



St Mary's Catholic School



Attendance Policy

September 2020

Growing together in knowledge, faith and love

Rationale:

St Mary's Catholic Primary School is committed to providing a full and enjoyable educational experience for all of our pupils. We believe that if pupils are to benefit from education, good attendance and punctuality is crucial. As a school we do all that we can to ensure maximum attendance for all our pupils. Any problems that prevent full attendance will be identified and addressed in as a supportive manner as soon as possible.

It is the policy of our school to celebrate achievement and attendance. Attendance plays a significant factor in producing a rich and successful school career and we will actively promote and encourage 100% attendance from all of our pupils.

Our school will give a high priority to conveying to parents/carers and pupils the importance of regular and punctual attendance. We recognise the vital role that parents/carers have to play and that there is a need to establish strong home-school links and communication systems that can be utilised whenever there is a concern about attendance.

If there are problems or issues which affect a pupil's attendance, we are required by law to investigate, identify and strive in partnership to resolve any issues as quickly and as efficiently as possible.

Aims:

At St Mary's we aim to:

- Encourage full attendance and punctuality.
- Monitor attendance and apply appropriate strategies to minimise absenteeism.
- Ensure a consistent approach is taken throughout the school.
- Make attendance and punctuality a priority for those associated with the school including pupils, parents, teachers and governors.
- Work in partnership with parents/carers and pupils.
- Provide support, advice and guidance to parents and pupils.
- Work effectively alongside other services and agencies to support these objectives when necessary.

Attendance Thresholds:

Every school has the legal duty to monitor and report pupil attendance. Every half term the Education Welfare Officer visits St Mary's and reviews every pupil's attendance data. It is expected that every child attends school for no less than 96% of the school year – this means that they should not be absent for more than ten school days.

Individual attendance is monitored in the following way:

Green	Pupils attendance is 96% or above	No more than 10 school days missed per year
Orange	Pupils attendance is 92% - 96%	No more than 16 school days missed per year
Red	Pupils attendance has fallen below 92%	More than 18 school days missed per year

Regular Attendance: (Green)

Attendance of 96% or more is deemed to be “regular attendance.” Research has shown that regular attenders:

- Make better and more rapid progress both academically as well as socially.
- Find school work and school routines easier to cope with.
- Find learning much more satisfying.
- Have an easier transition to secondary school.

Below Average Absence: (Orange)

Attendance between 92% - 96% is deemed below national average.

Attendance at this level will be closely monitored by the school if this continues into a second term then the case can be referred to the Educational Welfare Service

Persistent Absence: (Red)

The threshold used to determine persistent absence (**PA**) was lowered by the Government from 15% to 10% in September 2015. This means that a pupil is deemed persistently absent their attendance is below 90%. This will be monitored and acted upon by the school when a child reaches 92%.

In the case where attendance is below 92% the following action will be taken: Pupils attendance and punctuality is closely monitored by the school and the case will be referred to Educational Welfare Service and parents/carers will be invited to attend an organised attendance clinic.

In the case where attendance is below 90%, it is likely that the school may request medical confirmation of illness or other evidence of the reason for non-attendance in order to authorize any further absence.

Traffic Light Attendance Certificates:

At the end of each of half term the parent/carer of each child will receive an attendance certificate indicating whether the attendance is deemed to be green, orange or red.

To recognise that from time to time children do become ill and this can be unavoidable there will be 3 certificates awarded at the end of each term.

- Bronze certificate for children who achieve 96-97% attendance
- Silver certificate for children who achieve 98-99% attendance
- Gold certificate and badge for children who achieve 100% attendance

The School will:

In order to encourage punctual and regular attendance (96% or above) the school will:

(i) Promote the benefits of punctual and regular attendance:

- Include attendance issues in key stage and whole school assemblies.
- Invite the Education Welfare Officer to whole school assemblies.
- Promote the benefits of being punctual and regular attendance in the school newsletter, website,
- Remind parents of the importance of regular attendance and punctuality in newsletters, leaflets, school induction pack and in the Home-School Agreement.
- Sending home a half termly attendance certificate to parents on a half termly basis.

(ii) Rewarding regular attendance:

- During the weekly Celebration Assembly the class with the highest attendance will receive the Attendance Cup
- Each half term pupils with 100% attendance will be rewarded.

(iii) Monitoring and Reporting Attendance:

- Registration will take place twice each day: once in the morning and once after lunch. Teachers are required to take morning registers at 8.55am.
- Teachers will ensure that they use the correct coding when completing class registers
- Follow up all unexplained absences by phone on the first day everyday thereafter: these telephone calls will be recorded on the school's SIMS system.
- If the school have not been contacted, on the second day of absence a letter will be sent to the child's parents/carers from the Head Teacher requesting that the school are contacted as soon as possible about the child's absence.
- If a school has not been contacted after 20 school sessions school days then the school are required by law to report the child missing to the Local Authority.
- Report attendance data to the Governing Body in the termly Leadership Report.
- Meet with the Education Welfare Officer to review attendance monthly or more often if requested.
- Appropriate actions and referral routes will be followed where there are concerns about attendance.

