



Attendance Policy

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We are a rights respecting school. All our policies and procedures are written and reviewed to ensure that children's rights, as detailed in the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child, are respected and promoted and this policy ensures:

- Article 19:** All children should be protected from violence, abuse and neglect, and governments should protect them.
- Article 32:** Children should not be allowed to do work that is dangerous or might make them ill, or stop them going to school.
- Article 33:** Children have a right to be protected from dangerous drugs, and from the business of making or selling them.
- Article 34:** Nobody can do anything to your body that you do not want them to do, and grown-ups should protect you.
- Article 37:** No child should be punished in a way that humiliates or hurts them.
- Article 12:** All children have a right to be able to give their opinion when adults are making a decision that will affect them, and adults should take it seriously.
- Article 29:** Education should help children use and develop their talent and abilities. It should also help children learn to live peacefully, protect the environment and respect other people.

For more information on the convention and the rights of each child visit: <http://www.unicef.org.uk/>.

Attendance Policy

PRINCIPLES:

Good attendance and punctuality are vital for success at St Mary & St Thomas CE Primary School and establish positive life habits necessary for future success. They also minimise the risks of pupils conducting anti-social behaviour or becoming victims or perpetrators of crime or abuse. Regular attendance also encourages your child to build friendships and develop social groups, working together as a whole team, sharing ideas and developing on life skills. Children's social skills are also enhanced by regular attendance.

Our school displays a positive and proactive ethos that places high value on attendance and punctuality and values its partnership with parents/carers to promote good attendance. This policy advocates close working with all local Schools and aims to provide a cohesive approach to tackling attendance within St Mary & St Thomas CE Primary School ensuring that every child matters.

AIMS:

- To share the responsibility for promoting school attendance amongst everyone at St Mary & St Thomas CE Primary School and the broader school community;
- To develop and implement an effective attendance policy that touches all aspects of a school's life, and relates directly to the school's values, ethos and curriculum – staff particularly strive:
 - i. to encourage all pupils to reach their true potential and eventually become independent learners who value learning with and from others, i.e. have a positive attitude to life-long learning;
 - ii. to value application, perseverance, initiative and independence of thought and action, as well as co-operative endeavours.
- This attendance policy and its implementation should encourage some pupils to attend school more regularly by the implementation of specific measures, e.g.
 - i. registering pupils accurately and efficiently;
 - ii. setting attendance targets for individual pupils, the school and specific year groups (where applicable);
 - iii. contacting parents the same day when reasons for absence are unknown or unauthorised;
 - iv. daily monitoring of pupil attendance and punctuality;
 - v. regularly reporting school attendance statistics to parents, School Committee Members, Directors and DFE as appropriate.
- To monitor and evaluate this policy and its implementation by, amongst other means, rigorously collecting and analysing data about attendance to check our progress against measurable outcomes, e.g. National and Regional levels.

ATTENDANCE AND THE LAW:

It is a legal obligation of all parents/guardians/carers to ensure their child attends regularly, by law all children of compulsory school age must get a proper full-time education.

The 1996 Education Act 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 educational need he may have, either by regular attendance at school or otherwise'

COVID -19

During Covid-19 Lockdown in March when school was open to identified groups and following the wider partial opening in June, the Government made it clear no parent would be penalised or sanctioned for their child's non-attendance at school.

The Government have now informed that school attendance is mandatory again from September. It is vital for all children to return to school to minimise as far as possible the longer-term impact of the pandemic on children's education, wellbeing and wider development. Missing out on more time in the classroom risks pupils falling further behind.

This means the usual policy and procedures on school attendance will apply.

In order to continue to work together to minimise the spread of Corona Virus (COVID-19) school will ensure risk assessments and government guidance is followed.

Parents are reminded government guidance on self isolating due to displaying symptoms or due to exposure to Covid-19 as well as returning from a holiday requiring quarantine must be followed.

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/covid-19-stay-at-home-guidance/stay-at-home-guidance-for-households-with-possible-coronavirus-covid-19-infection>

Where a pupil is unable to attend school because they are complying with clinical and/or public health advice, they should access remote education provided by the school. School will monitor engagement with this activity.

