



St. Mary's Catholic Primary School and Nursery

*'Growing Together in Knowledge, Faith and Love'*

Attendance Policy

January 2023

### **Meeting your communication needs:**

We want to ensure that your needs are met. If you would like this information in any other format, please contact the school office.

At St Mary's Catholic Primary School we believe that outstanding attendance and punctuality is essential if pupils are to take full advantage, receive the greatest benefit from their education, raise attainment and gain the appropriate skills which will equip them for life. The school aims to achieve outstanding attendance by operating an attendance policy within which staff, pupils, parents and partner agencies can work collaboratively. We aim for a nurturing environment that enables and encourages all members of our school to reach out for excellence which is facilitated by each child being at school every day that it is open, and arriving on time.

### **The government expects:**

Schools and local authorities to:

- Promote good attendance and reduce absence, including persistent absence
- Ensure every pupil has access to full-time education to which they are
- entitled
- Act early to address patterns of absence
- Parents to perform their legal duty by ensuring their children of compulsory school age who are registered at school attend regularly
- All pupils to be punctual to their lessons

[https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/564599/school\\_attendance.pdf](https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/564599/school_attendance.pdf)

**Duty of parents to secure education of children of compulsory school age.** The parent of every child of compulsory school age shall cause them to receive efficient full time education suitable

(a) to their age, ability and aptitude

(b) to any special educational needs they may have, either by regular attendance at school or otherwise.

<http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/1996/56/section/7>

## **INTRODUCTION:**

Regular attendance at school is essential to promote the education of all pupils. The school's ethos demonstrates that children feel that their presence in school is important, that they are missed when they are absent or late. The school will take appropriate action when necessary in order to promote the aims of the policy.

## **AIMS:**

- To maximise attendance of all children.
- To provide an environment which encourages regular attendance and makes attendance and punctuality a priority for all those associated at the school.
- To monitor and support children whose attendance is a cause for concern and work in partnership with parents and carers to resolve any difficulty.
- To analyse attendance data regularly to inform future policy and practice.
- To work closely and make full use of the support from the wider community including the Education Welfare Service and multi-agency teams.

## **ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES:**

The following people have key responsibilities in the pursuit of high levels of attendance and punctuality:

### **Governors:**

- To set and monitor progress towards annual targets for attendance.
- To evaluate the effectiveness of the Attendance Policy.

### **Headteacher:**

- To ensure that effective systems are in place to accurately reflect individual pupil and group and whole school attendance patterns.
- To monitor individual pupil, group and whole school attendance and punctuality.
- To work in partnership with key agencies if attendance and / or punctuality is an issue.
- To provide Governors with information to enable them to evaluate the success of policy and practice.
- To write to parents/carers regarding any concerns about their child's attendance.
- To arrange meetings with parents/carers to discuss support and set targets for those experiencing attendance difficulties.

### **Class Teacher:**

- To provide an accurate record of the attendance of each child in their class.
- To record the reasons for absence given to them on SIMs.
- To respond promptly to any issue raised in the weekly analysis of registers by office staff.
- To organise work to be sent home for children in their class who are expected to be absent for an extended period through sickness.

### **Office Staff:**

- To prepare, manage and coordinate the use of the SIMS Attendance Manager System.
- To monitor and track attendance patterns for all children and prepare relevant attendance reports when necessary.
- To contact parents/carers by text or telephone on each day of their child's absence to establish the reason.
- To ensure that a satisfactory reason for every absence has been established for each child at the end of each week.
- To make a judgement in conjunction with the Headteacher whether an absence is authorised or unauthorised.

### **Education Welfare Officer:**

- To enforce the law regarding school attendance.
- To support the whole school response to attendance through regular meetings and monitoring individual children's attendance.

### **Parents:**

- To ensure that at least 2 contacts are given to the school by parents/carers.
- To support children in their attendance
- See appendix 1 for copy of attendance agreement signed by parent/carer

### **ADMINISTRATION:**

- The School uses the Attendance Manager provided by SIMS to store and monitor its legal responsibilities in relation to attendance.
- Registers are a vital legal document and teachers are required by their contractual duties to take an attendance register at the beginning of both the morning and afternoon sessions.
- Registers must be completed carefully and accurately, as they provide a record of a pupil's attendance. Failure to complete a register accurately leaves the school vulnerable to complaint from parents or carers and constitutes a risk if an emergency evacuation has to take place.

### **ABSENCE:**

#### **Lateness**

- Pupils arriving after 9am must report to the school office so that their attendance can be recorded accordingly.
- Pupils arriving after the register has been closed at 9.00 am, will be considered as late and as such marked as 'L' on the school register. They must report to reception (at the front of school) and be signed in by a parent/carer.
- Pupils arriving after 9.30 am will be marked as a 'U' on the school register. This will be considered an unauthorised absence unless a satisfactory reason is given.

