

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 1st 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 5th 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

The local authority can fine parent/carers for the unauthorised absence of their child from school, where the child is of compulsory school age, by issuing a Penalty Notice.

If the school issues a Notice to Improve, it will check with the local authority before doing so, and send a copy to them so they can issue the Penalty Notice as appropriate.

Before issuing a Notice to Improve, the school will consider the individual case, including:

- Whether the national threshold for considering a penalty notice has been met (10 sessions of unauthorised absence in a rolling period of 10 school weeks)
- Whether a Penalty Notice is the best available tool to improve attendance for that pupil
- Whether further support or another legal intervention would be a more appropriate solution
- Whether any obligations that the school has under the Equality Act 2010 make issuing a Penalty Notice inappropriate

A Penalty Notice may also be issued where parent/carers allow their child to be present in a public place during school hours without reasonable justification, during the first 5 days of a suspension or exclusion (where the school has notified the parent/carers that the pupil must not be present in a public place on that day).

Each parent/carers who is liable for the pupil's offence(s) can be issued with a penalty notice, but this will usually only be the parent/carers/parent/carers who allowed the absence.

The payment must be made directly to the local authority, regardless of who issues the notice. If the payment has not been made after 28 days, the local authority can decide whether to prosecute or withdraw the notice.

If issued with a **first** Penalty Notice, the parent/carers must pay £80 within 21 days, or £160 within 28 days.

If a **second** penalty notice is issued to the same parent/carers in respect of the same pupil, the parent/carers must pay £160 if paid within 28 days.

A **third** penalty notice cannot be issued to the same parent/carers in respect of the same child within 3 years of the date of the issue of the first Penalty Notice. In a case where the national threshold is met for a third time within those 3 years, alternative action will be taken instead.

Children at risk of Missing in Education (CME)

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.

Strategies to use with families to support and challenge

- Communicate more on newsletters
- Send out regular reminders about Attendance
- Target individual families
- Triage all cases regularly
- Instil a sense of shared responsibility to all staff
- Set individual targets over short term so they are achievable
- Celebrate successes
- Use the services of FSW
- Home visits by FSW / HT
- Half termly analysis
- Looking for trends / patterns in data and address
- Use services of Mental Health Team to support low level concerns
- Join and participate in DFE Attendance Hub
- Conduct lines of enquiry

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 2024

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.

Appendix I: Attendance Codes

The following codes are taken from the DfE's [guidance on school attendance](#).

Code	Definition	Scenario
/	Present (am)	Pupil is present at morning registration
\	Present (pm)	Pupil is present at afternoon registration
L	Late arrival	Pupil arrives late before register has closed
Attending a place other than the school		
K	Attending education provision arranged by the local authority	Pupil is attending a place other than a school at which they are registered, for educational provision arranged by the local authority
V	Attending an educational visit or trip	Pupil is on an educational visit/trip organised or approved by the school
P	Participating in a sporting activity	Pupil is participating in a supervised sporting activity approved by the school

Code	Definition	Scenario
W	Attending work experience	Pupil is on an approved work experience placement
B	Attending any other approved educational activity	Pupil is attending a place for an approved educational activity that is not a sporting activity or work experience
D	Dual registered	Pupil is attending a session at another setting where they are also registered
Absent – leave of absence		
C1	Participating in a regulated performance or undertaking regulated employment abroad	Pupil is undertaking employment (paid or unpaid) during school hours, approved by the school
M	Medical/dental appointment	Pupil is at a medical or dental appointment
J1	Interview	Pupil has an interview with a prospective employer/educational establishment
S	Study leave	Pupil has been granted leave of absence to study for a public examination
X	Not required to be in school	Pupil of non-compulsory school age is not required to attend
C2	Part-time timetable	Pupil is not in school due to having a part-time timetable
C	Exceptional circumstances	Pupil has been granted a leave of absence due to exceptional circumstances
Absent – other authorised reasons		

Code	Definition	Scenario
T	Parent/carers travelling for occupational purposes	Pupil is a 'mobile child' who is travelling with their parent/carers(s) who are travelling for occupational purposes
R	Religious observance	Pupil is taking part in a day of religious observance
I	Illness (not medical or dental appointment)	Pupil is unable to attend due to illness (either related to physical or mental health)
E	Suspended or excluded	Pupil has been suspended or excluded from school and no alternative provision has been made
Absent – unable to attend school because of unavoidable cause		
Q	Lack of access arrangements	Pupil is unable to attend school because the local authority has failed to make access arrangements to enable attendance at school
Y1	Transport not available	Pupil is unable to attend because school is not within walking distance of their home and the transport normally provided is not available
Y2	Widespread disruption to travel	Pupil is unable to attend because of widespread disruption to travel caused by a local, national or international emergency
Y3	Part of school premises closed	Pupil is unable to attend because they cannot practicably be accommodated in the part of the premises that remains open
Y4	Whole school site unexpectedly closed	Every pupil absent as the school is closed unexpectedly (e.g. due to adverse weather)

Code	Definition	Scenario
Y5	Criminal justice detention	Pupil is unable to attend as they are: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • In police detention • Remanded to youth detention, awaiting trial or sentencing, or • Detained under a sentence of detention
Y6	Public health guidance or law	Pupil's travel to or attendance at the school would be prohibited under public health guidance or law
Y7	Any other unavoidable cause	To be used where an unavoidable cause is not covered by the other codes
Absent – unauthorised absence		
G	Holiday not granted by the school	Pupil is absent for the purpose of a holiday, not approved by the school
N	Reason for absence not yet established	Reason for absence has not been established before the register closes
O	Absent in other or unknown circumstances	No reason for absence has been established, or the school isn't satisfied that the reason given would be recorded using one of the codes for authorised absence
U	Arrived in school after registration closed	Pupil has arrived late, after the register has closed but before the end of session
Administrative codes		
Z	Prospective pupil not on admission register	Pupil has not joined school yet but has been registered

Code	Definition	Scenario
#	Planned whole-school closure	Whole-school closures that are known and planned in advance, including school holidays