



## Attendance Policy

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Signature of Head teacher :	<i>L O'Connor</i>
Signature of Chair of Governors	<i>Mrs C Tweed</i>

## Introduction

School attendance is subject to various education laws and this school attendance policy is written to reflect these laws and the guidance produced by the Department for Education and Hampshire County Council. This attendance policy is also consistent with the following school policies:

- admissions
- anti-bullying
- child protection
- safeguarding
- special educational needs
- behaviour and rewards.

National guidance - DFE School Attendance Guidance (2014) requires that:

- **Schools** should:
  - Promote good attendance and reduce absence, including persistent absence.
  - Ensure child has access to fulltime education
  - Act early to address patterns of absence
- **Parents** must perform their legal duty by ensuring children of compulsory school age who
  - are registered to school attend regularly
  - All **pupils** must be punctual to their lessons.

**Your child's attendance** - The level of attendance and punctuality expected from all our pupils is included in our school's **Home School Agreement**, which parents must sign following their child's admission to St Mary's (this is a statutory requirement).

It is very important, therefore, that you make sure your child attends regularly; this policy sets out how together we will achieve this.

This policy will be publicised annually in writing for all staff, parents and pupils via the school website. It is also available in a number of other languages via our school's website (hard copies can be requested from the school office)

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## **Section 1 - Rationale/statement of intent:**

For a child to reach their full educational achievement a high level of school attendance is essential.

We are committed to providing an education of the highest quality for all our pupils/students and endeavour to provide an environment where all pupils feel valued and welcome. Parents and pupils play a part in making our school so successful. Every child has a right to access the

education to which he/she is entitled. Parents and teachers share the responsibility for supporting and promoting excellent school attendance and punctuality for all.

It is our duty to consistently strive to achieve a goal of 100% attendance for all children. Every opportunity will be used to convey to pupils and their parents or carers the importance of regular and punctual attendance.

For our children to take full advantage of the educational opportunities offered it is vital your child is at school, on time, every day the school is open unless the reason for the absence is unavoidable. The routines children develop around attendance and punctuality at school are the same as the expectations of any future employer in the world of work. High attainment, confidence with peers and staff, and future aspirations depend on good attendance.

**Good attendance is important because:**

- statistics show a direct link between under-achievement and attendance below 95%
- regular attenders make better progress, both socially and academically
- regular attenders find school routines, school work and friendships easier to cope with
- regular attenders find learning more satisfying
- regular attenders are more successful in transferring between primary school, secondary school, and higher education, employment or training.

***The Mission Statement for St Mary's, states that St Mary's is a Catholic community where we want our children to flourish and achieve great things. To achieve this, we need our pupils to attend school on a regular basis throughout the year.***

**Aims:**

There are occasions when pupils will be ill and unable to attend – this is both understandable and acceptable. However, the aim is that every child –

- has 100% attendance throughout the year
- reduces any unauthorised absences to zero

**Section 2 - Operating the policy**

**2.1 Promoting good attendance and Punctuality**

The foundation for good attendance is a strong partnership between the school, parents and the child. The Home School Agreement will contain details of how we will work with parents and our expectations of what parents will need to do to ensure their child achieves good attendance.

To help us all to focus on this we will:

- provide information on all matters related to attendance in our weekly newsletter and regularly on our school website
- report to you on how your child is performing in school, what their attendance and punctuality rate is and how this relates to their attainments
- celebrate good attendance by displaying individual and class achievements via the website and on the newsletters
- set targets for the school and for classes for attendance and display these in the school

## **2.2 Roles and responsibilities of the School Attendance Leader**

At St Mary's the responsibilities of the school's attendance leader is ultimately held by the Headteacher supported by the Admin team.

The Headteacher will:

- oversee, direct and co-ordinate the school's work in promoting regular and improved attendance;
- ensure the attendance policy is consistently applied throughout the school;
- ensure that attendance is both recorded accurately and analysed
- ensure that attendance issues are identified at an early stage and that support is put in place to deal with any difficulties.

If absence is frequent or continuous, except where a child is clearly unwell, staff will discuss with parents/carers the need and reasons for their child's absence and will encourage them to keep absences to a minimum. A note or explanation from a pupil's home does not mean an absence becomes authorised. The decision whether or not to authorise an absence will always rest with the school.

### **Responsibilities of classroom staff**

Ensure that all students are registered accurately.