- Action to address lateness will be taken in line with the school's strategy to improve punctuality.

### **Illness**

- Parents/carers are to contact the school on the first day of absence to provide the reason for absence and on each subsequent day to keep the school informed.
- Parents/carers should provide a written explanation on their child's return to school where they have not contacted the school office. The absence will then be marked as 'I' on the school register.
- If a child is to be absent due to illness for more than 3 days the school requests that medical evidence be provided in order to authorise the absence. Medical evidence can take the form of prescriptions, appointment cards, etc. (Not doctors' notes)
- Where office staff are not made aware of the reason for a child's absence they will, wherever possible, contact parents/carers by text/telephone on each day of absence. If a reason cannot be established the absence will be marked as 'O' unauthorised. Contact will be made with parents/carers to establish the reason for absence.
- If any member of staff is concerned about a reason for absence, the DSL or DDSL will be informed.

### **Medical or Dental Appointments**

- Absence from school due to a medical or dental appointment will be considered as an authorised absence where appointment cards/copies of appointment letters are provided. If this cannot be provided an absence request form must be completed and returned to school prior to the appointment. The school encourages parents/carers where possible to arrange appointments out of school time. Children should only be out of school for the minimum time necessary for the appointment.

### **Holidays in term time**

Headteachers cannot and will not authorise school absence purely for the reason of a family holiday. If you feel you have an exceptional circumstance, please speak to the school in the first instance. You must complete an absence request form detailing the reasons as to why your child will be absent during the school term.

Applications can be considered up to 5 days, if there has been no previous authorised absence application within the academic year, attendance is above 96% and there are no unauthorised absences on the child's records.

Please note we advise that you do not plan for your child to be absent from school without gaining prior agreements from the school first. The school cannot retrospectively authorise absence from school under any circumstances.

Parents are legally responsible for ensuring their children receive education in accordance with section 7 of the Education Act 1996 and if on a school roll that they regularly attend school.

## **What is absence from school for exceptional circumstances?**

### **Exceptional circumstances could include:**

- Service personnel returning from a tour of duty abroad where it is evidenced the individual will not be in receipt of any leave in the near future that coincides with school holidays.
- 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.
- The death or terminal illness of a person close to the family
- To attend a wedding or funeral of a person close to the family

Where there are exceptional and unforeseen circumstances that fall outside of the above, the Headteacher will consult with the Education Welfare Officer prior to the absence being authorised. In all instances, an absence request form must be completed before the absence (forms available from the school office and on the school website attendance page)

**Please note:** Evidence will be required in each case. Only one absence per academic year will be considered and your child's attendance must be above 96% unless medical evidence is provided for all absences.

### **Penalty notices:**

Penalty notices will be used as a deterrent to prevent a pattern of unauthorised absences developing. Fines are issued for unauthorised absences of 5 days or ten sessions. As each day is split into 2 sessions this is equal to 10 sessions.

<https://www.gov.uk/school-attendance-absence>

Should the school decide not to grant leave of absence and parents still take their child out of school the absence will be recorded as unauthorised and may be subject to a Penalty Notice fine by the Local Authority.

- Fine: Your local council can give you a fine of £60 for each child taken out of school, which rises to £120 if you do not pay within 21 days. If you do not pay the fine after 28 days you may be prosecuted for your child's absence from school.
- Prosecution: You could get a fine of up to £2,500, a community order or a jail sentence up to 3 months. The court also gives you a Parenting Order.

<https://www.gov.uk/school-attendance-absence/legal-action-to-enforce-school-attendance>

## **REWARDS:**

- An attendance cup is awarded to the class with the highest attendance each week. This is celebrated and promoted on Dojo.
- Children who achieve 100% or 96% and above attendance receive a certificate at the end of each term. If your child has significantly improved their attendance during a term, they will also be rewarded with a certificate.
- Good and improved attendance is rewarded in a tangible way with, for example, positive comments and discussion with pupils and parents/carers about improved attainment and social interactions.
- Attendance is promoted in school through assemblies and class lessons.
- Children are issued with a certificate at the end of the year if they achieve 100% attendance or 96% and above.
- Absence for self-isolation and other Covid-related safety guidelines are not included in calculating attendance figures.

