



ST MARY'S CATHOLIC PRIMARY SCHOOL

Attendance and Punctuality Policy [April 2019]

'Central to raising standards in education and ensuring all pupils can fulfil their potential is an assumption so widely understood that it is insufficiently stated – pupils need to attend school regularly to benefit from their education. Missing out on lessons leaves children vulnerable to falling behind. Children with poor attendance tend to achieve less in both primary and secondary school'.

School Attendance: Statutory guidance and departmental advice, DfE Aug 2013

St Mary's expects the highest attendance and punctuality from all pupils, at all times. We support pupils and their families to ensure that excellent attendance is achieved. Our annual target for attendance is 96%, but we are continuously working towards our goal of 100% attendance for all pupils.

Children should be at school, on time, every day the school is open, unless the reason for the absence is unavoidable. Permitting absence from school without a good reason is an offence by the parent/carer.

We understand that children are sometimes reluctant to attend school. Any problems with regular attendance are best sorted out between the school, the parents/carers and the child. If a child is reluctant to attend, it is never better to cover up their absence or to give in to pressure to excuse them from attending. This gives the impression that attendance does not matter and may make things worse.

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

Authorised absences are mornings or afternoons away from school for a reason such as genuine illness or other unavoidable cause.

Overall Aims:

- To ensure that every child is safeguarded and their right to education is protected.
- To ensure the school attendance target is achieved.
- To raise standards and ensure every child achieves their best, through a high level of school attendance and punctuality.
- To ensure all the stakeholders, governors, parents/carers, pupils and staff receive regular communication, about the importance of good attendance and punctuality.
- To keep accurate, up-to-date records and have a robust and rigorous system for analysing attendance.
- To identify causes of low attendance/punctuality with individuals, classes and groups of pupils and address them.
- To work with external agencies, in order to address barriers to attendance and overcome them.

Rights and responsibilities for attendance/punctuality

There are legal obligations on:

- The parents/carers to secure education for their children, whether at school or otherwise, to send them to school regularly once they are on the register.
- The school to register attendance and notify the Local Authority of absence from school.
- The Local Authority to provide education and to enforce attendance.

Governing Body:

- Receive reports and ensure that senior leaders analyse attendance data, looking for absence patterns in individual cases, comparing sibling absences and differences in attendance rates between different groups of children.

- Receive reports and ensure the school abides by its legal duty to forward attendance data and information to authorised agencies (Local Authority, Ofsted, Children's Services, DfE and Catholic Education Service).
- Review the attendance policy regularly.

Headteacher:

- Responsible for the overall management and implementation of the policy.
- Responds to requests for extended leave in line with East Sussex Local Authority policies and procedures.
- Considers the use of Penalty Notices, in line with East Sussex Local Authority policies and procedures.
- Reports on Attendance and Punctuality to Governors.

Senior Leadership Team (SLT):

- Lead on attendance/punctuality, on a day-to-day basis, including liaising with/responding to parent/carer enquires.
- Oversee the analysis of weekly/termly/yearly data and respond to findings.
- Meet with the School Administrator to monitor the systems and structures, ensuring they are having an impact on pupil attendance and punctuality.
- Liaise with external agencies such as Education Support, Behaviour & Attendance Service (ESBAS) and make referrals where necessary.
- Work with the teachers, to plan for the reintegration of pupils after long-term absence.
- Revise and amend the Attendance and Punctuality Policy, as required.
- Make urgent contact with the parent/carers of any unexpected non-attenders.
- Discuss the importance of school attendance with children.
- Highlight and reward good and improved attendance.
- Keep parents/carers updated on their child's attendance if it falls below 95%.
- Arrange Attendance Review and Target Setting Meetings with parents/carers (and pupils).
- Ask parent/carers for medical evidence to back up absences if persistent absenteeism does not show improvement from term to term.
- Conduct unannounced home visits of persistent absentees.
- Refer persistently low attenders and/or those with poor punctuality to ESBAS.

School Administrator (SA):

- Carry out and record the outcome of first day calls, if a child does not arrive at school and no reason has been received.
- Ask for clarity of reasons for absence and advise parents/carers on procedures.
- Monitor weekly attendance data for year groups.
- Check the school answer phone, take and record messages from parents/carers about pupil absences.
- Promptly inform the SLT if there are any concerns relating to attendance/punctuality.
- Produce weekly/termly/yearly data for SLT to analyse.
- Record reasons for absence and update class registers.
- Implement the daily checking of registers on SIMs after the morning and afternoon registration sessions.
- Maintain SIMs attendance records in line with this policy.
- Liaise with and report to outside agencies such as ESBAS.
- Report to the Local Authority/Diocese, as requested.
- Oversee the admission and induction of new pupils.
- Support SLT with the promotion of good attendance and punctuality, through finding/organising incentives.
- Ensure staff are following the registration systems and structures in this policy.

