

Our vision - Good ground grows well.



ST MARY'S CHURCH OF ENGLAND PRIMARY SCHOOL

Through our Christian ethos, we teach children to hear, understand and live the word of God, helping them to give back to the world as global citizens. As every child is uniquely created in God's image, we nurture their individual development through a holistic approach to all aspects of life.

Attendance and Punctuality Policy

Date policy accepted by the Governing Body:	Autumn 2024
Date for review:	Autumn 2026

Introduction

St Mary's Church of England Primary School recognises that positive behaviour and good attendance are essential in order to raise standards of pupil attainment and to give every child/young person the best educational experience possible.

This policy is written with the above vision in mind and underpins our school ethos to:

- promote children's welfare and safeguarding
- ensure every pupil has access to the full-time education to which they are entitled
- ensure that pupils succeed whilst at school
- ensure that pupils have access to the widest possible range of opportunities at school, and when they leave school, in order to grow and flourish.

This policy has been written to adhere to the relevant Children Acts, Education Acts, Regulations and Guidance from the Department for Education in addition to guidance from the Local Authority in consultation with school governors and teachers. It seeks to ensure that all parties involved in the practicalities of school attendance are aware and informed of attendance matters in school and to outline the school's commitment to attendance. It details the responsibilities of individuals and groups involved and the procedures in place to promote and monitor pupil attendance.

This policy aims to raise and maintain levels of attendance by:

- promoting a positive and welcoming atmosphere in which pupils feel safe, secure and valued
- raising awareness of the importance of good attendance and punctuality
- ensuring that attendance is monitored effectively and reasons for absences are recorded promptly and consistently.

For our children to gain the greatest benefit from their education it is vital that they attend regularly and be at school, on time, every day the school is open unless the reason for the absence is unavoidable. Any loss of time at school can adversely affect a child's attainment and all pupils benefit from regular school attendance. (Also see Appendix 1)

Attendance	Missing out on	Which means.....	Over 13yrs of schooling is.....
90%	1 day per fortnight	4 weeks per year	Nearly 1.5 years missed
80%	1 day per week	8 weeks per year	Over 2.5 years missed
60%	2 days per week	16 weeks per year	Over 5 years missed
40%	3 days per week	24 weeks per year	Nearly 8 years missed

It is a critical pre-requisite for a successful and fulfilling school career that pupils must attend every day, unless there are exceptional circumstances and it is the *Head of School*, not the parent, who can authorise the absence.

Promoting Regular Attendance

Helping to create a pattern of regular attendance is the responsibility of parents, pupils and all members of school staff.

To help us all to focus on this we will:

- Give parents/carers details on attendance in our newsletters.
- Report to parents/carers annually on their child's attendance with the annual school report.
- Contact parents/carers should their child's attendance fall below the school's target for attendance.

- Celebrate excellent attendance by displaying and reporting individual and class achievements.
- Reward good or improving attendance.

Attendance Targets

The link between attendance and attainment is irrefutable and good attendance has a direct impact on education and friendships.

The school has targets to improve attendance and each child has an important part to play in meeting these targets. The minimum level of attendance for this school is “97%” attendance and parents/carers are informed annually about progress to this level and how their child’s attendance compares.

The school’s target is to achieve better than this however because good attendance is the key to successful schooling.

Through the school year absences and punctuality are monitored to show where improvements need to be made. Information on any projects or initiatives that will focus on these areas will be provided in our Home - School newsletter and parents/carers are asked for their full support.

Roles and Responsibilities

The local authority, the school (governors and staff) and parents/carers work within the legal framework for securing good attendance set out by the Government in two important pieces of legislation: The Children Act 1989 (section 36) and the Education Act 1996 with subsequent amendments and variations.

- The child has a responsibility for helping themselves keep safe and well, and for being truthful in saying how they are.
- Parents/Carers have a responsibility in law for ensuring their child attends school on time and whenever the school is open unless there are unavoidable reasons for absence. Parents need to provide contact details for two or more adults so that attendance, absence and welfare issues can be immediately followed up.
- The school has a responsibility to administer this attendance policy consistently and effectively. It should always have the needs of the child uppermost.
- The Governing Body has a responsibility for establishing a policy on attendance and ensuring it is implemented effectively.
- The local authority has a responsibility for supporting the school in securing good attendance. It is able to take legal action where the school’s own resources have failed to achieve positive outcomes.

