

# John T Rice Infant & Nursery School

## ATTENDANCE POLICY

### 2024 - 2025



#### **1. Aims**

We are committed to meeting our obligations concerning school attendance by:

- Promoting good attendance and reducing absence, including persistent absence
- Ensuring every pupil has access to full-time education to which they are entitled
- Acting early to address patterns of absence

We will also support parents to perform their legal duty to ensure their children of compulsory school age attend regularly and will promote and support punctuality.

**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 obtaining permission for an absence in advance from the school.**

#### **2. Legislation and Guidance**

This policy meets the requirements of the [school attendance guidance](#) from the Department for Education (DfE), and refers to the DfE's statutory guidance on [school attendance parental responsibility measures](#). These documents are drawn from the following legislation setting out the legal powers and duties that govern school attendance:

- Part 6 of [The Education Act 1996](#)
- Part 3 of [The Education Act 2002](#)
- Part 7 of [The Education and Inspections Act 2006](#)
- [The Education \(Pupil Registration\) \(England\) Regulations 2006](#) (and [2010](#), [2011](#), [2013](#), [2016](#) amendments)
- [The Education \(Penalty Notices\) \(England\) \(Amendment\) Regulations 2013](#)

This policy also refers to the DfE's guidance on the [school census](#), which explains the persistent absence threshold.

#### **3. Roles and Responsibilities**

##### **3.1 The Governing Body**

The Governing Body is responsible for monitoring attendance figures for the whole school on, at least, a termly basis. It holds the Head Teacher to account for the implementation of this policy. The Strategic Development and Pupil Committee and the Full Governing Body meetings discuss whole school attendance each term looking at patterns and persistent absentees. During these meetings the governing body examine recent trends and patterns in attendance and compare to historic trends; they benchmark the school's attendance against other schools similar in context and view attendance data on different vulnerable groups such as SEND, PP and children who have a social worker to ensure their attendance is good. The

Governing body set realistic goals for school attendance with school leaders and support and challenge school leaders to improve overall school attendance.

### **3.2 The Head Teacher**

The Head Teacher is responsible for:

- Implementing this policy
- Leading school attendance and making referrals for families for external support
- Monitoring school-level absence data and reporting it to governors
- Supporting staff with monitoring the attendance of individual pupils
- Holding meetings with parents/carers to discuss ways to improve attendance
- Create attendance plans with parents to improve school attendance
- Completing home visits when there are concerns about a child's attendance or whereabouts
- Meet with office staff weekly to discuss attendance and identify children who are at risk of PA (persistent absenteeism)
- Liaising with other local schools and the local authority where absence is at risk of becoming persistent or severe
- Requesting the Local Authority issue fixed-penalty notices, where necessary
- Sharing the attendance policy with parents/ carers annually and ensuring it is accessible on the school's website

### **3.3 Parents/ Carers**

- Under Section 7 of the Education Act 1996 the parents and carers are responsible for making sure that their child receives efficient full-time education, suitable to their age, ability, aptitude and any special needs they may have, either by regular attendance at school or otherwise. Regular attendance is defined, as "children must be at school every day that the school requires them to be"
- Parents/ carers must ensure that they are fully aware of the school's attendance policy, as any absence will have a huge impact on your child's learning
- To have children in class ready for teaching by the start of the day at 8.45a.m
- To inform school of any absence and keep us up to date of any prolonged absence. If school are not informed of a reason for absence, this will be considered as unauthorised
- To request leave at least 4 weeks in advance
- To make applications for leave in writing on the school's 'Request to Remove a child from Education', giving the reason for the request
- To work with the school and The Family Service to improve lateness and attendance
- To avoid medical and dental appointments during the school day. Medical appointments do not normally need a full day so children should only be absent for the length of the appointment. They should attend school before the appointment and return to school immediately after
- If parents, guardians or carers are worried about their child's attendance at school they should: Talk to their child; it may be something simple that needs your help in resolving and then contact school to seek support

### **3.4 Class Teachers**

- Class teachers are responsible for recording attendance daily, using the correct codes, and submitting this information to the school office by 9:00am and 1pm
- Building strong relationships with parents/carers, listening to barriers for attendance and working towards removing them for families
- Liaising with the Head teacher and the office staff to raise concerns about attendance and punctuality of the children in their class and then work co-operatively with the Head teacher and parents/ carers to support any attendance plans.