- Inform parents/carers of school procedures, if they have failed to inform the school of clear reasons for any absence.

Staff:

- Ensure quality first teaching every day; with lessons that are well planned and resourced so that they challenge, inspire and meet their learners' needs.
- Provide a welcoming and safe environment, which encourages attendance and promotes the best performance from children.
- Keep accurate and up-to-date daily records of pupil attendance through the register system.
- Take a formal register of all pupils twice a day. This is done on the school's SIMs system by 9.00am and 1.05 pm.
- Regularly remind children and parents/carers about the importance of good attendance.
- Follow up on pupil absence by ensuring reasons for absence are sought as part of a 'Welcome Back to School' meeting.
- Establish good and effective communication links with parents/carers and work collaboratively in meeting each child's needs.
- Work collaboratively with other agencies to assist them in fulfilling their statutory duties, regarding for example, child protection.
- Work with pupils and their families where attendance is a concern, identifying barriers to good attendance and working to overcome these.
- Promptly inform the SLT of pupils who persist with poor attendance.
- Feed back to parents/carers about pupil attendance and punctuality regularly and at learning consultation meetings and in school reports.

Parents/Carers:

Children should only be kept at home if they have a serious illness or injury. If this is the case, parents/carers should contact the school. If a child has a minor illness e.g. mild headache, stomach aches, is tired or feeling 'out of sorts' etc. parents/carers should bring them in to school and inform the school office. Often attendance at school makes a child forget these niggles. If the child does not get any better, the school will contact parents/carers to collect them.

If it has been impossible to arrange for pupils' dental, clinic or hospital appointment to occur outside school hours, parents/carers should let the school know. Pupils should be brought child to school before/after appointments. Pupils should miss as little time as possible. Therefore, parents/carers are expected to:

- Ensure their child attends school and arrives on time every day, between 8.40am and 8.55am.
- Promote a good attitude to learning by ensuring their children attend school in the correct uniform and with the basic equipment required for lessons.
- Arrange medical and dental appointments out of school hours wherever possible.
- Telephone to inform the school by 9am on the first day of absence for their child.
- Never encourage their child to lie that they were ill, if they have had a day off as a treat, holiday or overslept.
- Work in partnership with the school and other agencies in the best interests of their child; this includes informing the school about significant influences and changes in the child's life, which may impact on learning.

Pupils:

- Take part in the inter-class competition to achieve best attendance each week.
- Take part in lessons and assemblies about the effect that absence can have on learning.
- Discuss their reason for absence with staff on their return to school and receive a formal welcome back to class.

The Local Authority, through ESBAS:

- Support the school in improving attendance, through whole school initiatives and individual pupil interventions.

- Work with families and other agencies to remove barriers to good attendance.
- Ensure that parents are informed of their responsibilities in relation to attendance.
- Uphold and enforce the law in respect of attendance, child employment, and involvement in entertainment and child protection.

Strategies for promoting/rewarding excellent attendance:

Aims:

- To ensure good attendance and punctuality is regularly promoted and supported and remains high profile across school.
- To achieve high levels of attendance and punctuality through rewarding good attendance and punctuality.

Weekly Celebration Assemblies

Assemblies are held every week on Friday. Classes with the highest attendance/punctuality receive the Attendance Fox and a sticker (the class with most stickers earn a non-uniform day). Classes receive extra break time if all classes achieve 95%+ attendance.

Weekly School Newsletter

Each week, the school newsletter and attendance board includes attendance information and information about the classes with the highest attendance and punctuality. The newsletter is used to highlight the importance of good attendance and punctuality. It regularly includes sections reminding parents of our school attendance target and what that means in terms of number of days absent. It also includes information about any initiatives, which the school is using, to promote attendance and punctuality.

The School Learning Environment

A welcoming, organised learning environment that supports and celebrates its learners is a key factor in ensuring children enjoy school and attend regularly. All staff ensure that their learning environments are of a high quality. Regular environmental audits are carried out by the SLT, to ensure this.

Staff Promoting Good Attendance

It is important that teachers are regularly promoting good attendance with their classes. Good class attendance is attributed to good teaching and this is celebrated.

Learning Consultation Meetings

These provide an opportunity for teachers to praise and recognise excellent attendance or share attendance concerns and discuss barriers to good attendance. Where necessary a target for improving attendance is set. The class teacher then monitors this. If there is no improvement in attendance/punctuality, the pupil is referred to the SLT.

School Reports

Attendance is highlighted against our school targets in end of year reports.

Monitoring and Recording Attendance & Punctuality

Class Registers are completed electronically using SIMs. The system ensures that no children are missed and that pupil information can be shared quickly and securely. Registers are the only way of recording pupil attendance and must be completed accurately. This is the responsibility of whichever member of staff has been directed to take the register for that session. Registers can be re-submitted in the case of a mistake or a pupil arriving after submission, but registers must be accurate and submitted at key times (see below).