- Promote and reward good attendance with students at all appropriate opportunities.
- Liaise with the Headteacher on matters of attendance and punctuality.
- Communicate any concerns or underlying problems that may account for a child's absence.
- Support pupils who have been absent to engage with their learning once they are back in school.

### **Responsibilities of students**

- Attend every day unless they are ill or have an authorised absence.
- Arrive in school on time.

### **Responsibilities of parents/carers**

Ensuring your child's regular attendance at school is a parent/carer's legal responsibility (Section 444 of the 1996 Education Act) and permitting absence from school that is not authorised by the school creates an offence in law.

**Parents will:**

- inform the school on the first day of absence
- make sure that any absence is clearly accounted for by telephone or email on the first and subsequent days of absence, or by letter if a phone is unavailable
- discuss with the Headteacher any planned absences well in advance
- support the school with their child in aiming for 100% attendance each year
- avoid taking their child out of school for non-urgent medical or dental appointments
- only request leave of absence if it is for an exceptional circumstance.

**Section 3**

**3.1 Recording attendance**

Legally the register must be marked twice daily; once at the start of the school day, 8.45am, and again for the afternoon session at 12:45pm Key Stage 1 and 1:15pm Key Stage 2.

**3.2 Lateness/punctuality**

It is important to be on time at the start of the morning and afternoon school sessions and to lessons. The start of school is used to give out instructions or organise work. If your child is late they can miss work time with their class teacher getting vital information, cause disruption to the lesson for others, and it can be embarrassing leading to possible further absence.

- The school day begins at 8:45 am and all pupils are expected to be in school at this time.
- Morning registration is at 8:50 am and it closes at 9:15am
- All lateness is recorded daily. This information will be required by the courts, should a prosecution for non-attendance or lateness be necessary.
- Arrival after the close of registration will be marked as unauthorised absence and coded U in line with Hampshire County Council and Department of Education guidance. This mark shows them to be on site, but is legally recorded as an absence.
- If a pupil is late due to a medical appointment, they will receive an authorised absence, coded M. Please be advised that, where possible, doctors and dentist appointments are to be made outside of school hours or during school holidays.

Pupils who are consistently late are disrupting not only their own education but also that of the other pupils. Ongoing and repeated lateness is considered as Unauthorised absence and will be subject to legal action (see Section 6 for further detail).

Parents, guardians or carers of pupils who have patterns of lateness will be contacted to discuss the importance of good time keeping and how this might be achieved. If lateness persists parents, guardians or carers will be invited to attend the school and discuss the

problem and support offered. If support is not appropriate or is declined and a child has 10 or more sessions of unauthorised absence due to lateness recorded in any 10 week period, the school or Hampshire County Council will be required to issue parents with a Penalty Notice in accordance with Hampshire County Council's Code of conduct: issuing Penalty Notices for unauthorised absence from schools (See Section 6 of this policy for further detail).

### **3.3 What to do if my child is absent?**

A child not attending school is considered a safeguarding matter. This is why information about the cause of any absence is always required.

#### **First day absence**

##### **If your child is absent you must:**

- contact school before 9:15 am on the first day of absence

##### **If your child is absent we will:**

- text you on the first day of absence if we have not heard from you – this is because we have a duty to ensure your child's safety as well as their regular school attendance. If we don't hear from you by 12:00 we will carry out a home visit.
- invite you in to discuss the situation with the Head teacher or ELSA if absences persist
- refer the matter to the Hampshire County Council's Attendance Legal Panels if absence is unauthorised and attendance falls below 90%.

#### **Third day absence**

If your child is not seen at school and contact has not been established with any of the named parents/carers, after three days of absence the school is required to start child missing in education procedures as set down by Hampshire County Council guidance. We will make all reasonable enquiries to establish contact with parents/carers and the child, including making enquires to known friends and wider family. We will send a letter asking parents to respond in writing as to why their child/children are absent.

#### **Ten days' absence**

We have a legal duty to report the absence of any pupil who is absent without an explanation for 10 consecutive days. If the child has not been seen and contact has not been established with the named parent/carer then the local authority will be notified that the child is at risk of missing. Children's Services staff will visit the last known address and alert key services to locate the child.

Please help us to help you and your child by making sure we always have an up-to-date contact number. There will be regular checks on telephone numbers throughout the year.