SECTION 1 ROLES & RESPONSIBILITIES

PARENTS

All children of compulsory school age (5-16) should receive suitable education, either by regular attendance at school or otherwise. If a child is registered at school, parents have the legal responsibility for ensuring that their child attends regularly. They should also ensure that they are fully aware of the school's attendance policy and adhere to it. **In addition to statutory obligations parents are encouraged to sign the Home-School Agreement – a section of which describes the agreed responsibilities of the parents which include 'a responsibility of parents to make sure their child attends regularly.'**

THE PARENTS' RESPONSIBILITIES

To help parents fulfil their important role in their child's education, and to be as informed as possible in any communications or discussions with teachers, parents are requested and encouraged, to the extent feasible:

- To ensure their child attends school regularly and punctually;
- To notify the School if their child cannot attend for any reason – this is for the child's security as well as administrative reasons;
- To work with the School and Family Support Worker to resolve/alleviate any attendance problems or protracted absence;
- To attend meetings as required in relation of their child's attendance;

- To ensure they obtain an authorised 'leave of absence' for their child for all holidays and attend any follow up meeting with the Family Support Worker.
- Early Years Parents: To sign, as a statement of commitment to the school, an Early Years Attendance Contract at the child's point of entry to the school.

To discharge their agreed responsibilities parents should always:

- Encourage good attendance making sure that their child goes to school regularly and arrives on time;
- Take an interest in their child's school work;
- Make sure their child understands that they (the parents) do not approve of absence from school;
- Support the school in its efforts to control inappropriate behaviour;
- Inform the school on the first day of non-attendance;
- Co-operate with the school staff to make sure their child overcomes his or her attendance problems and to access education;
- Discuss planned absences with the school and apply for permission well in advance. Parents should not normally:
 - i. expect the school to agree to shopping trips during school hours;
 - ii. take their own family holidays outside of the school holidays;
 - iii. take their own family holidays during test time;
 - iv. expect the school to agree to their child missing for family holidays, or submit two holiday requests in any one school year.

PUPILS

- i. Pupils are actively encouraged to attend school regularly and to arrive punctually at school and at the start of lessons after break.
- ii. Pupils should inform staff if there is a problem that may lead to their absence, e.g. bullying, racism, etc.
- iii. Pupils should use their best endeavours to pass on absence notes from parents to their class teacher and to pass school correspondence to their parents.
- iv. Pupils must be encouraged to understand the importance of attending school and know that it is compulsory to attend school regularly.
- v. Pupils should all understand that only 'real' illnesses can be a reason for absence.

FAMILY SUPPORT WORKER

The Family Support Worker works collaboratively across school settings to implement policy and procedures. Early warning of attendance problems will be identified by the Family Support Worker. Legal action will be a last resort and will only ensue following advice and preventative action from the Family Support Worker and school.

A decision will be made in relation to possible courses of action depending on the circumstances.

- **Attendance Contract** – these enforce the parents' responsibility for ensuring that children of compulsory school age receive suitable education and to ensure that the parent takes responsibility for making sure that their child attends regularly;
- **Home Visit/School Meeting** – a visit to the family by the Family Support Worker to discuss issues surrounding non-attendance and/or lateness in an attempt to solve the problem. This discussion will also involve advice to parents around the legal

obligations of parents to ensure good school attendance and possible consequences for non-compliance.

