



*Live Life, Love Learning, Guided by God*



# St Mary's C of E Primary School

## Attendance Policy

|                                   |                               |
|-----------------------------------|-------------------------------|
| Committee responsible             | FGB                           |
| Approval required by              | FGB                           |
| Statutory or Recommended          | Statutory from September 2023 |
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| Date approved                     | May 2023                      |
| <b>Date of next review</b>        | <b>May 2024</b>               |
| Display on website                | Yes                           |
| Link with other policies          | N/A                           |
| Signed by the Chair of Governors: | Jack Foster                   |
| Signed by the Headteacher:        | Emmeline Lawlor               |

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## 1. Aims

We are committed to meeting our obligation with regards to school attendance through our whole-school culture and ethos that values good attendance, including:

- › Promoting good attendance
- › Reducing absence, including persistent and severe absence
- › Ensuring every pupil has access to the full-time education to which they are entitled
- › Acting early to address patterns of absence
- › Building strong relationships with families to ensure pupils have the support in place to attend school

We will also promote and support punctuality in attending lessons.

## Introduction

St Mary's Primary School aim to work together with parents in order to achieve high levels of attendance and punctuality for all children. Regular attendance is crucial to children achieving their full potential in learning, in making friends and feeling more settled and happier in school. We closely follow the Local authority guidelines on attendance.

Regular school attendance is essential for children to make the most of the educational opportunities that are available to them. Good attendance ensures better progress both academically and socially, improves children's future life chances and establishes a positive work ethic early in life. Poor attendance and punctuality can also be an indicator of a safeguarding issue. Monitoring attendance is a statutory responsibility and part of the safeguarding procedures for our school and we track attendance and punctuality very closely.

St Mary's Primary School firmly believes that all pupils benefit from regular school attendance. Being in school and ready to learn is crucial to each child's attainment, wellbeing, and wider life chances. To this end we will do all we can to encourage parents to ensure their children sustain the maximum possible attendance and that any problems that prevent full attendance are identified and acted on promptly. We expect parents to ensure that their child's attendance is 96% or above for each academic year. In addition, when absence is unavoidable, parents will be required to inform the school at the earliest opportunity.

The aim of this policy is to encourage good and regular attendance and reduce pupil absences. Parents, whose children are of compulsory school age (5-16) and are registered at a school, are responsible for ensuring that their children attend school regularly. If they do not do so they may be committing an offence under the Education Act 1966 and could be liable to prosecution. In line with the Education Regulations (Pupil Registration) Regulations 2006, all unexplained absences of 10 days or more are required to be reported to the Local Authority. Schools are therefore required to report all absence figures to the local authority and the Department for Education and to ensure they are recorded on a child's annual report. Rates of absence are also taken into account by Ofsted as part of a school's inspection

## 2. Legislation and guidance

This policy meets the requirements of the [working together to improve school attendance](#) from the Department for Education (DfE), and refers to the DfE's statutory guidance on [school attendance parental responsibility measures](#). These documents are drawn from the following legislation setting out the legal powers and duties that govern school attendance:

- › Part 6 of [The Education Act 1996](#)
- › Part 3 of [The Education Act 2002](#)
- › Part 7 of [The Education and Inspections Act 2006](#)
- › [The Education \(Pupil Registration\) \(England\) Regulations 2006 \(and 2010, 2011, 2013, 2016 amendments\)](#)
- › [The Education \(Penalty Notices\) \(England\) \(Amendment\) Regulations 2013](#)

This policy also refers to the DfE's guidance on the school census, which explains the persistent absence threshold.

## **Parent Responsibility in the Law**

The Education Act 1996 Part 1, Section 7 states: The parent of every child of compulsory school age shall cause him to receive efficient full-time education suitable: a) to his age, ability and aptitude and b) to any special needs he may have, either by regular attendance at school or otherwise

Under current government legislation, all absence figures, together with the reasons for absence have to be reported to the School's Governing Body, the Local Authority (LA), and the Department for Education (DfE). Parents and carers must ensure that they support the school's attendance policy as any absence will have a large impact on their child's learning. Regular school attendance is essential and parents and carers, together with our school staff have a part to play in ensuring full potential is achieved.

