

JOHN TAYLOR MULTI ACADEMY TRUST



Attendance Policy

Implementation date: September 2019
LGB Procedures: No

Attendance Policy – JTMAT

1.0 Principles

1.1 Promoting excellent attendance is the responsibility of the whole school community.

1.2 Our schools will promote excellent attendance through their use of curriculum and learning materials. This is reinforced in our school's Behaviour and other policies. Excellent attendance by pupils will be recognised appropriately. All children should be at school, on time, every day the school is open, unless the reason for the absence is unavoidable.

1.3 Children are sometimes reluctant to attend school. Any problems that arise with attendance are best resolved between the school, the parents and the child. If a child is reluctant to attend, it is never advisable to cover up their absence or to give in to pressure to excuse them from attending. This gives the impression that attendance does not matter and may make things worse. Permitting absence from school without a good reason is an offence by the parent.

1.4 This Attendance Policy includes procedural referral agreements that are designed to promote and safeguard the welfare of pupils. JTMAT schools have a **duty** to refer to the Local Authority any child of compulsory school age who:

- is continuously absent from school for 20 sessions (2 weeks) without explanation
- has irregular attendance
- is persistently late to attend school
- has an unauthorised leave of absence as detailed in section 6.0.

1.5 Schools are required to take an Attendance Register twice a day. This shows whether the pupil is present, engaged in an approved educational activity off-site, or absent. If a pupil of compulsory school age is absent, every half-day absence from school has to be classified by the school, as either **AUTHORISED** or **UNAUTHORISED**. JTMAT Schools use the Attendance and Absence Codes, in the Attendance Registers, as required by the DfE *School Attendance Guidance for maintained schools, academies, independent schools and local authorities*. Only school can authorise the absence, not parents. The cause of each absence is always required

1.6 Authorised absences are sessions away from school for a good reason such as illness or another unavoidable cause.

1.7 Unauthorised absences are those which the school does not consider reasonable. It is classified in ways:

- a. **Unauthorised absence:** for any other absence from school which has not been requested and cannot be authorised. **See Section 5.0.**
This may include:

- a. parents keeping children off school unnecessarily
- b. truancy during the school day
- c. absences which have never been properly explained
- d. children who arrive at school too late to get a mark

- b. **Unauthorised leave of absence:** for any absence from school which has been requested but not granted. **See Section 6.0**

1.8 JTMAT schools will never authorise the unilateral withdrawal of pupils by their parents as a result of a parental concern or complaint. Such absences can be damaging to children's education, are unnecessary, do not allow staff to deal with the issue efficiently, and, as a consequence, will be unauthorised.

1.9 JTMAT Schools have a safeguarding duty, in respect of all of its pupils, to investigate unexplained absences as per the Keeping Children Safe in Education statutory guidance. The school will share relevant data to the Local Authority and other relevant professionals as required.

2. Working together

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

2.2 Wherever possible the school will take action to improve a pupil's attendance and address any underlying causes of problems before requesting intervention from the Local Authority.

2.3 Throughout this policy the term 'parent' refers to all adults or carers with either

- Parental Responsibility, or
- Are responsible for the day-to-day care of the pupil.

3.0 Expected first day of Attendance:

3.1 The school will enter pupils on the Admission Register and Attendance Register from the beginning of the first day on which the school has agreed, or

been notified, that the pupil will be attending the school. For most pupils the expected first day of attendance is the first day of the school year.

3.2 Should a pupil fail to attend on the agreed or notified date, then the Attendance Intervention Manager or Attendance Officer will establish contact with the parents to ascertain the reason for this.

3.3 The school will notify the Local Authority within 5 days, as required by Government Guidance, of pupils who have been added to the Admission Register other than at standard transition points.

4.0 Deletions from the School Admission Register:

4.1 Deletions from the Admission Register will only occur on the grounds prescribed in regulation 8 of the Education (Student Registration) (England) Regulations 2006. JTMAT Schools will inform the Local Authority of all deletions from the Admission Register as stated in regulation 8 of the Education (Student Registration) (England) Regulations 2006, apart from at standard transition points.

4.2 Should a pupil meet the criteria of being deleted from the Admission Register and their whereabouts are unknown, as stated in the grounds for deleting a pupil from the school Admission Register, section 8 (1)(f) and 8 (1) (h), then the Attendance Intervention Manager or Attendance Officer will make reasonable enquiries to ascertain where the pupil is. See Appendix B Children Missing from Education. The Local Authority will be informed of the enquiries into the whereabouts of pupils as stated in the above criteria and should the absence threshold be met, JTMAT Schools will remove the pupil from the Admission Register. The CTF file will be retained until further advice is provided from the relevant Local Authority.

