

Attendance Policy

St Mary's CE Primary School



September 2023

To be reviewed: September 2024

Introduction

This is a successful school and your child plays their part in making it so. We aim for an environment which enables and encourages all members of the community to reach out for excellence. For our children to gain the greatest benefit from their education, it is vital that they attend regularly and your child should be at school, on time, every day the school is open unless the reason for the absence is unavoidable.

It is very important therefore that you make sure that your child attends regularly and this policy sets out how together we will achieve this.

Why regular attendance is so important:

Learning

Any absence affects the pattern of a child's schooling and regular absence will seriously affect their learning. Any pupil's absence disrupts teaching routines so may affect the learning of others in the same class. Ensuring your child's regular attendance at school is your legal responsibility and permitting absence from school, without a good reason, is an offence in law and may result in prosecution.

Safeguarding

Your child may be at risk of harm if they do not attend school regularly. Safeguarding the interests of each child is everyone's responsibility and within the context of this school, we will adhere to 'Working together to Safeguard Children' (July 2018), 'Keeping Children Safe in Education' (September 2022):

- Protecting children from maltreatment;
- Preventing impairment of children's health or development;
- Ensuring that children are growing up in circumstances consistent with the provision of safe and effective care;
- Taking action to enable all children have the best life chances. Detecting early support through Early Help Assessment.

Failing to attend this school on a regular basis will be considered as a safeguarding matter and appropriate further action will be taken to address this.

Promoting regular attendance

Helping to create a pattern of regular attendance is everybody's responsibility - parents/carers, pupils and all members of school staff.

To help us all to focus on this we will

- Give you details on attendance in our regular Newsletter
- Report to you at least termly on how your child is performing in school, what their attendance and punctuality rate is and how this relates to their attainments;
- Celebrate good attendance by displaying individual and class achievements;
- Reward good or improving attendance through class competitions, certificates and outings/events.

The Law relating to attendance

Section 7 of the Education Act 1996 states that the 'parent/carer of every child of compulsory school age shall cause him/her to receive efficient full time education suitable:-

- a) to age, ability and aptitude;
- b) to any special educational needs he/she may have either by regular attendance at school or otherwise'

The Law relating to safeguarding

Section 175 of the Education Act 2002 places a duty on local authorities and governing bodies to have regard to guidance issued by the Secretary of State with regard to safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children and students under the age of 18.

Attendance at school in relation to the

'United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child'

- Every Child has a right to an education (article 28)
- Education must develop every child's personality, talents and abilities to the full (article 29)
- The best interests of the child must be top priority in all actions concerning children (article 3)
- Children must be protected from all forms of violence or abuse or mistreatment (article 19)

School Expectation

There is an expectation that over the course of the academic year a child's attendance (ie every child's attendance) at St Mary's will be at least **96.5%** or better.

We know that good attendance is the key to children fulfilling their potential. Therefore, throughout the school year we monitor absences and punctuality to show us where improvements need to be made. Information on any projects or initiatives that will focus on these areas will be provided on our website and we ask for your full support.

Understanding types of absence

Every half-day absence from school has to be classified by the school (not by parents/carers), as either AUTHORISED or UNAUTHORISED. This is why information about the cause of any absence is always required, preferably in writing.

Authorised absences are mornings or afternoons away from school for a good reason such as illness, medical/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. This type of absence can lead to the Local Authority using sanctions and/or legal proceedings. This includes (but is not restricted to) the following:

- Parents/carers keeping children off school unnecessarily
- Truancy before or during the school day
- Absences which have never been properly explained
- Children who arrive at school too late to get an attendance mark
- Shopping, looking after other children or birthdays
- Day trips and holidays in term time

Whilst any child may be off school because they are ill, sometimes they can be reluctant to attend school. Any problems with regular attendance are best sorted out between the school, the parents/carers and the child. If your child is reluctant to attend, it is inadvisable to cover up their absence or to give in to pressure to excuse them from attending. This gives the impression to the child that attendance does not matter and usually make things worse.

Any student in St Mary's Primary School identified as having **attendance below 93%** will have all further absence **unauthorised** on school's register. However, should parent(s)/carer(s) provide evidence from a medical practitioner advising that the period of absence was necessary, the absence for the evidenced period will be authorised.

The following national/prescribed and adopted codes will be used to record attendance information.