## **ATTENDANCE CODES:**

The following codes will be used to indicate the reason for absence:

**L** Late (between 9am and 9.15am or after 9.15am if authorised)

**U** Late (after 9.30am – unauthorised absence)

**B** Educated off site (not Dual reg)

**D** Dual registered

**S** Study Leave

**I** Illness

**M** Medical – hospital admission, dental, optician, hospital, doctors

**C** Other authorised absence –bereavement, exceptional circumstances

**G** Unauthorised holiday absence

**O** Unauthorised absence

**P** Approved Sporting Activity

**V** Educational Visit or Trip

**J** Interview (visiting a proposed school)

**R** Religious Observance

**E** Excluded

**N** No reason yet provided for absence

**T** Traveller Absence

**REPORTING, MONITORING AND EVALUATION:**

All absences both authorised and unauthorised, will be reported to the parent/carer at the end of the academic year within their child’s report. So that parents can benchmark their child’s attendance the Governing Body agree targets of attendance in line with national policy. These are outlined below.

100% Excellent
98% - 99.9% Very Good
96% - 97.9% Good
94% - 95.9% On Alert
<u>Under 94% Concerning</u>
<u>Under 90% Persistent absence</u>

Children whose attendance is less than 96% are monitored. Children who have less than 93% will be required to provide medical evidence for all absences in order to consider authorising them and will be invited into school to discuss ways of improving attendance. If absence continues and is not authorised, the school will make a referral to the Education Welfare Department. In every case a pupil will have had a minimum of 10 sessions (5 school days) lost to unauthorised absence during the previous six months up to and including the day the Education Welfare Service is notified. Please see appendix 2.

Attendance data will be collected monthly to establish patterns of irregular attendance. This will include children with:

- Incomplete weeks
- Monday and Friday absences
- Lateness; periods of extended absence
- Periods of unauthorised absence
- Children who are persistent absentees (School-age pupils are persistent absentees if they miss more than 10% of their possible sessions in a school year)

This data will be discussed with the Safeguarding team as part of the regular meetings. The Headteacher and the Safeguarding and Attendance team will discuss the impact of the School’s Attendance Policy and the strategies used to promote good attendance annually. The Headteacher will recommend an attendance target to the Governors. The Governors will then set an annual target of attendance which is reviewed annually.



**Monitoring and Review:**

This policy will be reviewed annually and approved by the governing board

**Date agreed:** January 2023

**Date of next review:** January 2024

## Appendix 1

### 1. Attendance Agreement

#### Times of the School Day

8.00am-8.45am: Breakfast club

8.40am: Gates are open for children to come into class and start reading activities

8.45am: Official registration for start of the day

10.30am-10.45am: Morning Break

12.00 noon - 1pm: Lunchtime

3.15pm: School ends

School begins promptly at **8:45 am**. If your child arrives after this time they **must** report to the school office in order to be marked present. If your child has not arrived at school by **9:30am** and the office has not been advised as to why your child is absent, a text/phone call will be made to establish why your child is not in school. If your child arrives after 9.15am, they are marked as late (L). Registers close at 9.30am. Any child that arrives after this time is marked as late after registers close (U). This is classed as an unauthorised absence.

**It is important that we are notified of your child's absence daily. If you do not notify school of the absence, the mark given will be unauthorised.**

If your child has 10 sessions (5 days) of unauthorised absence this can lead to a referral to the Education Welfare Department. If your child has to attend a doctor's/hospital appointment, the school needs to be notified before the appointment and any appointment cards/letters need to be presented to the school office.

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

They are too ill to come to school (please note school can administer your child's medicine with your prior consent) or you have advance permission from the school (completed the absence request form.) The forms are available from the school office.

#### Holidays:

Headteachers **may not** grant any leave of absence during term time unless there are exceptional circumstances. Please note that a family holiday is not classified as an exceptional circumstance.

**Should the school decide not to grant leave of absence and parents still take their child out of school the absence will be recorded as unauthorised which may be subject to a Penalty Notice fine by the Local Authority of £60 per parent, per child. This fine will increase to £120 if not paid within 21 days. Failure to pay the £120 fine within the period 22 to 28 days may lead to Court proceedings.**

Please contact the school in the first instance if you have any worries or concerns regarding your child's attendance. We will, as always, do our very best to help.

## **2. Attendance Commitment**

Parents/carers must:

- Ensure their children attend regularly and arrive on time
- Notify the school **each day** their child is absent as soon as possible on that day by phoning 01736 330005
- Provide evidence of any medical appointments to the school office in advance of appointments
- Complete a medicine consent form (available at the school office) to enable staff to administer medicine to your child so that they can stay in school
- Attend any appointments that are made to discuss punctuality and attendance
- Ensure that the school office is updated with any changes to your contact details
- Communicate with the school if there are any issues you feel will affect your child's attendance

**Appendix 2**  
**Flow Chart**