Parents/Carers should:

- Ensure that their children are punctual. Children should arrive at school between 8.40am and 8.55am. With all school registers being completed at 08:55 any child arriving after this time will be required to enter the school via the main office and they will be deemed late and this will be recorded in the register.
- Inform the school by 9.30am if their child is unable to attend school.
- Parents/carers are asked to make routine medical appointments outside of the school day or during school breaks.
- Not request or take holidays/time off during term time.

Exceptional Circumstances - Leave of Absence during Term Time:

Schools are no longer permitted to authorise holidays during term time unless there are exceptional circumstances.

Any parent/carer wishing to apply for exceptional circumstances will need to complete an "Exceptional Circumstances Request Form" which can be obtained from the school office or the school website. Once completed this must be submitted to the Head Teacher for consideration.

Before deciding whether to authorise leave of absence the Head Teacher will need to consider:

- The circumstance of the request.
- The impact for the students' academic progress of any absence.
- The pupil's attendance over the academic year.
- Whether the requested holiday falls within any key stage national tests or exams.

Examples of exceptional circumstances include:

Below are some examples of exceptional circumstances; however this is not an exhaustive list.

- Service personnel from/scheduled to embark on a tour of duty.
- Where a holiday is recommended as part of a child or parent's recovery from a medical or emotional issue – evidence must be provided.
- Funeral of a close relative or family friend. The Head Teacher will use their discretion having heard from parents/carers about travel and funeral arrangements and taking into account the distance to be travelled.
- Sudden loss of housing through eviction or domestic violence – up to a maximum of 3 days.
- Out of school programmes such as music, arts or sport operating at a high standard of achievement and agreed by the Local Authority.
- Time off relating to Child Entertainment Performances, subject to a license being issued by the Local Authority.
- Religious observance: The Education Act of 1966 states, "*on any day exclusively set aside for religious observance by religious body to which his/her parents belongs.*" This would include the Islamic Eids, as well as religious observance days of the orthodox Christian, Jewish and other religions. The Headteacher may specify **that only one day** will be authorised at a time.
- Weddings of parents and siblings: weddings can be arranged at weekends or during school holidays; however we acknowledge that there are times when the dates are dependent on other factors, such as the needs of the couple who are getting married. Leave should only be authorised for this purpose by the Head Teacher when there is a familial reason for attending the wedding during term time.

Examples of circumstances **NOT** considered as exceptional:

- Holidays abroad for the purpose of visiting a sick relative, excepting when that person is seriously ill. Medical evidence may be requested
- Availability of cheaper holidays during term time.
- Long weekends.
- Visiting family.

Legal Note:

Parents have a legal duty to ensure the regular and full time attendance at school of registered pupils (Education Act 1996) this policy is based on the law and on Best Practice guidance produced by the Department of Education and Skills and the Local Authority. The School Attendance Service aims to work with schools and families to promote good attendance and avoid legal action. However in some cases parents are prosecuted (taken to court) or have to pay a Fixed Penalty (Fine) if unauthorised absences continue.

Unauthorised Absences:

There are times when a child may be absent for reasons which are not permitted by law. These are known as unauthorised absences.

Examples of unauthorised absences are:

- Waiting on a delivery/engineer.
- Going for a family day out.
- Sleeping in after a late night.
- Parents being ill.
- Going shopping or for a haircut.
- Because it's the child's birthday.
- Unapproved holidays.
- Where there is no explanation for the absence or where the explanation for the absence is considered to me unsatisfactory.

The school will contact parents/carers and the local authority may consider taking legal action if a child has unauthorised absences.

Role of the Governors:

- To know the school's attendance data, with a particular focus on vulnerable groups.
- Be able to identify and explain what support the school is providing to those pupils whose attendance is below 96%.
- Support the impact and evaluation of the school's Attendance Policy.

Monitoring Indicators:

- Patterns and trends in the schools attendance and pupil punctuality have improved.
- Parent/carer response to absence has improved.
- The school has been successful in raising the profile of attendance by celebrating good and improved attendance within the school, governing body and the local community.
- Pupils and parents/carers are fully aware of the importance of punctuality and regular attendance and are aware of the attendance procedure operating within school.

Written by: Demelza Bolton

Date: September 2020

Next Review Date: September 2021

Ratified on:

Signed: Chair of Governors

