



# **ST MARY'S CATHOLIC PRIMARY SCHOOL**

## **Attendance Policy**

**DATE: - 22<sup>nd</sup> January 2019**

**CHAIR OF GOVERNORS: - .....**

**MINUTED: - LGB Educational Performance**

**DATE OF NEXT REVIEW: - Spring 2021**

**REVIEW FREQUENCY:- Bi-Annually**



## St Mary's Catholic Primary School Attendance Policy

### **Mission Statement:**

*St Mary's School endeavours to give all children the best educational opportunities within a Catholic Christian community that values the individual recognises the worth of each person and welcomes everyone.*

*We aim to combine excellence in teaching with enjoyment in learning through the provision of an inclusive, balanced and broadly based curriculum that promotes spiritual, moral, cultural, mental and physical development, and prepares children for the opportunities and responsibilities of secondary education and later life.*

**This attendance policy will be applied to all children consistently and with acknowledgement of the protected characteristics as identified within the Equalities Act 2010. Acceptable reasons for authorised absence will be sensitive to reasons relating to religion, culture and other factors covered within the Equality Act 2010.**

For our children to gain the greatest benefit from their education at St Mary's, good school attendance is essential and parents, pupils and teachers all have their part to play in ensuring this happens. All children are expected to attend school on-time and for the full 190 days of the academic year, unless there is a good reason for absence. The Department for Education sets out the requirements placed on schools. These requirements are detailed in the following legislation:

- The Education Act 1996 - sections 434(1)(3)(4)&(6) and 458(4)&(5);
- The Education (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2006;
- The Education (Pupil Registration) (England) (Amendment) Regulations 2010;
- The Education (Pupil Registration) (England) (Amendment) Regulations 2011;
- The Education (Pupil Registration) (England) (Amendment) Regulations 2013;
- The Education (Pupil Registration) (England) (Amendment) Regulations 2016.

It is very important that parents ensure their children attends school on a regular basis. This Policy sets out how we will achieve this together.

### **Why is regular attendance at school so important?**

There is a strong link between a child's school attendance and their attainment. Research has found a strong statistical link between absenteeism and educational underachievement (e.g. Gottfried 2011, 2013a; Hancock et al., 2013). Early poor attendance habits follow through into secondary school and employments. Any child's absence disrupts their education and teaching routines, so may also affect the learning of others in the same class. Ensuring a child's regular attendance at school (above 96% attendance) is the legal responsibility of the parents. Permitting a child's absence from school without good reason creates an offence in law and may result in prosecution.

## How do we promote regular attendance?

Helping to create a habit of regular attendance is everybody's responsibility – parents, children and school staff.

To help children create a habit of regular attendance, we will:

- inform parents promptly in writing if their child's attendance falls below the acceptable level and work with them to raise attendance;
- share clear written information about attendance in school newsletters, leaflets, website etc
- award termly Attendance Certificates for children who attain above 96% attendance over the term;
- award yearly Attendance Certificates for children who attain above 96% attendance over the school year.
- award Head's Awards to those children who have improved their attendance over time.

## What are the different types of absence?

There are three types of absence:

- *Authorised*: the school approves the pupil's requested absence;
- *Unauthorised*: the school will *not* approve the pupil's requested absence;
- *Persistent*: when a child's overall absence equates to 10 per cent or more of their possible sessions over a half term.

## Authorised absences

Examples of authorised absences would include time taken during the school day for good reason such as illness, medical or dental appointments which are **unavoidable** during school time, family emergencies or other unavoidable cause.

Authorised absence can be:

- Sickness
- Medical appointments which cannot be arranged outside of school absence (appointment letters from the medical body may be requested)
- A child is present at an approved off-site educational activity
- A feast day or a religious observance day exclusively set apart by the religious body to which the parent belongs
- In other **very** exceptional circumstances

An exceptional circumstance is much more likely to be a one-off, unique situation.