What is absence?

Every half-day absence from school has to be classified by the school (not by the parent/carer), as either **authorised** or **unauthorised**. This is why information about the cause of any absence is always required, preferably in writing. An email from a known address is acceptable.

Authorised absences are morning or afternoon sessions away from school for a genuine reason such as illness, medical or dental appointments which unavoidably fall in school time, emergencies, religious holidays or other causes which are beyond the control of the parent and are agreed as such by the school (you may be asked to provide evidence for your child before this can be authorised).

Unauthorised absences are those which the school does not consider reasonable and for which no ‘leave of absence’ has been agreed. This type of absence can lead to the Local Authority (Attendance Service) using sanctions and/or legal proceedings. This may include:

- Parents/carers keeping children off school
- Parents/carers keeping children off school unnecessarily, eg. because they had a late night or for non-infectious illness or injury that would not affect their ability to learn.
- Absences which have never been properly explained.
- Children who arrive at school after the close of registration are marked using a ‘U’. This indicates that they are in school for safeguarding purposes however it is recorded as an absence for the session.
- Shopping trips, child’s or family members

- birthdays, looking after other children or children accompanying siblings or parents to medical appointments.
- Religious observance not agreed by the school.
- Excessive illness without medical evidence.
- Day trips and holidays in term time which have not been agreed.
- Other leave of absence in term time which has not been agreed.

Punctuality

Poor punctuality is not acceptable. If a child misses the start of the day they can miss work and do not spend time with their class teacher getting vital information and news for the day. Late arriving pupils also disrupt lessons, can be embarrassing for the child and can also encourage absence. Good time-keeping is a vital life skill which will help our children as they progress through their school life and out into the wider world.

St Mary's operates a soft-start and therefore the school gates open at 8.30am and children can begin to come into school.

Registers are taken at 8.40am. If a child is not present at registration, this will be recorded on the electronic register.

If the child arrives after the register has been taken but before 9.10am a symbol of an **L** will be recorded and the lateness will be **Authorised**.

Closing a register is a formal legal procedure. In accordance with the Regulations, if a child arrives after that time they will receive a mark that shows them to be on site, but this will not count as a present mark and it will mean they have an unauthorised absence. This may mean that you could face the possibility of a Penalty Notice or prosecution if the problem persists. However, if your child has a letter explaining the reasons for their lateness, and this is judged to be for an appropriate reason (a medical appointment, for example), then they will be authorised late.

If the parent/carer has provided a letter in advance for an appointment such as a doctor's appointment or educational assessment or examination, the teacher will code the register as 'N' (no reason given) and the Attendance Officer in the School Office will apply the appropriate code retrospectively.

Parents/Carers must bring a child arriving late to school into the main office and advise our school Receptionist the reason for being late. They will then be signed into School and sent to class. The School Office and the Attendance Officer will monitor this.

When there is a general concern about a child's attendance parents/carers may be invited to meet with a member of staff to discuss this. If considered helpful, the Attendance Officer may be invited to attend the meeting. Parents/Carers are urged to contact the school if they need support to resolve difficulties with attendance and punctuality.

We expect parents and staff to encourage good punctuality by being good role models to our children and celebrate good class and individual punctuality.

From time-to-time the school updates parents/carers on attendance and punctuality in the Newsletter and on a termly basis to the Full Governing Body with other attendance data. If leave of absence is authorised, the school will not provide work for children to do during their absence. Parents are however advised to read with their children while they are away.

Absence Procedures

FIRST DAY ABSENCE

Parents/Carers are asked to telephone or email office@stmarysschoolng.org on the first day of absence by 9am to give a reason and, if possible, a return date.