## **Continued or ongoing absence**

If your child misses 10% (three weeks/sessions) or more schooling across the school year, for whatever reason, they are defined as persistent absentees. Absence for whatever reason disadvantages a child by creating gaps in his or her learning. Research shows these gaps affect attainment when attendance falls below 95%. As such, we monitor all absence thoroughly and all attendance data is shared with the local authority and the Department for Education. If your child has been absent and their attendance level is falling towards 90% we will contact you and, depending on the reasons for the absence, will meet with the parents/carers.

All persistent absentee pupils and their parents are subject to an Attendance Action Plan this will be led by the school Admin Team. It will be reviewed fortnightly until attendance is above 95% consistently for a half term period. If attendance does not improve as a result of the support and actions put in place, parents will be invited to discuss the matter with the Head teacher and prosecution for non-attendance will be considered.

## **A welcome back**

On return from an unavoidable absence the school will ensure that pupils are made to feel welcome. This will include ensuring that the pupil is helped to catch up on missed work and brought up to date with any information that has been passed to the other pupils.

## **Section 4 – Request for leave of absence**

### **For national guidance refer to:**

- 1 School attendance 2014, at: [www.gov.uk/government/publications/school-attendance](http://www.gov.uk/government/publications/school-attendance)
- 2 National Association of Headteachers' guidance document on Authorised absence, 2014: [www.naht.org.uk/welcome/news-and-media/key-topics/parents-and-pupils/naht-issuesnewguidance-on-authorised-absence/](http://www.naht.org.uk/welcome/news-and-media/key-topics/parents-and-pupils/naht-issuesnewguidance-on-authorised-absence/).

For Hampshire County Council advice and guidance refer to:

- 1 Guidance on recording absence: <http://documents.hants.gov.uk/childrens-services/HIAS/Promotingpupilattendanceandrecordingabsence-maindocument.pdf>
- 2 Guidance on approval of Extended leave of absence: [www.hants.gov.uk/education/hias/learning-behaviour-attendance/lba-resources-for-schools/atten-guidance/attendance-guidance-for-schools](http://www.hants.gov.uk/education/hias/learning-behaviour-attendance/lba-resources-for-schools/atten-guidance/attendance-guidance-for-schools)

Amendments to school attendance regulations were updated and enforced from September 2013:

The Education (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations state that Head teachers may not grant any leave of absence during term time unless there are exceptional circumstances. It is important to note that Head teachers can determine the length of the authorised absence, as well as whether absence is authorised at all.

The fundamental principles for defining exceptional are that the absence should be:

- rare,
- significant,
- unavoidable
- and short,

which means the event could not reasonably be scheduled at another time. There are no rules on this as circumstances vary from school to school and family to family. There is, however, no legal entitlement for time off in school term time to go on holiday and in the majority of cases holiday will not be authorised. Parents/carers wishing to apply for leave of absence need to fill in an application form available on the school website or school reception in advance and before making any travel arrangements.

If term-time leave is taken without prior permission from the school, the absence will be unauthorised and if the number of sessions absent hits the thresholds set down in Hampshire County Council's Code of conduct, parents/carers will be issued with a fixed-penalty fine or other legal action in accordance with the code (see Section 6 for detail). Taking holidays in term time will affect your child's schooling as much as any other absence and we expect parents to help us by not taking children out during school time.

### **Section 5 - Understanding types of absence – authorised and unauthorised**

Pupils are expected to attend school every day for the entire duration of the academic year, unless there is an exceptional reason for the absence. There are two main categories of absences:

- authorised absence: is when the school has accepted the explanation offered as satisfactory justification for the absence or given approval in advance for such an absence. If no explanation is received, absences cannot be authorised.
- unauthorised absence: is when the school has not received a reason for absence or has not approved a child's leave absence from school after a parent's request. This includes:
  - parents giving their children permission to be off school unnecessarily such as for shopping, birthdays, to look after siblings
  - truancy before or during the school day
  - absences which have not been explained.

A school can, if needed, change an authorised absence to an unauthorised absence and vice versa if new information is presented. Any changes will be communicated to parents/carers.

An example of this would be where a parent states a child is unwell but on return to school there is evidence they have been on holiday.

## Section 6 - Penalty Notices for non-attendance and other legal measures

In education law, parents/carers are committing an offence if they fail to ensure the regular attendance of their child of compulsory school age at the school at which the child is registered, unless the absence has been authorised by the school.

### Legal measures for tackling persistent absence or lateness

Hampshire schools and Hampshire County Council will use the full range of legal measures to secure good attendance. Legal measures will only be considered when there is unauthorised absence and:

- 1 The child or family do not require the support from any agency to improve the attendance
- 2 The child has 10 or more sessions of unauthorised absence and parents are complicit in the child's absence.

