



ST MARY'S
CATHOLIC PRIMARY
SCHOOL

St Mary's Catholic Primary School
Attendance Policy

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Post Holder Responsible for Review:	Mrs J Bate



Commitment to Equality:

We are committed to providing a positive working environment which is free from prejudice and unlawful discrimination and any form of harassment, bullying or victimisation. We have developed a number of key policies to ensure that the principles of Catholic Social Teaching in relation to human dignity and dignity in work become embedded into every aspect of school life and these policies are reviewed regularly in this regard.

This Attendance Policy has been approved and adopted by St Mary's Catholic Primary School on 16.10.2023 and will be reviewed in September 2023.

Signed by the Chair of the Local Governing Body for St Mary's Catholic Primary School:

Mr T Guinan

T Guinan

Signed by the Principal for St Mary's Catholic Primary School

Mrs I Borriello

I Borriello



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Introduction:

As a school, we do our utmost to develop a partnership with parents and value the relationship between school and home; we work with the community to drive the school forward and ensure the children in our care are the very best that they can be. You and your child/ren play an important role in making our school successful.

For our children to gain the greatest benefit from their education it is vital that they attend regularly. Your child should be at school, on time, every day the school is open, unless the reason for the absence is unavoidable. It is important that you make sure that your child attends regularly, "Attendance is everyone's business" (DFE 2022) and this Policy sets out how together we will achieve this.

School's target for attendance is 96% and above. This is equivalent of a child having no more than 7 school days absence in the whole academic year.

Why is regular attendance important?

Learning:

Good attendance is learnt behaviour. It is proven that children with highest attendance achieve highest attainment and have wider life chances. Any absence affects the pattern of a child's schooling and regular absence will seriously affect their learning.

The Law relating to attendance:

Ensuring your child's regular attendance at school is the registered parent/carer responsibility. If a child fails to attend school regularly the parent/carer can be held accountable and be prosecuted as per legislation set out under the Education act 1996. The two offences are:

- Section 444(1) Education Act 1996 - a fine of up to £1,000.
- Section 444(1A) Education Act 1996 - a fine of up to £2500 and imprisonment for a

The Local Authority can also issue sanctions for general absence and leave of absence by issuing a Fixed Penalty Notice (fine).

Safeguarding:

Your child may be at risk of harm if they do not attend school regularly. Safeguarding the interests of each child is everyone's responsibility and within the context of this school, we will adhere to 'Working together to Safeguard Children' (July 2018) Keeping Children Safe in Education (Sept 2023) and School's Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy:

- Protecting children from maltreatment.
- Preventing impairment of children's mental and physical health or development.
- Ensuring that children are growing up in circumstances consistent with the provision of safe and effective care and taking action to enable all children have the best outcomes.
- Detecting early support through school's support strategies or an early Help Assessment.

The Law relating to safeguarding:

Section 175 of the Education Act 2002, places a duty on Local Authorities and governing bodies to have regard to guidance issued by the Secretary of State with regard to safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children and students under the age of 18.

Failing to attend school on a regular basis and unexplained absence may be considered as a safeguarding matter.

Attendance procedures and types of absence:

Every half-day absence (either morning or afternoon) from school must be classified by the school (not by the parents), as either authorised or unauthorised. Therefore, information about the cause of any absence is always required, preferably in writing.

The school may grant an authorised absence for reasons such as genuine illness, medical/dental appointments which unavoidably fall in school time, emergencies, or other unavoidable cause.

Unauthorised absences are those which the school does not consider reasonable and for which no "leave" has been given. This type of absence can lead to the Local Authority using sanctions and/or legal proceedings. This includes:

- Parents/carers keeping children off school unnecessarily.
- Truancy before or during the school day.
- Absences which have never been properly explained.
- Children who arrive at school too late to get a mark (after class register has closed).
- Shopping, looking after other children, oversleeping, or birthdays.
- Unauthorised leave of absence/holiday or day trips in term time.
- Absences of children whose attendance is a concern and parents have been requested to supply medical evidence.

Whilst any child may be absent because they are ill, sometimes they can be reluctant to attend school. If your child is reluctant to attend, it is never better to cover up their absence or to give in to pressure to excuse them from attending. This can often make your child feel more anxious over time and make matters worse. **If there are any problems with regular attendance, please contact school to discuss these matters as early as possible so we can support you and your child.**

If your child has been identified as having **attendance below 93%**, they may have all further absence **unauthorised** on school's register. However, should parent(s) provide evidence from a medical practitioner advising that the period of absence was necessary, the absence for the evidenced period will be authorised.

