

# St Mary's CE Primary Attendance Policy October 2024

*Do everything in love*



**1 Corinthians 16:14**

Reviewed October 2024

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 **St Mary's will always work in partnership with our parents.**

**St Mary's** recognises that poor attendance is often an indication of difficulties in a child's life and their lived experience. This may be related to problems at home or in school. Parents should inform the school of any difficulties or changes in circumstances that may affect their child's attendance and or behaviour in school, for example, bereavement, divorce/separation, incidents of domestic abuse. This will help the school to identify any additional early help that may be required. Safeguarding is a priority, concerns for any child at any time will be reported to the Designated Senior Lead for Child Protection. We will always follow Keeping Children Safe in Education 2023 and our Child Protection Policy.

Some children are more likely to require additional support to attain good attendance, for example, children who are vulnerable, have a medical need or EHCP plan will be monitored and supported in school. At **St Mary's** we will proactively identify and follow up on a child's non-attendance and gather information about the child. This will result in taking prompt action to prevent non-attendance developing and monitoring the impact of targeted support.

The Attendance Team (office staff, Family Support Worker, and Head Teacher) will initially:

- Check records, including any from other schools which the child has attended previously.
- Discuss with staff how the child is coping with the curriculum.

- Speak to the Special Educational Needs Coordinator to establish whether the child is on the Special Educational needs register.
- Take into account the voice of the child and understand any difficulties, e.g., curriculum or bullying and their views on the issue could be addressed.

Children whose attendance falls below 90% are Persistently Absent from school, where a child falls under 50% attendance the child will be classified as a Severely Absent child. Ultimately this will indicate that all intervention, and support, offered by **school** has not made the expected impact to improve overall attendance. Where attendance remains a concern and all other interventions and support have not made a significant impact, we will escalate with the Education Welfare Service.

### First Day Contact

At **St Mary's** we expect our parents to make contact at the earliest opportunity on the first day of any absence. We will always contact you via text message or by calling you. Where we have on-going concerns regarding your child's attendance, we will visit your home address and write to you. We may even invite you to meet with a member of staff to discuss any on-going concerns regarding attendance. It is important that you talk to us first; you are legally responsible under Education Act 1996 for ensuring that your child is in school every day and on time. If we cannot contact you, we will continue to make announced and unannounced home visits, regarding any concerns we may have surrounding attendance.

### **Parents are responsible for securing full-time education**

Parents are responsible for ensuring their children receive a full-time education. Each situation will be dealt with on an individual basis, fairly and equitably always remembering the welfare and safety of the child is the paramount concern.

The term 'parent' includes those who are not a natural parent but have parental responsibility for the child as defined by the Children's Act 1989 or have care of the child as defined by the Education Act 1996.

- Absence can only be authorised by the school; parents do not have this authority. All absences will be treated as unauthorised unless satisfactory evidence for the child's absence has been received. In the first instance contact from the parent will be accepted as evidence. However, if a child's attendance continues to cause concern, parents may be asked to provide medical evidence where absences occur repeatedly due to reported illness. This will usually be in the form of an appointment card, prescriptions etc. Advise parents to register with "Care of the Chemist". Absence may be coded as unauthorised without evidence.
- Parents should wherever possible make all medical and dental appointments outside of the school day. Where this is not possible, children should attend school for part of

the day. Appointment cards should always be provided as evidence of medical/dental appointments.

- Unless parents have provided a satisfactory explanation and it has been accepted by the school absence will not be authorised.

Examples of unsatisfactory explanations include:

- A child's/family member's birthday.
- Shopping for uniform.
- Having their hair cut.
- Closure of a sibling's school for INSET or other purposes.
- "Couldn't get up."
- Illness where the child is considered well enough to attend school without medical authority and in the absence of a communicable disease.
- Leave during term time taken without authorisation of the school.
- Head lice – let the school know and letters will then be sent to all parents in a confidential manner.