- **Formal Warning letter** – after 20 sessions of unauthorised absences within a 10 week period, a monitoring letter will be issued. This will give a maximum of 15 schools days monitoring period to show improvement. School will request the Local Authority to issue a fixed penalty notice if a further unauthorised absence occurs during this period.
- **Fixed Penalty Notice**- issued by Local Authority (Education Welfare Service) if there are any further unauthorised absences during monitoring period. £60 fine for each adult per child which must be paid within 21 days, this will increase to £120 after 21 days but must be paid within 28 days.
- **Non-payment** – in cases where the penalty is not paid within the appropriate period of time, EWS will instigate action through the courts under 444(1) of the Education Act 1996.
- **Leave of Absence** – Should an unauthorised leave of absence be taken in term time and equates to 20 sessions or more, no monitoring letter will be issued and a fixed penalty notice will be requested.
- **Lates after registers close** – Where a pupil has arrived late after registers have closed on 10 occasions within a 10 school week period and the parent has been warned of this triggering a penalty notice, a penalty notice will be requested.
- **Pupils below 70%** - A penalty notice will not be issued by LA in this case. Referral to EWS for consideration of ongoing case work and/or instigation of legal proceedings.
- **Refer to St Helens Penalty Notice Code of Conduct 2016 for all other circumstances for issuing penalty notices which may apply.**
<https://www.sthelens.gov.uk/schools-education/education-welfare-service/legal-sanctions-for-unauthorised-school-absence/>

Local Authorities are responsible, by law, for making sure that registered pupils of compulsory school age attend their school regularly. The Family Support Worker will monitor school attendance and to help parents meet their responsibilities.

THE SCHOOL COMMITTEE

The school committee is legally responsible for many aspects of school management including the attendance register and so it is registered with the Data Protection Registrar under the Data Protection Act 2018. However, the Headteacher manages the day-to-day running of the School and in so doing takes responsibility for the day-to-day implementation of this policy.

To discharge their agreed responsibilities, committee members should:

- i. Meet to discuss whole school attendance regularly (at least termly)
- ii. Be kept updated on all attendance related issues and monitor termly School Attendance Data and external ASP Data.
- iii. Ensure that the CEO is able to assist with attendance reviews/parent contracts where required.
- iv. Decide clearly on the policy towards poor attendance for non-compulsory school age children (nursery) – e.g. removal from roll at an agreed point (following intervention and a further decrease in attendance levels)
- v. Monitor the school's annual attendance target and its progress towards this on a termly basis.

THE HEADTEACHER

The Headteacher is required to tell Education Welfare Service if a pupil fails to attend regularly or has been absent for a continuous period of 10 days and the absence is treated as unauthorised (in addition where deemed appropriate a home visit will be arranged). Children Missing in Education protocol will be adhered to.

The Headteacher will ensure the following are carried out and recorded prior to any Education Welfare Service intervention:

- Action by the class teacher as part of their day-to-day duties;
- Action by the Family Support Worker as part of their day-to-day duties;
- Involvement of others within the School, e.g. Headteacher, Senior Leaders;
- Contact with parents and parent/child interviews;
- Records of invites to meetings etc.
- Appropriate application of fixed penalty notices/prosecution documentation to EWS

The Headteacher is also required to maintain two registers:

- An admission register (known as the school roll) which contains a list of all pupils at the School;
- An attendance register for all pupils of compulsory school age on the admission register. This must be taken twice a day; once at the start of the morning session and once at the start of the afternoon session.

The Headteacher ensures that a clear policy on attendance is in place, which is known to staff, pupils and parents. The positive link with parents can be strengthened if the arrangements for notifying absence and the School's policy towards absence (authorised and unauthorised) is regularly publicised.

CLASS TEACHER

Class teachers must enforce this policy strictly.

When a pupil is missing from class, the class teacher will immediately inform the school office so that the pupil's absence can be further investigated by the family support worker. Class teachers can also contribute to the reduction of unauthorised absence by delivering interesting and engaging lessons and insisting on punctuality for themselves, colleagues and pupils.

School staff will receive regular training in relation to Attendance Policy, Protocol and Guidelines.

FAMILY SUPPORT WORKER

The Family Support Worker will be responsible for the attendance, in conjunction with the school, of all the pupils in the settings.

The Family Support Worker will check school registers regularly (with reviews with the Headteacher and Director of Wellbeing at least every half term) to ensure that they are being completed in accordance with the school's policy and to identify any patterns of absence which have not already been notified. The Family Support Worker promptly follows up incidents where the Family Support Worker and/or Headteacher/SLT have

identified a possible attendance problem (pupils whose attendance is **95.9%** or less even after school intervention).