- Other short-time (typically one days) absences for events such as weddings, christenings, funerals. Other requests should be made in writing directly to the Head of School.

## Unauthorised absences

Unauthorised absences are those which the school does not consider reasonable, unavoidable or for which no notice has been given and for which no leave has been given. This type of absence can lead to a Penalty Notice being issued. Examples of unauthorised absences would include:

- parents keeping children off school unnecessarily (e.g. shopping trips, days out, birthdays, looking after other children, after a 'late night');
- absences which have not been explained despite requests from school;
- children who arrive at school too late to receive a mark in the register (after 9.10am);
- excessive illness without medical evidence;
- day trips/holidays in term time.

## Persistent absence

A child becomes a 'persistent' absentee when they miss 10% or more schooling across the school year *for whatever reason*. Absence at this level will be doing considerable damage to any child's educational prospects and a rapid improvement will be required to improve attendance.

Every half-day absence from school has to be recorded and classified by the school as authorised or unauthorised. This is why information about the absence is always requested from parents.

### **What should I do if my child will be absent e.g. due to illness?**

If a child is absent, parents should call the school, as early as possible but before 9.15am, stating a reason on the day of absence. Absences must be explained either by an acceptable written and dated note or by a personal telephone message, which will be recorded and passed to the class teacher. **Any reason given will be recorded in the absence book by the Admin Team for monitoring purposes.**

### **What will the school do if my child is absent without notification?**

If contact explaining the child's absence fails to be made by parents or carers, then the school will contact the home by telephone on the initial day (known as 'First Call' response), and subsequent days, following this with a letter after three days of unexplained absence. It may be necessary to make a home visit to check on the situation. **This contact will be recorded in the absence book by the Admin Team.**

### **How do I request time off for medical or dental appointments?**

Should a child require time off during the school day for e.g. medical appointments, parents are required to put in writing the request *in advance*, providing written evidence (e.g. copy appointment card, e-mail or letter) which covers the time requested. The Head of School will then consider the individual request in light of the circumstances and pupil's attendance record to date and let the parents know their decision.

Absence requests will NOT be authorised if the pupil's attendance is already below 90% in the current or previous school year, for reasons other than medical, dental appointments or exceptional circumstances.

We expect that parents will endeavour to make routine medical and dental appointments for children outside school hours and during school holidays wherever possible, to minimise avoidable absences from school.

### **How do I make a request for Exceptional Leave in term time?**

Exceptional Leave refers to any request for time out of school in term time other than medical/dental appointments. On 1 September 2013, the Education (Pupil Registration) (England) (Amendment) Regulations 2013 came into force, changing the rules about term time holidays. The amendments remove references to family holidays and extended leave as well as the statutory threshold of 10 school days. The amendments specify that Head's may not grant any leave of absence during term time unless they consider there to be "exceptional circumstances" for doing so.

**If you wish to apply for a period of exceptional leave, you must do so in writing at least two weeks in advance to the Head of School explaining the reasons for your request, with supporting documentation wherever possible.** The current Student Registration Guidelines will be followed when deciding whether to approve an absence.

**There is no entitlement to any days' absence from school per academic year and the 'right' for your child to be granted exceptional. The decision whether or not to authorise an absence will always rest with the school and its Governors.**

### **How we consider a request?**

Our school considers each request individually taking into account the circumstances, such as: the nature of the event for which leave is sought, the frequency of the request, whether the parent gave advance notice, and the pupils attainment, attendance and ability to catch up on missed schooling.

In particular, we will also look carefully at the child's previous attendance record and should he or she have causes for concern.

### **How is my child's attendance recorded by the school?**

Complete and accurate daily registers are of key importance. Registers provide the daily record of the attendance of all pupils; they are documents that **may be required in a court of law**, for example as evidence in prosecutions for non-attendance at school. They also contribute to pupil's reports and to records of achievement.

