



# St Mary's Catholic Primary School

## Attendance Policy

**Person Responsible: M. Jackson**

**Date: December 2017**

**Review Date: Autumn 2018**

**Agreed by Governors**

### **Introduction**

For children at St Mary's to gain the greatest benefit from their education it is vital that they attend school regularly and are punctual This policy sets out how we, together, will achieve this.

In order for any attendance and punctuality policy to be effective it must be consistently applied throughout the whole school, by its staff, pupils and parents.

### **Why regular attendance is so important:**

Any absence affects the pattern of a child's schooling and regular absence will seriously affect their learning. Any pupils' absence disrupts teaching routines which may affect the learning of others in the same class

Ensuring a child's regular attendance at school is the legal responsibility of their parents, permitting absence from school without good reason is an offence in law and may result in a Penalty Notice being issued or Court action/prosecution.

Research has shown that regular attendance and good punctuality are key factors in children achieving their full potential at school.

### **Attendance and Punctuality in the Early Years:**

Establishing good habits from the start will help a child to settle more quickly and build good habits for later life. Coming to school on time, every day helps to develop confidence.

Research has shown that, even at the earliest age, children with poor attendance and punctuality are at a disadvantage later in life. They generally find it harder to make and maintain friendships, they achieve less and they often suffer from poor self-esteem.

The school keeps a register of attendance for every child. This is a legal document and record and classifies every half-day attendance and/or absence. Absences are classified as either authorised or unauthorised. For this reason, the school will ask parents/carers for the reason for each absence.

## Every School Day Counts

Although being absent cannot always be helped as we all do become ill from time to time, parents are asked to take a look at the table below to show you exactly what a child could be missing.

<b>365 Days in a Year</b>	<b>190 School Days in Total</b>	<b>Absence</b>
100% Attendance	190 Days	0
95% Attendance	180 Days	2 Weeks
90% Attendance	171 Days	4 Weeks
85% Attendance	161 Days	6 Weeks
80% Attendance	152 Days	More than half a term
75% Attendance	143 Days	9+ Weeks

### Promoting regular attendance:

Helping to create a pattern of regular attendance is everybody's responsibility – parent, pupils and all members of school staff.

To help us all to focus on this we will give parents details on attendance in our weekly newsletter and website.

### Safeguarding:

Effective attendance procedures are integral to ensuring all children are kept safe. A child may be at risk of harm if they do not attend school regularly. Safeguarding the interest of each child is everyone's responsibility and within the context of this school, promoting the welfare and life opportunities for a child encompasses: - Attendance, Behaviour Management, Health and Safety, Access to the Curriculum and Anti-bullying.

Failing to attend school on a regular basis will be considered as a safeguarding matter.

### The Law Relating to Attendance:

Section 7 of the Education Act 1996 states that 'the parent 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, they may have either by regular attendance to school or otherwise.

If parents wish to find out more information about the legislation around attendance, please visit:

[https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/564599/school\\_attendance.pdf](https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/564599/school_attendance.pdf)

### Understanding Types of Absence:

Every-half day absence from school has to be classified by the school (not by the parents), 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 cannot be made outside of school time or unavoidably fall in school time, emergencies or other unavoidable causes.

In order to enable the school to authorise an absence due to illness, parents/carers are requested to;

- **Provide medical evidence to the school. This can be in the form of GP/Hospital/Medical/Dental Appointment letters/cards, Copies of prescriptions/antibiotics issued (providing the child's name is indicated there on).**

In order to enable the school to authorise an absence due to an emergency or unavoidable cause, parents/carers are requested to;

- **Speak to the Headteacher, advising her of the issue and request the absence be authorised.**
- **Write to the Headteacher and request the absence be authorised.**

Unauthorised absences are those which the school does not consider reasonable and for which no "authorised leave of absence" has been given. This type of absence can lead to the use of sanctions and/or referring to the Local Authority for legal intervention. Unauthorised absences are;

- Parents/carers keeping children off school unnecessarily
- Parents/carers not communicating the reason for absence the school
- Absences which have never been properly explained or evidenced
- Parents not providing medical evidence to the school to support the absence as being due to ill health
- Child who arrives at school after the Registration period has ended
- Truancy before or during the school day
- Shopping, looking after other children or birthdays
- Day trips, holidays or overseas trips 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 and the child. If your child is reluctant to attend, it is never better to cover up their absence or to give into pressure to excuse them from attending. This gives the impression that attendance does not matter and usually make things worse.

