

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 2024
Frequency of review	1 Year
Date approved	June 2025
Date of next review	June 2026
Display on website	Yes
Link with other policies	N/A
Signed by the Chair of Governors:	Joseph Al-Kalili
Signed by the Headteacher:	Emmeline Lawlor

Statement of Intent

Attendance and punctuality are life skills and at St Mary's School we strive to support our pupils to maintain high levels of attendance. Good attendance at school is important for your child's education and establishes a positive working ethos early in life.

The Positives – research shows:

- Children who have 95% attendance or above do better at school and better in later life.
- Children who have 95% attendance or above are more confident, happier and find school more enjoyable.
- Children who have 95% attendance or above find transition to secondary school easier.

Why Does Attendance Matter?

Everyday Counts, Attendance Matters

Being in school is important to your child's academic achievement, wellbeing, and wider development. There is evidence to suggest that regular school attendance is a key mechanism to support children and young people's educational, economic and social outcomes.

The Education Act 1996 requires parents and carers ensure their child attends school regularly to ensure they receive full time education.

The current government legislation requires schools to provide the Local Authority (LA) and the Department of Education (DFE) with all absence figures for each pupil and the reasons for those absences.

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

Attendance Expectations

At St Mary's we have high expectations for pupils' attendance and punctuality.

Children's attendance is monitored weekly by our Attendance Officer Miss Campos, who meets termly with the school's designated Educational Welfare Officer to discuss children's attendance that has fallen below 94%.

We expect Children to:

- Attend school regularly
- Attend school punctually

We expect the child's parents/carers will:

- Make sure their child arrives at school on time and is collected at the appropriate times.

- Make sure their child arrives healthy, dressed in school uniform and properly equipped for their school day.
- Avoid planning and booking holidays and other activities during term time.
- Contact the school office each day of your child's absence by 9am with the reason for their absence. If they are off due to illness please state what the illness is.
- Encourage regular school attendance and be aware of their legal responsibilities.

We expect school staff will:

- Keep accurate records of attendance for all pupils, twice daily.
- Monitor every pupil's attendance and lateness.
- Contact parents/carers as soon as possible when a pupil does not attend when no message has been received to explain the absence.
- Encourage good attendance.
- Provide a welcoming atmosphere for children - a safe learning environment and a sympathetic response to any pupil's concerns.
- Communicate with parents/carers for pupil's who are not attending regularly.
- Refer families to the Educational Welfare Officer (EWO) when a pupil's attendance is of concern.
- Report attendance figures to the Local Authority.

School Governors:

- Have a legal responsibility to monitor and evaluate the attendance of pupils. The school's attendance figures are presented to the Governing Body on a termly basis.

Definitions of absences and requirements for these absences

There are many reasons that children may be absent from school, some of which are considered to be authorised absences and others are unauthorised absence. Some examples of these are as follows:

Authorised absences

- **Illness** - Please note that whilst illness is considered an authorised absence, but if a child is persistently off with illnesses or has an extended period of time off due to illness the school can request medical evidence. If no medical evidence is received the illness will be marked as an unauthorised absence.
- **Medical appointments** - Needs to be booked outside of school hours, but we do understand this is not always possible. Medical appointments will only be authorised if an appointment card, letter or confirmation is provided to school before the appointment. This can be done by coming to the school office with the letter, or emailing the office at office@stmarys.rbksch.org.
- **Religious Observance** - Parents/carers will be expected to request absence for religious observance at least two weeks in advance. The school will only authorise for the days that are exclusively set apart for the religious observance by the relevant religious body. This must be applied for by completing the school's Leave of Absence form.
- Children taking part in any kind of performance such as stage or sport which is not a school activity must complete the Leave of Absence Form as well as a child

performance licence. These are issued through the Local Authority. Requests for time out of school will be considered on a case-by-case basis. If the relevant documents are not provided the absence will be an unauthorised absence.

