Attendance Policy

Updated for:	September 2026
Next review:	September 2027

James Montgomery Academy Trust

Attendance Policy

1. Statement of intent

JMAT schools are child-centred, inclusive and distinctive, delivering excellence in education, sharing best practice and building aspiration - regular attendance at school is vital to achieve this. We believe that all our pupils have a right to an education as enshrined in the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child and in UK law.

The opportunities provided by education are fundamental to enabling all children to reach their potential and lead happy and rewarding lives. Evidence shows that there are clear links between good attendance and high achievement in school. Pupils who attend school regularly are more likely to feel settled in school, maintain friendships, make progress and gain the greatest benefit from their education. Our Trust schools will work with families to ensure pupils engage in education and maximise their full potential.

This policy outlines our approach to attendance and summarises the legal duties and expectations of the whole school community. It reflects the key principles of the DfE's guidance 'Working together to improve school attendance', as well as local procedures.

2. Good attendance is important because:

- Statistics show a direct link between under-achievement and absence below 95%.
- Good attendance and punctuality are vital for success at school and to establish positive life habits necessary for future success.
- Regular attendance encourages children's social skills, building friendships and developing social groups, working together as a whole team, sharing ideas and developing life skills.
- Non-attenders will not only miss out on essential learning but also other social events taking place (linking into the personal development of pupils).
- Regular attenders are more successful in transferring between primary school, secondary school, higher education, employment and training

Laughton Junior & Infant School Attendance Team

Miss K Devonshire

Admin Assistant

Mrs H Holden

Admin Assistant

Mrs C Hill

School Attendance Lead

Miss H Lawery

Deputy Attendance Lead

4 Roles and responsibilities

All staff (teaching and support) and volunteers in school have a key role to play in supporting and promoting excellent school attendance and will work together with parents to provide an environment in which all our pupils are eager to learn, feel valued members of the school community and look forward to coming to school every day. The whole school community, pupils and parents, have a responsibility for ensuring good school attendance. Each has an important role to play. The purpose of this attendance policy is to clarify everyone's part in this.

4.1 The headteacher will:

- Develop and maintain a whole school culture that promotes the benefits of high attendance.
- Communicate attendance expectations clearly and consistently to the school community.
- Ensure the attendance policy is understood and followed by all staff, pupils and parents.
- Ensure a systematic approach to gathering, analysing and acting upon attendance data is in place.
- Ensure that barriers to attendance for a child are identified at an early stage and that support is put in place to support with overcoming these barriers.
- 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 for individual pupils, groups of pupils and at a whole-school level.
- Share information and work collaboratively with other schools in the area, local authorities, and other partners when required, particularly where a pupil's absence is at risk of becoming persistent or severe.

4.2 All school staff will:

- Accurately complete admission and ensure all pupils are registered accurately.
- Record attendance accurately and follow up absences with parents
- Promote and reward good attendance with pupils at all appropriate opportunities.
- Build strong relationships and work jointly with parents/carers by listen carefully and understanding the barriers to a child's attendance
- Work in partnership with families and others to remove the barriers to attendance for a child
- Communicate any concerns or underlying problems that may account for a child's absence
- Support pupils with absence to engage with their learning once they are back in school, being particularly mindful of pupils absent from school due to physical or mental health, or special educational needs and/or disabilities

5. Parents and carers and the law

The law in the UK entitles every child of compulsory school age to an efficient, full-time education suitable to their age, aptitude, and any special educational need they may have.

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, medical appointments, etc.

Permitting a child's absence from school that is not authorised by the Headteacher creates an offence of law.

5.1 Parents are expected to:

- Ensure their child attends every day the school is open except when a statutory reason applies.
- Inform the school on the morning of the first day if their child is absent.
- Provide accurate and up-to-date contact details and update the school if their details change.
- Provide more than two contact numbers where possible.

- Only request leave of absence in exceptional circumstances and do so in advance (this does not include holidays).
- Support school with their child in aiming for 100% attendance each year.
- Book any medical/dental appointments around the school day where possible.
- Avoid taking holidays in school time.
- Work together with school to understand and overcome the barriers to their child's attendance in school
- Encourage good routines at home so children are prepared for school each day
- Work with the school and local authority to help them understand their child's barriers to attendance in cases of poor attendance or persistent absence.
- Proactively engage with the formal support offered – including any attendance contract or voluntary early help plan to prevent the need for legal intervention.

