

**ST MARY’S CATHOLIC PRIMARY SCHOOL**

**ATTENDANCE POLICY 2024-2025**

**‘Love One Another as I have Loved You’**

Adopted: August 2024

Review Date: September 2025

**Attendance Policy**

**INTRODUCTION**

St Mary’s Catholic Primary School is committed to providing outstanding educational opportunities for all our pupils. We recognise the importance of being on time for school and regular attendance in maximising the benefit of any educational opportunity. Encouraging and supporting excellent attendance is a crucial part of supporting our pupils to learn effectively.

This policy is written with reference to DfE guidance including ‘School attendance: Guidance for maintained schools, academies, independent schools and local authorities’, ‘Keeping Children Safe in Education’ and ‘Children Missing Education’.

Support for parents is available. Please approach any member of staff you feel comfortable to talk to and we can arrange a meeting. Support may include a variety of interventions, or signposting to other services.

**INTRODUCTION AND PURPOSE**

The purpose of this policy is to ensure that all stakeholders including pupils and parents/carers understand the importance of punctuality and regular attendance at school and their roles and responsibilities regarding attendance. Research has shown that there is a direct correlation between school absence and overall achievement. Poor attendance also affects young people’s ability to make and sustain friendships and can interrupt the routine of school life, making it hard to settle when they do attend.

St Mary’s Catholic Primary School aims to raise the achievement of all its children and to ensure that it meets the following aims:

* To encourage learners to adopt healthy lifestyles
* To ensure learners feel safe and adopt safe practices
* To ensure learners enjoy their education
* To encourage learners to make a positive contribution to the community
* To aid learners to prepare for their future economic wellbeing.

St Mary’s Catholic Primary School recognises that attendance is a critical factor in student success. It therefore aims to achieve significantly improved attendance levels and to increase the number of children with greater than 95% attendance each year, whilst recognising that the attendance of SEND children is complex and multifaceted.

**ST MARY’S CATHOLIC PRIMARY SCHOOL OBJECTIVES**

* To improve the overall attendance of children
* To create an environment in which children look forward to attending school and

lessons

* To make attendance a priority for children, parents, staff and governors
* To create a framework which defines roles and responsibilities and promotes

consistency in carrying out designated tasks

* To create a rigorous system for monitoring and analysing attendance
* To provide support and advice to parents
* To recognise the needs of individual children when planning reintegration following

significant periods of absence

To ensure that attendance data is accurate and regularly generated so that:

* Children can be praised/rewarded for their attendance
* Parents/carers can be quickly informed of any attendance and punctuality issues
* Individual children and groups can be monitored

**The Governing Body will:**

* Meet regularly and review attendance figures and monitor progress against national attendance figures for all, PPG, non-PPG and children with SEND
* Ensure implementation of this policy

**The Headteacher, Mrs Samantha Griffiths takes overall responsibility for the implementation and monitoring of the Policy by:**

* Attendance champion – can be contacted through the school office o 01952 388255
* Developing and monitoring policies that create an environment in which all children

feel valued and safe and in which they are encouraged and able to achieve success

* Meeting with the governing body and reporting on attendance figures
* Giving attendance a high profile with pupils, staff, and parents/carers
* Identifying clear roles and responsibilities and ensuring that staff have the time and

resources to fulfil them

* Ensuring that there is sufficient funding to support reward systems
* Ensure that attendance is regularly discussed in assemblies and that children with high levels of and/or improved attendance are praised and rewarded regularly

**Our School Business Manager, Mrs Nicola Pryce and Educational Welfare Officer, Mrs Alison Pike, will:**

* Ensure that attendance and punctuality procedures are followed across all year groups
* Monitor for internal truancy. Look for patterns of absence and consider the impact of

the curriculum upon attendance alongside other causes

* Ensure that children on long term absence/exclusion access the curriculum and are supported on their return
* Assist the attendance officer in meeting with parents and children whose attendance is low and/or consistently below 90%
* Analyse the attendance data to ensure that children with low attendance are detected

early and appropriate action is taken.

