

St Mary's CE Primary Attendance Policy February 2021

Do everything in love



1 Corinthians 16:14

Reviewed February 2021

Presented to Governors:

Deeply rooted in the love of Jesus we are committed to:-

Creating a happy, healthy and honest school,
where everyone feels secure and valued.

Providing excellent teaching and learning opportunities
which develop independent, confident and resilient life-
long learners who can think for themselves.

Celebrating and supporting all children
to unlock and fulfil their unique potential.

Preparing children to contribute to society
with wisdom, hope, tolerance and dignity.

Living by our school values of Love; Honesty; Courage;
Compassion; Determination and Respect.

Our vision is to inspire and grow a
compassionate community of excellence.
A happy place for our children to shine for God,
for each other, and for themselves.

School Attendance Policy

Introduction

At St Mary's we pride ourselves on our strong Christian Ethos, and our vision, aims and values set the tone for our school. Church of England schools have at their heart a belief that all children are loved by God, are individually unique and that the school has a mission to help each pupil to fulfil their potential. If pupils are to get the greatest benefit from their education, regular and punctual school attendance is important. We recognise that children flourish in a safe environment where they feel loved, valued and secure.

This policy has been written to adhere to the relevant Children Acts, Education Acts, Regulations and Guidance from the Department for Education in addition to guidance from the Local Authority.

Although parents/carers have the legal responsibility for ensuring their child's good attendance, the Headteacher, staff and Governors at St Mary's work together with other professionals and agencies to ensure that all pupils are encouraged and supported to develop good attendance habits. As they grow and prepare for the next stages of their education and employment, children need to see good attendance and punctuality as important qualities that are valued by others. We will work hard with those families where attendance is an issue and put in place effective strategies to support them. We will work collaboratively and compassionately with a personalised approach.

Covid-19

From March 8th 2021 pupil attendance will be mandatory and the usual rules on attendance will apply, including:

- parents' duty to ensure that their child of compulsory school age attends regularly at the school where the child is a registered pupil
- schools' responsibilities to record attendance and follow up absence
- the ability to issue sanctions, including fixed penalty notices, in line with local authorities' codes of conduct

Parents who have concerns around infection and safety of their families are urged to discuss with Mrs Tainsh as a matter of urgency. School WILL do everything it can to support families at this time and should rest assured that we have followed all government guidelines around infection control.

Aims and Objectives

This attendance policy ensures that all staff and governors in our school are fully aware of and clear about the actions necessary to promote good attendance.

Through this Policy we aim to:

- Improve pupils' achievement by ensuring high levels of attendance and punctuality.

- Achieve a minimum of 96% attendance for all children, apart from those with chronic health issues.
- Create an ethos in which good attendance and punctuality are recognised as the norm and seen to be valued by the school.
- Raise awareness of parents, carers and pupils of the importance of uninterrupted attendance and punctuality at every stage of a child's education.
- Work in partnership with pupils, parents, staff and the Education Welfare Service so that all pupils realise their potential, unhindered by unnecessary absence.
- Promote a positive and welcoming atmosphere in which pupils feel safe, secure, and valued, and encourage in pupils a sense of their own responsibility.

We maintain and promote good attendance and punctuality through:

- Ensuring that parents have an understanding of the responsibility placed on them for making sure their child attends regularly and punctually.
- Equipping children with the life skills needed to take responsibility for good school attendance and punctuality appropriate to the child's age and development.
- Maintaining effective means of communication with parents, pupils, staff and governors on school attendance matters.
- Developing and implementing procedures for identifying, reporting and reviewing cases of poor attendance and persistent lateness.
- Supporting pupils who have been experiencing any difficulties at home or at school which are preventing good attendance.
- Developing and implementing procedures to follow up non-attendance at school.

Definitions

Authorised absence

- An absence is classified as authorised when a child has been away from school for a legitimate reason and the school has received notification from a parent or carer. For example, if a child has been unwell and the parent telephones the school to explain the absence.
- Only the school can make an absence authorised. Parents do not have this authority. Consequently not all absences supported by parents will be classified as authorised.