The Family Support Worker will ensure the school attendance tracker is kept accurately up to date with all interventions taken.

The Family Support Worker works closely with the school and families to resolve attendance issues, arranging home visits where necessary. The key to success is an effective working relationship between our school and the learning community.

- Ensuring shared policies and operational practices between the Family Support Worker and our school (see below);
- Clearly defined roles of school staff and the Family Support Worker;
- Arrangements for referral, regular review, monitoring and evaluation in place;
- Effective procedures for resolving enquiries;

If a pupil is absent without explanation when the register is called and electronically submitted, the School Family Support Worker will contact the parents the same day. Home visits will be made when necessary. The absence will also be followed up with the parent to ensure that a written note or verbal acceptable explanation is received explaining the absence. Where no reply is received this will be recorded as unauthorised. Coding for all pupils will be completed on a daily basis by the Family Support Worker.

The relationship that the Family Support Worker has with parents, school colleagues and partners from other children's services contributes to the range of benefits that improve learning opportunities for pupils and their families.

The Family Support Worker will work in engaging harder to reach families, both in supporting their children to participate in curriculum and out of school activities and their parents in taking a more active interest in school life.

The Family Support Worker will focus on early intervention with families and children to help prevent issues from escalating into crisis and attempt to reduce the barriers that may exist in relation to attendance.

The family support worker will inform the Designated Safeguarding Lead on a regular basis of attendance patterns.

POLICE

Under the Crime and Disorder Act 1998 the police now have powers to remove truants found in public places and to return them either to their schools or a place designated by the Local Authority.

SECTION 2 INITIATIVES TO IMPROVE ATTENDANCE RATES

There are many reasons why pupils miss school without permission as such; there is no one solution to the problem of absenteeism – for example setting reward schemes (termly prize, half termly reward, certificates). School will implement systems to improve attendance and where necessary work with other agencies.

- Help children develop the habit of regular attendance including through providing a number of regular initiatives (termly prize and half termly reward, certificates);

- Show parents clearly that unjustified absence will be recorded and challenged;
- Visit all none accounted for absentees, regardless of attendance levels, on a daily basis;
- Minimise problems in KS1 by helping pupils transition from Early Years and when pupils transfer from KS1 to KS2.

The school has considered initiatives that are most appropriate e.g. setting reward schemes such as certificates for 100% attendance. Other helpful initiatives include:

- Implementing first day contact with parents of children who are absent from school without prior knowledge. It is hoped that this sends a clear signal to pupils and parents that absence is a matter of concern and will be followed up;
- Encouraging regular attendance checks, scheduled or unscheduled, which are effective particularly when pupils are not with the class teacher;
- Regular half termly register sweeps for pupils below 96% and follow up with the support of the Family Support Worker;
- Family Support Worker is responsible for first day contact and the Headteacher is responsible for attendance overall;
- Interviews for target families following half termly sweep and a further period of monitoring to ensure attendance improves;
- Attendance Agreement system
- Class attendance displays (raising the profile of attendance and punctuality in class)
- Raffle for 100% attendance.
- A weekly Attendance Assembly (raising the profile of attendance and punctuality throughout the school)
- Attendance displayed on weekly newsletter
- 100% attendance certificates at the end of each term for pupils who have full attendance for that term;
- A breakfast club provision for pupils.
- Regular (at least half termly) attendance letters to all parents of children causing concern, so that they can actively monitor their own child's attendance
- An Early Years Stage Attendance Contract for Nursery Pupils where the school reserves the right to remove any child from roll – should attendance continue to be an issue following intervention

The use of the Arbor computer system to monitor attendance and punctuality.

SECTION 3 KEEPING THE REGISTER

Registers are legal documents – indeed they may be used as evidence in court cases. For this reason, they are retained for a minimum of 3 years. For each pupil, the register must be marked either as present or absent, the register clearly differentiates whether the absence is authorised or unauthorised by the School.