The following legal measures will be used for pupils of compulsory school age who are registered at a school:

- parenting contracts set at Education Planning Meetings
- parenting orders
- Penalty Notices
- Education Supervision Orders
- Prosecution

Where a child has **unauthorised absence**, the school must enforce *Hampshire County Council's Code of conduct: issuing Penalty Notices for unauthorised absence from schools* or follow its guidance on other legal measures for non-attendance. The *Code of conduct* is a statutory document that ensures that powers for legal sanctions are applied consistently and fairly across all schools and their families within the authority. A copy is available from [www.hants.gov.uk/education/hias/learning-behaviour-attendance/attendance-guidance-for-parents/possible-penalties](http://www.hants.gov.uk/education/hias/learning-behaviour-attendance/attendance-guidance-for-parents/possible-penalties).

### Penalty Notices for non-attendance – Hampshire's *Code of conduct*

The school or Hampshire County Council will issue a Penalty Notice for any unauthorised absence where the pupil has been:

- absent for 10 or more half-day sessions (five school days) of unauthorised absence during any 100 possible school sessions – these do not need to be consecutive (codes G, U or O on the register)
- persistently late (coded U) for up to 10 sessions (five days) after the register has closed
- persistently late before the close of the register (coded L), but the school has met with parents and has clearly communicated that they will categorise as unauthorised any further lateness (code O), and where the threshold of 10 sessions (five days) has been met
- absent for any public examinations of which dates are published in advance

- absent for any formal school assessments, tests or examinations where the dates have been published in advance unless the issuing of a Penalty Notice would conflict with other intervention strategies in place or other sanctions already being processed.

### **Legal measures for absence taken when the headteacher has declined parents/ carers' request for leave of absence**

#### **Where a pupil has unauthorised absence due to either:**

1 non-approval of a parent/carer's request for leave of absence or

2 a holiday that has been taken without permission and the unauthorised absence (coded G) is for 10 or more sessions (five days) in any 100 possible school sessions/10 week period then a Penalty Notice for non-attendance will be issued.

#### **If a child has other types of unauthorised absence (coded O and U) and the family or child do not require any agency support to improve the attendance, then a single Penalty Notice is issued for either:**

**1 10 sessions (five days) of unauthorised absence or lateness in any 100 possible school sessions/10 week school period**

**2 one or more sessions of unauthorised absence during a public exam, formal school assessment of testing where dates are published in advance.**

Parents and carers will be warned of the likelihood of a Penalty Notice being issued for unauthorised absence via a letter or through the leave of absence request form. The Penalty Notice is a fine that is issued to each parent/carer who condoned (or was responsible for the child) during the period of unauthorised absence for which the fine has been issued. For each case of unauthorised absence, the school or Hampshire County Council will decide whether a Penalty Notice is issued **to one or more parents/carers** for each child. **NB:** This could mean four Penalty Notices for a family with two siblings both with unauthorised absence for holiday, ie one Penalty Notice for each child to each parent.

Each Penalty Notice carries a fine of £60 if paid within 21 days of the Penalty Notice being posted. If the fine is not paid within 21 days, the penalty is automatically increased to £120 if paid within 28 days. If the fine remains unpaid Hampshire County Council will consider prosecution for the non-attendance. Payment methods are detailed on the Penalty Notices themselves. Penalties are to be paid to Hampshire County Council and revenue resulting from payment of penalties is used by the County Council to help cover the costs of issuing Penalty Notices and/or the cost of prosecuting recipients who do not pay.

**Please note:** If you pay the Penalty Notice and your child has further unauthorised absences additional legal action will be taken. For example, in the event that a Penalty Notice has previously been served to you due to unauthorised holiday, should your child have any future unauthorised leave this will result in further legal action for you, such as prosecution or an Education Supervision Order.

For further information parents/carers can request a leaflet from their school and should visit Hampshire County Council's website at: [www.hants.gov.uk/education/hias/learning-behaviourattendance/attendance-guidance-for-parents/possible-penalties](http://www.hants.gov.uk/education/hias/learning-behaviourattendance/attendance-guidance-for-parents/possible-penalties).

## **Section 7**

### **7.1 What can I do to encourage my child to attend school?**

Children are sometimes reluctant to attend school. Any problems with regular attendance are best sorted out between the school, the parents/carers and the child. If a 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 gives the impression that attendance does not matter and may make things worse.