4.3 Should a JTMAT school receive a written notification, by a parent, to home educate their child, the school must inform the Local Authority that the pupil is to be deleted from the admission register. JTMAT Schools will not seek to persuade parents to educate their children at home as a way of avoiding excluding a pupil or because a pupil has a poor attendance record.

5.0 Monitoring of Absence Levels and Unauthorised Absence:

5.1 In each JTMAT School there is a member of the Senior Leadership Team who has responsibility for Attendance. To ensure that each pupil has the best opportunity to succeed, JTMAT schools will monitor and respond high levels of absence from school.

- At frequent intervals, the Attendance Intervention Manager, or Attendance Officer, will review the pupils whose attendance level is less than that of the schools attendance target. Letters may be issued to parents to inform them of their child's high level of absence. If appropriate, pupils may be spoken with directly regarding their attendance.

5.2 The Attendance Intervention Manager will support pupils whose attendance gives cause for concern. This will involve assisting in resolving any situation which may be having an adverse effect on a pupils attendance. The Attendance Intervention Manager will undertake case work with pupils and, their parents where thought appropriate, to improve the pupil's attendance this may include the use of a Parenting Contract. Casework is completed up to the threshold where statutory action is deemed necessary.

5.3 Where there is **persistent unauthorised absence** then the Attendance Intervention Manager will provide appropriate records to the Local Authority for them to fulfil their statutory functions should their threshold be met. The Local Authority has the decision on which, if any, response will be issued. These include:

Fixed Penalty Notice:

- Should a Fixed Penalty Notice be issued, the fine is 'per parent/carer and per child', regardless of who applied for the leave. The parent has 3 choices:
 1. A set fine if paid within 21 days.
 2. An increased fine if paid after 21 days but within 28 days.
 3. In the case of a non-payment of the fine the Notice will be withdrawn and will trigger the fast-track prosecution process under the provisions of section 444(1), of the Education Act 1996. If found 'guilty' then this would result in a criminal record for that parent.

Current Penalty Notice figures can be found in Appendix A

Prosecution under the Education Act 1966 s.4441

This includes:

- An Education Supervision Order or School Attendance Order on the child.
- A Prosecution under the 1996 Education Act, section 4441 or section 4441 (a).

5.2 Alternatively, parents or children may wish to contact the Local Authority themselves, to ask for help or information. The Local Authority is independent

of the school and will give impartial advice. Their address and contact details can be found locally, or by contacting the Attendance Intervention Manager or JTMAT school.

6.0 Planned Absences and Unauthorised Leave of Absence

6.1 The JTMATs Attendance Policy is to fully comply with Government regulations. Statutory guidelines state "Headteachers may not grant leave of absence during term time unless there are exceptional circumstances". Requests for leave in exceptional circumstances should be made in advance of the event and in writing with specific details included such as dates, and should be addressed to the Head of School / Senior Leader Responsible for Attendance, or by completion of the schools dedicated Leave of Absence Request Form. Should parents have children in 1 or more of the JTMAT Schools and are requesting the same period of leave, this should be declared within the letter or completed form. JTMAT Headteachers may confer about their decision about whether a request for leave is to be deemed as an exceptional circumstance. Should a parent not divulge a cross JTMAT School sibling group then any decision on whether a leave of absence is to be authorised may be overturned. If a leave of absence is granted, then it will be for a fixed period of time. Should the absence not be granted, but still taken, then it will be classed as ***unauthorised leave of absence***. An application for a Penalty Notice to be issued from the Local Authority will be made for any unauthorised leave of absence of 6 or more sessions in the current or previous half term.

6.2 **Unauthorised leave of absence** presents a risk of a Fixed Penalty Notice being issued. Please note that:

- A parent can receive more than one Fixed Penalty Notice per academic year;
- JTMAT Schools will provide appropriate records to the Local Authority for them to fulfil their statutory functions should the threshold of unauthorised leave of absence sessions be met.

6.3 If a parent does not apply for leave but we believe that the pupil has been taken on holiday, then we will write to the parent to express our concern. The parent will be expected to provide contrary evidence to be received at school by a specified date. Should the supporting documentation not be provided then the absence will be coded as ***unauthorised leave of absence*** and the relevant procedures will be applied.