Under our commitment to safeguarding children, the school operates a 'first day calling' policy. This means that the School Office produces an absence report from our School's Management Information System (SIMS). If parents/carers do not telephone, the school will contact the parent/carer for an explanation; in the first instance by telephone call or email to the priority contact. If the school has not heard from the parents/carers by 10am then staff will start to call all the contact numbers that have been provided in order to gain an explanation for the absence. If the school is still unable to ascertain where the child is then the senior leadership team will consider if a home visit is required. Following this action, if the school still has not been able to contact parents/carers the matter will be reported to the authorities, eg. local authority and police, as the child will then be classified as 'missing in education'.

Where a sole parent/ carer of a child will knowingly be incapacitated due to health, family or work occurrences which involve travelling abroad / being a considerable distance away within the UK and therefore unable to respond to any possible school messages, it is good practice to give advance notice by informing the school and providing details of additional contacts for the determined duration of time.

Following an absence due to illness, written confirmation is not required due to the daily absence report recorded via the School's SIMS register. However, medical appointments do require documented evidence.

Documentation concerning medical absence is to be retained by the school and, in extenuating circumstances, could be requested by and/or used as evidence by the Attendance Service (formerly the Education Welfare Service) at the London Borough of Ealing. They have confirmed the following requirements:

A brief note which includes the date(s) of absence must be provided by the parent/carer. Appointments with a doctor, dentist or hospital must be supported by an appointment card. If a parent/carer makes an appointment by telephone and the child is collected from school, a card must be produced upon return. A note from the parent/carer is not acceptable. In the absence of an appointment card, the absence will not be authorised.

If the school notifies a parent/carer that a child is unwell and is collected from school, there is no requirement for a note to be provided. Safeguarding measures are satisfied because the parent/ carer has signed a register stating that the child has left school owing to illness. A parent/carer is expected to telephone on the first full day of absence, if the child remains unwell.

PERSISTENT ABSENCE

Where a child's attendance falls below 90% (irrespective of the reason), the child's attendance is deemed to be "Persistent Absence" (PA). We monitor all absence, and the reasons that are given, thoroughly. If a child is seen to have reached the PA mark or is at risk of moving towards that mark we will inform the parent/carer. PA pupils are tracked and monitored carefully.

In addition, the school must refer the information to the Attendance Officer. Schools are required to submit to the Local Authority, records of attendance. All PA pupils and their parents are subject to a school-based meeting and the plan may include: allocation of additional support through the School Nurse, Attendance Officer, Home School Liaison Worker, Local Authority Attendance Officer, EHAP or Social Care.

Persistent absence and parental failure to communicate is likely to be referred to the Attendance Team.

Telephone Numbers

There are times when the school needs to contact parents about lots of things, including absence, so we need to have current contact numbers at all times. Parents should ensure the school is informed of any changes.

EXCEPTIONAL LEAVE

There is no longer any entitlement in law for pupils to take time off during the term to go on holiday. In addition, the Supreme Court has ruled that the definition of regular school attendance is "in accordance with the rules prescribed by the school".

The Education (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2006 were amended in September 2013. All references to family holidays and extended leave have been removed. The amendments specify that Headteachers may not grant any leave of absence during term time unless there are "exceptional circumstances" and they no longer have the discretion to authorise up to ten days of absence each academic year.

It is a rule of this school that a leave of absence shall not be granted in term time unless there are reasons considered to be exceptional by the Head of school, irrespective of the child's overall attendance. Only the Head of school or his/her designate (not the local authority) may authorise such a request and all applications for a leave of absence must be made in writing. Statutory regulations demand that parents/carers make a request in writing to the Pastoral Manager **prior to the proposed absence**. This letter must contain the reason for the request and the dates, including the return date, evidenced by a copy of travel tickets.

Where a parent removes a child when the application for leave was refused or where no application was made to the school, the issue of a penalty notice may be requested by this school.

At St Mary's School 'exceptional circumstances' will be interpreted as:

being of unique and significant emotional, educational or spiritual value to the child which outweighs the loss of teaching time (as determined by the Head of School). The fundamental principles for defining 'exceptional' are events that are "rare, significant, unavoidable and short". By 'unavoidable' we mean an event that could not reasonably be scheduled at another time.

Each request will be considered individually and various factors will be taken into account, such as:

- The child's attendance history.
- Efforts made to minimise the number of school days taken.
- Under no circumstances will leave be considered during periods of school assessment and other important school events even if it is of an urgent nature.