The offence of failing to ensure regular school attendance If a child of compulsory school age who is registered at a school fails to attend regularly at the school, the parent is guilty of an offence under section 444(1) of the Education Act 1966. Since 2001, a more serious offence has been introduced, which requires proof that the parent was aware of the child's non- attendance and failed to act. Under this higher offence a warrant can be issued compelling a parent to attend court. Prosecution under section 444(1A) can lead to a custodial sentence

## **3. Roles and responsibilities**

### **3.1 The governing board**

The governing board is responsible for:

- › Promoting the importance of school attendance across the school's policies and ethos
- › Making sure school leaders fulfil expectations and statutory duties
- › Regularly reviewing and challenging attendance data
- › Monitoring attendance figures for the whole school
- › Holding the headteacher to account for the implementation of this policy

### **3.2 The headteacher**

The headteacher is responsible for:

- › Implementation of this policy at the school
- › Monitoring school-level absence data and reporting it to governors
- › Supporting the Attendance Officer with monitoring the attendance of individual pupils
- › Monitoring the impact of any implemented attendance strategies

### **3.3 The designated senior leader responsible for attendance**

The designated senior leader is responsible for:

- › Leading attendance across the school
- › Offering a clear vision for attendance improvement
- › Evaluating and monitoring expectations and processes
- › Having an oversight of data analysis
- › Devising specific strategies to address areas of poor attendance identified through data
- › Arranging calls and meetings with parents to discuss attendance issues
- › Delivering targeted intervention and support to pupils and families

The designated senior leader responsible for attendance is Emmeline Lawlor and can be contacted via our school office.

### **3.4 The attendance officer**

The school attendance officer is responsible for:

- › Monitoring and analysing attendance data (see section 7)
- › Benchmarking attendance data to identify areas of focus for improvement
- › Providing regular attendance reports to school staff and reporting concerns about attendance to the designated senior leader responsible for attendance and the headteacher
- › Working with education welfare officers to tackle persistent absence

The attendance officer is Suzie Campos and can be contacted via [office@stmarys.rbksch.org](mailto:office@stmarys.rbksch.org)

### **3.5 Class teachers**

Class teachers are responsible for recording attendance on a daily basis, using the correct codes, and submitting this information to the school office via the SIMS system by 9:00am.

### **3.6 School office staff**

School office staff will:

- › Take calls from parents about absence on a day-to-day basis and record it on the school system

### **3.7 Parents/carers**

Parents/carers are expected to:

- › Make sure their child attends every day on time
- › Call the school to report their child's absence before 9:00am on the day of the absence (and each subsequent day of absence), and advise when they are expected to return
- › Provide the school with more than 1 emergency contact number for their child
- › Ensure that, where possible, appointments for their child are made outside of the school day

### **School's Procedures**

- Children who arrive after the registers have closed at 9:00am should report to the school office where your child will then be taken to their classroom by a member of the office staff.
- If your child is late because they have been attending a medical appointment, please provide evidence in the form of an appointment card or hospital letter. Their absence will be authorised.
  - Parents will be contacted by telephone if they have not informed the school of the reason for their child's absence by 9:00am. If we still can't contact you and we do not hear from you within 5 days, we have a legal obligation to make a referral to Social Services as your child has become a Child Missing from Education [CME].
- When an explanation for absence has not been provided, parents will receive a reminder letter. If this is not completed and returned by the given date, the child's absence will be recorded as unauthorised.
- When a child's attendance falls below 95% attendance will continue to be monitored.
- If attendance falls below 90% you may be invited in for a meeting with the Headteacher to discuss any barriers to good attendance and a plan going forward to improve your child's attendance.

- Should attendance continue to cause concern, the involvement of the Education Welfare Officer will be requested by the school.
- Children whose attendance falls below 90% are identified as 'Persistent Absentees'. This level of attendance can prompt the involvement of the Education Welfare Officer from the Local Authority. The Educational Welfare Officer will meet with parents or may carry out home visits where attendance is a concern.
- On going poor attendance can indicate a safeguarding concern/neglect and will prompt the school to follow its safeguarding procedures including a referral to Social Services.
- If a holiday is taken, it will be recorded as an unauthorised absence.