* Be aware of school priorities with regard to attendance, persistent absence and punctuality, and plan interventions to secure improvements for targeted groups

**Our Administrator will:**

* Monitor registers daily
* Make first day contact with parent/carers of children with unexplained absence
* Mark the student register with the appropriate code and forward information as

necessary

* Inform the DSL of any vulnerable student absence by 9.15am
* Send appropriate letters to parent/carers of children to update them on the child’s

attendance

* Monitor the attendance register, alerting the relevant staff when concerns arise.
* Provide fortnightly attendance data to the attendance team
* Provide data to the governing body and external agencies, as required for the census

etc.

**Classteachers will:**

* Support school in giving attendance a high profile
* Ensure that the register is taken daily at the correct time, using the correct codes
* Liaise closely with members of the attendance team with regards to

attendance issues

* Ensure that children who have been absent from school are made to feel welcome on their return.
* Ensure that children who have been absent for a length of time for whatever reason

have support to catch up with missed work

* Use data provided to comment weekly on attendance levels both as a group and on an individual basis, ensuring that children with high levels of attendance and improved attendance are appropriately praised
* Ensure that issues of bullying, difficulties with work and peers are dealt with

effectively and that relevant staff are informed

* Give attendance a high profile by praising children with high attendance, awarding them with certificates and entering children into attendance raffles with substantial prizes
* Set work for children who are absent for a long period
* Ensure that systems are in place so that work missed can be easily made up
* Ensure that the classroom continues to be a safe environment where plans are made to meet individual student needs and lessons continue to be as relevant and stimulating as possible
* Refer concerns and action taken to relevant staff
* Be the very best of role models in terms of attendance

**What if my child is too anxious to go to school?**

Children can sometimes feel a little bit worried about going to school. Mostly, this is a very normal emotion.

It’s important to recognise that going into school can help children to feel less worried than letting them stay at home.

If your child is anxious over several weeks, talk to our school about how we can support you.

**What does it mean if a child is persistently or severely absent?**

Children who are registered at a school but regularly fail to turn up are officially referred to as being ‘persistently’ or ‘severely’ absent.

The school day is split into two sessions – one session counts as a morning or afternoon spent in school.

Pupils who have missed more than 10 per cent of school sessions are considered persistently absent, while children who have missed more than 50 per cent of school sessions are referred to as severely absent.

**What about children with SEND?**

Of course, some children face greater barriers to attendance, such as pupils with long term medical conditions or special educational needs and disabilities.

For children who face complex barriers to attendance, our school will have a sensitive conversation with children and families and work with them to put support in place.

Support may include reasonable adjustments for pupils with disabilities or help for pupils where mental health issues are affecting their attendance.

**PARENTAL RESPONSIBILITY**

Parents/carers have the primary responsibility for ensuring that children of compulsory school age (5- to 18-year-olds) with a Education, Health and Care Plan opt to home educate their child or ensure they attend an establishment authorised by their Local Authority (LA). This includes a legal obligation to ensure children attend regularly and on time. Ensuring regular attendance is essential; permitting absence from school without good reason is an offence by law and may result in prosecution. St Mary’s will always seek to work collaboratively with families in order to support regular attendance.

**ARRIVING LATE**

If a child arrives late, it is the responsibility of the adult to accompany the child or children in, report to the school office and sign the late book, giving a reason for lateness. Children do not understand danger, they can wander off in the blink of an eye and therefore need to be accompanied into school and not supervised from afar. This is important so that the school office knows your child is in school and can mark your child in in the class register. Occasionally, as parents drop their child/ren off they might be asked to meet with the headteacher briefly to discuss the reasons for lateness and provide potential solutions and remedies to lateness reoccurring.

A fine can be issued to parents of pupils who arrive very late (after school have closed the register) 10 or more times within 10 school weeks.

**AUTHORISED AND UNAUTHORISED ABSENCES**

An absence is classed as authorised when a child is away from school for a legitimate reason and the school has received notification or a request from a parent/carer, e.g. if a child has been unwell. Evidence may be required to authorise an absence,

e.g. hospital appointment letter. There may be other occasions where the school will authorise an absence e.g. family wedding/funeral; any requests of this type must be made by completing a absence request form available from the office.

Unauthorised absences are those which the school does not consider essential and for which no authorisation has been given. This type of absence can lead to the Local Authority becoming involved. Support will be offered initially but if unauthorised absences continue, the LA has the right to apply a fine or legal proceedings.

