



# PUPIL ATTENDANCE POLICY

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

First agreed by Governing Body:	May 2010
Full review	January 2018
Next review	January 2021

## Introduction:

This is a successful school and every pupil plays their part in making it so. We aim for an environment which enables and encourages all members of the community to strive for excellence.

Regular and punctual attendance at school is key to the academic and social development that will improve the life chances of children and young people.

Parents and carers have a duty to ensure that their children attend school regularly and punctually in order to get the greatest benefit from the opportunities.

We are committed to supporting children and families to achieve and maintain good attendance at school.

## **Why Regular Attendance is so important:**

Any absence affects the pattern of a child's schooling and regular absence will seriously affect their learning. Children and young people who do not attend school regularly are at risk from a whole range of factors that may lead to poor outcomes in terms of their educational achievement and future employment and financial security and citizenship.

Ensuring your child's regular attendance at school is your legal responsibility and if you permit absence from school without a good reason is an offence in law and may result in prosecution.

## **Promoting Regular punctuality and attendance:**

Creating a learning environment where all pupils can achieve is everyone's responsibility. Establishing positive and punctual patterns, including of regular attendance is vital and everyone has a responsibility to help. This includes parents, children and all members of staff.

### **What we will do:**

- Keep you up to date with attendance levels in the school bulletin or letters
- Inform you about your son's/daughter's attendance, punctuality and how this relates to their academic progress
- Celebrate good attendance
- Recognise and reward good or improving attendance

## **Understanding types of absence**

Every half – day absence from school has to be recorded and classified with a code by the school, as either AUTHORISED or UNAUTHORISED. Only the school can make this decision and record it.

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 like illness, medical/ dental appointments which unavoidably fall in school time, emergencies or other unavoidable causes.

Valid reasons for **authorised** absence include:

- Illness and medical/dental appointments which cannot be made outside of school hours. Please provide evidence of appointments, i.e. appointment cards or letters from Hospital
- Music exams and school exams and/or interviews. Please note that authorised absence will only be given for the duration of the exam and travel time. Absence will not be authorised for extra tuition or a whole day given for an exam that takes half a day. Please provide appropriate evidence
- Religious observance (one day per academic year), where the day is exclusively set apart for religious observance by the religious body to which the pupil's parents belong. If necessary the school will seek advice from the parents' religious body to confirm whether the day is set apart. St Mary's school will authorise one day's authorised absence for religious observance
- Traveller pupils traveling for occupational purposes – this covers Roman, English and Welsh Gypsies, Irish and Scottish Travellers, Showmen (fair round people) and Circus people, Bargees (occupational boat dwellers) and New Travellers. Absence may be authorised only when a Traveller family is known to be travelling for occupational purposes and has agreed this with the school but it is not known whether the pupil is attending educational provision

UNAUTHORISED absences are those which the school does not consider reasonable and for which “leave” of absence has not been given. This type of absence can lead to the Local Authority using sanctions and /or legal proceedings. Some examples of this include:

- Parents/carers keeping their child away from school unnecessarily
- Absences that have not been properly explained
- Late arrival after the close of registration (morning or afternoon)
- Day trips and holidays in term time that have not been agreed in advance

### **Illness**

Whilst it is understood that any child can have an illness and be away from school for a given period, sometimes they can be reluctant to attend school. Any problems with regular attendance are always best sorted out by the parents/carers contacting school immediately to discuss the issues.

If your child is reluctant to attend:

- Please do not cover up the absence
- Please do not give in to pressure to excuse them from attending

The situation will only worsen and become a habit and the causes will be harder to find and the resolution difficult.

The school needs to give careful consideration to the authorisation of absence for some pupils.

Where a pupil has frequent absences, the school will ask for evidence such as a medical certificate or an appointment card.

Additionally, the school may wish to refer to the school nursing service where there are health concerns or if there is a view that illness is being used as an excuse to cover other reasons for absence.

The school may also wish to seek the advice of the family GP having first discussed the matter with parents/carers to seek their permission to do this.

### **Dental/Medical Appointments**

Wherever possible, parents/carers should make every effort to avoid making medical or dental appointments during the school day. It is preferable to try and arrange these during holiday periods or at the beginning or end of the school day. An appointment at the beginning or end of the school day must not result in a whole day's absence from school.

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

A pupil becomes a 'persistent absentee' when they are absent from school for 20% or more across the school year for whatever reason. The reasons can be both authorised and unauthorised.

Absence at this level will do considerable damage to any child's educational achievement and future prospects. We will need the full support and co-operation of all parents to tackle this.

- We will monitor all absence thoroughly
- If your child's attendance has reached or is in danger of reaching the PA level we will make the case a priority.
- Pupils who have reached the PA level will be tracked and monitored carefully through our pastoral system and through involvement of the educational welfare officer.
- All PA pupils and their parents will be subject to an Action plan and the plan may include: individual programmes and activities around raising attendance.
- All PA pupils will be made known to the Education Welfare Officer.
- All PA pupils will be required to present a signed certificate from the GP for all absences from school.