Unauthorised absence

- An absence is classified as unauthorised when a child is away from school without the permission of the school.
- Therefore the absence is unauthorised if a child is away from school without good reason, even with the support of a parent.

Procedures

Our school will undertake to follow the following procedures to support good attendance:

- To maintain appropriate registration processes.
- To maintain appropriate attendance data.
- To communicate clearly the attendance procedures and expectations to all staff, governors, parents and pupils.
- To have consistent and systematic daily records which give detail of any absence and lateness.
- To follow up absences and persistent lateness if parents/carers have not communicated with the school.
- To strongly discourage unnecessary absence through holidays taken during term time.
- To work with parents to improve individual pupils attendance and punctuality
- To refer to the Educational Welfare Service any child whose attendance causes concern and where parents/carers have not responded to school initiatives to improve.

Responsibilities

All members of school staff have a responsibility for identifying trends in attendance and punctuality. The following includes a more specific list of the kinds of responsibilities which individuals might have.

Class teacher

Class teachers are responsible for:

- Keeping an overview of class and individual attendance looking particularly for either poor overall attendance, anomalies in patterns of attendance and/ or unusual explanations for attendance offered by children and their parents/ carers
- Informing the SLT where there are concerns and acting upon them
- Providing background information to support referrals
- Monitoring follow-up once actions have been taken to correct attendance concerns
- Emphasising with their class the importance of good attendance and promptness
- Discussing attendance issues at consultation evenings where necessary

Headteacher , Deputy Head Teacher and Family Support Worker

The Headteacher, Deputy Head Teacher and/or FSW are responsible for:

- Overall monitoring of school attendance
- Trends in authorised and unauthorised absence
- Contacting families where concerns are raised about absence including arranging meetings to discuss attendance issues
- Monitoring individual attendance where concerns have been raised
- Making referrals to the EWO service
- Providing reports and background information to inform discussion with the school's EWO

- Liaising with other professionals to determine potential sources of difficulties and reasons for absence.
- Support parents to try to source additional support for the families if needed to help with attending school

Administration staff

Staff in the School Office are responsible for:

- Collating and recording registration and attendance information.
- Taking and recording messages from parents regarding absence
- Ensuring the Absence/Late Book is completed and monitored
- Contacting parents of absent children where no contact has been made. In Nursery staff will do this.
- Keeping an overview of class and individual attendance looking particularly for either poor overall attendance, anomalies in patterns of attendance and/ or unusual explanations for attendance offered by children and their parents/ carers and reporting concerns to the Headteacher
- Sending out standard letters regarding attendance and punctuality.

Parents

Parents/Carers are responsible for:

- Ensuring that their child attends school regularly and punctually unless prevented from doing so by illness or attendance at a medical appointment.
- Contacting the school office on the first morning of absence. Update the school on the third day of non-attendance if the absence is expected to continue.
- Informing the school in advance of any medical appointments in school time. For the absence to be recorded as a medical absence we may require evidence from the doctor or dentist. (Appointment card/letter)
- Making requests for authorised absence in term time, only if absolutely necessary as these are not automatically authorised.
- Talking to the school as soon as possible about any child's reluctance to come to school so that problems can be quickly identified and dealt with.

Lateness

Once the doors are closed the only way to get into school is via the school office. Any pupil who comes into school this way will be marked as late in the attendance record with the minutes late added. Any child who arrives for school later than 9.30 will be marked as having an unauthorised absence for the morning. Children who have attended a dentist or doctor's appointment and subsequently come to school later than 9.15am will have the absence recorded as a medical absence. Children who are persistently late miss a significant amount of learning, often the most important aspect, as the beginning of the day is where the teacher explains the learning and what each child is expected to achieve.

Where there have been persistent incidents of lateness parents/carers will receive a letter advising them of the concerns and the school will provide opportunities for parents/carers to seek support and advice to address these issues.

ABSENCE REPORTING

Parents/carers should contact the school on the first morning of their child's absence, providing details of the reason for their absence. It is important that we receive accurate information from parents with reasons for the child's absence. This information is used to determine whether the absence is authorised or unauthorised. The Headteacher has the responsibility to determine whether absences are authorised or unauthorised.