Examples of unauthorised absence include:

* Parents/carers keeping children off school to go shopping, to care for a sibling, for a family birthday.
* Refusal by the child to attend an allocated session.
* Absences that have never been explained.
* Children who arrive too late to get a mark.
* Illness without medical evidence.
* Holidays in term-time.

If a child is reluctant to attend school, parents/carers must communicate this as soon as possible to their school’s administration team in order that support strategies can be put in place.

Parents/carers can support their child’s attendance by:

* Ensuring regular and early bedtimes, appropriate to the age of the child.
* Having uniform and equipment prepared the night before.
* Reporting any academic or social concerns promptly.
* Retaining open and honest communication with the school.
* Having a positive attitude towards school attendance.

**ILLNESS AND MEDICAL APPOINTMENTS**

When a pupil is unwell, parents/carers should contact the school before morning registration on the first day of absence. A call must be made for each day of absence. When a pupil is absent due to illness or a medical appointment, evidence may be requested e.g. appointment card, letter, prescription, prescribed medication packs or boxes with the pupil’s/student’s name printed on them.

Should school staff become concerned about the amount of school missed due to illness, information may be shared with external agencies such as social services (Family Connect).

Parents/carers should ensure that every effort is made to make or arrange medical and dental appointments outside school hours

St Mary’s Catholic Primary School recognises that pupils’ additional needs may include significant health concerns and involve regular or unexpected medical support e.g. admission to hospital or attendance at specialist clinics. We will always seek to work with our pupils and their families to support good attendance and, where this is not possible, to support continued learning through initiatives such as home learning programs.

**HOLIDAYS**

Absence during term time can seriously disrupt pupils’ continuity of learning. Parents should avoid booking family holidays in term time. Parents do not have an automatic right to withdraw pupils from school for a holiday and must apply in writing for permission in advance. Holidays in term time will only be authorised in exceptional circumstances and this must be started by completing a holiday request form available from the office.

**ABSENCE AND EXCEPTIONAL LEAVE POLICY**

At St Mary’s Catholic Primary School we believe that leave of absence during term time should be avoided as it can have a damaging effect on a child’s education and overall achievement. However, it is recognised that on occasions there may be extenuating or compassionate reasons that justify such leave. Attendance Regulations 2024 state that head teachers may not grant any leave of absence during term time unless there are exceptional circumstances. The Headteacher will determine the number of school days a child can be away from school if the leave is granted. With regard to the regulation outlined above the school policy is as follows:

1. Parents must request leave for exceptional circumstances as far in advance as possible.
2. The request should be made in writing using the leave of absence form. (Available from the school office) Requests cannot be made orally.
3. This must include the reason why parents/carers feel that it is necessary to take a leave of absence. This may include any extenuating or compassionate reasons, including evidence of circumstances such as medical certificate or letter from employers.

On receipt of an application for leave on the appropriate form together with any supporting documentation, consideration will be given to the circumstance. An hard copy letter outlining the decision of the school will be sent to the applying parent/carer within 7 days.

**PUNCTUALITY**

St Mary’s Catholic Primary School expects all pupils and children to arrive on time for their scheduled provision. Late arrival is disruptive and can lead to pupils missing out on important work and information.

Doors open: 8.35am

Register is taken at 8.45am

End of the school day: 3.15pm

Persistent lateness may lead to a fixed penalty notice being issued by the Local Authority.

**SAFEGUARDING**

St Mary’s Catholic Primary School has a duty to effectively safeguard all pupils attending. Supporting regular attendance is part of this safeguarding duty. Poor attendance and unexplained absence can indicate a possible safeguarding concern including (but not limited to) physical, emotional or sexual abuse, neglect, female genital mutilation (FGM), child sexual exploitation, radicalisation, substance misuse or peer on peer abuse.

St Mary’s Catholic Primary School staff will always seek to work with families to minimise absence and ensure clear communication regarding any absence that might occur. Where safeguarding concerns are raised, these will be managed in accordance with St Mary’s Catholic Primary School Safeguarding Policy and Procedures.