- Exceptional Circumstances - These may be authorised but all applications are managed on a case-by-case basis. All leave for exceptional circumstances must be applied for by completing the school's Leave of Absence Form. The Headteacher will review the request and will decide whether or not to authorise the exceptional circumstance absence. The following will be taken into consideration:
 - The Child's current attendance;
 - The reason for the absence;
 - Previous requests for term time absence within the same school year;
 - Evidence provided by the family

Once a decision has been made, parents/carers will be informed and a copy of the decision will be kept in the child's personal file.

Unauthorised Absences

- Family Holidays

For family holidays during the school year parents/carers will need to complete a Leave of Absence form (see Appendix 1). The school does not authorise family holidays during term time but the form does need to be completed.

Under Pupil Registration Regulations (2006, as amended in 2013), we strongly discourage parents/carers from taking children out of school in term time for holidays. parents/carers must be aware that taking a child out of education for a 10 day holiday will result in them missing 5% of their education.

Parents/carers are strongly advised to avoid taking their children on holiday during term time.

- Birthdays

If a birthday falls on a school day during term time children are still expected to attend school.

- Persistently absent

If a child is persistently absent and no medical evidence is provided the illness will be marked as an unauthorised absence.

The Process of Monitoring Attendance

The school Attendance Officer, Miss Campos, will log instances of absence and lateness and will discuss with the Head Teacher and the Educational Welfare Officer. The following process will be followed:

- **Stage 1:** Where there are concerns with regards to attendance and/or punctuality a letter will be sent to parents/carers via Weduc (See Appendix 2).
- **Stage 2:** Once the first letter is sent, a 3-week monitoring period will be implemented. After that period the pupil's attendance will be reviewed and if their attendance is above 94% an Improved Letter (See Appendix 3) will be sent. If their attendance has not improved enough a further 3 weeks of monitoring will be

implemented (Appendix 4). If their attendance has declined within that 3-week period Letter 2 (see Appendix 5) will be sent to parents/carers.

- **Stage 3:** If the child's attendance continues to be a concern the school will arrange for a meeting between the parent/carer.
- **Stage 4:** If the concerns persist the school will make a formal referral to the Local Authority Educational Welfare Service. A letter (see Appendix 6) will be sent to the parent/carer informing them that a referral has been made.

The school reserves the right to go straight to Stage 4 if we feel there is a major concern with attendance and feel that the Educational Welfare service needed to be involved sooner.

The Role of the Education Welfare Officer

- The Education Welfare Officer supports schools, parents/carers and pupils with the aim of ensuring and promoting good attendance and punctuality. However, the Educational Welfare Officer has a statutory duty under the Education Act 1996 to pursue non-school attendance and persistent lateness.
- Section 444 of the Education Act states that "if a child of compulsory school age, who is a registered pupil at a school, fails to attend regularly at the school, the parents are guilty of an offence."
- Kingston upon Thames Local Authority, through the Education Welfare Service, may prosecute parents/carers of children who do not attend school regularly.
- The Local Authority's framework promotes early intervention and aims to ensure that appropriate action is taken to tackle non-attendance as soon as the attendance problems become apparent. It involves engaging the parent/carer, specifying what improvements need to be made over a fixed time-frame (usually 12 weeks). Parents/carers have the responsibility for ensuring that their child attends school regularly. Where a parent/carer fails in this responsibility and sufficient improvement is not brought about within the specified time frame, legal proceedings may be initiated.

Penalty Notices

The code of conduct:

Under Section 444A and 444B of the Education Act 1996, local authority officers, headteachers and the police are empowered to issue penalty notices (FPNs) in cases of unauthorised absence from school.

The Education (Penalty Notice) Regulations 2007 set out the details of how the penalty notice scheme must operate. Every local authority must draw up and publish a Code of Conduct for issuing penalty notices and Achieving for Children (AFC) who act on the behalf of Kingston and Richmond local authority have done just this. Further information can be found [here](#).

