

Clifton (Main Office and Junior Site):
Worrall Road, Clifton, Bristol, UK BS8 2UH
Tel: 0117 903 0251

Redland (Infant Site):
Lower Redland Road, Redland, Bristol, UK BS6 6SU
Tel: 0117 353 2090

21 November 2022

All parents & carers

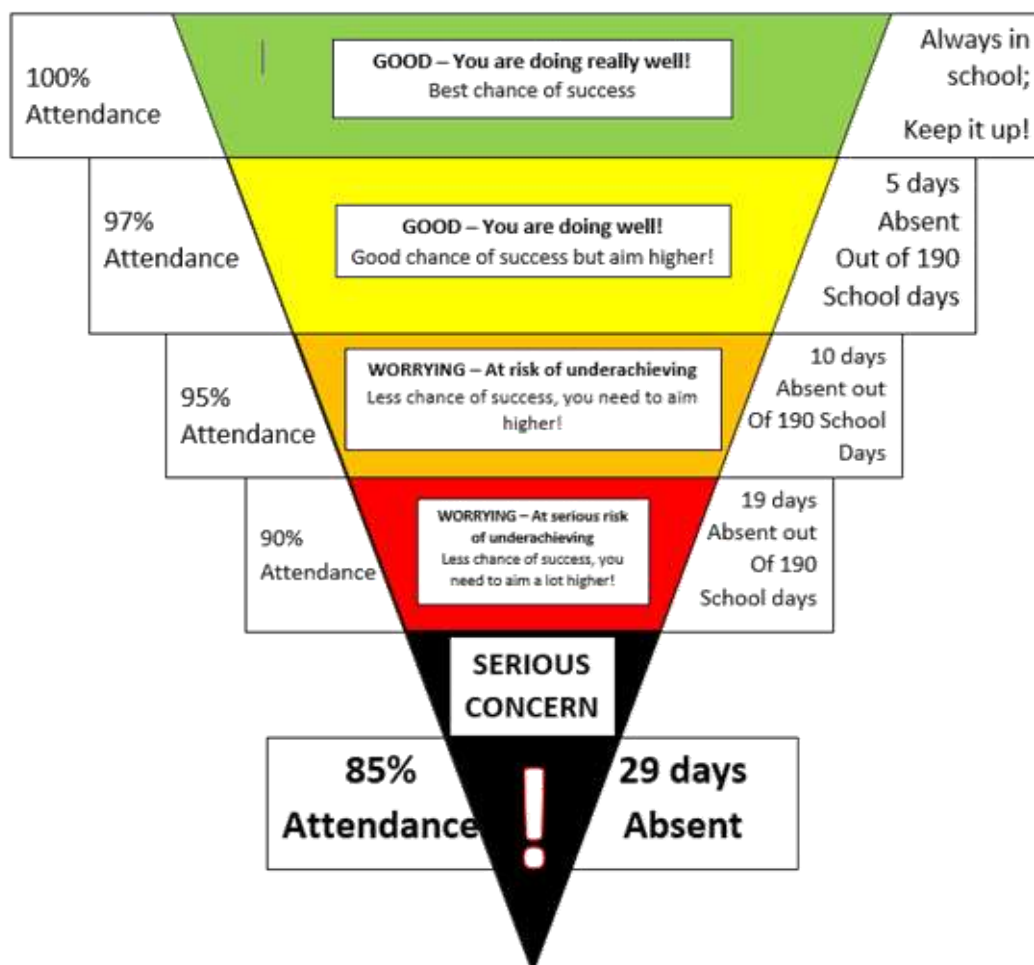
Re: Attendance & New Procedure

I am writing to you with regards to the importance of school attendance and punctuality and to outline a new, improved procedure for requesting a leave of absence.

The Importance of Attendance & Punctuality

We are all very aware that the last few years of Covid disruption has impacted school attendance like never before and we are hopeful that things have now returned to a more typical school year. Regular attendance at school has therefore never been more critical to ensure your child benefits from all the excellent learning and opportunities at St. John's. Every lesson counts and even a small amount of time out, negatively affects the learning of all children.