## 4. Recording attendance

### 4.1 Attendance register

We will keep an attendance register, and place all pupils onto this register.

#### **Categorisation of Absence**

Any pupil who is on roll but not present in the school must be recorded within one of these categories:

#### 1. Unauthorised absence

This is for those pupils where no reason has been provided, or whose absence is deemed to be without a valid reason. This includes:

- parents keeping children off school unnecessarily
- absences which have never been properly explained
- shopping, looking after other children, birthdays, buying new shoes etc.
- excessive illness without medical evidence
- leave taken during term time which is not deemed exceptional

#### 2. Authorised absence

This is for those pupils who are away from school for a reason that is deemed to be valid under the Education Act 1996 (e.g. genuine illness). The 2013 changes of the Education Regulations 2006 must also be taken into account when considering requests for leave during term time and these state that the Headteacher may no longer grant leave of absence during term time unless there are exceptional circumstances.

#### 3. Approved Educational Activity

This covers types of supervised educational activity undertaken off site but with the approval of the school.

Note: Pupils recorded in this category are deemed to be present for attendance returns purposes. This would include:

- work experience placements
- field trips and educational visits
- sporting activities
- link courses or approved education off site
- most types of dual registration

#### **Registration:**

We will take our attendance register at the start of the first session of each school day and once during the second session. It will mark whether every pupil is:

- Present
- Attending an approved off-site educational activity

- Absent
- Unable to attend due to exceptional circumstances

Any amendment to the attendance register will include:

- The original entry
- The amended entry
- The reason for the amendment
- The date on which the amendment was made
- The name and position of the person who made the amendment

See appendix 1 for the DfE attendance codes.

We will also record:

- Whether the absence is authorised or not
- The nature of the activity if a pupil is attending an approved educational activity
- The nature of circumstances where a pupil is unable to attend due to exceptional circumstances

We will keep every entry on the attendance register for 3 years after the date on which the entry was made.

Pupils must arrive in school by 8:45am on each school day.

The register for the first session will be taken at 9:00am and will be kept open until 9:15am. The register for the second session will be taken at 1:10pm

## **4.2 Unplanned absence**

The pupil's parent/carer must notify the school of the reason for the absence on the first day of an unplanned absence by 9:00am or as soon as practically possible by calling the school office staff (see also section 7)

## **4.3 Planned absence**

Attending a medical or dental appointment will be counted as authorised as long as the pupil's parent/carer notifies the school in advance of the appointment.

We expect parents/carers to provide evidence of the medical or dental appointment for our records.

However, we encourage parents/carers to make medical and dental appointments out of school hours where possible. Where this is not possible, the pupil should be out of school for the minimum amount of time necessary.

The pupil's parent/carer must also apply for other types of term-time absence as far in advance as possible of the requested absence. Go to section 5 to find out which term-time absences the school can authorise.

## **4.4 Lateness and punctuality**

A pupil who arrives late:

- Before the register has closed will be marked as late, using the appropriate code
- After the register has closed will be marked as absent, using the appropriate code

### **Late collection**

School closes at 3:20pm for YR – Y6. Parents must ensure that their child is collected on time every day.

If a child is collected late either from school or a club, this can be distressing for the child and also mean that staff who have to supervise late children beyond the school day are taken away from their scheduled work.

This can also result in staff needing to stay beyond the end of their shift. In extreme circumstances, regular late collection can also indicate a safeguarding issue and the school will follow its safeguarding procedures.

#### **4.5 Following up unexplained absence**

Where any pupil we expect to attend school does not attend, or stops attending, without reason, the school will:

- Call the pupil's parent/carer on the morning of the first day of unexplained absence to ascertain the reason.
- Identify whether the absence is approved or not
- Identify the correct attendance code to use and input it as soon as the reason for absence is ascertained – this will be no later than 5 working days after the session
- Call the parent/carer on each day that the absence continues without explanation to ensure proper safeguarding action is taken where necessary. If absence continues, the school will consider involving an education welfare officer

#### **4.6 Reporting to parents/carers**

The school will regularly inform parents about their child's attendance and absence levels each term.