St Mary's staff complete the daily class registers using the following codes:

**Black** diagonal line to denote presence;

**Red** circle to denote unauthorised absence;

**Red circle with correct symbol recorded inside in Red** for authorised absence – no unmarked sessions allowed;

No tippex.

At 9.10am, the registers are closed. In accordance with the Regulations, if a child arrives after that time, they will receive a mark that shows them to be on site, but this will NOT count as a present mark and it will mean

they have an unauthorised absence. This may mean that parents could face the possibility of a Penalty Notice if the problem persists.

If your child develops persistent lateness, you will be asked to meet with the Head of School and/or Attendance Officer to resolve the problem, but you can approach us at any time if you are having problems getting your child to school on time.

### **What happens if my child is late for school?**

The front door opens for the children at 8.45 please arrive promptly at school for this time. School begins at 8.55am and all pupils are expected to be at their desks ready for registration by this time. Outside doors are closed at 8.55am. Any child arriving later than 8.55am should enter school via the main entrance reporting to the School Reception. The parent or carer should give a reason for the lateness and sign the late book. Parents who do not accompany their child to school will have a late slip sent home which needs to be signed and return to school the next day.

Pupils who are consistently late are disrupting not only their own education, but also that of others. Where persistent lateness gives cause for concern further action may be taken.

Registers officially close at 9.10am and registration after this time without an authorised reason will be classed as unauthorised and will count towards the school's absence return.

### **How does the school monitor children's attendance?**

The school monitors all children's attendance at school on a daily basis. The school notes any children whose attendance falls below the thresholds below without good reason and the Head of School contacts the parents by letter to advise them that the child's attendance needs to improve.

96% and above	Good attendance level.
Between 93% and 96%	Below an acceptable level.
Between 90% and 93%	Significantly below an acceptable level.
Below 90%	Extremely low. An improvement must be made.

Whilst we understand that some absences (e.g. illness) can be unavoidable, the attendance of any children whose parents have been sent a letter will be monitored more closely from that point on. Should the children's attendance not improve within four school weeks, the parents may be invited to meet with the Head of School to discuss further. Where attendance does improve, the Head of School will write also to parents to acknowledge the fact and to thank them for their support.

### **How does the school recognise good attendance?**

We recognise that the majority of children have good attendance in school and that most parents ensure that their children are attending school regularly. It is important that this is recognised.

The school will recognise good attendance through:

- awarding termly Attendance Certificates for individual children who attain above 96% attendance over the term;
- awarding yearly Attendance Certificates for individual children who attain above 96% attendance over the school year;
- awarding Head's Awards to those children who have improved their attendance over time and write thank you letters to their parents for their support.

### **What can parents do to support their child's attendance?**

Parents can support their children in avoiding unauthorised absences by measures such as:

- Let the school know as soon as possible why your child is away;
- Make routine medical and dental appointments outside school time;
- Do not allow your child to have time off school unless it is really necessary.
- ensuring regular and early bed times in term time;
- helping with homework;
- having uniform and equipment needed prepared the night before;
- providing a healthy breakfast;
- reporting any academic or social concerns to the class teacher promptly;
- Ensure you have allowed sufficient time for your journey;

If you are concerned about your child's attendance at school you should:

Talk to your child; it may be something simple.

Talk with your child's classteacher;

Talk with the Head of School to see what support may be available.

### **Summary**

- Good attendance at school is an example of the effective partnership between school and parents.
- Good attendance promotes good achievement for children.
- Parents have a legal responsibility to ensure their child's good attendance at school. This means attendance of at least 96%.
- St Mary's Catholic Primary School has a legal duty to promote good attendance for all pupils and to publish its attendance figures and its Attendance Policy.
- St Mary's Catholic Primary School supports parents and children through a range of measures to promote good attendance and address poor and/or deteriorating attendance on a prompt and regular basis, so that children can benefit from their education as fully as possible.