6. Understanding types of absence

Every half-day absence from school has to 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".

Authorised absences are mornings or afternoons away from school for a justified reason like illness (although you may be asked to provide medical evidence for your child before this can be authorised), urgent medical or dental appointments which unavoidably fall in school time, emergencies or other unavoidable cause.

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

Unauthorised absence includes:

- 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 adequately explained to school
- oversleeping
- confusion over school dates
- children who arrive at school too late to get a "U" mark on the attendance register to indicate they are in school for safeguarding purposes, however, this is counted as an absence for the session
- shopping trips
- family events
- problems with the distance travelled to school
- looking after other children/ family members or children accompanying siblings or parents to medical appointments
- their own or family birthdays
- day trips
- other leave of absence in term time which has not been agreed

7. Term-time leave of absence

The headteacher is allowed to grant a leave of absence in exceptional circumstances, at their discretion. The DfE does not consider a need or desire for a holiday or other absence for the purpose of leisure and recreation to be an exceptional circumstance. **Holidays will not be authorised under any circumstance**.

Applications for a leave of absence will be made in advance and considered on an individual basis. The Headteacher reserves the right to determine the amount of time a pupil can be away from school during term time.

In terms of further attendance guidance for Trust schools, requests for leave should not be granted in the following circumstances:

- Immediately before and during assessment periods.
- Where a pupil's authorised absence record is already above 10 percent for any reason.

If parents take their child out of school during term-time without authorisation from the headteacher, they may be subject to sanctions, such as a fixed penalty fine.

Refer to section 5 above regarding reasons for unauthorised absences which are not acceptable.

8. Dealing with lateness

Lateness is not acceptable as it disrupts lessons and may lead to more serious absence. School staff will monitor a child's lateness and may use a range of actions as follows:

- monitor lateness and minutes lost.
- record minutes lost/lateness letter sent to parents/carers.
- meet with parents/carers to discuss reasons for lateness and how school can support improved timekeeping

Pupils arriving after the normal start of the school day must sign in at the main school office where their name and the reason for lateness will be recorded. The register will close 30 minutes after the register has been taken (DfE August 2024). Pupils arriving after the register has closed will be marked as late after registration (Code 'U') and this will count as an unauthorised absence.

Lateness can also be addressed through a parent attendance contract which will detail a support plan agreed between school, child (if appropriate) and parents. If a repeated pattern of lateness continues, and is part of other safeguarding concerns for a family, then a referral may be made for further support from Early/Family Help or children's social care.

9. Children who are absent from school/first day calling procedures

If a child has not arrived at school within the expected time frame and is therefore absent from school with no reason provided, a designated member of staff will initiate **first day calling** procedures.

Year 5 and 6 children who have permission to walk to school alone will be treated as a priority when initiating first day calling procedures and will be contacted immediately if they do not arrive for the start of the school day.

Parents must be contacted on the first day of absence by phone call as soon as practically possible. If a parent cannot be contacted, school will use the further contact numbers provided to establish a reason for the child's absence. DfE recommendations are that schools hold 4 emergency contact numbers for all children.

Careful consideration must be given to determine how quickly a home visit or safe and well check should be made when a child is absent from school. The decision should be made on a case-by-case basis, depending on the concerns and vulnerabilities for a child and family. Each JMAT school will use contextual safeguarding information and a child's history to assess the risk level around any absence and what actions are required when.

A home visit must be carried out by two members of staff, lone visits to a child's home are not permitted by the Trust. If the home visit is unsuccessful and raises further cause for concern, school must consider whether a request to the police for a safe and well check is required.

9.1 Home visits by school staff

If a home visit becomes necessary to ascertain the whereabouts of a child or follow up on a safeguarding concern, the visit must:

- Involve two members of school staff (paired visit), one of whom should be a DSL, Deputy DSL or SLT member.
- Staff should ensure they take phones and/or alarms.
- Ensure that staff sign in/out of school.
- Home visit and any interactions must be recorded on the child's chronology on RecordMy.

If there are concerns about conducting a home visit a dynamic risk assessment will be undertaken, e.g., if there have been previous concerns with aggression, domestic abuse, mental health issues, etc.