Promoting Regular Attendance

Helping to create a pattern of regular attendance is “everybody’s business” (DFE 2022) - parents, pupils, all members of school staff, governors and the LA. To achieve excellent attendance, school will follow the DFE guidance “working together to improve attendance” (DFE 2022)

To help us all to focus on this we will:

- Give you details on attendance in our regular Newsletter
- Report to you at least half-termly on how your child is performing in school and what their attendance and punctuality rate is and how this relates to their attainments
- Celebrate good attendance by displaying class achievements and rewarding classes and individuals
- Recognise improving attendance through phone calls and letters
- Contact and work with you if we have concerns about your child’s attendance

The following national codes will be used to record attendance information:

CODE	DESCRIPTION	MEANING
/ \	Present in school / = am, \ = pm	Present
B	Off-site educational activity e.g., taster day at another school	Approved Education Activity
C	Authorised absence granted school	Authorised absence
D	Dual registered at another school	Approved Education Activity
E	Excluded but no alternative provision made	Authorised absence
F	Extended family holiday (agreed)	Authorised absence
G	Holiday not granted by school or in excess of the period determined by school	Unauthorised absence
H	Family holiday granted by school	Authorised absence
I	Illness (NOT medical or dental appointment)	Authorised absence
J	Interview e.g., with another educational establishment	Approved Education Activity
L	Late (before registers closed)	Present
M	Medical or Dental appointment	Authorised absence
N	Reason for absence not yet provided	Unauthorised absence
O	Absence without authorisation	Unauthorised absence
P	Approved sporting activity	Approved Education Activity
R	Religious observance	Authorised absence
S	Study leave	Authorised absence
T	Traveller absence	Authorised absence

U	Arrived late after registration closed	Unauthorised absence
V	Educational visit or trip	Approved Education Activity
W	Work experience	Approved Education Activity
X	Non-compulsory school-age pupil not required to be in school	Not counted in possible attendances
Y	Unable to attend due to exceptional circumstances	Not counted in possible attendances
Z	Prospective pupil not on admission register	Not counted in possible attendances
#	Planned whole or partial school closure	Not counted in possible attendances

Punctuality and late after registration

Poor punctuality is not acceptable. Regular attendance and punctuality help to instil good habits and promote the development of a positive attitude towards school. Arriving late to school is stressful for both parent and child and is not a good start to the day. Children who arrive late miss essential learning time, instructions for the lesson, disrupt the routine of the classroom and the work/progress of others

The school day starts at 8:50am and we expect your child to be in class at that time. Registers will be marked at this time and your child will receive a 'L' late mark if they are not present in class. School opens the gates at 8:40am and children should arrive between **8:40am -8:50**. If your child arrives late after the gates close, they must come through the main reception, sign in and will receive a 'L' late mark. The school register closes at 9:20am and any child arriving after this time will be marked as a 'U', which is classified as an unauthorised late absence. **If unauthorised lateness persists it could result in a referral to the Local Authority for consideration of a Penalty Notice or enforcement proceedings against you.**

Our school day ends at 3.20pm.

Attendance/Absence procedures for Parent/Carer:

- Ensure your child/ren attend school every day the school is open.
- Notify school each day, by 9:15am at the absolute latest, when your child is absent giving reason for absence. (School will decide to authorise or 'unauthorise' the absence)
- Notify School of any changes to emergency contact details or medical issues that may have an impact on your child's attendance.
- Avoid taking holidays/leave of absence in term time unless there is exceptional circumstance. Parent/carer must notify the school at least 5 days prior to travel via a school leave of absence/holiday form. There have been occasions where parents have taken holiday without notifying school or said their child is off due to illness. We politely request parents are honest with school as this causes a large amount of time wasted, undertaking calls, home visits and even referrals to children missing education.

- Book routine medical appointments outside of school (where possible) or bring your child in for part of the school day when possible.
- Engage with school, attendance support and the Local Authority if your child's attendance starts to deteriorate.
- Engage with further support offered, such as attendance support and family liaison visits, Early Help, parenting contracts and the Local Authority to prevent further legal action.

Early Years, Nursery & Reception

Early years & foundation year groups provide valuable opportunities for children to experience learning and development whilst having fun. It aids their social skills, independence, self-esteem and initiates good habits and routine.