6.4 Retrospective approval for absence cannot be granted.

6.5 Should a leave of absence be granted, regulations are clear that any lateness in the return to school from the granted period, may be recorded as ***unauthorised leave of absence***.

6.6 Any request for planned absences for a pupil to participate in a sporting or other educational activity, such as a dance or music exam, should be addressed to the Head of School / Senior Leader Responsible for Attendance. Additional documentation, such as the confirmation letter, should also be included.

7.0 General absences

7.1 Parents should inform the JTMAT school on each day that their child is absent. The parent needs to provide a reason for their child's absence from school. Should a reason not be received for a pupil's absence, then the JTMAT school will attempt to contact the parent, through first day contacting procedures, to ascertain a reason for the absence.

7.2. Should no reason for absence have been ascertained, the Attendance Intervention Manager or another member of staff may complete a home visit to gain the reason for the absence. A home visit may also be completed if:

- the school receive any additional contradictory information,
- the staff are concerned about the pupil's absence,
- the absence is during the last week of a school term, even if contact has been received from parents.

7.3 In the case of an enforced closure or dedicated / subsidised transport difficulties due to exceptional circumstances the "Y" code is used, which is not classed as an absence. This can be applied to pupils for whom getting to school is problematic due to exceptional circumstances even if the school is officially open. Ordinarily, this relates to pupils who live beyond walking distance of the school.

8.0 Lateness

8.1 All pupils should be punctual at arriving at JTMAT Schools. Each JTMAT school has an individual starting time.

8.2 Those pupils who arrive after the starting time, but before the end of the Registration Period will be issued with an 'L' code in the Attendance Register. Those arriving after the Registration Period, but before the end of the session will be issued with a 'U' code in the Attendance Register.

8.3 JTMAT school requires late arriving pupils to be signed in. The reason for the lateness will need to be provided. Parents may be requested to assist with signing their child into school should they be a late arrival. Parents may be contacted for a reason for their child's lateness should this not have been provided.

8.4 JTMAT schools monitor the late arrival of pupils. Persistent lateness will be monitored the Attendance Intervention Manager who may undertake casework with pupils and their parents, to overcome any barriers, to improve punctuality.

Ultimately, continued unauthorised lateness, that which is coded as 'U', could result in Statutory Action being taken by the Local Authority. **Please refer to section 5.3.**

8.5 Pupils arriving late because of **school dedicated / subsidised transport** lateness will not be marked as late, however pupils need to ensure that they have signed in to School.

9.0 Absence for Medical Appointments and Medical Evidence / Documentation

9.1 JTMAT Schools request that wherever possible, doctor and dental appointments are made outside the school day. If this is not possible, parents are requested to contact the school and **provide the school with a copy of medical evidence**, such as the appointment card. No evidence of the appointment may lead to the absence being recorded as unauthorised. Pupils should sign out at the School dedicated place and must sign in when returning to school following the appointment. Pupils are not permitted to leave the school premises without being collected by an responsible adult / an adult identified by the parent as being responsible.

9.2 JTMAT Schools request for additional Medical Evidence / Documentation may be made if:

- A Pupil has a planned prolonged absence from school
- A pupil has been absent for over 3-5 school days
- A Pupil has a high level of absence and little improvement has been made
- To authorise medical appointments during the school day
- A pupil is absent, due to illness at the beginning or the end of a school term.

9.3 JTMAT Schools will accept this medical evidence in the form of an appointment card or prescription, for example. The medical documentation however must justify the period of absence from the school. If a medical professional states that this is ongoing issue and sets a date to review the situation, then no further evidence will be required until the date of the review. Parents and pupils will be supported by the Attendance Intervention Manager or Attendance Officer to reengage with school once the Medical Evidence / document period has concluded. A full GP note is not required.

9.4 For pupils who are absent from school due to ongoing health needs and a medical professional has provided the required documentation, the decision about providing school work for completion at home will be made on an individual basis and in consultation with all relevant parties. If it is deemed appropriate, and with the consent of parent, the pupil's details may be

forwarded to the Local Authority for consideration to be given as to whether alternative provision is required.

10.0 Other circumstances

10.1 It is not appropriate for the school to authorise absences for shopping, looking after other children, haircuts etc. Leave may be granted in an emergency (e.g. bereavement).