#### **Absence in Term Time:**

Holidays or overseas trip absences in term time will affect a child's schooling as much as any other absence and we expect parents to help us by not taking pupils away in school time.

Parents are reminded that any savings they think may be made by taking a holiday/overseas trip in school time are offset by the cost to a child's education. Due to gaps in learning as a result of such trips, **we do not authorise any holidays/overseas trips in term time.**

There is no automatic entitlement in law to time off school to go on holiday/overseas trip.

#### **Persistent Absenteeism (PA):**

A child becomes a 'persistent absentee' when they miss 10% (26 sessions or 13 days) or more schooling across the school year **for whatever reason** (this includes authorised and unauthorised absences). Absence at this level is doing considerable damage to any child's educational prospects and we need the fullest support and co-operation from parents to tackle this.

We monitor all absence thoroughly. Any case that is seen to have reached the PA mark or is at risk of moving towards that mark is given priority and parents will be informed of this immediately.

Projected PA children are tracked and monitored carefully through our attendance system. All our PA children and their parents are subject to an Intervention Plan and individual incentive programmes. All PA cases are also

automatically made known to the Attendance Advisory Officer and some cases may lead to a referral to the Attendance Advisory Service of the Local Authority, whereby legal action could be initiated.

### **Absence Procedure:**

If a child is absent parents must:

- Contact the school as soon as possible on the first day of absence, advising of the reason and likely length of absence, either by calling the school office or emailing [school email address, if required](#). (A phone call will be made to parents each time the child has been marked with an unauthorised code and no reason has been given for absence).
- Contact the school on the subsequent days of absence as necessary.

### **What the School will do if Attendance is a Concern:**

- Letters will be sent to parents to alert them to the concerns about their child's attendance and/or punctuality.
- Invite parents into the school to discuss the situation with the Headteacher/Attendance Officer.
- Use Royal Borough of Greenwich's Fast Track to Improved Attendance.
- Home visits.
- Pre referral meetings and where appropriate, the offer of an early help assessment.
- Referral to Attendance Advisory Service if a child's unauthorised absence reaches 10% or more.

### **The Attendance Advisory Officer:**

Parents are expected to contact St Mary's at an early stage and to work with the school staff in resolving any problems related to attendance together. This is nearly always successful. If difficulties cannot be resolved this way, and unauthorised absences continue, the school may refer to the Attendance Advisory Service. The Attendance Advisory Officer (AAO) will try to resolve the situation by agreement but, if other ways of trying to improve a child's attendance have failed and unauthorised absence persist the Attendance Advisory Service can use sanction such as Penalty Notices or prosecutions in the Magistrates Court.

Alternatively, parents may wish to contact the Attendance Advisory Service themselves to ask for help or information. They are independent of the school and will give impartial advice (their telephone number is 020 8921 8510).

### **Lateness:**

Poor punctuality is not acceptable. If a child misses the start of the day they can miss spending time with their class teacher, getting vital information and news for the day. The late arrival of children also disrupt lessons, can be embarrassing for a child and can also encourage absence.

### **How we manage lateness:**

The school day starts at **8.55am for Years R-6 but children are expected to arrive from 8.45am so they can arrive in class by 8.55am. Children are encouraged to arrive earlier so they can settle in class and be ready for prayers as soon as the bell sounds. Parents are asked to support the school.**

Prayers and registration will take place from 8.55am promptly. If a child arrives in class after this time, a late mark will be recorded.

If a child arrives after **9.15am**, the registers will be 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, possibly increasing any current unauthorised absences.

If a child has a persistent late record parents will be asked to meet with the Headteacher/School Attendance Officer to resolve the problem but parents can always approach us at any time if they are having problems getting their child to school on time.

## Every Minute Counts

As well as being absent a lot from school effecting a child's development, being late also has a big effect on their learning. Please look at the table below:

<b>Lateness = Lost Learning</b>	
(figures below are calculated over the school year)	
5 mins late each day	3 days lost
10 mins late each day	6.5 days lost
15 mins late each day	10 days lost
20 mins late each day	13 days lost
30 mins late each day	19 days lost

## School Targets, Projects and Special Initiatives:

The school has targets to improve attendance and punctuality and every child has an important part to play in meeting targets.

