

## ATTENDANCE POLICY

St. Mary's Catholic Primary School Chiswick

*"Living and learning, inspired by our faith"*



June 2024

DHR Sankar  
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Chair of Governors

Next Review Date: June 2026

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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 excellent 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 school.

Regular attendance and excellent punctuality at school are legal requirements, and have significant impact on children's wellbeing, learning and attainment. It is essential so that children can access the curriculum and achieve their full potential.

## 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](#)

It also refers to:

- [School census guidance](#)
- [Keeping Children Safe in Education](#)
- [Mental health issues affecting a pupil's attendance: guidance for schools](#)

## **3. Roles and responsibilities**

### **3.1 The governing body**

The governing body 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
- Making sure staff receive adequate training on attendance
- 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 staff with monitoring the attendance of individual pupils
- Monitoring the impact of any implemented attendance strategies
- Issuing Attendance Contracts or making referrals for fixed-penalty notices, where necessary
- 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
- Building relationships with parents/carers to discuss and tackle attendance issues
- Creating intervention reintegration plans in partnership with pupils and their parents/carers
- Delivering targeted intervention and support to pupils and families

### **3.3 The attendance officer**

The school attendance officer is responsible for:

- Monitoring and analysing attendance data
- 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 leaders responsible for attendance and the headteacher
- Working with education welfare officers to tackle persistent absence
- Advising the headteacher when to make referrals

### **3.4 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

### **3.5 School Office staff**

School Office staff will:

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

- Communicate with staff in order to provide them with more detailed support on attendance

- Communicate with the headteacher to provide information about absences for Vulnerable Pupils

### **3.6 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 2 emergency contact numbers for their child, in addition to parents' contact details

- Ensure that where possible, appointments for their child are made outside of the school day, (especially for non-urgent appointments) and that the school is notified via email in advance of the appointment, of the date and time of the appointment and the reason. Proof of appointment is also required, prior to the child attending the appointment.

### **3.7 Pupils**

Pupils are expected to:

- Attend school every day on time

## **4. Recording attendance**

### **4.1 Attendance register**

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

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

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 6 years after the date on which the entry was made.

School gates open at 8.45am and close at 8.55am. Pupils must arrive in school by 8.55am on each school day.

The register for the morning session will be taken at 8.55am. Morning registers close at 9.10am. Any child arriving after this time is marked as unauthorised absence. The register for the afternoon session will be taken at 1.00pm.

## **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 emailing or calling the School Office on [Office@stmarys.hounslow.sch.uk](mailto:Office@stmarys.hounslow.sch.uk) or 0208 994 5606.

We will mark absence due to physical or mental illness as authorised, unless the school has a genuine concern about the authenticity of the illness.

Where the absence is longer than 5 days or there are doubts about the authenticity of the illness, the school will ask for medical evidence, such as a doctor's note, prescription, appointment card or other appropriate form of evidence. We will not ask for medical evidence unnecessarily.

If the school is not satisfied about the authenticity of the illness, the absence will be recorded as unauthorised, and parents/carers will be notified of this in advance.

## **4.3 Planned absence**

Attending a medical appointment will be counted as authorised, as long as the pupil's parent/carer notifies the school in advance of the appointment. Parents should ensure that where possible, appointments for their child are made outside of the school day, (especially for non-urgent appointments) and that the school is notified via email in advance of the appointment, of the date and time of the appointment and the reason. Proof of appointment is also required, prior to the child attending the appointment. The pupil should be out of school for the minimum amount of time necessary.

Parents/carers should request leaves of absence by completing a request for absence form, which can be obtained from the School Office. Requests for leave of absence will be considered by the headteacher and will only be granted in exceptional circumstances. Permission will not be granted for holidays during term-time.

Parents/carers must 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.

As per DfE guidance, term-time leave is not authorised. By taking term-time leave, you may be referred to Hounslow Local Authority, where you could be at risk of receiving a penalty notice.

## **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.

Parents will be asked to sign the late book in Reception. Persistent latecomers will be required to meet with the headteacher.

We work in partnership to support parents to ensure that children are in school every day and on time.