If your child has a place in school's preschool or reception, they also must attend regularly. School follows the same safeguarding procedures if a child is absent. Parents/carers are expected to contact school if they are unable to attend through unavoidable cause, as failure to do so may instigate safeguarding procedures or may risk losing their place.

Holidays in term time/leave of absence.

Taking holidays in term time will affect your child's schooling as much as any other absence and we kindly ask parents not to take children away in school time.

Remember that any savings you think you may make by taking a holiday in school time are offset by the cost to your child's education.

It is a rule of this school that a leave of absence shall not be granted in term time unless there are exceptional circumstances, irrespective of the child's overall attendance. Only the Principal (not the Local Authority) or his/her designate may authorise such a request and all applications for a leave of absence must be made on an application form provided by the school (see appendix 1). Where a parent takes a leave of absence to which the application was refused or takes a leave of absence where no application was made to the school, the issue of a penalty fine (upon a return from such leave) by the Local Authority may be requested. When requesting a fixed penalty fine the school may calculate the period of days taken within a 12-month period.

There is no automatic entitlement in law to time off in school time to go on holiday and the government made an amendment to the Education (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2006 in September 2013 to reflect this.

Leave of absence shall not be granted unless –

- (a) an application has been made in advance to the proprietor by a parent with whom the pupil normally resides: and
- (b) the proprietor, or a person authorised by the proprietor in accordance with paragraph (1), considers that leave of absence should be granted due to the exceptional circumstances relating to that application.

All applications must be made in writing to the Principal at least 5 school days prior to the requested leave date.

Where the decision is made not to authorise leave in term time, school will inform parent/carers in writing. A general guide for parent' is that leave for any holiday, activity or event that could be arranged during the annual 13-week holiday time would not be authorised.

On any occasion that school refuses a request for leave in term time, should parents/carers proceed with the leave it will be recorded as a (G) (family holiday not agreed or in excess of agreement), on schools register.

Failure to notify and/or request leave of absence in term time, providing at least 5 day notice will result in all absence being recorded as (O) (unauthorised absence not covered by any other description).

If a pupil does not return to school after the leave of absence date, school will:

- Investigate the reasons surrounding the absence.
- Refer to the Local Authority and under Regulation 8, 1 (f) of The Education (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2006.
- May consider removal from the school register.

School Absence Procedures

If your child is absent we will:

- Telephone you on the first morning of absence if we have not heard from you. If we cannot reach you, we will telephone other contacts on your child's file to attempt to ascertain the reason for absence.
- Invite you in to discuss the situation with our Attendance Support Officer and/or a member of the senior management team if absences persist.
- Refer the matter to our Attendance Support Officer and/or the Local Authority if attendance moves below 95%.

The School Attendance Officer

Parents/Carers are expected to contact school at an early stage and to work with the staff in resolving any problems together. This is nearly always successful. If difficulties cannot be resolved this way, the school may discuss matters with our appointed Independent Attendance Support Officer. They will discuss matters and try to resolve the situation by agreement or may use the following strategies:

Attendance strategies:

- Weekly attendance analysis
- Phone call to discuss attendance concerns
- Home visits/safe and well visits
- Parenting contract
- Improved attendance correspondence
- Attendance certificates
- Attendance assemblies

- Interventions (key person/meet and greet)
- School Attendance Strategy Support Meeting.
- Maintaining positive communication (school refuser/long term illness etc)
- First day absence contact
- Unexplained absence letter
- Punctuality letter
- Suspected holiday in term time letter
- Issue letters when your child's attendance is a concern (from below 95% onwards)
- Attendance clinics
- Late gates
- LA referrals

Persistent Absence (P.A.)

A pupil becomes a 'persistent absentee' when they miss 10% or more schooling across the school year for whatever reason. Severely absent pupils are classified as those missing 50% or more of school. Absence at this level is doing considerable damage to any child's educational prospects and we need parents' fullest support and co-operation to tackle this.

P.A. pupils are tracked and monitored carefully through our pastoral system, and we also combine this with academic mentoring where absence affects attainment.

If your child reaches P.A., you will be informed of this. Any case that is seen to have reached the PA mark, below or is at risk of moving towards that mark is given priority through targeted support via school and with partners to try to remove the barriers of poor school attendance.