First Day Contact

Where a child is absent from school and we have not received any verbal or written communication from the parent, then we initiate a first day contact process. Office staff check all of the registers from 9.00am to 9.30am on a daily basis, to identify those pupils who are absent. There are occasions when we are unaware why the child is absent and we will contact the parent to check the reasons for the child's absence.

Illness

When children have an illness that means they will be away from school long term, the school will do all it can to send material home, so that they can keep up with their school work.

Where over the course of an academic year, a child has repeated periods of illness, the school will speak to parents to ask them to provide medical evidence for each future period of illness related absence. This evidence could be a Doctor's note, appointment card or copy of a prescription. We may seek written permission from you for the school to make their own enquiries.

Where extended periods of illness occur, the school may ask for medical evidence – this could happen when a consecutive number of sessions (10) have been missed through illness.

Parental Request for Absence from School for Holiday

With effect from September 2013 the government abolished the right of head teachers to authorise absence specifically for holidays of up to 10 days per year if special circumstances exist. Instead, head teachers will only be allowed to grant leave of absence for any reason if they are satisfied exceptional circumstances exists. In exceptional circumstances, when a

leave of absence is granted, the Headteacher will determine the number of days a child can be away from school.

Addressing Attendance Concerns

The school expects attendance of at least 96%. Where a child's attendance record does not improve over a period of time then the school has a responsibility to make a referral to the Educational Welfare Service. The Education Welfare Service (EWS) may issue penalty notices to parents where there has been a referral to EWS from the school as part of the school's processes to address poor attendance patterns.

In addition, education-related parenting orders are available by direct application by a school or LA to the Magistrates' Court as an ancillary order following a successful prosecution by the LA for irregular attendance or breach of a school attendance order.

The school understands the need for on-going communication with parent/carers and pupils regarding this policy, particularly those new to the school.

What can parent/carers do to help?

- Let the school know as soon as possible why your child is absent from school and keep them informed
- Follow the infection control guidance recommendations to ensure illness is not spread
- Try to make appointments outside school time
- Do not allow your child to have time off school unless it is really necessary

If you are worried about your child's attendance at school what can you do?

- Talk to your child; it may be something simple
- Talk to the head teacher and staff at the school

Addendum to Model School Attendance Policy

1. Introduction

The implementation of the latest government guidance for the full opening of schools during the COVID-19 pandemic necessitates adjustments to existing policy and practice. In addition, there are specific changes to the recording of absence during the academic year 2020-21, in relation to coronavirus (COVID-19), which have been outlined by the DFE here and are explained in section 4 of this document.

2. Scope

This addendum applies until further notice. It sets out changes and exceptions to our usual attendance policy. Students, staff and parents should continue to follow our existing

attendance policy with respect to anything not covered in this addendum. We may need to amend or add to this addendum as circumstances or official guidance changes. We will communicate any changes to staff, students and parents.

3. Expectations for Attendance

The latest government guidance states that school attendance is mandatory from September and the usual rules on attendance will apply, including:

- parents' duty to ensure that their child of compulsory school age attends regularly at the school where the child is a registered pupil
- School responsibility to record attendance and follow up absence
- the ability to issue sanctions, including fixed penalty notices, in line with local authorities' codes of conduct

As a result, we will be reverting back to our usual expectations for attendance as detailed in our Attendance Policy which can be located on the school website

4. Absence Related to COVID-19

Although school attendance is mandatory from the start of the autumn term, there are some circumstances where students cannot attend school due to coronavirus (COVID-19). To enable consistent recording across all schools, the DFE have added a new category for non-attendance: 'not attending in circumstances related to coronavirus (COVID-19)'. In line with current legislation, and current guidance from PHE and DHSC, the circumstances identified as examples in which 'not attending in circumstances related to coronavirus (COVID-19)' could apply are listed below:

- a) Your child has coronavirus symptoms
- b) Your child has a positive test result for coronavirus
- c) Somebody in your household has coronavirus symptoms
- d) Somebody in your household has a positive test result for coronavirus
- e) NHS 'Test and Trace' have identified your child as a 'close contact' of someone either with coronavirus symptoms or someone with confirmed coronavirus.
- f) Your child has to quarantine as a result of travel
- g) Your child has received medical advice to commence/re-commence shielding

More detail to support parents and carers in these circumstances can be found in Appendix A.