### **Punctuality**

Doors open for children at 8.45, the class register will close at 9am. Children arriving after the close of registration will be recorded as an L code. The school register will officially close at 9.15 am Children arriving after the register has closed U codes will be entered onto your child's registration certificate they will not be authorised and will count as an absence for the school AM session. If a child arrives late after registration for more than 10 sessions in each half term, then school will expect parents to attend a meeting to discuss.

The absence will only be authorised if a satisfactory explanation for the late arrival can be provided, for example, attendance at a medical appointment.

The absence will be recorded as unauthorised if a child has arrived late without justifiable cause, for example they woke up late or were waiting for their uniform to dry.

### **Transition following long term absence or illness.**

Absence can significantly interrupt the continuity of children's learning.

During any long-term absence, St Mary's will:

- Maintain contact with the child.
- Carefully plan the transition back to school, ensuring your child feels welcome and gains a sense of belonging.
- Ensure the child once again feels safe in school and if they experience any concerns, they will have an appointed member of staff to work with.
- The Class Teacher and Teaching Assistant will support a child when returning to class and help them with any work they may have missed.

### **Leave during Term Time**

From 1<sup>st</sup> September 2013, the Government amended the England (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2006. Head teachers may only grant leave in 'exceptional circumstances' only. **St Mary's observes** Halton Borough Council 'Leave in Term Time Guidance for schools and Academies'.

Parents wishing to apply for leave during term time must send a written request for the attention of the Headteacher and include any evidence to support the application before making any arrangements. Retrospective requests will not be considered and therefore will result in the absence being categorised as unauthorised. Each leave during term time request will be considered on an individual basis.

If a child fails to return and contact with the parent has not been made or received, school need to contact the Education Welfare Service in the first instance and follow the CME protocol.

If the permission to take leave is not granted and the child is still absent from school, the absence will be **unauthorised**. In such cases the school may consider legal action.

Only in **exceptional circumstances** will absence be agreed. In such cases, consideration will be given to the cultural needs and the family circumstances, such as minority ethnic children returning to their country of origin. In these cases, granting leave for longer periods than normal may be considered justified. In all cases though, parents will be required to justify why the leave needs to be taken during term time.

### **Using attendance data**

Children's attendance will be monitored and shared with other agencies and the DfE.

Weekly attendance meetings will be held between the Attendance Leader and the Attendance Team. Meetings will focus on agreed actions for those children of concern. The purpose of each meeting will be to understand the progress the school is making when supporting identified individuals or groups of children.

Attendance data will be used to identify emerging patterns and trends to inform whole school strategies to improve attendance and attainment.

It is the responsibility of school Governors to challenge and support the school regarding overall attendance, regular reports will be presented to this body. The governors will therefore examine closely the information provided for them and seek to ensure that our attendance figures are as high as can be.

### **Persistent Absence**

At **St Mary's** we aim to communicate the importance of attendance with parents and children. We have a particular focus on reducing Persistent Absenteeism at the school. The Persistent Absence threshold for children is currently 10% and Ofsted will use this threshold in its inspection of schools.

The threshold means that any child will be classed as Persistently Absent when they have missed 38 or more sessions. This equates to 19, or more, missed days during the academic year - which is as little as 6 days over each of the three Terms. This also equates to the equivalent of 1 day of absence, or more, a fortnight across a full school year.

Once a child has reached 38 sessions, or 19 days absence, they will be classified as Persistently Absent from school.

### **Statutory Duty**

Section 7 of the Education Act 1996 states that the parent of every child of compulsory school age receive efficient full-time education suitable to their age, aptitude and ability and any special educational needs they may have, either by regular attendance at school or otherwise.

A child is of compulsory school age at the beginning of the term following their 5<sup>th</sup> birthday.

Under the Education Act 1996, the Local Authority has a statutory responsibility to ensure that parents secure education for children of compulsory school age and where necessary, use legal enforcement.