9.2 Safe and Well Checks

The requirement for a safe and well check request to the police must be considered on a case-to-case basis, depending on the concerns and vulnerabilities for the child and family. In the first instance all other means of contacting the family must be exhausted prior to contacting the police. This includes:

- Via phone, email and/or text, dojo, etc
- Home visit (using the home visit slip if nobody is present in the property)
- Sibling's schools
- Early Help/Social Worker
- Other services, such as health (if appropriate)

If all of these measures have been exhausted, school should send an email/text to the family contact numbers to say that 'contact is urgently required and the school will need to escalate the concern to the police if there is no response to this email/text'.

If there is no response to the email/text, school reserves the right to contact the police, the local authority or children's social care.

10. Medical/dental appointments

Schools should encourage parents to make medical/dental appointments out of school hours. Where this is not possible, they should get the school's agreement in advance and the pupil should only be out of school for the minimum amount of time necessary for the appointment.

If a pupil is present at registration but has a medical/dental appointment during the session in question, no absence will be recorded for that session.

Pupils who have attended medical/dental appointments and who arrive back in school during the morning or afternoon session will have their attendance code changed from Code M to Code U to ensure that the pupil is marked as having arrived in school after the register has closed. This is to ensure the register is correct with the number of pupils who are present in school and to adhere to fire safety protocols.

Ideal times for appointment are in the mornings after 9.30 so the child gets their morning attendance mark and returns for their afternoon attendance mark, or in the afternoon after 1.30 when they have received their afternoon attendance mark. This ensures that the child's attendance will not be negatively affected by attending dental/medical appointments.

11. Pupils leaving during the school day

During school hours school staff are legally act 'in loco parentis' for a child and therefore must know where the pupils are during the school day:

- Pupils are not allowed to leave school without prior arrangement between parent and a staff member.
- Pupils must be signed out on leaving the school and be signed back in on their return.
- Where a pupil is being collected from the school within school hours, parents are to report to the main school office to collect their child.

- If a pupil leaves the school site without permission their parents will be contacted. Should the school be unable to make contact with the family it may be appropriate, in certain circumstances, to contact the police.

<u>Under no circumstances</u> will a child be allowed to leave school unaccompanied by an adult during the school day.

12. Remote education

Remote education should not be viewed as an equal alternative to attendance in school and is only considered it only as a last resort when the alternative would be no education, and only after it has been established that the child is, or will be, absent from school. In such cases, remote education can be a short-term solution and have the benefit of allowing absent pupils to keep on track with their education and stay connected to their teachers and peers.

There should only be limited circumstances where a pupil is unable to attend school but is able and well enough to continue their education remotely. These circumstances should only involve a short-term absence and might include pupils:

- recovering from short- term infectious illnesses
- preparing for or recovering from some operations
- recovering from injuries where attendance might inhibit recovery

In some exceptional cases, these circumstances might also include pupils whose attendance has been affected by a special educational need or disability (SEND) or a mental health issue. In these circumstances, after the pupil's absence from school has been established, schools should consider providing pupils with remote education on a case-by-case basis. This should be part of a plan to reintegrate back to school, and only when it is judged that providing remote education would not adversely affect the pupil's return to school.

Further information can be found on the DfE's guidance 'Providing remote education' January 2023.

Pupils with long-term medical conditions or any other physical or mental health needs affecting attendance may require additional support to continue their education.

13. Persistent and severely persistent absence

Persistent absence is classed as absence below 90% and equates to a child being absent one day or more every fortnight. Severely persistent absence is 50% and below, with the child being absent from school more than they are present.

For children who are persistently absent (below 90%) school will work together with parents and local partners to put additional targeted support in place to remove any barriers to attendance and re-engage the child into school.

For children who are severely persistently absent (50% and below) school will work with parents and local partners to consider specific support with attendance. This may include consideration for an education, health and care plan or an alternative form of educational provision where necessary to overcome the barriers to the pupil being in school.

Further details about persistent absence can be found in the school Attendance Strategy.