The national average for primary attendance is 96% and for St. John's last year it was 94%. Most children have attendance that is above the national average, but there are too many children who, for a variety of reasons, are below this and are therefore being deprived of their education. We recognise that children do get ill and individuals may have some years when they dip to 95%, however, any child below this is a concern:



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If your child's attendance falls below 90%, they are deemed to be 'Persistently Absent' by Ofsted and of significant concern – and with good reason. The correlation between attendance and achievement is undeniable¹ and is confirmed by last year's average Year 6 SATs scores:

Children above 90% Attendance	Children with 80-90% Attendance
Reading = securely at the expected standard & close to the upper 'Greater Depth' level & Progress was very high	Reading = below the expected & Progress was negative
Writing = securely at the expected standard & Progress was high	Writing = below the expected & Progress was low
Maths = securely at the expected standard & close to the upper 'Greater Depth' level & Progress was high	Maths = just at the expected standard & Progress was negative

Ensuring your child is in school regularly:

- Will help your child's academic achievement and enable them to reach their potential
- Establishes good habits for future education and the world of work
- Shows you value education and the power it has to transform lives
- Helps social development & friendships
- Enables access to the full breadth of cultural awareness & wider personal development
- Maintains a routine which is good for children's learning and wellbeing
- Avoids being disadvantaged when you return as lessons are often sequential
- Enables staff to focus on teaching, rather than trying to help absentees to catch up

Similarly, arriving at school in good time also yields many of the benefits listed above. Many children who arrive late, find it really difficult to enter the already occupied classroom and are embarrassed; this also disrupts the lesson that would have started as soon as the children arrive. It is your responsibility to ensure your child is in school before the bell goes (even if it's raining!); we are happy to support you or your child if needed.

Leave of Absence Revised Procedure

Absence from school should only be when there is no other option. We know that children will be ill and if they are truly unwell, especially with a high temperature, then we want them to stay at home to rest and recover (for 48 hours if this is diarrhoea or vomiting, to avoid the spread of infection). However, a cold or cough is *not* a reason to keep them at home. Medical/dental appointments should be outside of school time, but we know this may not always be possible. Similarly, funerals of close family members, essential visa trips, visits to other schools, examinations are all usually unavoidable and are likely to be authorised for the event taking place on that day.

¹ Further national data is available via this link: <https://explore-education-statistics.service.gov.uk/find-statistics/the-link-between-absence-and-attainment-at-ks2-and-ks4>

St. John's C of E Primary School



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Any other absences should be the absolute exception and for unavoidable reasons. Holidays, however “educational”, family gatherings or visits, birthdays, shopping and parent/carer work commitments will not be authorised. In most cases, absences of 8 half days or more are likely to incur a fixed penalty from the Local Authority (see attached leaflet). We will no longer authorise any Covid-disrupted re-scheduled events.

Unplanned absences, usually for illness, must be reported to the office via the Parentmail app, or when this is not possible via email or phone call to the office. For all other absences, we will now use **an online form** to request a leave of absence – this replaces the red paper form.

Requests will either be:

Authorised – for those exceptional occasions listed above

Unauthorised – school cannot prevent you taking your child out of school, but the absence is not authorised and may incur a fixed penalty

Partially authorised – some days may be authorised and some may not (and may still incur a fixed penalty) e.g. a family wedding abroad – the day may be authorised but the extended time either side may not.

We trust that all families will be honest about the reasons for any absence and accept the system that we are operating in. I would urge parents and carers to think carefully about the moral message that not doing so gives to your children – and remember, children are usually very vocal about what they get up to out of school.

The new form is available via [this link](#), will be at the bottom of each Friday bulletin and on the school website in the Parent/Carer Section under FAQ. We hope that the form is easy to use, it will provide us with all the essential information to enable us to make an informed decision about the absence and is easier for us to track; no more lost red forms!

And Finally . . .

As a school, we have developed more robust systems to monitor and follow up attendance so we can support you with keeping your child in school. Ensuring your child's attendance is at least 95% is your responsibility. We all want the best for our children; your child has so much to gain from being in school every day, and so much to lose by missing school.

Kind regards

Mr. Justin Hoye
Headteacher