**CHILDREN MISSING EDUCATION**

* St Mary’s Catholic Primary School must hold a minimum of three emergency contact numbers for each pupil , unless there is a genuine reason why this is not possible e.g. parent fleeing domestic violence.
* Any child going missing from education will always get immediate attention from the Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL). Staff are trained to be alert to signs to look out for and the individual triggers to be aware of when considering the risks of potential safeguarding concerns such as travelling to conflict zones, FGM, trafficking, and forced marriage.
* When a pupil is absent without notification, the administrator will record the absence in the register and the school will endeavour to contact the parents/carers and other emergency contacts in order to determine the reason for the absence. This will happen for every day of non-attendance where no call has been received informing the school of absence and reasons why.
* Any unexplained absence of a pupil with a Child Protection Plan will be reported to the pupil’s social worker within one day.
* Where a pupil does not present for school as expected, the school will endeavour to ascertain that pupil’s whereabouts and wellbeing without delay, using all available parent/carer and secondary/emergency contact details. Where no contact can be made with any named emergency contacts, a member of school staff should generally attend the pupil’s home. If the pupil or a named contact still cannot be contacted, the school must report this to relevant personnel in the Local Authority and, where deemed necessary, the police. However, it is acknowledged that in some exceptional, local circumstances, such action may be counter-productive and it is for the school to risk assess such a scenario on the first day. Regardless of this, if a pupil is absent for a second consecutive day without notification from a named contact, the school must report this to relevant personnel in the Local Authority and, where necessary, the police.
* Staff at school will attempt to get eyes on any student missing for over 10 school days where no professionals have had contact and parents have not supplied medical evidence for their absence but have been in contact with school
* Staff will always report to the Local Authority the name of any child who has been newly registered to attend the school but does not arrive on the expected day.
* Staff will always report to the Education Welfare Service the continued absence of a child known or thought to have been taken overseas if the child does not return to school on the expected return date.
* St Mary’s Catholic Primary School maintains accurate attendance and admissions registers (all pupils are on both), in line with statutory requirements. This includes paying careful attention to off-rolling pupils in association with the Local Authority and knowing, and recording, pupil destinations consistently on the admissions register. Where a pupil destination is unknown, and unable to be established after significant follow-up, the Local Authority, Education Welfare Service and/or Family Connect will be informed.
* Pupils will not be deleted from the admissions register. Staff will alert

the child’s Local Authority immediately if:

* the pupil has been taken out of school by their parents/carers and is being educated outside the school system e.g. home education
* the pupil has ceased to attend school
* the pupil has been certified as medically unfit to attend school or is in custody.

Keeping Local Authorities up to date is crucial so that they can check if children of compulsory school age are missing education, and might therefore be in danger of not receiving an education and be at risk of abuse or neglect.

When children are designated as *Children Missing Education* and have exceeded 10 days with no contact, St Mary’s Catholic Primary School follows Guidance for Identifying and Safeguarding Children Missing from Education (CME). In line with these processes and following the statutory guidance set out in DFE 2016 we are in

regular contact with the LA and provide them with information on changes to the roll as required. No child is removed from the school roll without first notifying the local authority and receiving their approval. Information on transferring files is contained within the Safeguarding and CP policy. In line with practices agreed with the LA and the guidance first set out in DFE-00261-2016 ‘Children Missing Education’ (September 2016), the Attendance Officer will inform the Attendance/Educational Welfare Service at TAW of any student who has been absent from school for 10 consecutive days to report the student as missing from education. In addition, the attendance officer will inform the Designated Safeguarding Lead. The DSL will then assess the child’s vulnerability and, where appropriate, a referral to social care for that child. A meeting will be arranged by the DSL, if appropriate, in case of continued non-attendance. Appropriate staff will be informed of the outcome of the meeting by email from the Attendance Officer.

On the rare occasions that St Mary’s Catholic Primary School pupils are excluded for a fixed term, the school will confirm this in writing to both the family (and the placing Local Authority where this exclusion exceeds five days). While the school will provide the pupil with work to complete during their external exclusion (and mark it), St Mary’s Catholic Primary School is not responsible for the pupil/student’s safety and welfare during their time at home.

**UNEXPLAINED CONTINUOUS ABSENCE**

**1st Day of Absence**

All children not seen at registration should be marked as an unexplained (N) absence, unless tutors have prior knowledge and proof of the reason for the absence

The administration will phone home on the first day of absence if no explanation has been received.