CODE	DESCRIPTION	MEANING
/	Present (AM)	Present
\	Present (PM)	Present
B	Educated off site (NOT Dual registration)	Approved Education Activity
C	Other Authorized Circumstances (not covered by another appropriate code/description)	Authorized absence
D	Dual registration (i.e. pupil attending other establishment)	Approved Education Activity
E	Excluded (no alternative provision made)	Authorized absence
F	Extended family holiday (agreed)	Authorized absence
G	Family holiday (NOT agreed <u>or</u> days in excess of agreement)	Unauthorized absence
H	Family holiday (agreed)	Authorized absence
I	Illness (NOT medical or dental etc. appointments)	Authorized absence
J	Interview	Approved Education Activity
L	Late (before registers closed)	Present
M	Medical/Dental appointments	Authorized absence
N	No reason yet provided for absence	Unauthorized absence

O	Unauthorized absence (not covered by any other code/description)	Unauthorized absence
P	Approved sporting activity	Approved Education Activity
R	Religious observance	Authorized absence
S	Study leave	Authorized absence
T	Traveller absence	Authorized absence
U	Late (after registers closed)	Unauthorized absence
V	Educational visit or trip	Approved Education Activity
W	Work experience	Approved Education Activity
X	Untimetabled sessions for non-compulsory school-age pupils	Not counted in possible attendances
Y	Unable to attend due to exceptional circumstances	Not counted in possible attendances
Z	Pupil not yet on roll	Not counted in possible attendances
#	School closed to pupils	Not counted in possible attendances

Persistent absenteeism (PA)

A pupil becomes a 'persistent absentee' when they miss 10% or more schooling at any point during the school year for whatever reason and even if absence has been deemed 'authorised'. Absence at this level is doing considerable damage to any child's educational prospects and we need parents'/carers' fullest, support and co-operation to tackle this.

We monitor all absence closely. Any case that is seen to have reached the PA mark or is at risk of moving towards that mark is given priority and you will be informed of this immediately. PA pupils are tracked and monitored carefully through our pastoral system and we also combine this with academic mentoring where absence affects attainment.

Absence procedures If your child is absent you must

- Contact us as soon as possible on the first day of absence;
- Or, you may call into school and report to reception, who will take full details of the absence.

If your child is absent we will

- Telephone or text you on the first day of absence if we have not heard from you;
- Invite you to discuss the situation in person with our Attendance Officer and/or a member of the senior management team if absences persist;
- Refer the matter to our Attendance Consultant and/or the Local Authority if attendance falls below 95%.

Telephone numbers

There are times when we need to contact parents/carers about, amongst other things, absence. We need to have relevant contact numbers at all times. Please ensure we always have up to date numbers – if we don't then something important may be missed. **You have a duty to notify school as soon as possible of any changes to contact details and to provide at least two numbers.**

The Attendance

Parents/carers are expected to contact school where attendance/absence is a difficulty at an early stage and to work with the staff in resolving any problems together. This is nearly always successful. If difficulties cannot be sorted out in this way, the school may refer the child to the Education Investigation Officer (EIO) from the Local Authority. He/she will also try to resolve the situation by agreement but, if other ways of trying to improve the child's attendance have failed and unauthorised absences persist, these Officers can use sanctions such as Penalty Notices or prosecutions in the Magistrates Court. Alternatively, Parent/Carers/carers may wish to contact the EIO

themselves to ask for advice and information. They are independent of the school and will give impartial advice, in accordance with their statutory duties.

Lateness

Poor punctuality is not acceptable. If your child misses the start of the day, they can miss work and do not spend time with their class teacher getting vital information and news for the day. Late arriving pupils disrupt lessons. This can be embarrassing for the child and can encourage absence.

How we manage lateness

The school day starts at **9.00 am** and we expect your child to be in class at that time.

Registers will be marked at that time and your child will receive a late mark if they are not present in the class.

If your child has a persistent late record you will be asked to meet with a member of school staff and/or Attendance Consultant to resolve the problem, but you can approach us at any time if you are having problems getting your child to school on time and school will do what it can to assist.

Holidays in term time

Taking holidays in term time will affect your child's schooling as much as any other absence and we expect parents/carers to help us by not taking children on holiday in school time. Remember that any financial savings you think you may make by taking a holiday in school time are offset by the cost to your child's education and subsequently, life chances.

There is no automatic entitlement in law to time off in school time to take a holiday and the government made an amendment to the Education (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2006 in September 2013 to reflect this.

Leave of absence shall not be granted unless -

- a) an application has been made in advance to the proprietor (ie school) by a parent/carer with whom the pupil normally resides: and
- b) the proprietor, or a person authorised by the proprietor in accordance with paragraph (1), considers that leave of absence should be granted due to the exceptional circumstances relating to that application.

In light of the changes to the Pupil Registration Regulations, St Mary's Primary School will only grant leave where parents/carers can prove exceptional circumstances, which in turn are deemed "exceptional" by St Mary's Primary School.

All applications for pupil leave in term time must be made in writing to the Head Teacher at least 5 school days prior to the requested leave date.

Where the decision is made not to authorise leave in term time, school will inform parents/carers in writing. A general guide for parents/carers, is leave for any holiday, activity or event that could be arranged during the annual 13 week holiday time would not be authorised. Any unauthorised leave will be passed to the local authority will be subject to fining.