In line with the Secretary of State's expectation that no parent will be penalised for following official public health advice for their child not to attend a given session, this new category of non-attendance due to Covid 19 will not count as an absence (authorised or unauthorised) for statistical purposes.

5. Local Lockdown

If rates of coronavirus rise locally, we may need to prevent some students from attending. We will follow the advice of Public Health England (PHE) or Department of Health and Social Care (DHSC) guidance on the measures that will be necessary in the event of a local lockdown.

6. Monitoring Arrangements

We will monitor the effectiveness of these adjustments to our policy through our usual mechanisms which include the regular monitoring and analysis of attendance at both individual and group level. We will use our analysis to intervene at individual student and group level whilst also making any necessary adjustments to the detail in the addendum.

7. Links with other Policies

This policy links to the following policies and procedures:

- Anti-Bullying Policy
- Child Protection Policy
- Behaviour Management Policy
- Equalities Policy
- SEND Policy
- Supporting students with medical needs Policy

8. Review

We may need to amend or add to this addendum as circumstances or official guidance from the local authority or Department for Education changes. Any adjustments will be communicated to staff, students and parents.

Addendum to Attendance Policy September 2020

Appendix A: Absence Related to COVID-19 – Guide for Parents

Circumstance	Action needed	Return to school when...	Absence Code
Your child has Coronavirus symptoms	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Do not come to school ▪ Contact school daily ▪ Self-isolate ▪ Get a test ▪ Inform school immediately about test result 	...the test comes back negative and they are free of the symptoms for 48 hours and no longer feel unwell, they can return to school as long as they are not isolating due to being a contact of a positive case.	X
Your child has a positive test result for coronavirus	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Do not come into school ▪ Inform school immediately about test result ▪ Self-isolate for at least 10 days 	...they feel better. They can return to school after 10 days even if they have a cough or loss of smell/taste as these symptoms can last for several weeks once the infection is gone.	X
Somebody in your household has coronavirus symptoms	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Do not come to school ▪ Contact school daily ▪ Self-isolate ▪ Household member to get a test immediately ▪ Inform school immediately about test result 	...the household member receives a negative test result.	X
Somebody in your household has a positive test result for coronavirus	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Do not come to school ▪ Contact school daily ▪ Self-isolate for 14 days 	...your child has completed 14 days of self-isolation.	X

NHS 'Test and Trace' or School have identified your child as a 'close contact' of someone with either confirmed coronavirus or coronavirus symptoms.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Do not come to school ▪ Contact school daily ▪ Self-isolate for 14 days 	...your child has completed 14 days of self-isolation.	X
Your child has to quarantine as a result of travel	<p>Before travel</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Do not take unauthorised leave in term time ▪ Follow guidance in the school attendance policy relating to authorisation of term time absence ▪ Consider quarantine requirements and Foreign Travel advice when booking travel <p>If quarantine is necessary:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Do not come to school ▪ Contact school daily ▪ Self-isolate for 14 days 	...the quarantine period of 14 days has been completed.	X
• If a member of the household is classed as clinically vulnerable or extremely clinically vulnerable or is pregnant then the child SHOULD attend school.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ None 	...Child to continue to attend school	
• If a child is clinically vulnerable and has not been advised to shield	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ None 	...Child to continue to attend school	
• Any child who is clinically extremely vulnerable AND has medical advice advising to shield.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Do not come to school ▪ Shield until you receive medical advice that the child should return to school. ▪ Parent to provide a copy of shielding letter to school ▪ schools are expected to be able to immediately offer them access to remote education. Schools will monitor engagement with this activity. 	..The child is advised by a clinician or Government that they are no longer required to shield	X