### **3.5 School Office Staff**

- Taking calls and checking Weduc for messages from parents about absence and recording it on the school system
- Following up any messages where no specific reason has been provided e.g. Parent/carer has said the child is unwell
- Making first day phone calls to parents/ carers of children who are absent and have not informed school of the reason why.
- Monitoring attendance data across the school and at an individual pupil level
- Making calls to parents/carers and arranging meetings with the Head Teacher
- Compiling attendance data each week and identifying children whose attendance is falling below the required level
- Reporting concerns about attendance to the Head Teacher
- Completing home visits with the Head teacher or other senior leader when there are concerns about a child's attendance or whereabouts
- In conjunction with the Head Teacher, sending out letters to parents and parent APP messages in relation to attendance

## **4. Recording Attendance**

### **4.1 Attendance Register**

We will keep an attendance register and place all pupils onto this register.

We will take our attendance register at the start of the first session of each school day and once during the second session. It will mark whether every pupil is:

- Present
- Attending an approved off-site educational activity
- Absent
- Unable to attend due to exceptional circumstances

Any amendment to the attendance register will include:

- The original entry
- The amended entry
- The reason for the amendment

- The date on which the amendment was made
- The name and position of the person who made the amendment

We will keep every entry on the attendance register for 3 years after the date on which the entry was made.

Pupils must arrive at school by 8:40am on each school day (or 12:30pm for afternoon nursery).

The register for the first session is taken at 8:50am and closes at 9:15am.

The register for the second session is taken between 12:30pm - 1:00pm.

Registers are sent to the office and office staff will check them twice a day and ensure all absences are accounted for.

## 4.2 Unplanned Absence

The pupil's parent/carer must notify the school on the first day of an unplanned absence by 9:00am or as soon as practically possible.

This can be done by telephoning school (01623 465588) and speaking to an office member or leaving an answer phone message. Parents/carers can also report the absence on the parent APP.

We will mark absence due to illness as authorised unless the school has a genuine concern about the authenticity of the illness. If the authenticity of the illness is in doubt, the school may ask the pupil's parent/carer to provide medical evidence, such as a doctor's note, prescription, appointment text/ email or other appropriate form of evidence. We will not ask for medical evidence unnecessarily.

If the school is not satisfied about the authenticity of the illness, the absence will be recorded as unauthorised.

## 4.3 Planned Absence

Attending a medical or dental appointment will be counted as authorised if the pupil's parent/carer notifies the school in advance of the appointment. If a dental appointment is in the morning, we would expect the child to return to school for the afternoon and the same if the appointment was in the afternoon – the children would be expected to be at school in the morning. Exceptions will be made if the child must have complex dental work, or medical appointments are in hospitals a distance away from school.

However, we encourage parents/carers to make medical and dental appointments out of school hours where possible. Where this is not possible, the pupil should be out of school for the minimum amount of time necessary.

Go to section 5 to find out which term-time absences the school can authorise.

## 4.4 Holiday Requests in Term Time

The DfE introduced, in August 2024, statutory guidance stating **no** holidays will be authorised in a school term. If parents/carers still wish to remove their child from education during term-time, they must apply as far in advance as possible of the requested absence. They should do this by collecting a 'Request to Remove a Child from Education' form from the school office or download and print one from the school website.

Any request to remove your child from education for **5 days/ 10 sessions over a ten-week rolling period** could lead to the local authority issuing a penalty notice or prosecution under section 444(1) of the

Education Act 1996. If issued with penalty notice, the penalty is set at **£160 per child per parent/carer** and should be paid within 28 days of the date on which the notice is issued. The payment must be made directly to the local authority.

If a parent has received two penalty notices over a three-year rolling period, and removes their child for a third time, (within the three year rolling period) the local authority may prosecute via Magistrates court. This decision is the Local Authorities' and not the schools.

#### **4.5 Lateness and Punctuality**

A pupil who arrives late:

- Before the register has closed (9:15am) will be marked as late, using the appropriate code (L)
- After the register has closed (After 9:15am) will be marked as an unauthorised absence for the whole session (U)

If the lateness is regular and sustained and/or impacting upon a child's progress, the Head Teacher will arrange a meeting to discuss reasons for the lateness and to offer support in order to improve the punctuality.

#### **4.6 Following Up Absence**

Where any child we expect to attend school does not attend, or stops attending, the school will:

- Follow up on their absence with their parent/carer to ascertain the reason, by making a first day phone call by 9:30am
- Ensure proper safeguarding action is taken where necessary
- Identify whether the absence is approved or not
- Identify the correct attendance code to use
- Completing a home visit if necessary
- Arrange meetings with parents/ carers to look at barriers to attendance
- Refer to other agencies for support
- Refer to attendance enforcement

#### **4.7 Reporting to Parents**

- Attendance will be reported to parents in the final week of each half term via the parent APP
- The final yearly attendance will be reported in the form of a school report in the last half term of the year
- Attendance meetings will be organised with parents/ carers at the end of each term if a child's attendance is of concern. This is normally when a child's attendance is below 90% and there has been no sustained improvement. A discussion will be held in private between the child's parents/ carers and the Head teacher or senior leader. Support will be offered and a plan put in place for the following 6 weeks. An expectation will be that the child's attendance will improve over the six-week period.

