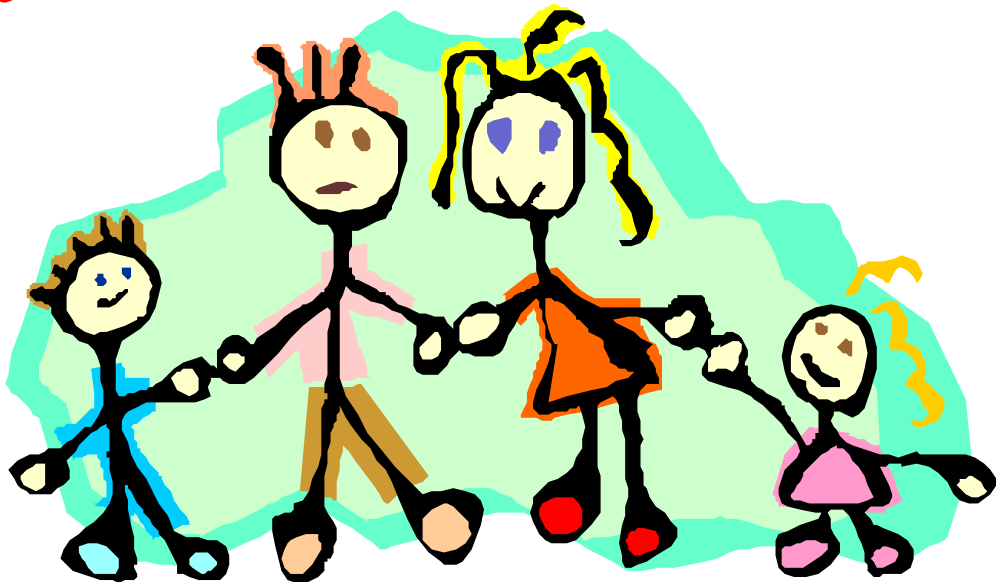


**St. John the Baptist C.E.
Primary School**

**Working
Together**



A parent's guide to absence in
school

This booklet is intended to help parents understand more about the school's attendance policy by answering some commonly asked questions.



Why do schools have to have an attendance policy?

Every parent with children of school age is required to send their child to school unless they make alternative provision – such as home tutoring.

Government set out regulations around school attendance and schools must have an attendance policy to demonstrate how they intend to meet those regulations.

Why is it important to ensure that children have good attendance?

The link between good school attendance and achieving your best is very clear and all of the research shows that children with poor attendance often achieve less well than those with good attendance.

This chart from Educational Welfare Officers shows the impact of missing school on how well a child might achieve.

Above 97%	<i>Fewer than 6 days absence in an academic year</i> Very good attendance. Pupils with this level of attendance have the best chance of achieving the grades of which they are capable and this leads to the best prospects for work, college or university.
95%	<i>Fewer than 10 days' absence in a year</i> Pupils are likely to achieve their target grades, and have good oppor retunities for work, college and university, but will need to invest time in catching up any work missed.
90%	<i>19 days absent from school</i> Pupils with this level of attendance are missing a month of school per year and this is likely to have a detrimental effect on their achievement; it will be difficult for them to achieve of their best.
85%	<i>29 days absent from school – DFE classify this level as persistently absent</i> These pupils are missing six weeks of their education and will find it extremely difficult to keep up and achieve of their best.
80%	<i>Pupils with this level of attendance are missing a year of school over the five years that they attend School.</i> It will be almost impossible to keep up with their work and these pupils are at risk of serious underachievement. Parents of students with this level of attendance could be issued with a penalty notice*
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <i>A penalty notice may also be issued for any unauthorised holiday absence</i>

What do the government regulations say?

The rules are very clear. A child can only be absent from school in “exceptional circumstances”. That means that the reason for the absence would be unavoidable and not common place.

In the past I was able to make a request for holiday absence and it was granted. Why can't I do this anymore?

In September 2013 the Government introduced new regulations. The school's previous attendance policy was based on the old regulations. The old policy looked at children's attendance levels and if they were good then it was usually felt that a holiday absence request could be authorised. The new wording of “exceptional circumstance” in the government regulations has meant that the school has had to change its policy.

The new policy says that the school will consider authorised absence only in exceptional circumstances.

Does this mean that I have to make an absence request whenever my child is absent from school?

No. The school recognises that there are some absences where it will not be possible to request absence in advance. These are;

- Sickness. Parents should inform the school on the day of illness (before 9.30a.m.) and on each subsequent day of illness unless a date of return has been agreed with the school.
- For medical / dental appointments, parents should try whenever possible to make appointments outside of school hours or in holidays. The school recognises that this is not always possible and so if you must make an appointment in school time then you should inform the school office in writing of the appointment. Time away from school for such appointments should be kept to a minimum and children should only be away from school during the time slot of the appointment and time for travel.
- In emergencies e.g. a bereavement, medical emergency etc. then contact should be made with school as soon as you are able.

For all other absences from school you should make an absence request in advance.

If I think the reason for wanting my child to be absent from school would be an “exceptional circumstance” then what do I need to do?

Request forms are available on our school website and from the school office. The request should be made at least 10 school days prior to the date of absence and you will generally be required to attend a meeting with either the Headteacher, Deputy Headteacher or School Business Manager. At the meeting we will discuss the exceptional circumstances that have led you to make the request.

What will you consider an “exceptional request” to be?

It is impossible to list all of the reasons that might constitute an exceptional circumstance. However, to be granted absence the request must be something that is unavoidable and not common place. In order to be granted absence the reason you give will not be a reason that could apply to most other people.

What will happen when I submit my request?

Usually you will be asked to attend a meeting so that we can discuss the request. Following the meeting you will usually be told of the decision as to whether or not we feel the absence can be granted.

If the absence request is granted can I keep my child off school for as long as I want to?

No. One of the purposes of the meeting is to find out how long it is necessary for the child to be away from school. It is for the school to decide how long we will grant. Previous rules about being absent for up to 10 days have been abolished under the new government regulations.

What if I disagree with the decision, can I appeal?

If you disagree with the decision that has been made then you can ask the Headteacher to take another look at your request. Following this if you still disagree with the decision then you can take your complaint to the Governing Body Complaints Committee. If you disagree with the decision of the Complaints Committee then you can take your concern to the Local Authority who will advise you on how to proceed.

What will happen if I take my child out of school without permission?

The school always wants to work with parents and we would hope that all parents would abide by the rules. We understand that aspects of this policy might be frustrating to parents – but unfortunately we are required to follow regulations set down by government.

School attendance is regarded by the government as a key piece of data when they consider how well a school is doing. Attendance data is looked at every year by government and they will challenge schools where attendance is poor.

Governors would prefer not to use penalties against parents who ignore a decision not to remove a child from school without permission. They feel that this would not help to form and sustain good home school relationships. However, it may be that there is little choice but to request that the Local Authority issue a penalty notice to a parent who has a child with unauthorised absence in certain circumstances.

A full copy of the school’s attendance policy and forms to request school absence are available on the school website or from the school office.