### **5. Authorised and unauthorised absence**

#### **5.1 Approval for term-time absence**

The headteacher will only grant a leave of absence to a pupil during term time if they consider there to be 'exceptional circumstances'. A leave of absence is granted at the headteacher's discretion, including the length of time the pupil is authorised to be absent for.

Circumstances vary from school to school and so there can be no absolute rules on this subject. Term times are for education. This is the priority. Children and families have 175 days off school to spend time together, including weekends and school holidays. Head teachers will rightly prioritise attendance. Generally, absences will not be granted during term time and will only be authorised by the head teacher in exceptional circumstances.

If parents want to take their child out of school during term time they must complete a 'Request for Leave for Exceptional Circumstances' form.

#### **What are exceptional circumstances?**

Head teachers cannot authorise term time holidays, unless there accept the reason for leave of absence is exceptional.

Exceptional circumstances are one off events which are unavoidable, examples may include the death of a close relative, attendance at a funeral, a housing crisis which prevents attendance. The school considers each application for term-time absence individually, taking into account the specific facts, circumstances and relevant context behind the request.

#### **Exceptional leave MAY be:**

- Grandparent or other close relative is seriously ill – and you must leave in an emergency
- Where an absence from school is recommended by a health professional as part of a parent or child's rehabilitation from a medical or emotional issue. This must be backed up by a doctor's letter
- Religious observance – The Education Act 1996 S444(3) (c), states "on any day exclusively set apart for religious observance by the religious body to which his/her parent belongs";



### **Exceptional leave is NOT:**

- Availability of cheap flights and/or holidays
- Availability of desired accommodation
- Parent/carer work commitments
- Poor weather experienced during school holiday periods
- Overlap with the beginning or end of term, half term
  - The impact of Covid or similar on booked / rearranged holidays

## **6. Encouraging sustained, regular attendance**

At St Mary's, we encourage regular attendance in the following ways:

- ✓ by providing a safe, caring and welcoming learning environment
- ✓ by responding promptly to a child or parent's concerns about the school or other pupils
- ✓ by informing parents in writing of irregular attendance, including lateness by accurate and punctual completion of registers during morning and afternoon registrations
- ✓ by publishing attendance statistics
- ✓ Linking our school attendance register to a 'live' WEDUC register so that parents can efficiently view and track attendance of their child
- ✓ by celebrating good attendance
- ✓ by educating our children through Collective Worship and lessons in relation to the importance of excellent attendance and punctuality as a crucial part of becoming successful learners, confident individuals and responsible citizens
- ✓ by presenting excellent attendance certificates at the end of each half term

## **7. Attendance monitoring**

The school attendance officer gathers attendance and punctuality data for all pupils each week. This is shared with the Headteacher on a weekly basis in order to monitor consistently at individual pupil level.

### **7.1 Monitoring attendance**

The school will:

- Monitor attendance and absence data across the school and at an individual pupil level
- Identify whether or not there are particular groups of children whose absences may be a cause for concern

Pupil-level absence data will be collected each term and published at national and local authority level through the DfE's school absence national statistics releases. The underlying school-level absence data is published alongside the national statistics. The school will compare attendance data to the national average, and share this with the governing board.

### **7.2 Analysing attendance**

The school will:

- Analyse attendance and absence data regularly to identify pupils or cohorts that need additional support with their attendance, and use this analysis to provide targeted support
- Look at historic and emerging patterns of attendance and absence, and then develop strategies to address these patterns

### 7.3 Using data to improve attendance

The school will:

- Provide regular attendance reports to class teachers, and other school leaders, to facilitate discussions with pupils and families
- Use data to monitor and evaluate the impact of any interventions put in place in order to modify them and inform future strategies

### 7.4 Reducing persistent and severe absence

The government definition of PA is when a child misses 10% or more schooling across the school year for whatever reason. Severe absence is when a pupil misses 50% or more schooling across the school year. Absence at this level is considerably damaging to a child's educational prospects and we need parents' fullest support and cooperation to tackle this.

