



**St. Mary's Catholic Primary School**

educate protect love serve

## **Attendance Policy**

**2023-24**

**Updated November 2023**

## **ATTENDANCE**

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; and,
- 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/publications/working-together-to-improve-school-attendance>

### **Duty of parents to secure education of children of compulsory school age.**

The parent of every child of compulsory school age shall cause him to receive efficient fulltime education suitable—

- (a) to his age, ability and aptitude, and
- (b) to any special educational needs he 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 and Pupil and Parent Support Advisor**

- 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.
- To monitor and track attendance patterns for all children and prepare relevant attendance reports when necessary. (moved from office staff)
- To follow up on any unexplained absences if contact from the office staff has been unsuccessful. This could include home visits to complete a welfare check.

### **Class Teacher**

- To support parents and carers with understanding the impact attendance has on their child's attainment and progress.
- To contact parent and carers to discuss lateness
- To complete registers accurately, in a timely manner and promptly close them.
- 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 co-ordinate the use of the SIMS Attendance Manager System
- To contact parents/carers by DOJO 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 or Pupil and Parent Support Advisor 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/Carers**

- To ensure that at least 2 contacts are given to the school by parents/carers and that these are up to date.
- To support their child/children to attend school on a regular basis so that they can achieve their full potential
- To ensure their child/children arrive to school on time and are not late.
- To contact school every day their child is absent and provide a reason for their absence

### **ADMINISTRATION**

- The School uses Attendance Manager provided by SIMS to store and monitor its legal responsibilities in relationship 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**

- Our school gates open at 8.45am and close at 8.55am. Pupils arriving after 8.55am must report to the school office so that their attendance can be recorded accordingly.
- Pupils arriving after the register has been closed 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 un-authorised absence unless a satisfactory reason is given. A U code will impact attendance.
- 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 may request 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 DOJO/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.
- If it has not been possible to make contact with parents or carers to establish the reason for the absence then a home visit will be completed by school staff to complete a welfare check. If this home visit means that we are still unable to make contact with parents/carers then we may contact the local policing team for further support to ensure all is well and everyone is safe.

## **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 encourage 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.

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)

### **Penalty notices.**

A Penalty Notice is a fine that can be issued under section 444A and section 444B of the Education Act 1996. The fine is issued per parent, per child for:

- Leave of absence of 12 school sessions /6 school days or more (within any 100 school session period) during term time, without authorisation from the school, or a holiday for example
- Unauthorised absence of 12 school sessions /6 school days or more (within any 100 school session period) of absence from school, either when a parent fails to provide an explanation, or an explanation is provided but the school consider it insufficient to authorise
- Unauthorised lateness of 12 school sessions /6 school days or more (within any 100 school session period), resulting from arrival at school after the register has closed

NB A Penalty Notice can be issued for any combination of the above reasons, where the unauthorised absence from school results in 12 sessions /6 school days or more (within any 100 session period)

If your child is absent from school without authorisation, you will be committing an offence under the Education Act 1996. We may submit a request to Cornwall Council for a Penalty Notice to be issued, in accordance with Sections 444A and 444B of the said Act. Penalty Notices are issued per liable parent, per child and each carry a fine of £60 if paid within 21 days or £120 if paid after this but within 28 days. Failure to pay the Penalty Notice may result in legal action. Absence not authorised by the school may result in a prosecution in the Magistrates' Court under Section 444(1) or Section 444(1A) of the Education Act 1996, leading to a fine of up to £2,500 and/or a custodial sentence. Cornwall Council may also apply for the costs incurred in taking the matter to Court.

<https://www.cornwall.gov.uk/media/30oigwab/penalty-notice-leaflet-may-2022.pdf>  
<https://www.gov.uk/school-attendance-absence/legal-action-to-enforce-school-attendance>

As a school we are more than happy to discuss any concerns you have regarding the above but in the first instance any request for absence is to be done by completing an absence request form (available from the school office or on the school website).

## REWARDS

- Each week the class with highest attendance is announced in our celebration assembly and is rewarded with extra special class time on a Friday afternoon.
- Children who achieve 100% attendance in each term are recognized in a special assembly and get a certificate.
- Children who get 100% attendance for the full school year are entered into a raffle to win a special prize such as cinema tickets for them and their family.
- 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 and the newsletter and school

## ATTENDANCE CODES

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

L Late (between 9.10 and 9.30 or after 9.30 if authorised)

U Late (after 9.30 – unauthorised absence)

B Educated off site (not Dual reg)

X Covid isolation

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 authorized and unauthorised will be reported to the parent/carer throughout the year at parents meeting and at the end of the academic year within their pupil'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%	Unsatisfactory
Under 94%	Concerning
Under 90%	Inadequate

Children whose attendance is less than 96% are monitored. Letters will be sent to let parents/carers know that their child's attendance is being monitored. Children who have less than 93% may be required to provide medical evidence for all absences in order to consider authorising them and will be invited in to 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 12 sessions (6 school days) lost to unauthorised absence during the previous six months up to and including the day the Education Welfare Service is notified.