### **5. Authorised and Unauthorised Absence**

#### **5.1 Approval for Term-time Absence**

The Head Teacher will only grant a leave of absence to pupils during term time if they consider there to be 'exceptional circumstances'. A leave of absence can be granted at the Head Teacher's discretion.

**We define 'exceptional circumstances' as circumstances that could not be reasonably foreseen and for which there was insufficient time to take the necessary action to resolve the situation arising from those circumstances.**

The school considers each application for term-time absence individually, taking into account the specific facts, circumstances and relevant context behind the request.

Valid reasons for **authorised absence** include:

- Illness and medical/dental appointments
- Religious observance – where the day is exclusively set apart for religious observance by the religious body to which the pupil's parents belong. If necessary, the school will seek advice from the parents' religious body to confirm whether the day is set apart
- Traveller pupils travelling for occupational purposes – this covers Roma, English and Welsh Gypsies, Irish and Scottish Travellers, Showmen (fairground people) and Circus people, Bargees (occupational boat dwellers) and New Travellers. Absence may be authorised only when a Traveller family is known to be travelling for occupational purposes and has agreed this with the school, but it is not known whether the pupil is attending educational provision

## **5.2 Legal Sanctions**

The local authority can request penalty notices for unauthorised absences, where the child is of compulsory school age.

If issued with a penalty notice, the penalty is set at **£160 per child per parent/carers** and should be paid within 28 days of the date of which the notice starts. The payment must be made directly to the Local Authority.

The decision on whether to issue a penalty notice may take into account:

- The number of unauthorised absences occurring within a rolling academic year
- One-off instances of irregular attendance, such as holidays taken in term time
- 10 sessions of unauthorised absence within a ten week period (that may or may not include a holiday in this amount and unauthorised absence for another reason)
- Where an excluded pupil is found in a public place during school hours without a justifiable reason

If the payment has not been made after 28 days, the Local Authority can decide whether to prosecute.

## **6. Strategies for Promoting Attendance**

Weekly assemblies take place and attendance is celebrated.

- The class with the best attendance receives a certificate and JTR Bear, which builds towards Golden Time.
- Classes with 100% attendance receive a non- uniform day the following week.
- The class with the least minutes late receives a certificate and a bear, which builds towards Golden Time.
- Classes with no minutes late receive a non- uniform day the following week
- Classes with good attendance and no lates are celebrated on the home page of the website.
- At the end of each term, children with 96%+ attendance receive a small prize in recognition

- Children who have 100% attendance for the whole year are presented with a book voucher.
- Children who attend school 100% in a week have the chance to win a prize in Friday well done assembly. 10 lucky winners will be selected at random from the 100% box and can choose a small prize.

## **7. Attendance Monitoring**

The office staff at our school monitor pupil absence daily.

A pupil's parent/carer is expected to call the school in the morning if their child is going to be absent due to ill health. It is the responsibility of the parent/carer to phone school every day that their child is absent to give an update.

**Day 1** - If we have not received a phone call from parent/carer by 9:00am, the office staff will make a first day call. Until contact with the parent/carer is made, this absence will remain unauthorised.

**Day 2** - In the event of a parent/carer not answering the first day call a message will be left (if this option is available) and a Weduc message will also be sent. For children who are absent for a second consecutive day the office staff will telephone parent/carer again in the morning and leave a message/send a WEDUC message.

**Day 3** – If parents/carers have not made contact by day 3, the Head Teacher will be informed and a home visit will take place to ascertain the whereabouts of the child. A letter will be posted through the home address of the parent/ carer of the child stating a home visit has taken place and school need to be contacted as soon as possible by the parent.

***NB: If a child is not seen by school staff by day 3, and/or contact has not been made to parents/carers, a phone call to the police and/or social care will be made. In addition, children whose attendance is of concern will automatically proceed to step 3, if contact is not made on day 1.***

If a pupil's absence goes above the expected number of days for the specific illness, the school will contact the parent/carer of the pupil to discuss the reasons for this. The school uses the Public Health guidance to ascertain the recommended number of days required for illnesses.

If a pupil's attendance continues to decline after contacting their parent/carer, we will consider involving the School Attendance Support Team (Early Help).