Morning Register: The morning register remains open until 9:00am. At that point, the teacher submits her/his final register, (save and print to the school office). The teacher should record the number of children in class that day against the number on roll in the class as a fraction on the board for the reference of anyone working in the class throughout the day.

School starts at 8.55am. The playground gates are open from 8.40am – 8.55am. Children arriving after the gates are closed must enter through the main reception and sign in with the help of the School Administrator giving a detailed reason why they are late. The SA will enter the child's arrival on the register system with an 'L' and record the number of minutes learning time lost. Children arriving after 9:25am are recorded as 'U' (late after register closed, an unauthorised absence) in the register. The SA then checks for any missing marks in the registers and inputs codes and reasons given for children who are known to be absent. The SA then begins first day absence calls for children whose parent/carer has not contacted the school.

Afternoon Register: This must be submitted by teaching staff straight after lunch before afternoon lessons commence. They should be completed by 1:05pm

Communications about School Attendance

The school sends out letters, to communicate with individual parents/carers about attendance and punctuality.

The SLT monitor the attendance and punctuality regularly. This may also involve speaking to parents directly or via a phone call or email. If attendance/punctuality does not improve, parents will be invited to meet with a member of the SLT to discuss the concerns at an Attendance and Target Setting Review Meeting with a member of the SLT to plan a way forward. If this does not improve following the meeting, then the family will be referred to the ESBAS who will contact parents warning them that further action may be taken.

Child Protection and safeguarding concerns must be acted on immediately, in line with the school Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy.

Monitoring First Day Absence

If a child has not arrived in school and the school has not received a phone call or other message from the parent/carer by 9am, a first day absence call will be made. The SA follows this system:

- Phone parents'/carers' contact number(s).
- Repeat this until 9.30am absence if no response.
- Phone other emergency contact number(s) to get an up-to-date contact number for the parent/carer and update the school system accordingly.
- If no contact can be made refer to SLT

Persistent Absenteeism

Since September 2015 the Department for Education has defined a 'persistent absentee' as a pupil who, at any point in the year, has accumulated absence of 10% or more of the available sessions, regardless of whether any of it is authorised or unauthorised, all absences count.

Pupils will therefore be classed as 'persistent absentees' if they are absent for the following:-

Term 1	At least 7 half day sessions missed during Term 1
Term 2	At least 15 half day sessions missed during Term 1 to Term 2
Term 3	At least 20 half day sessions missed during Term 1 to Term 3
Term 4	At least 25 half day sessions missed during Term 1 to Term 4
Term 5	At least 31 half day sessions missed during Term 1 to Term 5
Term 6	At least 38 half day sessions missed during Term 1 to Term 6

Attendance Meetings

The SLT monitor individuals, classes, year groups, different ethnic groups, SEN and Pupil Premium pupils. They identify patterns and trends in absence/punctuality, including persistent absence and check similar absences against other siblings in the same household. The systems and structures are then followed, to improve attendance for these individuals or groups. Letters are sent out to parents whose children's attendance is below 95% and parents/carers are asked to work in partnership with the school.

Parents/carers will be asked to Attendance Meetings in order to provide support for families in improving attendance. A range of solutions will be discussed and a target will be set for the following 6 weeks which will be monitored by school.

Summary of procedures to promote good attendance/punctuality:

The following tables show specific procedures to maintain and encourage excellent attendance at St Mary's Catholic Primary School:

Daily procedures	By whom	Outcomes / actions
Parents/carers ensure pupils arrive at school on time.	Parents/carers	
Parents/carers inform the school by 9am, if their child will be absent that day.	Parents/carers	Office staff update registration codes
Pupils arriving late to school are registered at reception.	School Administrator (SA)	Absence mark on SIMS amended to a late mark by SA
Teachers record attendance using the schools SIMs system. This is done by 9.00am and 1.05pm. Complete welcome back to school chats for children returning to school after an absence and send all documentation to the school office by 9.15am.	Teachers/Supply staff Teacher/TA	Staff use a paper register, if required. Teacher takes responsibility for promptly informing SLT of any concerns.
9.00am – 9.30am 1st day absence phone calls are made to inform parents/carers of their child's unexplained absence for that day.	SA	SA updates attendance codes
SLT informed of attendance/punctuality issues or any child who is not in school and for whom there has been no parental/carer contact.	SA to SLT	It may be necessary to make a home visit or treat the child as a missing person and notify appropriate authorities.

Weekly procedures	By whom	Outcomes / action
Attendance/punctuality statistics produced for year group and whole school. Attendance/punctuality statistics produced and shared in Celebration Assembly.	SA	Parents and Pupils are able to see which class(es) have been successful with their attendance and punctuality as noted on newsletters.