PA represents a very significant amount of time out of school. It is equivalent to 19 days over the course of the year or approximately 6 days in a term. We monitor all absences thoroughly. Any case that is seen to have reached the PA mark or is at risk of moving towards that mark is given priority. PA will be referred to the EWO. These children are then monitored weekly. Parents will be notified by letter if their child becomes a persistent absentee and, where appropriate, will be invited to a meeting where an action plan will be drawn up to address the issues identified.

The school will:

- Use attendance data to find patterns and trends of persistent and severe absence
- Hold meetings with the parents of pupils who the school (and/or local authority) considers to be vulnerable, or are persistently or severely absent, to discuss attendance and engagement at school
- Provide access to wider support services to remove the barriers to attendance

## 8. Monitoring arrangements

This policy will be reviewed as guidance from the local authority or DfE is updated, and as a minimum every year by the Headteacher. At every review, the policy will be approved by the full governing board.

## 9. Links with other policies

This policy links to the following policies:

- Child protection and safeguarding policy

### Appendix 1: attendance codes

The following codes are taken from the DfE's guidance on school attendance.

| Code | Definition   | Scenario                                      |
|------|--------------|---|
| /    | Present (am) | Pupil is present at morning registration      |
| \    | Present (pm) | Pupil is present at afternoon registration    |
| L    | Late arrival | Pupil arrives late before register has closed |

|          |                               |   |
|----------|-------------------------------|---|
| <b>B</b> | Off-site educational activity | Pupil is at a supervised off-site educational activity approved by the school   |
| <b>D</b> | Dual registered               | Pupil is attending a session at another setting where they are also registered  |
| <b>P</b> | Sporting activity             | Pupil is participating in a supervised sporting activity approved by the school |
| <b>V</b> | Educational trip or visit     | Pupil is on an educational visit/trip organised, or approved, by the school     |
| <b>W</b> | Work experience               | Pupil is on a work experience placement   |

| <b>Code</b>                 | <b>Definition</b>                 | <b>Scenario</b>  |
|-----------------------------|-----------------------------------|--|
| <b>Authorised absence</b>   |                                   |  |
| <b>C</b>                    | Authorised leave of absence       | Pupil has been granted a leave of absence due to exceptional circumstances |
| <b>E</b>                    | Excluded                          | Pupil has been excluded but no alternative provision has been made         |
| <b>H</b>                    | Authorised holiday                | Pupil has been allowed to go on holiday due to exceptional circumstances   |
| <b>I</b>                    | Illness                           | School has been notified that a pupil will be absent due to illness        |
| <b>M</b>                    | Medical/dental appointment        | Pupil is at a medical or dental appointment                                |
| <b>R</b>                    | Religious observance              | Pupil is taking part in a day of religious observance                      |
| <b>T</b>                    | Gypsy, Roma and traveller absence | Pupil from a traveller community is travelling, as agreed with the school  |
| <b>Unauthorised absence</b> |                                   |  |
| <b>G</b>                    | Unauthorised holiday              | Pupil is on a holiday that was not approved by the                         |

|          |                            |   |
|----------|----------------------------|---|
|          |                            | school  |
| <b>N</b> | Reason not provided        | Pupil is absent for an unknown reason (this code should be amended when the reason emerges, or replaced with code O if no reason for absence has been provided after a reasonable amount of time) |
| <b>O</b> | Unauthorised absence       | School is not satisfied with reason for pupil's absence   |
| <b>U</b> | Arrival after registration | Pupil arrived at school after the register closed   |

| <b>Code</b> | <b>Definition</b>                                 | <b>Scenario</b>  |
|-------------|---|--|
| <b>X</b>    | Not required to be in school                      | Pupil of non-compulsory school age is not required to attend   |
| <b>Y</b>    | Unable to attend due to exceptional circumstances | School site is closed, there is disruption to travel as a result of a local/national emergency, or pupil is in custody |
| <b>Z</b>    | Pupil not on admission register                   | Register set up but pupil has not yet joined the school  |
| <b>#</b>    | Planned school closure                            | Whole or partial school closure due to half-term/bank holiday/INSET day  |