The persistent absence threshold is 10%. If a pupil's individual overall absence rate is greater than or equal to 10%, the pupil will be classified as a persistent absentee. See grid below:

<b>Term</b>	<b>No of Absences</b>
September – October 1 <sup>st</sup> Half Term	3½ days
September – December Autumn Term	7 days
September – February Half Year	10 days
September – Easter Autumn & Spring Term	12½ days

September – May 5 Half Terms	15½ days
September – July Full Academic Year	19 days

### **Process for Monitoring and Intervening:**

School office staff & the Head teacher will monitor and track all children's attendance on a daily and weekly basis. Any children's attendance that falls below 90% will be identified and flagged by office staff to the Head Teacher each week.

#### *Informal school support:*

- **Step 1** – Letter 1 will be sent to any child's parents/carers whose attendance falls below 90% explaining the attendance has fallen below the acceptable level. Parents/carers will be invited into school to speak to the Head Teacher and offered support and help in order to increase the attendance.  
NB: If after letter 1, attendance falls again within 6 weeks they will automatically receive letter 2.
- **Step 2** - If a child's attendance improves, a message will be sent via Weduc in recognition of this.  
If a child's attendance continues to fall, they will receive letter 2. This will inform the parents/carers to that an appointment has been made to speak to the Head Teacher or a member of the SLT. At this meeting, parents are asked about the barriers to ensuring good attendance for their child, and they will be offered further support in order to improve attendance. This support may be advice, visual TT, reward charts, referrals to other services such as surestart, HFT, EHU. At this meeting parents/ carers will be informed that a 6-week monitoring period will begin and medical proof will be required to authorize any future absences. The purpose of this monitoring period is to increase the attendance of the child.

#### *Specialist service support:*

- **Step 3** – If a child's attendance improves after the 6-week monitoring period, a message will be sent via the parent APP in recognition of this. (Letter 3)  
If a child's attendance continues to fall, parents/carers will be sent letter 4 requesting they meet with the Head Teacher and attendance leader so a more formal attendance plan or referral to relevant support services can be made. At this meeting, barriers to good attendance will be explored again, the impact of poor attendance explained and parents will be asked to complete an attendance agreement. This will be signed by parents and the Head teacher and detail the agreements decided at the meeting. Parents/ carers will be referred for any specialist support they need and the child, if useful, will receive support through ELSA and mindfulness club in school.  
At this meeting it will be made clear that over the next 10 weeks their child's attendance will be closely tracked and if 5 days or 10 sessions are taken in absence, then a referral for attendance enforcement to support the family will be made. It will also be made clear that medical proof will be required in order to authorize any future absences.

#### *Issuing fixed penalty notice:*

- **Step 4** – If a child's attendance improves at the end of the written plan a phone call to parents/carers in recognition of this will take place.



If a child's attendance continues to decline during this period and the threshold of 5 days (10 sessions) is reached then a referral without consent to attendance enforcement team will be made. This will be communicated through a written letter posted to the parent or hand delivered.

NB: All attendance letters, meetings, discussions and plans will be added to CPOMS as a record of the support and help offered. This log of support and communication will be sent through to Attendance Enforcement if a referral is made.

Pupil-level absence data will be collected each day by the Local Authority and published at National and Local Authority level through the DfE's school absence national statistics releases. The underlying school-level absence data is published alongside the national statistics. The school will compare attendance data to the national average, and share this with the Governing Body.

## **8. Monitoring Arrangements**

This policy will be reviewed as guidance from the Local Authority or DfE is updated, and as a minimum annually by Mrs. Shelley Bennett (Head Teacher). At every review, the Full Governing Body will approve the policy.

## **9. Nursery**

John T. Rice Infant & Nursery school organise our own admissions into the nursery. It is a 52 place nursery that runs morning, afternoon and 30 hour spaces. On admission to nursery, parents are given an attendance policy and it is made clear that on acceptance of a place at JTR they are committing to sending their child to nursery every day that nursery is open, which is in line with our attendance policy for statutory aged children. If a nursery child's attendance becomes a concern and drops to 75% or less, school will write to parents/ carers explaining the concerns and then set up a meeting to discuss barriers to attendance/ punctuality. School will offer support and sign post to available services at this point.

If attendance/ punctuality still does not improve after a monitoring period of six weeks, a further meeting will be set up and additional support and help will be offered such as advice from school professionals, a referral to Surestart or the Early Help unit.

After a further monitoring period of six weeks, if there is still no improvement in attendance/ punctuality, school reserve the right to remove a place from a child in nursery. Governors will have been involved in the lead up to this decision and it will not be taken lightly. There will always have been meetings to discuss the barriers to attendance, attendance plans and referrals to professional services.

## **10. Links With Other Policies**

This policy links to the following policies:

- Child protection and safeguarding policy
- Behaviour policy
- Wellbeing policy

Policy written and reviewed autumn 2024

Agreed by Governors 23.09.2024 at FGB meeting