Termly procedures	By whom	Outcomes / action
Analyse attendance/punctuality data to monitor trends and progress.	SLT	
Assemblies to promote attendance/punctuality and share term's data and progress.	SLT	
Discussions as required in response to specific attendance/punctuality concerns of a particular cohort/group of pupils.	SLT	
Individual attendance/punctuality discussed with pupils and families, at learning consultations.	Class teachers	Mentoring and advice on attendance/ punctuality issues provided to all families
Analyse attendance/punctuality data and information to identify cases of concern and develop appropriate interventions.	SLT	Targeted intervention for individual concerns
Meeting to discuss individual cases, monitor progress and refer new concerns. Support and meeting provided for pupils and families.	SLT	Targeted intervention for individual concerns
Review success and impact of attendance/punctuality strategies for the term.	SLT & Governors	Amend and refine interventions as appropriate

Leave of Absence from School

- It is not appropriate for the school to authorise any absences for holidays, shopping, looking after other children, day trips, transport issues etc. Leave may only be granted in an exceptional circumstances (e.g. bereavement) or for those medical appointments which absolutely cannot be arranged out of school time.
- There is no entitlement in law for parents to remove their child from school for the purposes of a holiday in term time.
- Head teachers may now only grant leave in term time where the circumstances are exceptional. All such requests must be made on the school's official 'Withdrawal from Learning Form'. The governors have agreed that lower costs/cheaper fares in term time, a mix up of holiday dates etc. will not be accepted as an exceptional circumstance, but this may include for example include:
 - Death of parent/carer, sibling or close relative of the pupil
 - Life threatening or critical illness of parent, sibling or close relative of the pupil
 - Parent/carer recuperation and convalescence from critical illness or surgery (leave request to be made within 6 months of recovery and medical evidence required)
- Parents should not assume that returning the form guarantees that the request will be approved.
- The Headteacher has the authority (through current legislation) to decide whether or not to authorise the absence *and* will need to decide the appropriate length of the leave.
- The Headteacher will inform parents/carers of the reason/s for a request being refused.

Parents/carers who do decide to remove their children from school during term time must consider the following:

- If a child is removed from school without approval, the absence will be marked as 'unauthorised' in the class register this is in the same category as truancing. In addition, the Headteacher will report the absence to the Local Authority who have the power to issue, a Fixed Penalty Notice.
- A child who is removed from school during in term time will miss school work while s/he is away and will be unprepared for the work on returning to school.
- Teachers will not be able to spend extra time helping a child to catch up with the work missed during the time away from school.
- The school will not provide extra work to do at home to make up for that missed. This is not appropriate as the child will have also missed the initial teaching input.
- Children with lower attendance often experience more issues with friendships within the class.

Family emergencies need careful consideration. It is not always in the best interest of the child, nor appropriate for them to miss school for family emergencies that are being dealt with by adult family members. Being at school, friendships and support from staff can provide children with stability and care during difficult times. The routine of school can provide a safe and familiar background during times of uncertainty.

The school recognises that taking children out of school may constitute a safeguarding risk and will make necessary enquiries, in order to be satisfied that the child is not at risk. The school may contact outside agencies in order to ensure that a visit is legitimate and safe for the child/children.

Penalty Notices

If a child is taken out of school without the Headteacher's authorisation, it will be recorded as unauthorised absence. This may lead to the issuing of a penalty notice and legal action being taken.

Section 23(1) Anti-Social Behaviour Act 2007:

Penalty notices may be issued to the parent of pupils who have unauthorised absence from school. The amount of the penalty is £60.

If this is not paid within 21 days the amount rises to £120.

If not paid within 28 days the Local Authority will prosecute under section 444(1) unless it comes to our attention that the penalty notice had been issued in error.

Section 444(1) Education Act 1996:

“If you are the parent of a child of compulsory school age who fails to attend school regularly, you are guilty of an offence.” The court may use legal interventions on parents or to seek an Education Supervision Order on the child. The maximum penalty on conviction is a fine of £2500 and/or 3 months imprisonment.

Please note that:

- Penalties and prosecutions are in respect of each parent for each child.
- ‘Parent’ includes any person who is not a parent of the child but who has parental responsibility for the child (and applies whether or not that person lives with the child) or who has care of him/her.
- These prosecutions are criminal proceedings and could result in you having a criminal record.

Attendance is everyone’s responsibility however, the people to contact for attendance matters in this school are:

- The Headteacher
- The School Secretaries

Summary

The school has a legal duty to publish its absence figures to parents and to promote attendance. Equally, parents have a duty to make sure that their children attend. School staff are committed to working with parents as the best way to ensure as high a level of attendance as possible.

Review Date: April 2022