Contact your child's class teacher immediately and openly discuss your worries. Your child could be avoiding school for a number of reasons – difficulties with school work, bullying, friendship problems, family difficulties. It is important that we identify the reason for your child's reluctance to attend school and work together to tackle the problem. In some cases you may find it helpful to discuss the circumstances of your child's difficulties with another professional.

Make sure your child gets enough sleep and gets up in plenty of time each morning. Ensure that he/she leaves home in the correct clothes and properly equipped. Show your child, by your interest, that you value his/her education.

Be interested in what your child is doing in school, chat to them about the things they have learnt, what friends they have made and even what they had for lunch!

For many parents, your child attending school may be your first experience of being separated from them. This can seem daunting at first for both of you, but consistency and a caring, supportive home and school life will make the transition a quick and easy experience for you both. If you have any worries or concerns about your child, contact the class teacher and discuss them as soon as possible.

### **7.2 Leavers**

If your child is leaving our school (other than when transferring to secondary school) parents are asked to give the School Business Manager, in writing, comprehensive information about their plans, including any date of a move and your new address and telephone numbers, your child's new school and the start date when known.

If pupils leave and we do not have the above information, then your child is considered to be a child missing in education. This requires schools and local authorities to then carry out investigations to try and locate your child, which includes liaising with Children's Services, the Police and other agencies. By giving us the above information, these investigations can be avoided.

### **7.3 Absence through child participation in public performances, including theatre, film or television work and modelling**

Parents/carers of a child performer can seek leave of absence from school for their child to take part in a performance. They must contact the headteacher to discuss the nature and frequency of the work, whether the child has a valid performance licence and whether education will be provided by the employer during any future leave of absence. It is, however, down to the headteacher's discretion as to whether to authorise this and they will wish to discuss with you the nature and frequency of the absence and how learning will continue if absence occurs. Any absence recorded as part of a child's participation in a public performance is recorded as C, an authorised absence.

### **7.4 Absence through competing at regional, county or national level for sport**

Parents of able sportsmen and women can seek leave of absence from school for their child to take part in regional, county, national and international events and competitions. It is, however, down to the headteacher's discretion whether to authorise this and they will wish to discuss with you the nature and frequency of the absence and how learning will continue if absence occurs.

Permission for your child to leave early or arrive late to attend coaching and training sessions is also at the discretion of the headteacher and is not likely to be approved if it is a regular event, unless the sports club or association is providing an education tutor as part of their coaching.

### **7.5 Gypsy, Roma, Traveller and Showman families**

Absence of a child from a Traveller family that has left the area may be authorised if the absence is for **work purposes only** and it is believed that the family intends to return. To ensure the continuity of learning for Traveller children, dual registration is allowed. That means that a school cannot remove a Traveller child from the school roll while they are travelling. When the Traveller is away the home school holds the place open and records the absence as authorised through the T code. Distance learning packs for Traveller children are not an alternative to attendance at school.

## **Section 8 - Record preservation**

School registers are legal documents. We will ensure compliance with attendance regulations by keeping attendance records for at least three years. Computer registers will be preserved as electronic back-ups or microfiche copies

## **Appendices**

### **The law**

The Education Act 1996, Part I, Section 7 states:

*"The parent of every child of compulsory school age shall cause him to receive efficient full-time education suitable:*

*a) to his age, ability and aptitude and  
b) to any special needs he may have  
either by regular attendance at school or otherwise.”*

For educational purposes the term parent is used to include those that have parental responsibility and/or those that have the day-to-day care of the child.

The legislation that appertains to children who are of compulsory school age and are registered at school is contained within this Act.

Part VI, Section 444 contains the details of when an offence is committed if a child fails to attend school.

### **Register and admission roll keeping**

The legal requirements are found in: The Education (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations

2006.

### **Guidance documents on attendance**

The following Department for Education documents are used to guide attendance recording:

- *Absence and attendance codes (guidance for schools and local authorities)*
- *Keeping pupil registers (guidance on applying the Education Pupil Registration Regulations).*

These and other guidance documents are available on the Department for Education website.

Hampshire County Council guidance is available on Hantsweb at:

[www.hants.gov.uk/education/hias/learning-behaviour-attendance/lba-resources-for-schools/atten-guidance/attendance-guidance-for-schools](http://www.hants.gov.uk/education/hias/learning-behaviour-attendance/lba-resources-for-schools/atten-guidance/attendance-guidance-for-schools).