In accordance with the regulations regarding pupils' attendance at school, St Mary's keeps an attendance register on which at the beginning of each morning and afternoon session children are marked present or absent. The marks are electronically processed and stored on the school's central administrative system SIMS. This information is shared with the Department for Education.

### **Legal Sanctions**

There are several sanctions that school can take to address the issue of non-attendance. To try and identify the reason for absence we will always talk to you first to identify the reason for absence. **St Mary's will** always ensure the escalated process map is followed, focusing on the support a child needs at each stage. However, for lack of engagement in attendance support there are sanctions that will be followed:

#### **Penalty Notices (Anti-Social Behaviour Act**

#### **2003)**

Penalty Notices will be considered when:

- A child is absent from school for the purpose of a Leave of Absence in term time and the absence has not been authorised by the school.
- A child has accumulated at least ten sessions of unauthorised absence and further absence has occurred following written warning to improve.

Penalty Notices will be used in accordance with Halton Borough Council Code of Conduct.

### **Prosecution**

Where intervention through the school's process fails to bring about an improvement in attendance, the local authority will be notified and legal proceedings in the Magistrates Court may be taken. The school will provide the Local Authority with evidence required for a prosecution under section 444/4441 (a) of the Education Act 1996 school will refer to the Education Welfare Service for consideration of legal action. This is to ensure that parents realise their own responsibilities in ensuring their child's attendance at school.

Section 4441(a) of the Education Act 1996 states that if a parent fails to ensure the regular school attendance of their child if he/she is a registered pupil at a school and is of compulsory school age, then they are guilty of an offence.
-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------

Schools, trusts and local authorities are expected to work together and make use of the full range of legal interventions rather than relying solely on fixed penalty notices or prosecution. It is for individual schools and local authorities to decide whether to use them in an individual case after considering the individual circumstances of a family. These are:

- Parenting contracts
- Education supervision orders
- Attendance prosecution
- Parenting orders
- Fixed penalty notices

**Please refer to section 6 of the DFE Working together to improve school attendance 2022 for more information.**

## **Children at risk of Missing in Education (CME)**

Children Missing Education (CME) are a vulnerable group of children. All agencies who work with children have a duty to support the Local Authority in ensuring all children are safe and looked after appropriately.



**CME** includes those children who are **missing** (family whereabouts unknown) and are children who are registered on a school roll / alternative provision. This might be a child who is not at their last known address **and either**.

- has not taken up an allocated school place as expected, or
- has 5 or more days of continuous absence from school without explanation, or
- left school suddenly and the destination is unknown.

**It is our responsibility as a school to work with the LA Education Welfare Service by making referrals.**

### **Celebrating Success**

At **St Mary's**, we feel it is important to reward children who have achieved good or improved attendance. Each half term every class that has achieved over 94% attendance will get a reward.

**St Mary's will** always challenge falling attendance and reward improvements. We are committed to the future of all children that attend **St Mary's**, and by working in partnership with the school community we believe that together we can achieve more!

We can only achieve this by working in partnership with you, if you have any concerns or anything that prevents your child from attending, **please come and talk with us.**

## **Roles and Responsibilities**

### **St Mary's expectations – Parents:**

- i Parents are legally responsible for ensuring their children attend the school regularly and may risk prosecution if they fail in this responsibility.
- ii Parents should ensure that their children arrive at school on time, with the correct equipment and in full school uniform.
- iii Parents should support the school by avoiding, if possible, non-emergency medical/dental appointments for their child during School time.
- iv Parents should be aware that they do not have the automatic right to take their child out of the Academy for a holiday during term time.
- v It is the parents' responsibility to inform the school of the reason for a child's absence on the first day of absence and in line with the schools' procedures for informing of absence.
- vi All unexplained attendances will be monitored, and parents will be kept informed about any attendance concerns relating to their own child. Parents are expected to attend meetings when requested and support the school in responding to ongoing attendance concerns.