## **4.5 Following up unexplained absence**

It is the parent's responsibility to inform the school of their child's 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. If the school cannot reach any of the pupil's emergency contacts, the school will take advice from local authority attendance officers

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, who will visit the home to make contact with the parents

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

The school will regularly inform parents/carers about their child's attendance and absence levels. Parents whose children are classed as persistently absent – below 90% will receive a letter from the headteacher each term. Parents may also be put on an attendance contract, and if there is no improvement, be referred to the Local Authority.

# **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.

The school considers each application for term-time absence individually, taking into account the specific facts, circumstances and relevant context behind the request.

Any request should be submitted as soon as it is anticipated and, where possible, at least 2 weeks before the absence, and in accordance with any leave of absence request form, accessible via the School Office. The headteacher may require evidence to support any request for leave of absence.

Valid reasons for **authorised absence** include:

Illness (including mental illness) and urgent medical/dental appointments (see sections 4.2 and 4.3 for more detail). We will require proof of appointments.

Religious observance – where the day is exclusively set apart for religious observance by the religious body to which the pupil's parents/carers belong. If necessary, the school will seek advice from the parents'/carers' religious body to confirm whether the day is set apart. Please note that government guidelines state that no more than 1 day a term or 3 days in an academic year may be taken for religious observance.

Traveller pupils travelling for occupational purposes – this covers Roma, English and Welsh gypsies, Irish and Scottish travellers, showmen (fairground 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

To attend the funeral of a close family member or relative.

## 5.2 Legal sanctions

The school or local authority can fine parents/carers for the unauthorised absence of their child from school, where the child is of compulsory school age.

If issued with a fine, or penalty notice, each parent/carer must pay £80 within 21 days or £160 within 28 days. The payment must be made directly to the local authority.

Penalty notices can be issued by a headteacher, local authority officer or the police.

The decision on whether or not to issue a penalty notice may take into account:

The number of unauthorised absences occurring within a rolling academic year

One-off instances of irregular attendance, such as holidays taken in term time without permission

Where an excluded pupil is found in a public place during school hours without a justifiable reason

If the payment has not been made after 28 days, the local authority will decide whether to prosecute or withdraw the notice.

## 6. Strategies for promoting attendance

We are keen to reward excellent attendance and punctuality. Attendance certificates are awarded at Celebration Assembly at the end of each term.

## 7. Attendance monitoring

### 7.1 Monitoring attendance

The school will:

Monitor attendance and absence data daily, half-termly, termly and yearly 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 body.

## **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 to these pupils and their families

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**

Persistent absence is where a pupil misses 10% or more of school – less than 90% attendance, and severe absence is where a pupil misses 50% or more of school – less than 50% attendance.

The school will:

Use attendance data to find patterns and trends of persistent and severe absence

Hold regular meetings with the parents/carers 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

Parents whose children are classed as persistently absent – below 90%, will receive a letter from the headteacher each term. School may also issue attendance contracts, and where attendance does not improve, a referral may be made to the Local Authority.

## **8. Monitoring arrangements**

This policy will be reviewed as guidance from the local authority or DfE is updated, and as a minimum, every 2 years by the headteacher. At every review, the policy will be approved by the full governing body.

## **9. Links with other policies**

This policy links to the following policies:

Child Protection and Safeguarding Policy

Behaviour Policy

## **Appendix 1 – Attendance Codes**

### **Authorised Absence**

\ - present

L- late

C – authorised circumstances by school

E – exclusion, no alternative provision is made

H – leave of absence authorised by school (exceptional circumstances)

I – illness (not medical or dental appointment)

M- medical or dental appointment

R – religious observance

S – study leave

T – traveller

### **Unauthorised Absence**

G- holiday not granted by the school or in excess of the period authorized

N – reason for absence not yet provided

O – absent without authorisation

U – arrived in school after registration closed

### **Approved Educational Activity**

B – off-site educational activity

D- dual registered at another school

J - Interview

P- pupil performing in supervised sporting activity

V – educational visit or trip

W – work experience

Y – unable to attend due to exceptional circumstances

X – non-compulsary school age pupil, not required to be in school