

# St Mary's Primary School

## Pupil Attendance & Absence Policy

### Introduction

The law defines compulsory school age as between 5 and 16 years old. It is the responsibility of the Parents, Local Education Authority and St Mary's Primary School to secure education for their children as well as a welcoming atmosphere that makes pupils feel safe and valued. We give priority to ensuring high attendance by all pupils.

### THE ROLE OF PARENTS

Parents have a legal duty to make sure their child/ren attends school regularly and that their children arrive at school on time (9.00am) and are collected from school on time (3.10pm and as soon as clubs finish). It is the parent's responsibility to tell the school as soon as possible why a pupil is absent and to provide any further information that the school needs.

### REGISTERS

The class teacher will record attendance of the child at the start of the morning and the afternoon sessions. If the child fails to attend regularly or is absent for 20 sessions in a 10 week period, the LEA will be informed.

The register is a legal document and may be used as evidence in court.

### AUTHORISED ABSENCE

Only the school can authorise an absence. An absence is not automatically classed as 'authorised' because it is covered by a written or verbal note from the parent; this is at the Headteacher's discretion and will take into account any number of previous pupil absences and reasons given for the absences. An absence may be authorised by the school when a parent/guardian contacts the school and the Headteacher is satisfied with details of the absence.

### UNAUTHORISED ABSENCE

Her Majesty's Inspectors define unauthorised absence as:

*"Absence from school for any period as a result of a premeditated or spontaneous act by the pupil or parent or both. This includes parentally condoned absence."* (Education Observed, No 13)

### Parentally condoned absences include absences when:

- a parent gives in to a pupil who wants to stay at home
- a parent is ill
- a parent is using the pupil as a childminder
- a pupil is supporting other members of the family

- work patterns, for example shift work, make it difficult for the family to ensure the child attends school
- a parent wants company
- it is the pupil's birthday
- a parent does not care whether the pupil attends school
- a parent has taken the pupil shopping
- a parent cannot control the pupil
- a parent has taken the pupil to the hairdresser
- a pupil is in paid work
- a parent is hostile towards the school or towards education in general
- a parent distrusts authority
- a parent is using the pupil as an interpreter.

### **LATE ATTENDANCE**

The register is taken at 9.00am, the start of the school day. A child will be marked in the register as late if they arrive after 9.00am and the register has been taken. If any child arrives later than 15 minutes after the start of school i.e. 9.15am, they will be marked in the register as unauthorised absence. If a child is frequently late, the parents will be contacted by the school. Repeated lateness does affect a pupil's education as much as poor attendance.

### **COLLECTION OF CHILDREN**

It is parents' responsibility to ensure that their child/ren are collected promptly from school as soon as the school day or after school clubs finish, when the school is no longer responsible for their supervision. Parents are responsible for making proper arrangements for the collection of their child/ren from school promptly at the allocated time by a responsible adult or designated person and for informing the school of these arrangements and personnel.

### **FAMILY HOLIDAY REQUESTS AND EXTENDED ABSENCE DURING TERM TIME**

Regulation 8 of the Education (Pupil Registration) Regulations 1995 allows Headteachers to authorise absences for family holidays during term time. However, **parents have no right to demand that absences are authorised. The law states that you do not have the right to take your child out of school for holidays during term time.** Whenever possible, parents should take their holidays during the school breaks. If this is not possible, the Headteacher may authorise up to ten school days in one school year for family holidays during term time, **however this is not an entitlement.** When a request for absence due to a family holiday is made, the Headteacher will consider individual circumstances and other forms of absence, e.g. sickness, will also be taken into consideration.

**Parents are encouraged not to request a leave of absence for Y2 and Y6 pupils prior to SATs.**

The Local Education Authority works with us to reduce the numbers of children missing school because of holidays taken in term time and we can refuse parents' requests to take their child/ren out of school.

We will contact the Education Welfare Officer if:

- Any child who has 20 absences (10 days) or more unauthorised absence in one school year will automatically be referred to the Education Welfare Officer who could initiate court proceedings against the parent.
- Any child's attendance rate falls below 80%, authorised or not, is monitored by the Education Welfare Officer who visits the school on a termly basis.
- A pupil is taken on holiday during term time without the Headteacher's permission, we will record the absence as unauthorised and will inform the EWO.
- If a pupil is taken on holiday after their holiday request has been refused

A holiday application request form is available from the school office and must be completed and returned **at least 10 days prior to the holiday**. If a pupil goes on holiday during term time without prior permission, it will be recorded as unauthorised absence. No permission can be given for holidays already taken without seeking prior authorisation.

## **SCHOOL PROCEDURES FOR DEALING WITH PUPIL ABSENCE**

Under The Education (School Attendance Targets, England) Regulations 2005, Section 3, the governing body of St Mary's Primary School are required to set a target to reduce pupil absence from school.

Our procedure for ensuring all children are safe and attend school is as follows:

- If a pupil is absent without explanation, we will contact the parents as soon as possible, preferably on the first day by 9.30am
- If a pupil is absent for three days without an explanation, we will write to the parents. We will keep a copy of the letter and record the date it was posted.
- If a pupil returns from absence without a letter of explanation, we will write to the parents asking why the pupil was absent.
- We will date and initial notes from parents, records of telephone calls and medical certificates. We will store these in a secure place, as they may contain sensitive information.
- If an explanation for absence is not satisfactory, or if the absence continues, we will invite the parents to school to discuss any difficulties that are preventing the pupil from attending. We will do this as soon as possible, so that the problem is tackled early.
- If a child is repeatedly late, we will contact the parents. Repeated lateness can affect a pupil's education as much as poor attendance.
- We will update our absence records each week to detect short but frequent absences.

The Headteacher will meet with the Education Welfare Officer once a term to discuss pupil absence and identify where intervention is required

**Date of Policy review** \_\_\_\_\_

**Signed (Headteacher)** \_\_\_\_\_

**Signed (Chair of Governors)** \_\_\_\_\_

**Date of next review**  
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