### **St Mary's expectations – Children:**

- i. All children should aim to have an excellent attendance and punctuality record for which there will be appropriate rewards.
- ii. All children are expected to be on the school site on time and ready to learn. Children are expected to be punctual to all lessons and registration.
- iii. Children who arrive at school late must follow the correct procedures for recording their lateness and entering their lesson.
- iv. Children who need to leave school for a medical appointment must follow the correct procedures for recording that they have permission to leave and have left the building.
- v. Children must not leave the school without permission, 'truant;' this will be seen by the School as a Safeguarding concern as well as a Health and Safety concern.

### **St Mary's expectations - Class Teacher**

The Class Teacher is the key staff members in promoting regular punctual attendance. The Class Teacher will:

- i. provide a good example by always being punctual to registration and meeting children at the door – providing a welcoming environment.
- ii. keep an accurate and up-to-date register of attendance.
- iii. follow the Attendance Policy procedures when dealing with absences and punctuality.
- iv. maintain swift action and effective communication with Assistant Head Teachers and Deputy Head /or School Attendance Leaders on all attendance matters concerning class group.
- v. ensure that children and young people are aware of the importance of the school attendance.
- vi. ensure children receive rewards in relation to attendance and punctuality success – aligned to the Attendance Policy:
- vii. build a welcoming atmosphere in the classroom and provide support as necessary when children return after an absence.

### **St Mary's expectations – Family Support Worker**

The FSW will take responsibility for monitoring the attendance of children and regularly promote the importance of attendance and punctuality. They will:

- i. ensure that their team is aware of their responsibilities with respect to promoting attendance and punctuality and adherence to the attendance policy and procedures.
- ii. ensure that rewards and sanctions for attendance and punctuality follow agreed procedures and align to the School Behaviour and Attendance Policy.
- iii. help to monitor and track the attendance of vulnerable groups.
- iv. help to monitor the attendance of individual class groups, following up with irregular patterns of absenteeism that are not being effectively addressed.
- v. liaise effectively with the Attendance Leader and work together on ensuring that appropriate action is taken in the management of absenteeism and poor punctuality.
- vi. have attendance as a regular item during pastoral meetings.
- vii. ensure contact is made with parents of poor attendees – always placing support before sanction.

## **St Mary's expectations - Attendance Officer**

The Attendance Officer is responsible for regularly checking attendance data and ensuring data is accurate and up to date. The Attendance Officer will:

- i. ensure that data is input daily into the attendance management system.
- ii. ensure that parents of absent children are contacted where notification of absence has not been received.
- iii. respond to any parent seeking support on attendance concerns.
- iv. provide regular attendance and punctuality data for relevant staff and external agencies in line with the agreed procedures and timescales.
- v. be responsible for disseminating important attendance information including informing the Attendance Leader of which children are of concern; in-line with the agreed procedures and timescales.
- vi. be responsible for liaising closely with the Local Authority's Attendance Team to ensure appropriate levels of intervention take place; referrals are made, and attendance meetings are set up.
- vii. be responsible for managing and maintaining attendance records and systems.

### **Relevant legislation**

The Education Act 1996

The Children Act 1989

The Crime and Disorder Act 1998

The Anti-social Behaviour Act 2003

The Education and Inspections Act 2006

The Sentencing Act 2020 The Education (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2006

The Education (Parenting Contracts and Parenting Orders) (England) Regulations 2007

The Education (Penalty Notices) (England) Regulations 2007

### **Relevant government guidance**

Parental responsibility measures for attendance and behaviour

Children missing education.

Keeping children safe in education 2023

Working together to safeguard children.

Elective home education

Alternative provision: statutory guidance for local authorities

Exclusion from maintained schools, academies, and pupil referral units in England

Supporting pupils at school with medical conditions

Ensuring a good education for children who cannot attend school because of health needs.

Promoting and supporting mental health and wellbeing in schools and colleges

Approaches to preventing and tackling bullying.