Statutory Referrals to the Local Authority

If your child's attendance does not improve and unauthorised absences persist school may refer the case to Dudley Council, Education Support Service (ESS). They are a statutory service for the enforcement of school attendance and other education related legal interventions for children in employment, children in entertainment, children missing education and elective home education. They have the legal power to issue:

- a Parenting Order
- an Education Supervision Order
- a School Attendance Order
- a fine (known as a 'penalty notice') of £60, which rises to £120, each if you do not pay within 21 days. If you do not pay the fine after 28 days you may be prosecuted for your child's absence from school.
- Prosecution in court of up to £2,500, a community order or a jail sentence up to 3 months. The court also gives you a Parenting Order.

Parents can contact the ESS themselves to ask for guidance on their procedures. Their telephone number is 01384 814317. For general information regarding school absence, visit:

<https://www.dudley.gov.uk/residents/learning-and-school/education-support-service/>

Children Absent in Education

“A pupil’s name can only be deleted from the admission register for a reason set out in regulation 8 of the Education (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2006” (DFE 2022).

If you move out of area and the distance is too far to travel to School, please notify us immediately and fill in a removal from roll form (obtained from school). We advise you contact the admissions department (of the Local Authority where you now reside) as quickly as possible to obtain a new school place, as often places are limited.

All schools must notify their local authority when they are about to remove a pupil’s name from the school admission register. If your child ceases to attend school and we have had no contact from parent, we will deem this as a safeguarding issue. We will try to contact you and may undertake a home visit. We will then follow the Local Authority referral procedure for a child missing education before removal from roll.

Those responsible for school attendance:

Mrs I. Borriello, Principal – who has overall responsibility for attendance at St. Mary’s Catholic Primary School. **Mrs I. Borriello** is responsible for the strategic management of attendance according to this Attendance Policy and any resulting decisions that have to be made.

Mrs J. Bate, School Office Administrator – who is responsible for maintaining the pupil registers with accurate information and for implementing first day absence communications on a daily basis.

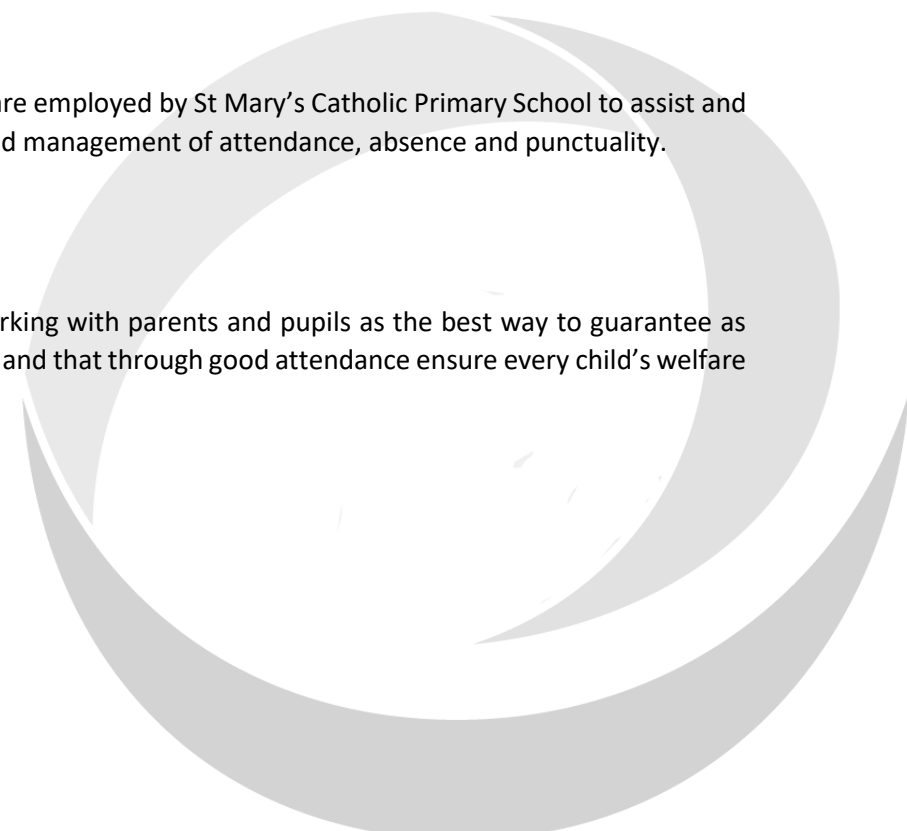
Governors – who are responsible for the ratification of this Attendance Policy and ensuring that it is rigorously implemented.