The minimum level of attendance and punctuality for this school is 97% attendance and we will keep parents updated regularly about progress to this level and how their child's attendance and punctuality compares. Our target is to achieve better than this however because we know that good attendance is the key to successful schooling.

Through the school year we monitor absences and punctuality to show us where improvements need to be made.

## Child Missing Education (CME)

The attendance procedures are crucial to ensuring the safety of all children. When a child has been absent from school for 20 consecutive days without good reason the school has a legal obligation to report the child as missing education (CME) to the relevant local authority. In accordance with DFE regulations the child may be removed from the school roll.

## Communication – What we Need to Know:

### Telephone Numbers:

There are times when we need to contact parents about lots of things, including absence, so we need to have contact numbers at all times. Parents are asked to support the school by making sure we have always got up to date phone numbers.

### Home Address:

Parents are asked to inform the school if they move, passing on the new address.

### Removing a Pupil from Our School:

If parents make the decision to transfer their child to another school, for whatever reason and have given the relevant notice period to the school, as a matter of priority they need to provide the school with all of the necessary details.

We will ask parents to provide the name and address of the new school. Records need to be transferred to the new school so this is very important. If we do not receive this information and a child ceases to attend our school,

they become a '**Child Missing in Education**'. Any child in this category is reported to the Child Missing in Education Officer at the Local Authority, who will follow up the matter under safeguarding legislation as necessary.

**Elective Home Education:**

If parents make the decision to educate a child at home and have given the relevant notice period, they are required to advise us of this in writing.

Once the letter is received, we will remove the child from the school roll and advise the Elective Home Education Officer of the Local Authority, who will make contact with parents regarding this matter.

If a letter is not received, the child remains on the roll of the school and their absence is treated as unauthorised and action as detailed above.

**Those people responsible for attendance matters in the school are:**

Headteacher-Miss M. Jackson  
Secretary/Attendance Lead-Mrs S. Jeffrey

**Summary:**

The school has a legal duty to ensure procedures are in place to support good attendance and punctuality. Equally, parents have a duty to make sure that their children attend school.

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

## **FOR SCHOOL USE ONLY**

### **School Organisation**

In order for the school's Attendance Policy to be successful, every member of staff must make attendance a high priority and convey this to the pupils at all times. Parents/carers need to support these views in the home to ensure that children are receiving corresponding messages about the value of education.

#### **It is the responsibility of the Headteacher, Governors and designated members of school staff to:**

- Adopt the whole policy;
- Ensure the electronic registration procedures are carried out efficiently.
- Set the whole school attendance targets;
- Headteacher to meet with parents as part of the action to address irregular school attendance with parents.

#### **Class Teachers:**

- To complete the registers accurately and punctually at 8.55am and 1.15pm.
- To be alert to early signs of disaffection which could culminate in non-attendance and to report these concerns as soon as possible to the Headteacher/Attendance Lead.
- Speak with pupils to establish reasons for absence/problems;
- Speak with the parent to discuss concerns and possible implications;
- Record conversations/meetings;

#### **Attendance Officer:**

- To oversee the registration process and ensure that registers are completed accurately and punctually;
- Meet/liaise with the Attendance Lead regularly
- To liaise and meet with the AAO regularly;
- Consult and liaise closely with the AAO on a regular basis and take responsibility for ensuring appropriate pupils are identified and referred without delay;
- Monitor and evaluate attendance with AAO;
- Provide monthly/half termly data to the AAO, as identified.
- Speak with the parent and pupil to discuss concerns and possible implications;
- Record conversations/meetings;
- Ensure school action is taken on a daily/weekly basis, to address irregular school attendance, in line with the school procedure/flow chart of action;
- Be prepared for the meeting with the AAO, having percentage data and relevant information available, to be able to make informed decisions;
- Undertake Pre-referral meetings with the AAO and parent/pupil as necessary;
- Refer pupils to the AAO in accordance with guidelines and after discussion and agreement with the AAO;
- Provide the completed referral form and required additional documentation to the AAO.
- Record all medical evidence received and file in pupils file;
- To reinforce good practice at staff meetings;