Types of Absence Authorised Absence

Authorised absence is absence with permission from the Headteacher, this includes instances of absences for which a satisfactory explanation has been provided, e.g. ill health. Parents reporting absence should give the reason and date of return for the child. If this is unknown, regular contact on a daily basis is kept with the Family Support Worker. For periods of extended absence, the school will seek the advice of

the school nurse and HPA (Health Protection Agency) and will only authorise the number of days that have been advised by the Health Authority for the illness.

NB Reporting an absence does not guarantee authorisation. Authorisation will be considered in relation to the reason and your child's past attendance record is taken into consideration. Medical evidence and hospital letters that prove that a child is unfit to attend school will be required in addition to medical appointment cards for appointments in school time, in order that an authorisation can be considered. No absence will be authorised unless in extenuating circumstances.

Absences for Head lice will not be authorised.

In the case of a pupil leaving school during a session and/or returning later pupils must be signed in and out.

St Mary & St Thomas CE Primary School may authorise absence in the following circumstances:

- Illness (will require medical evidence)
- Medical appointment (Copy of appointment card to be seen and retained)
- Immediate family bereavement
- Conditions rendering attendance impossible or hazardous to child's health and safety.
- Religious observance, necessitating absence from school (limitations apply)
- Other exceptional circumstance may apply

Unauthorised Absence

Unauthorised absence is absence without permission from the Headteacher – this includes all unexplained or unjustified absences.

No absences are authorised by the Headteacher until the pupil's past attendance record is taken into consideration.

All registers must allow for the original entry and any subsequent correction to be clearly distinguishable and that, on retrieval, they appear in chronological order.

St Mary & St Thomas CE Primary School will not authorise absence in the following circumstances:

- No explanation is offered by the parent/carer
- The explanation offered is unsatisfactory (e.g. shopping, minding the house etc)
- Leave of absence (which is taken without the school's prior consent or knowledge and/or is in excess of the time agreed by the school)
- Lateness when the child arrives after the register has closed
- Special occasions, birthdays
- Looking after siblings
- Head lice
- Family holidays in term time
- Parents or siblings are ill

The Headteacher has the duty to consider the use of legal action in terms of court action to address incidences of poor attendance.

Persistent Absenteeism (PA)

Persistent Absentees are pupils whose attendance falls below 90%. At St Mary & St Thomas CE Primary School the Family Support Worker will identify any pupil whose attendance falls below 95%.

All PAs are tracked and reported to the School Committee on a termly basis.

Punctuality and Lateness:

The School actively discourages late arrival by staff setting a good example and by challenging it whenever it occurs. The Family Support Worker records the time of arrival and reason for lateness on Arbor. Frequent lateness of pupils can provide grounds for legal action to be taken. All teachers must ensure that registers are completed electronically by 9.00a.m. in the morning and 1.05p.m. in the afternoon. A child will be recorded as late after 9a.m. and recorded as absent after 9.30a.m*. The School Committee reserves the right to change timings of register closure and will inform parents of this. The school completes a punctuality trawl regularly and targets families who are at risk. Lateness is often an indication of more serious problems, but can also be the result of poor time management. 2 minutes every day over 2 weeks equates to 20 minutes of missed opportunities for learning:

- The school day starts at 8.55a.m*
- If you are late after registration you must enter your child into the Inventory System and the reason for late arrival.
- All late students are marked appropriately using code 'L' if your child is late before the register closes, 'U' after the close of register.
- If your child is persistently late the Family Support Worker, will in collaboration with the Headteacher, operate late gates to highlight the damage caused by lateness.
- School will send out letters to parents whose children are late on more than 5 occasions or who are late after registers close on 2 occasions, or who develop an unacceptable pattern of lateness.
- If a child is late after registration is closed; 9.30a.m then they will be recorded as 'U', which is unauthorised for the morning period.

MONITORING, EVALUATION AND REVIEW

St Mary & St Thomas CE Primary School will review this policy annually and assess its implementation and effectiveness. The policy will be promoted and implemented throughout the school and staff, pupils and parents will be reminded regularly of its contents.

To be read in conjunction with DfE Guidance : Attendance – August 2020

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/school-attendance>

* Current staggered start and finish times impacts on current register closures.