The code of conduct is set to ensure that the powers are applied consistently and fairly. The school will consider the issuing of Penalty Notices appropriate where the Educational Welfare Service has failed to affect a return to school following specific circumstances:

- At least 10 sessions (5 school days) lost due to unauthorised absence in any six-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 six-week period.

Payment of a Penalty Notice:

From August 2024, a Fixed Penalty Notice will incur a charge of £80 per parent, per child if payment is made within 21 days. After 21 days but before 28 days is £160 per parent, per child for the offence period. No reminder for this payment will be sent.

Non-payment of Penalty Notices:

If the payment is not received within 28 days, the local authority can consider whether to start prosecution. If the fine remains unpaid after 28 days, the presumption is the local authority will issue summons and proceed to court.

Repeated Fines:

If a parent/carer receives a second fine for the same child within any three year period, this will be charged at the higher rate of £160.

Fines per parent are capped at two fines within any three year period. Once this limit has been reached, other actions such as a parenting order or prosecution may be considered.

Lateness

Punctuality is an important life skill that is expected of your child in order for them to succeed in their learning journey.

- The school gate opens at 8.30am. Key Stage One classroom doors open at 8.45am and Key Stage Two classroom doors open at 8.40am. Children must be in class by 9am ready for the register to be taken. The school gate will close at 9am. Children who arrive after that time must be accompanied by their parent/carer to the school office. The office will enter the child in the register and the child will receive a late mark depending on their arrival time to school.
- If the arrival is after the register closes at 9am the pupil will receive an 'L' mark in the register and the number of minutes will be input into the register. If the child arrives after 9.14am they will receive a 'U' mark in the register. These marks both equate to an absence even though the child is on the school premises in accordance with health and safety.
- If a pupil is late due to a medical appointment, they will receive an authorised code 'M', but only if proof of appointment has been given or emailed to the officer otherwise the child will be marked late.

Lateness is monitored by the School's Attendance Officer, who will liaise with the Head Teacher and Education Welfare Service. Lateness does affect the attendance percentage of the child which can result in attendance letters being sent home.

What to do if your child is unwell or has an emergency doctor/dentist appointment.

Please call the office on 0208 397 9597 or email the office@stmarys.rbksch.org by 9am in order to inform us why your child will be absent and for how long. If your child is unwell, please leave a message stating what the illness is. Parents/carers must call everyday of a child's absence unless informed not to by the office staff. If we do not hear from the parent/carer by 9.30am the school will endeavour to contact you. If we have not made contact with the parent/carer by 10.30am the Head Teacher or a member of the Senior Leadership Team will be informed and a home visit will take place to ensure the safety of the child. If no-one is at home a referral will be made to the Education Welfare Service.

If your child requires an urgent medical or dentist appointment and needs to attend that appointment before coming into school, please call or email the office (details as above) with the appointment time and expected time to return to school. We do also need confirmation of the appointment from the dentist or medical facility to be emailed to the office or an appointment card with the child's name on it handed to the office.

Appendix 1:

APPLICATION FOR LEAVE OF ABSENCE FOR EXCEPTIONAL CIRCUMSTANCES

As parents, you have a legal responsibility to ensure your child's attendance at school. During the academic year, pupils are at school for 190 days and at home for 175 days.

Regular attendance at school is vital for your child to make good progress in their learning. Good attendance is between 96-100%. Regular missed days at school can result in a meeting with the Educational Welfare Officer. Persistent absences can result in the Educational Welfare Service taking court action to prosecute parents.

Please complete the form below if you want the Headteacher to consider your request for your child's leave of absence for exceptional circumstances. We may ask for proof to back up your request.

The Headteacher will consider the reasons for your request carefully and we will notify you of the decision.

Name of child:	Class:
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First date of absence:	Return date to school:
Number of school days your child will be absent:	
Reason for absence:	
Has your child already had a leave of absence this school year: YES/NO	
If yes please give details:	
Signed: (Parent/Carer):	Date:
.....