### **Absence Procedures**

If your child is absent you must:

- Contact us as soon as possible on the first day of absence;

If your child is absent we will:

- Telephone or email you on the first day of absence if we have not heard from you
- Invite you in to discuss the situation with the Headteacher or Deputy Head teacher where attendance is already a concern, and if absences persist
- Invite you to attend an attendance panel with the Governing Body or
- Discuss the matter to the Education Welfare Officer if attendance moves below 90% and put in an action plan for improvement

### **Lateness:**

Poor punctuality is not acceptable. If your child misses the start of every day they can miss work and the opportunity of hearing vital information / news and sharing class time with their friends.

Late arriving pupils also disrupt lessons. Your child may also be embarrassed by arriving late.

What we will do:

- The school day begins promptly and we expect your child to get to their classroom in good time
- Registers are marked immediately at the beginning of the day and your child will receive a late mark if they are not in
- The registers will be closed no later than 10 minutes after the start of the day and lateness after this time is recorded as unauthorised absence

- In accordance with the regulations, if your child arrives after that time they will receive a late mark that shows them to be on site, this will not count as a present mark and means that they will have an unauthorised absence
- If the child is late four times in four weeks there will be a referral made to the attendance service and may result in legal proceedings

If your child has a persistent late record you will be asked to meet with the Assistant / Deputy Head teacher 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. Letters are sent to parents and carers whose children are persistently late.

You may also wish to seek advice from the Education Welfare Officer.

### **Holidays in term time (Exceptional leave of absence)**

Taking holidays in term time will affect your child's schooling as much as any other absence and we expect parents to help us by not taking their child away in school time.

This school, the local authority (LA) and the government actively discourage holidays in term time. There is no automatic entitlement in law to time off in school time to go on holiday.

The Head teacher has the final decision as to whether to authorise the holiday or not and will consider the individual circumstances of each case.

- All applications for leave must be made in advance and in writing using the form available from the school office or via the website. You may also email us at either [headteacher@st-marys.richmond.sch.uk](mailto:headteacher@st-marys.richmond.sch.uk) or [info@st-marys.richmond.sch.uk](mailto:info@st-marys.richmond.sch.uk)
- In exceptional circumstances and at the discretion of the Head teacher, absence maybe authorised but the following will be considered:
- Your child's overall pattern of attendance;
- Any previous pattern of leave in term time;
- The age of your child; this is important where testing may be applicable
- The time of year and whether there are assessments due;
- Family circumstances and the parents/carers reasons for wanting to take a leave of absence during term time

If the holiday or leave of absence is taken without the agreement of the Head teacher or is in excess of what has been agreed, your child's absence will be marked as unauthorised and you may be contacted by the Education Welfare Officer (EWO)

Failure to return after a date has been agreed may result in your child losing their school place.

### **Late Collection**

A small number of children are regularly collected late at the end of the day. It is important that children are collected on time as they can become distressed. If children have not been collected 15 minutes after the end of the day we will record this and contact parents. Should the situation not improve, a SPA referral may be made.

## **The Education Welfare Service**

Parents are expected and encouraged to contact the school at an early stage and work together with school staff in resolving problems together. This approach is nearly always successful.

If this does not resolve the problem, the school will refer your child to the Education Welfare Officer (EWO) from the local authority. They are independent of the school and can provide impartial advice.

The EWO will work together with you and school in order to resolve the difficulty and return your child to regular attendance.

In this school, to ensure that we promote early intervention and prevent absence from becoming chronic, the school together with the LA, will make use of the Fast Track to Attendance process. This means that you and your child will work together with the EWO over a 12-week program of strategies and support in order to improve attendance.

It is important to note that once your child has been accepted on the Fast Track to Attendance Programme no further absence will be authorised without medical evidence.

If all efforts have been tried and the unauthorised absences persist, officers can use sanctions such as Penalty Notices or in some cases a legal planning meeting will be convened.

## **Telephone Numbers/Contact Details**

There are times when we need to contact parents/carers in an emergency and about other things including absence from school. We must have contact telephone numbers and parental /carer details. We need your help in ensuring that you have provided us with up to date telephone numbers and contact details – if we don't then something important maybe missed.

## **School targets, projects and initiatives**

The school has targets to improve attendance and punctuality and you have an important part to play in helping us to meet these targets and to aim higher in all aspects of your child's education.

The minimum level of attendance for this school is 97% and we will keep you updated regularly about the progress to this level and how your child's attendance compares.

Our aim is to achieve higher than this because we know that good attendance is the key to successful schooling.

Throughout the school year we monitor absence 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 in our regular school newsletter and we would ask for your full support.