10.2 It is unlikely that a JTMAT school will agree with any reduction in a pupil's timetable unless additional documentation has been provided which states that this is necessary. Should a reduced or reintegration timetable be agreed then this will be for a set period of time with a review date. Any flexi-school arrangement requests are required to be discussed with the Headteacher of the relevant JTMAT school.

10.3 The school will notify the Local Authority, at regular intervals, as required by Government Guidance, any pupils who fail to attend school regularly.

10.4 Pupils become of Statutory School Age on the 1st September, 1st January or 1st April after their 5th Birthday. Pupils are no longer of Statutory School Age on the last Friday in June of the Academic Year in which they turn 16 years old. JTMAT Schools require an explanation of any absences of pupils not of Statutory School Age. These absences, however, must be coded in the Attendance Register as an authorised absence. JTMAT School monitor the absences levels of none Statutory School Age pupils and will support in improving the attendance levels as needed.

11.0 Summary

13.1 The school has a legal duty to publish its absence figures to parents and to promote attendance. Equally, parents have a duty to make sure that their children attend. School staff are committed to working with parents as the best way to ensure as high a level of attendance as possible.

JTMAT Attendance Policy should be read in conjunction with the individual JTMAT Schools Attendance Procedures.

APPENDIX A

Current Penalty Notice Payment Details (November 2016)

Fixed Penalty Notice or ultimately a prosecution under the Education Act 1966 s.4441

Should a Fixed Penalty Notice be issued, the fine is 'per parent/carer and per child', regardless of who applied for the leave. The parent has 3 choices:

- A fine of £60 if paid within 21 days.
- A fine of £120 if paid after 21 days but within 28 days.
- In the case of a non payment of the fine the Notice will be withdrawn and will trigger the fast-track prosecution process under the provisions of section 444(1), of the Education Act 1996. If found 'guilty' then this would result in a criminal record for that parent.

Appendix B:

Children Missing from Education Protocol:

Purpose: Further to the 2016 DFE Children Missing from Education Statutory Guidance and the subsequent Local Authorities Children Missing from Education Policy, JTMAT needs a response to clarify the steps which would be undertaken should a pupil become a *Child Missing from Education (CME)*. For the purpose of this protocol, a CME is not a student who is persistently absent, or one for whom it is suspected the reason for absence from school is due to unrequested holiday / leave. A CME student is one for who absence is spontaneous and ongoing with no contact from those with parental responsibility.

This Protocol is to be added to the JTMAT Attendance Policy as an annex and should also be read in conjunction with the JTMAT Safeguarding Policy. Any deletions from a School Admissions Register can only occur once the criteria in Annex A – Grounds for deleting a pupil from the school admission register (Children Missing Education - Statutory Guidance for Local Authorities – September 2016) has been reached.

Day	Who is Responsible?	Actions to be taken:
1-2	Attendance Officer	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Attempts are made to telephone those adults with parental responsibility and / or living with the student. Voicemails are left if the call is unanswered.• Emails to those adults with parental responsibility and / or living with the student asking them to contact the school.• SMS sent to those adults with parental responsibility and / or living with the student asking them to contact the school.• Contacts all other adults, as per the students contact details and leaves voicemails if telephone calls go unanswered.• Completes a sibling check to see if any siblings are also absent from school.• Should there be additional concerns / information received, for this to be passed to the Attendance Intervention Manager.
3	Attendance Officer	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Attempts to telephone all adults and other contacts again.• Should these not be answered then to raise a concern on MyConcern to state that the student is absent without contact.• Contact is made with the Attendance Intervention Manager and Assistant Principal informing them that student is absent.

3-10	Attendance Intervention Manager	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Should there be any safeguarding concerns then Immediate referral is made to First Response. • Completes home visit and hand delivers letter asking for adult living with student to contact school as matter of urgency should there be no answer. • Posts a copy of the letter to adult asking them to contact school as a matter of urgency. • Makes relevant enquiries with classmates / siblings / siblings school / other agencies as appropriate.
10	Attendance Intervention Manager	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Completion of the Statutory Action Request form – Reasonable Enquiry is completed and sent to the LST.
10-20	Attendance Intervention Manager	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Keeps in close communication with EWW from LST regarding ongoing progress.
20	Attendance Intervention Manager	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Is in contact with the EWW from LST and if student has not been located then Assistant Principal / Safeguarding Team / Pupil Data Officer / Attendance Officer are informed. • Completed the CME.1 Referral form and emails this to CME Referrals
	Pupil Data Officer	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Creates a CTF and is uploaded on S2S database. • Removes student from school roll.