In addition:

Education Attendance Solutions Ltd are employed by St Mary’s Catholic Primary School to assist and actively support with the strategic and management of attendance, absence and punctuality.

Summary

All school staff are committed to working with parents and pupils as the best way to guarantee as high a level of attendance as possible and that through good attendance ensure every child’s welfare and life opportunities are promoted.



Appendix 1

Application for Leave of Absence

Childs name:

DOB:.....

Childs name:

DOB:.....

Childs name:

DOB:.....

Address:.....

.....

.....

Postcode:.....

I would like to apply for Leave of Absence from school for the above named children.

From: Date/...../..... To: Date/...../.....

Number of school days requested:.....

Destination:.....

Parent(s)/Carer travelling with the child. (Please include title i.e. Mr, Mrs, Miss etc)

Name:.....Parental Responsibility

Yes.....No.....

Name:.....Parental Responsibility

Yes.....No.....

Name.....Parental Responsibility

Yes.....No.....

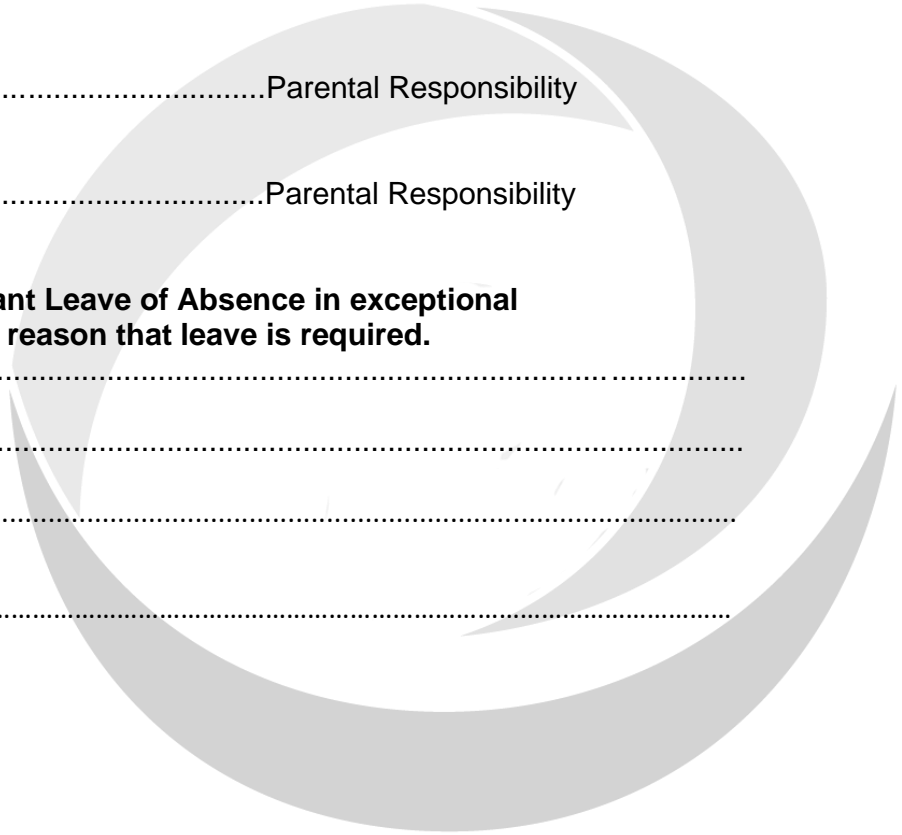
The Head Teacher may only grant Leave of Absence in exceptional circumstances. Please give the reason that leave is required.

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By signing this form I understand the following:

1. The Schools Attendance policy states that absences during term time will not be authorised unless the Head Teacher agrees that there are exceptional circumstances and that any absences will be recorded as unauthorised on the school register.
2. Any unauthorised absences may be referred to the Education Investigation Service.
3. I understand that if a referral is made to The Education investigation Service I may be subject to a Penalty Notice (a fine of up to £120 in respect of each child and each parent) and/or be subject to further legal proceedings in the Magistrates Court.
4. If my child does not return to school after the above leave of absence date, school may remove my child's name from the school register under Regulation 8, 1 (f) of The Education (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2006.

Signed:.....Name:.....

Relationship to child.....

Date:.....

Address if different to child/children:

.....
.....

Postcode.....

Please return this form to school once completed