14. Children Missing Education, and children being absent from education over a prolonged period of time

Knowing where children are during school hours is an extremely important aspect of safeguarding. All staff should be aware that children being absent from school, particularly repeatedly and/or for prolonged periods, and children missing education can act as a vital warning sign of a range of safeguarding possibilities. This may include abuse and neglect such as sexual abuse or exploitation and can also be a sign of child criminal exploitation, including involvement in county lines. It may indicate mental health

problems, risk of substance abuse, risk of travelling to conflict zones, risk of female genital mutilation, so called 'honour'-based abuse or risk of forced marriage. Early intervention is essential to identify the existence of any underlying safeguarding risk and to help prevent the risks of a child going missing in future.

Where a child is missing from education, local authority procedures will be followed**.**

The school will inform the LA of any pupil who:

- Fails to attend regularly without explanation.
- Is expected to start at school but does not arrive on the first day.
- Has not returned **after 10 days** following a period of authorised absence.
- Has **a period of 20 days unauthorised absence**.
- Leaves the authority without a destination.

These children will be placed on the out of CME register, unless there is evidence to show the child is elsewhere. Children referred as Missing from Education should only be removed from the school roll on the advice of and following consultation with the Children Missing Education Officer and authorisation from the local authority.

15. Young Carers

A young carer might support someone who has a disability, a long-term illness, mental health issues or a problem with alcohol or drugs. This could be a parent, grandparent or a sibling. This can present barriers for them that might make it difficult to attend school or focus on school when they are there. JMAT understands the difficulties that face young carers. All JMAT schools take a caring and flexible approach to the specific needs of young carers, involving other agencies if appropriate.

16. Children with Special Education Needs, Disabilities and Health Needs

Some pupils face more complex barriers to attendance. This can include pupils who have special educational needs and disabilities (SEND). Their right to an education is the same as any other pupil and therefore the attendance ambition for these pupils should be the same as it is for any other pupil but additional support may need to be provided.

School will work in partnership with parents to develop specific support approaches for attendance for pupils with special educational needs and disabilities, including, where applicable, ensuring the provision outlined in the pupil's education, health and care plan is accessed.

17. Religious Observances

As a general rule, 'a day exclusively set apart for religious observance' is a day when the pupil's parents would be expected by the religious body to mark the occasion. If in doubt, schools should seek advice from the parent's religious body about whether it has set the day apart for religious observance.

If a religious body sets apart a single day for a religious observance and the parent applies for more than one day, the school may only record one day using this code; the rest of the time would require a leave of absence request to be submitted to school in advance.

Parents should inform school prior to the absence required for religious observance.

18. Participating in a regulated performance or undertaking regulated employment abroad

All schools can grant a leave of absence for a pupil to undertake employment (paid or unpaid) during school hours. Where a pupil requests to be absent for a performance or activity, the individual or organisation responsible for organising, producing or running the activity/performance is required to request a license form the pupil's home LA, in line with section 3 of the children and Young Person Act 1963.

Where a local authority licence specifies the dates that a pupil is to be away from school to perform, school should record the absence for those days as if a leave of absence had been applied for and granted.

Where the terms of the local authority licence do not specify dates, it is at the discretion of the school to grant leave of absence.

19. Monitoring and Review

This policy/strategy is reviewed annually by the **Trust Strategic Safeguarding and Attendance Lead.**

Any changes made to this policy by the above will be communicated to all members of staff. All members of staff are required to familiarise themselves with all processes and procedures outlined in this policy as part of their induction programme.

20. Document History

Previous versions archived in accordance with document retention requirements.

Issue	Author/ Owner	Date Reviewed	Reviewed by	Approved by A&R Committee (date)	Comments/ Changes
V1	*JMAT*	*July 2025*	*PRG*	*08/07/25*	• *Section 4.1 – change of wording regarding attendance data* • *Section 5.1 – updated guidance on contact numbers* • *Section 6 – new section to give detail to types of absence* • *Section 7 – clarifies further guidance for Trust schools* • *Section 8 – change of wording to include 'Family Help'* • *Section 9 – clarification to timescales for first day calling procedures* • *Section 11 – further detail added regarding children leaving school during the school day*
V2	*JMAT*	*July 2026*	*PRG*	*09/07/26*	• *Change of wording to reflect KSCIE 2026* • *Addition of section 9.1 and 9.2 – home visits and safe and well check to clarify guidance for schools* • *Section 12 – substantial rewrite of this section to reflect KSCIE 2026*

Key:

PRG – Policy Review Group
A & R Committee – Audit and Risk Committee