On any occasion that school refuses a request for leave in term time, should Parent/Carer/carers proceed with the leave, it will be recorded as a (G) (family holiday not agreed or in excess of agreement), on school's register. Failure to notify and/or request leave of absence in term time, providing at least 5 day notice will result in all absence being recorded as (O) (unauthorised absence not covered by any other description).

Roles and responsibilities/School Procedures

Those people responsible for attendance matters in this school are:

Parents/carers

The Law

Under the 1944 Education Act, parents/carers have a legal duty to ensure that their children receive “efficient full-time education”. Education is compulsory. Once parents/carers have registered a child at school, Parent/Carers (not the child) commit an offence if the child does not attend regularly.

The Local Education Authority can prosecute a parent/carer of a pupil failing to attend school regularly under section 444, Education Act 1996. On conviction, the offence carried a fine of £2,500 for each absent child.

The LA consider that regular attendance at school is of such importance that:

Penalty Notices may be used in a range of situations where unauthorised absence occurs (per parent/carer): Overt truancy, inappropriate parentally condoned absence, excessive holidays in term time or persistent late arrival at school.

Every absence has to be recorded by the school as either:-

AUTHORISED or UNAUTHORISED

- Please make sure your child attends school regularly
- Please make sure your child arrives at school on time (8.00-9:00 class doors are open)
- Please contact the school on the first day that your child is absent on 01226 206422. If we have not received a message regarding your child's absence we may telephone you for information
- Please make sure a late slip is completed by the adult dropping off your child if they are late for school and that they provide a reason for lateness
- Please complete a leave of absence form asking for permission to take your child out of school during term time
- Please notify the school if you change your telephone or emergency contact number, as soon as possible

Authorised absence is the school has either given approval in advance for a pupil to be away or has accepted an explanation offered following an absence as satisfactory justification ascribed ie illness, hospital appointment, family bereavement.

All other absence is categorised as unauthorised.

NB according to the Law, it is school alone (not parents/carers) who decide if an absence is to be authorised or unauthorised.

School

To help parents/carers fulfil their legal duty, this school will:-

- Make clear the school's expectations regarding lateness and absence
- Give the times for the beginning of each session
- Give the dates for the school term and training days in writing
- Contact parent/carers quickly with concerns regarding lateness or absence
- Make clear the procedure for informing school about the reason of lateness/absence

- Report each child's attendance over the year as part of the annual academic report
- Keep parents/carers informed of changes in attendance procedures
- Record attendance twice daily in accordance with DfE guidelines (class teacher responsibilities)
- Monitor all absences and lateness
- Contact parents/carers if no message has been received
- Meet with the Education Investigation Officer or Attendance Consultant to discuss/refer individual pupil absence/lateness
- Report termly to the Governing Body and provide attendance data for the Governors' Annual Report to parents/carers

Procedures

- All parents/carers will receive clear guidelines on attendance
- Parents/carers must inform school on the first morning of absence by 9.30 am
- Pupils enter between 8:50-9:00am
- Registration is at 9.00 am. Arriving after this time will be recorded as an 'unauthorised absence'
- All unauthorised absences must be recorded
- Registers will be monitored weekly
- Class teachers must notify Mrs Goodyear or SLT of any cases for concern
- Pastoral Team to meet on a fortnightly basis to discuss concerns/issues
- Any unauthorised absences will then be actioned. Letters will be sent – first one will be a statement of fact, followed by asking parents/carers to a meeting with the Education Attendance Consultant. Finally, and if need be, the Education Investigation Officer will take over the case with threat of prosecution or a fixed penalty notice
- If a child is late for 2 or more mornings, a letter will be sent to the parents/carers. If lateness persists, parents/carers will be asked to attend a meeting attended by the Education Attendance Consultant
- Individual class teachers have a responsibility to encourage good attendance and punctuality – charts, rewards etc
- Rewards – we will encourage children to come to school regularly and on time through use of positive rewards

This will be done by:-

- A weekly mention for best class attendance in ethos assembly (class points/house points awarded)
- The class in first place will also keep the attendance trophy for the week in their class
- Individual pupils will be awarded a certificate at the end of each term for 100% attendance. Certificates will be bronze/Silver/Gold termly, building on prior success
- Individual pupils will be awarded with a certificate and a prize for 100% attendance for the whole year. These pupils will be entered into a draw to win a special prize
- Pupils will be recognised and awarded a certificate for achieving 'Excellent Attendance' (ie over school target)
- Pupils with medical conditions or exceptional circumstances will be considered on an individual basis and awards given as appropriate
- Classes who achieve 100% for a week will be awarded an extra 10 minutes of an activity of their choice eg (playtime/computer)
- Classes that achieve best overall attendance for the year will be taken on a school trip as reward

Summary

All school staff are committed to working with parents/carers and pupils as the best way to achieve as high a level of attendance as possible and through good attendance ensure every child's welfare and life opportunities are promoted.