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

- Incomplete weeks
- Monday and Friday absences
- Lateness; periods of extended absence
- Periods of unauthorised
- 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:** xxxxxxxxx

**Date of next review:**

xxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxx



## **Appendix 1**

### **1. Attendance Agreement**

#### **Times of the School Day**

7.45-8.45am Breakfast club

#### **8.45 School gates open**

8.55 School Begins

10.40-11.55 break

12.00 and 12.15 and 1.00 Lunchtime (Staggered EYFS and KS1 and 2)

3.15 school ends

School begins promptly at **8:55 am**. If your child arrives after this time they **must** report to reception 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 arrived after 8.55am they are marked as late (L). Registers close at 9.15am. Any child that arrives after 9.25am 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 12 sessions (6 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 and with a medical consent form having been completed) or you have advance permission from the school (completed the absence request form.) The forms are available from the school office or on the school website under the attendance matters section.

#### **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

St Mary's Catholic Primary School parents/carers should:

- Ensure your children attend regularly and arrive on time
- Notify the school **each day** your child is absent as soon as possible on that day by phoning 01208 73218 and leave a message on the absence option
- Provide evidence of any medical appointments to the school office in advance of appointments
- Complete a medicine consent form (available at the school office or directly from the school website in the Attendance section) 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 their child shows respect and care for themselves, others and the environment
- 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

## St Mary's Catholic Primary School

### Attendance Procedures

- Any absence due to appointments during school hours will need evidence in order to be authorised (usually an appointment card or letter)
- If your child is absent you **MUST** contact the school each day. If the school do not hear from you they will contact you. If your child is absent for more than 3 days the school may need medical evidence in order to authorise the absence (if you are unsure what medical evidence is please contact the office for advice)
- The school **ARE NOT** permitted to authorise absence due to a family holiday. If you wish to apply for absence due to **exceptional circumstances** you must first speak to the school prior to arranging.

**Please speak to the school before any absence is booked from school. The local authority will be issuing fines for unauthorised absences, including holidays taken during term time.**

- Please contact the school office with any enquiries regarding absence if you have any concerns. As always we are here to help.

### APPENDIX 3

EXAMPLES OF ATTENDANCE LETTERS :

DATE

Our Ref:PAPSA/1

Parent Name

Address

Dear Parent

**Re: School Attendance – Pupil**

As part of our school policy we monitor all pupils' school attendance on a regular basis. It has come to our attention that **Pupil** attendance has fallen below 90%. The Department of Education's expectation for school attendance is 96%. **His/Her** attendance has now dropped to **XX%**.

I have enclosed a copy of **Pupil's** attendance certificate for your information.

The Law is clear that it is the responsibility of the parents/guardians of children in their care to make sure that they attend school. If the parents or guardians fail to ensure full and regular attendance, they can be prosecuted under the 1966 Education Act which could incur potential fines.

We clearly want to avoid this happening. Should your child be experiencing difficulties with schooling, please contact the school for an appointment to discuss the matter. I am available to support you with any worries or concerns regarding attendance or any other difficulties you may be experiencing. I can be contacted on 01208 73218, alternatively email [pastorallead@st-marys-bod.cornwall.sch.uk](mailto:pastorallead@st-marys-bod.cornwall.sch.uk) .

Yours sincerely,

**Pupil and Parent Support Advisor**

Enc Attendance Report

Our Ref: PSA/2

Dear

Re: School Attendance – Pupil's Name

Further to our previous communication (Name)'s attendance is still a cause of concern. (NAME)'s attendance is currently XX %. The Department for Education's expectation for attendance is 96%.

Therefore, we will only authorise «chosen\_forename»'s absence where we have reasonable evidence that there is a medical reason or for any other exceptional circumstances. Please share any medical evidence you have so that we can support your child's welfare and education and authorise their absence. We can authorise your child's absence when we consider it reasonable to do so.

Please be aware that further absences may result in a referral to the Educational Welfare Office for investigation. If your child is absent from school without authorisation, you will be committing an offence under the Education Act 1996. We may submit a request to Cornwall Council for a Penalty Notice to be issued, in accordance with Sections 444A and 444B of the said Act. Penalty Notices are issued per liable parent, per child and each carry a fine of £60 if paid within 21 days or £120 if paid after this but within 28 days. Failure to pay the Penalty Notice may result in legal action. Absence not authorised by the school may result in a prosecution in the Magistrates' Court under Section 444(1) or Section 444(1A) of the Education Act 1996, leading to a fine of up to £2,500 and/or a custodial sentence. Cornwall Council may also apply for the costs incurred in taking the matter to Court.

I would be most grateful for your support in helping (Pupil) to achieve better attendance and overcome this problem. Your child's attendance will be monitored closely and the school office must be fully informed of any reasons for absence.

If you wish to discuss this matter further, please do not hesitate to contact me at school on 01208 73218, alternatively email me [pastorallead@st-marys-bod.cornwall.sch.uk](mailto:pastorallead@st-marys-bod.cornwall.sch.uk)

Yours sincerely,

Pupil and Parent Support Advisor

Date

Address

Dear ,

You may recall that I wrote to you recently to make you aware that Name's attendance was XX %. Name's attendance is now XX % and is still a cause for concern. I enclose an attendance certificate for your information.

I am therefore inviting you into school on [date] at [time] to meet with me to look at ways that we can work together to support Name in improving their attendance.

If you are unable to attend the appointment date or time, then please do get in contact with the school and we can re-arrange.

I look forward to meeting with you.

Yours sincerely

Pupil and Parent Support Advisor