We will not consider applications for leave during term time:

- At any time in September. This is very important as your child needs to settle into their new class as quickly as possible.
- When the absence would conflict with statutory or non-statutory assessment tests periods in the school's calendar affecting your child.
- When a pupil's attendance record already includes any level of unauthorised absence or they have already been granted authorised leave within that academic year.
- Where there has been more than 20 half days absence (for whatever reason) in the preceding year.
- Requests that are made on a regular or annual basis or where a pattern is evident.
- Those with poor attendance.

Whilst any child may occasionally have time off school because they are ill, sometimes they can be reluctant to attend school. Any problems with regular attendance are best sorted out between the school, the parents and the child. If a parent thinks their child is reluctant to attend school then we will work with that family to understand the root problem and provide any necessary support. Where exceptional leave is taken which has not been authorised by the Head of School, the school supports such action by the Attendance Support Team who may impose a fixed penalty notice of £80 per child, per parent / carer. In the event of non-payment within 21 days the fine will increase to £160 per child, per parent / carer. If the fine remains unpaid after 28 days a summons will be issued from the Magistrate's Court which could result in prosecution. The legislation is the Education Act 1996 sec. 444(1) and 444(1A).

"If any child of compulsory school age who is a registered pupil at a school fails to attend regularly at the school, his/her parent is guilty of an offence."

Alternatively, parents or children may wish to contact the Attendance Team themselves to ask for help or information. They are independent of the school and will give impartial advice. Their telephone number is 0208 825 6014 or Attendance@ealing.gov.uk

If a further period of unauthorised holiday is taken, an immediate court summons is issued (ie. without a penalty fine first being issued) which then results in a criminal record.

If children do not return by the agreed date, (to be contained in the letter of request and the Executive Headteacher's authorisation), then following a further 10 day period the **child can be removed from the school roll and referred to the Attendance Support.**

If there are extenuating circumstances which prevent return on the planned date it is essential that parents/carers make every effort to contact the school and explain the reason for the continued absence.

SEPARATED PARENTS

Requests for Exceptional Leave impact upon a child's education. Therefore, in cases of parental estrangement, where one parent requests exceptional leave, the school has a duty to inform both persons having parental responsibility of the outcome. The Head of School's response will be communicated to both parents. If a penalty is imposed, both parents are liable.

PERFORMANCE LICENCES

The applicant for a Performance Licence (usually the production company or theatrical agent) is obliged to seek the view of the school when applying for an absence request. Such a request will only be considered by the school when the child's attendance is above 90% (both during the current and previous year) and the child is making at least expected levels of progress (both during the current and previous year). A request may be declined if either of these thresholds is not met or if the timing of the requested absence could be detrimental to the child's education.

RELIGIOUS OBSERVANCE

Absence from school for religious observance is allowed and will be marked as authorised where the school is satisfied that the day has been set aside by the religious body and the parents/carers of the child are members of that religious community.

- We will authorise absence only for a single day's date 'exclusively set apart by the religious body'.
- If a date has not been 'exclusively set apart' by the relevant religious body, we will consider whether to grant leave under exceptional circumstances and in doing so consider whether the religious observance can be accommodated outside of school hours.
- Absence taken on a school day for a festival falling at a weekend, or in a school holiday, will not be authorised.
- Additional days taken on either side of the day explicitly set aside for observance will not be authorised on the grounds of religious observance.

MOVING SCHOOLS

For any pupil leaving St Mary's Primary School, other than at the end of Year 6, parents/carers are required to email office@stmarysschoolng.org with the Child's name, class, current address, date of leaving, new home address, name of new school, address of new school. This information is essential to ensure that we know and safeguard the whereabouts of all our pupils. In such cases, the Attendance Team should be notified.

School Collection Scheme

Parents/Carers are informed that the child is their responsibility after the school day has finished and that if they fail to collect their child, or it has been impossible to contact a nominated person on their emergency contact list, the Attendance Team and /or The Social Care Department will be contacted to arrange for temporary care.

