



PUPIL ABSENCE POLICY

Pupil Absence Policy for St Mary's C.E. School

First agreed by Governing Body:
Full review
Next review

May 2010
November 2014
September 2017

Pupil Absence Policy

Parents have a legal responsibility to make sure their child gets a suitable education (as set out in the Education Act 1996). For St Mary's parents, this means making sure your child is registered at school and that they attend regularly during term time. If your child fails to attend school regularly you are committing an offence and could be fined or prosecuted.

You can only allow your child to miss school if either:

- they're too ill to go in
- you've got advance permission from the school

There is extra support available if your child can't go to school for long periods because of a health problem. Please speak to the school for guidance on this (See Supporting Children with Medical Needs policy).

Authorised and unauthorised absence from school

Parents do not have a legal right to take their children out of school. It is always the Headteacher's decision whether or not to allow you to take your child out of school during term time. If you do not ask their permission in advance, or they do not give it and you take your child out of school anyway, this will be recorded as an unauthorised absence. Unauthorised absences are monitored by the Local Authority's Education Welfare team, and can trigger them contacting you to discuss your child's absence and put in place strategies to help you improve attendance for your child. In some cases, the Education Welfare officer might take legal action.

Head teachers may authorise an absence from school during term time if there are exceptional circumstances. Exceptional circumstances may include;

- The death or terminal illness of a person in the immediate family.
- Service personnel and other employees who cannot take leave outside term time at any point in the academic year.

You must make any requests for leave of absence in advance and you must be the parent the child normally lives with.

Holidays/leave of absence in term time

Holidays during term time will not be authorised by the Headteacher unless they are unavoidable and there are exceptional reasons, which must be recorded. If you remove your child for 20 school days you will lose your school place.

Children requiring absence to attend exams and medical appointments should provide written proof of the appointment, and will be granted half a day's authorised absence. They should not be taken out for a whole day.

Education Welfare Officer

St Mary's is allocated an Education Welfare Officer by the LA. They monitor attendance and make contact with parents whose children are absent frequently. They can provide help and support to families who are struggling to get their children to school, and in some cases they can start legal proceedings.

Fixed Penalty Notice

The Local Authority has introduced Fixed Penalty Notices for unauthorized absence from September 2014.

Fixed Penalty notices can be used in the following specific circumstances:

- At least 10 sessions (5 school days) lost due to unauthorised absence in any five week period;
- Parentally condoned absence;
- Unauthorised holidays in term-time;
- Unauthorised delayed return from extended holidays;
- Persistent late arrival at school (after the register has closed) equivalent to 10 sessions in any five week period.

The laws grant police, head teachers and local authorities the power to issue Penalty Notices. Therefore, head teachers may issue Penalty Notices for unauthorised absences and consult with the Education Welfare Service. A fixed Penalty notice will only be issued by post.

What is the cost?

The penalty is £120 per child per parent if paid within 28 days; this is reduced to £60 per child per parent if paid within the first 14 days.

If you do not pay the fine within 28 days the local authority has no option but to prosecute you in the Magistrates' Court. This could lead to a fine of up to £1000 per parent per child.

At the moment St Mary's has opted out of issuing Fixed Penalty Notices, but is open to reviewing this in the future. In the meantime, the governors monitor unauthorized absence closely, and the EWO is informed by the school of every unauthorized absence.

School trips

Your child's school can ask you for a voluntary contribution to the cost of activities like school trips. They can't stop your child from attending if you don't pay, but they should cancel the activity if there isn't enough money to cover the cost of it.

Children in entertainment

The general rule is that no child may take part in a performance unless licensed to do so by the local authority in whose area he or she lives. Even with a license, it is up to the Headteacher whether or not to authorise the absence. Licences are granted where the local authority is satisfied about the child's fitness and about provisions made for his or her health, treatment and education. If the school is concerned that having a license will be detrimental to the education of the child, a license will not be granted by the Local Authority. The school attendance of children in entertainment is closely monitored by the Education Welfare team.

Statement of Equal Opportunities

St Mary's CE School is committed to valuing diversity and to equality of opportunity. We aim to create and promote an environment in which pupils, parents and staff are treated fairly and with respect, and feel able to contribute to the best of their abilities.

The Governing Body recognises that it is unlawful to take into account anyone's gender, marital status, colour, race, nationality, ethnic or national origin, disability, religious beliefs, age or sexual orientation. Full consideration has been given to this during the formulation of this policy as it is the governors' aim that no-one at St Mary's school should suffer discrimination, either directly or indirectly, or harassment on any of these grounds.