emergency evacuation. The register is subsequently amended to authorise the absence or record an unauthorised absence.

Persistent Absence
Persistent absence (or PA) is absence of 10% or more. An individual child is deemed to be a persistent absentee, therefore, if his/her attendance is less than 90% (regardless of whether or not the absences have been authorised).

Parents/carers of children with attendance at 93% or below will be notified of our concerns regarding attendance. If attendance continues to decline, further action will be taken. Parents will be informed if attendance falls below 90% and the Headteacher may inform parents that any future absence may need to be verified and if not authorised, could lead to a penalty notice. The Headteacher will invite the parents into school to discuss attendance. The Headteacher may involve the Early Help team if the child's attendance does not improve. Every effort will be made between the school and the family to ensure the child's attendance improves. If a pupil is persistently (or intermittently) absent or late, and the school's efforts to affect an improvement have been unsuccessful a referral will be made to the Early Help and Attendance Enforcement. We will continue to work with the family alongside this referral to improve the child's attendance.

The Local Authority will also consider what services or measures may be required to prevent or reduce further unauthorised absence. The Local Authority will determine in some cases whether to issue a Penalty Notice or take straight to Prosecution. In line with Nottinghamshire County Council guidance, the Education Penalty Notice will be issued to both parents who have parental responsibility (even if separated and living at different addresses) as well as any other step parent/partner and carer that has day to day care and contact with the child. Please note – **school does not benefit financially from following the Nottinghamshire County Council guidance.**

Penalty Notices
The law gives powers to the Local Authority and other designated bodies to issue Penalty Notices where a parent/carer is considered able but unwilling to ensure their child attends school. Reducing absences from school is a key priority nationally and locally because missing school damages a pupil's

attainment levels and disrupts school routines and the learning of others.

Parents/carers commit an offence if a child fails to attend school regularly and if those absences are classed as unauthorised. A Penalty Notice is an alternative to prosecution as it does not require an appearance in court unless the fine is unpaid after 28 days.

If a child is taken out of school without the Headteacher's authorisation, it will be recorded as unauthorised absence. This may lead to the Local Authority issuing a penalty notice and legal action being taken.

Section 23(1) Anti-Social Behaviour Act 2007:
Penalty notices may be issued to the parent of pupils who have unauthorised absence from school. The amount of the penalty is £60.

- If this is not paid within 21 days the amount rises to £120.
- If not paid within 28 days the Local Authority will prosecute under section 444(1) unless it comes to our attention that the penalty notice had been issued in error.

Full payment of the Penalty Notice means that parents/carers can avoid being prosecuted and convicted.

If a child has had more than 3 school days (6 half-day registration sessions) lost to unauthorised absence within a 6 week period the school may issue a Penalty Notice. In cases of unauthorised absence parents/carers will receive a warning of the possibility of a Penalty Notice being issued.

Section 444(1) Education Act 1996:
"If you are the parent of a child of compulsory school age who fails to attend school regularly, you are guilty of an offence."
The court can fine each parent up to £1,000 per child, order payment of the prosecution costs and/or make a Parenting Order.

Please note that:
- Penalties and prosecutions are in respect of each parent for each child.
- 'Parent' includes any person who is not a parent of the child but who has parental responsibility for the child (and applies whether or not that person lives with the child) or who has care of him/her.

In cases of unauthorised absences and holidays, warnings will be issued where notice of the intended absence has been given. However, if insufficient notice is given, Penalty Notices may be issued without notice.

Children at risk of missing education

Our school ensures that we follow robust processes to respond when children are missing from education or missing from home or care. School leaders and designated safeguarding leads follow Nottinghamshire County Council guidance https://www.nottinghamshire.gov.uk/media/2329358/nottinghamshire-children-missing-education-strategy.pdf (appendix 1) when children are at risk of missing education. (See also the school's Child Protection Policy).