Headteacher:

Number of days authorised:	Number of days unauthorised:
Headteacher's signature: Date:	

Appendix 2:

XX/XX/20XX

Dear Mr/Mrs,

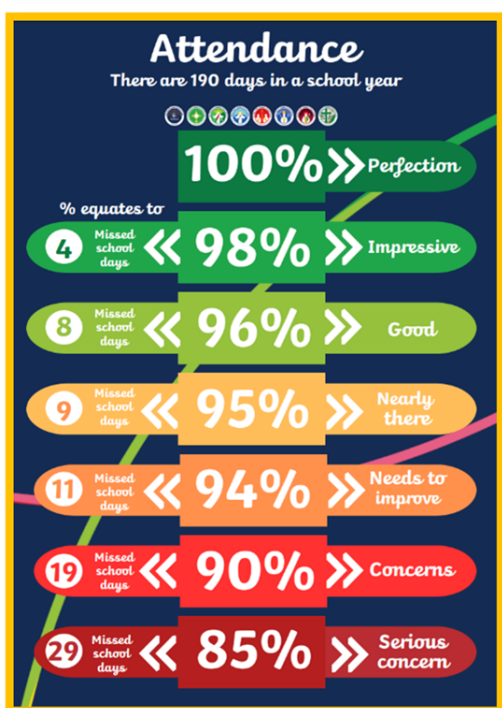
Your child xxxx, has attendance of %. This is below/very close to the Department for Education definition of persistent absence, which is 90%. A good level of attendance is deemed to be 96% or above. Low level attendance can affect your child's wellbeing and social development as well as their long-term academic achievement.

Please note that attendance is also affected by children arriving late for school.

We will be monitoring your child's attendance closely for the next three weeks and would like to see an improvement.

If you have any concerns or would like to discuss this letter further, please do not hesitate to contact me via the office.

Miss Suzie Campos
Attendance Officer



Appendix 3:

XX/XX/XXXX

Dear XXXX,

I am writing to let you know that a review of your child's attendance has been completed.

We are pleased to note that XXXX's attendance has improved from XX to XX, although this is still below the government's recommended attendance percentage of 96%.

Thank you for the ongoing commitment to improving your child's attendance.

Yours sincerely,

Suzie Campos

Attendance Officer

St Mary's C of E Primary School



Appendix 4:

XX/XX/XXXX

Dear XXXX,

XXXX's attendance review has been completed. Their attendance was XX and is now XX. It has improved but it is still below/close to the government's persistent absentee rate of 90%. A good level of attendance is deemed to be 96%. Low attendance can affect your child's long term academic achievement.

Attendance is also affected by children arriving late to school.

Your child's attendance has been monitored for the past three weeks and even though it has improved, a further three weeks of monitoring is needed and we hope to continue to see an improvement.

Yours sincerely

Miss Suzie Campos

Attendance Officer



Appendix 5:

XX/XX/XXXX

Dear XXXX,

Your child XXXX's attendance review is complete. Their attendance was XX and is now XX.

We shall continue to monitor your child for the next three weeks and we expect to see improvements. If your child is unwell, we do now require medical evidence for their absence otherwise it will be marked as an unauthorised absence.

Please note that as a school we have the legal duty to refer any pupil whose attendance remains a concern to the Education Welfare Officer.

Yours sincerely

Miss Suzie Campos

Attendance Officer



Appendix 6:

Dear XXXX,

As you are aware from previous written communication, we have been monitoring your child's attendance.

Your child xxxxxx's, attendance is %. This has continued to be below or very close to the nationally recognised persistent absentee rate of 90%.

The Local Education Authority has a legal duty to provide a service called the Education Welfare Service to support families in promoting engagement with education and positive school attendance.

Schools have a legal duty to refer any pupil whose attendance remains a concern to this service. Due to xxxxx attendance still being a concern we would like to inform you that a referral has now been made and they will be in contact with you.

Please note that we require medical evidence of any further absences that your child may have and any absences that are not substantiated will be categorised as unauthorised.

Yours sincerely,

Mrs Emmeline Lawlor

Headteacher

St Mary's C of E Primary School