Children MUST be collected at 3.10pm or at the designated time if the child is attending an after school extra-curricular club. Where possible, children not collected on time will be cared for at the After School Club until 6 pm. In this instance, parents/carers must collect their child from the club and make the appropriate payment.

Parents/Carers must telephone the school if they are running late and must always inform us if their child(ren) is / are being collected by another responsible adult who must be known to the child(ren). *Where a sole parent/carer of a child will knowingly be incapacitated due to health, family or work occurrences which involve travelling abroad / being a considerable distance away within the UK, and therefore unable to respond to any possible school messages, it is good practice to give advance notice by informing the school and providing details of additional contacts/collection arrangements for the determined duration of time.*

Late collections from the After School Club are **NOT permissible under any circumstances**. Parents/Carers must have contingency cover to ensure that their child is ALWAYS collected on time.

If a child is not collected from Extended Services (After School Club) on time on more than one occasion, an appointment will be made for the parent(s)/carer(s) to meet with the Executive Headteacher and the Governing Body which reserves the right to refuse further attendance at Extended School facilities where parents/carers arrive after 6 pm on more than one occasion.

Equal Opportunities

That every member of the school community experiences equal chances, irrespective of ethnic origin, race, religion, colour, nationality, political beliefs, disability, age, sex or sexual orientation.

That every member of the school community is valued as an individual and that everyone understands that stereotyping, discrimination, prejudice and racism will not be tolerated.

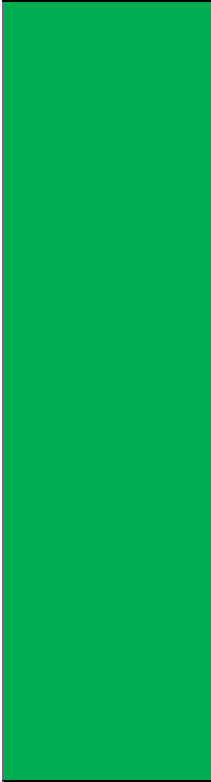


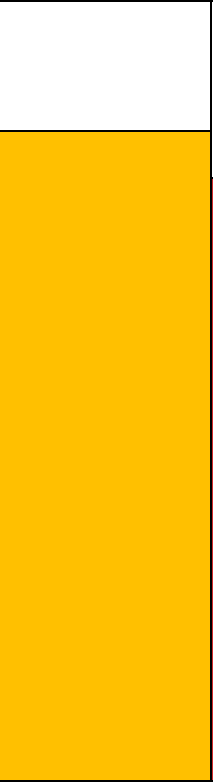

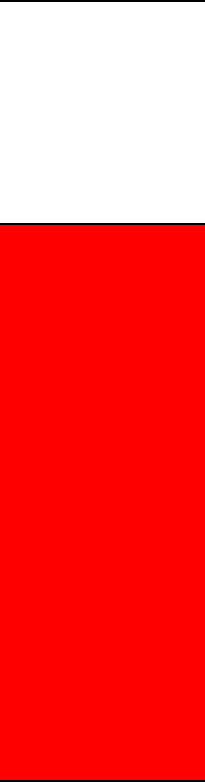
Summary

The school has a legal duty to publish its absence figures and its Attendance Policy to parents and to promote attendance. School attendance data must be available to the Local Authority and the Department for Education. Equally, parents have a duty to make sure that their children attend.

All school staff are committed to working with parents and pupils as the best way to ensure as high a level of attendance as possible.

Regular attendance supports optimising your child's attainment. (Reference: Appendix 1)

Appendix 1

St Mary's Church of England Primary School Attendance Something to think about...					
A whole year has 365 days, a school year has 190 days. That leaves 175 days to spend on family time, holidays, visits, shopping and other experiences.					
No absence	9.5 days absence	19 days absence	28.5 days absence	38 days absence	47.5 days absence
					
100%	95%	90%	85%	80%	75%
190 days of education	180.5 days of education	171 days of education	161.5 days of education	152 days of education	142.5 days of education
Good attendance Best chance of success		Poor attendance Less chance of success		Very poor attendance Serious impact on education and reduced life chances	

Every day counts - Our school target is 97% attendance