The school has a legal duty to publish its absence figures to parents and to promote good attendance. Equally, parents have a duty to make sure that their children attend.

All school staff are committed to working with parents and pupils as the best way to ensure as high level of attendance as possible.

## **What is expected of staff?**

The Class Teachers will:

- Be models of good attendance and punctuality. Staff procedures for absence are detailed in the Staff Handbook.
- Complete the registers according to the policy.
- Follow the 'Absence and Punctuality Recording Procedures'.
- Encourage all children to attend school regularly and on time.

The Attendance Staff will:

- Enter the data from the registers into the electronic system
- Ensure accurate attendance / absence codes are used
- Monitor the 'Late Book' and 'Late Collection' books and generate appropriate letters
- Distribute the 'Attendance and Punctuality' information to new families and families that are regularly late or have poor attendance.
- Ensure the 'Late Books' are completed accurately and remind families who are entered in it of the school's expectations for attendance and punctuality.
- Phone families before 10.00 am on the first day of absence when the school has not been notified
- Ensure that all LA / DofE reports on attendance and punctuality are generated.

The School will:

- Monitor patterns of attendance and punctuality
- Report on attendance and punctuality to the LA as requested by completing attendance returns
- Liaise with the SENCo, Learning Mentor, Class Teachers, Administration officers, EWO and other outside agencies as required, providing data where necessary
- Respond to observed patterns of attendance
- Target children who are regularly late to ensure improvements
- Offer support to Parents or Carers and children
- Liaise with the School Administrator concerning the completion and sending off of the appropriate forms and the removal of any child from the school register.

The Senior Leadership Team will:

- Monitor attendance and punctuality especially for trends and patterns
- Give out the agreed awards for good punctuality and attendance

The Headteacher will:

- Monitor attendance and punctuality throughout the school, evaluating the implementation of the policy, meeting with the EWO every 6 weeks
- Analyse weekly punctuality and attendance data for distribution in the newsletters.
- Report termly attendance and punctuality to the Governors

The Educational Welfare Officer will:

- Visit the schools at least once every 6 weeks. Check attendance and punctuality and provide feedback to the school and the LA.
- Meet with the attendance team to discuss attendance and punctuality and individuals that have developed patterns of concern.
- Take appropriate action, depending on the individual case, including writing letters or initiating legal planning meetings where necessary.
- Meet with parents, where necessary, to discuss any other issues of concern including home education in cases of long term absence due to significant illness.
- Agree the removal of children from the school register.

### **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.

The Staff responsible for attendance matters in this school are:

Angela Abrahams

Jane Tomlinson

Rhys Williams



## APPENDICES

1. Request for pupil authorised absence (p10)
2. Attendance policy (p11)
3. Letter requesting written verification for absence for medical reasons from a Health Professional (p12)



## REQUEST FOR PUPIL AUTHORISED ABSENCE

Name(s) of Child(ren) .....

Class(es) .....

Date(s) of Absence .....

Please give reason for absence: (you may attach a separate letter if you prefer)

.....  
.....  
.....  
.....

Authorised by Headteacher: YES  NO

Angela Abrahams .....

Date .....

*Office use only:*

Copy returned to Parents

Copy to Class Teacher

Logged on Integris

## ST MARY'S CE SCHOOL

### ATTENDANCE POLICY

#### b) Holidays

The Headteacher is discouraged by the Governing Body and the local authority from authorising family holidays and extended leave during term time and expects that there be no requests for these.

At St Mary's, however, we recognise each family is individual and that family crises, specific parental work commitments and other special needs do occasionally arise. If parents, after careful consideration, feel it is unavoidable that they take their child out of school, they should fill in the appropriate form (available from reception or to download). The Headteacher may wish to discuss the matter with the family. Schoolwork may be set for the pupil to complete while he/she is away.

In deciding whether to authorise leave, the Headteacher and governors will consider the best educational and social interests of each child, taking into account the following:

- the nature of the trip
- the child's family circumstances
- the child's age
- the child's ability and effect on his/her education
- the duration of leave
- the time of year (e.g. close to SATs)
- whether the parents are restricted in terms of leave from their employer
- previous term-time leave

If permission is refused and a child is still taken out of school, the absence will be recorded as unauthorised and may be referred to the local authority's Education Welfare Officer.

TO WHOM IT MAY CONCERN

ATTENDANCE AT GP CLINICS, SURGERIES, DENTIST OR HOSPITAL

The school requires pupils who have persistent absences due to illness, medical conditions etc to obtain confirmation of their appointment from the clinic.

I would be grateful if you could confirm that this pupil has attended an appointment by stamping this letter with your official stamp and entering the date of the appointment.

Thank you very much for your co-operation.



Angela Abrahams  
Headteacher  
[headteacher@st-marys.richmond.sch.uk](mailto:headteacher@st-marys.richmond.sch.uk)

Name of child.....

Date of appointment.....

OFFICIAL STAMP