A Parentmail will be sent on each day of absence if reason for absence is not provided and there is no contact from the family.

**3rd Day of Continuous Absence**

The administrator will phone home to follow up on the absence and a communication will be sent via Parentmail, requesting explanation for the absence. If **no contact** with family is made to obtain a reason for absence on the third day of absence, the school will call all contacts listed on child’s profile to raise concern and obtain information of student whereabouts. The EWO, Police, attached social worker, attached strengthening families’ worker, or a nominated member of staff will make a home visit.

A re-integration plan will be made if necessary. The parent/carer will be offered additional support as appropriate and/or requested. The seriousness of the situation will be stressed including notification of the possibility of a penalty notice. Should there be no-one at home or no response, a letter will be hand delivered noting the visit outlining the possible next steps as above and requesting urgent contact with school.

**5th Day of Continuous Absence**

If no contact with the family has been made for 5 consecutive days and no information was obtained following home visit(s) the school will refer to Educational Welfare Services and/or Family Connect and/or the police.

**10th Day of Continuous Absence**

If the child has been absent for 10 consecutive days and no update provided to school in all the steps above the child will be referred to ‘Children Missing in Education’ to Family Connect. No child is removed from the school roll without first notifying the local authority and receiving their approval. For children where there are concerns regarding wellbeing or welfare, or for children who are subject to any safeguarding plan, we may conduct a home visit at any time to ensure that the child remains safe.

**INTERMITTENT ABSENCE**

It is also recognised by St Mary’s that pupils will on occasions be ill but expects children to achieve 97% attendance for the year at a minimum. We understand some of our children may be undergoing periods of medical ill health due to aspects of their SEND. When there are periods of sustained illness it is expected that these will be supported through submission of medical evidence.

For this reason, a number of measures are taken to minimise intermittent, short-term absences.

* Phone calls are made daily to inform parents of their child’s absence and request

information to support it

* Termly reports to contain attendance percentage to update parents and carers on

their child’s attendance record

* Rewards for children with 100% attendance

Letters will be sent out to the parents of all children where attendance has been identified as below St Mary’s absolute minimum target of 90%. In occasional circumstances it may deemed appropriate to not sent out the letters outlined above although we expect the instances in which this to be the case to be minimal. Throughout this process is it possible that a student may be identified as being persistently absent in which case the process below will be followed.

**PERSISTENT ABSENCE**

Unauthorised and irregular attendance will be referred to the Local Authority. ‘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.’ (Education Act 1996). From September 2015, Persistent absence has been defined by the Department for Education as all attendance falling below 90%.

Where a pupil has intermittent attendance and school deems it necessary, the continuous absence process will be followed for each day the student is absent. The parent/carer will be sent a warning letter stating the reason for the warning being issued. The student’s attendance will be monitored for a six-week period (minimum of 60 school sessions)

If no sustained improvement has been made the details will be forwarded to the Educational Welfare Service who will make arrangements for a Penalty Notice to be issued. If there has been an improvement, the parent/carer will be informed. Penalty Notices issued by Telford and Wrekin Council will be sent to each parent/carer of student/s at St Mary’s where pupils’ attendance meets the criteria for the issuing of a Penalty Notice warning.

The parent/carer will be sent a warning letter stating the reason for the warning being issued. The child’s attendance and punctuality will be monitored for a period of between six and twelve weeks. If insufficient improvement has been made the details will be forwarded to the Education Welfare Officer who will make arrangements for the Penalty Notice to be issued.

**SEVERE ABSENCE**

Unauthorised and irregular attendance will be referred to the Local Authority. Severe absence is classified as those children missing 50% or more of school (Working together to improve attendance, 2022). A concerted effort will be made by all partners to prioritise support for these children in order to improve their attendance. If all avenues of support have been facilitated by schools, local authorities and other appropriate education support has been provided but severe absence for unauthorised reason continues, it is likely to constitute neglect and be referred to Family Connect.

**SANCTIONS AND PENALTY NOTICES**

Our school will make use of the full range of potential sanctions – including, but not limited to, those listed below – to tackle poor attendance. Decisions will be made on an individual, case-by-case basis.

**Penalty notices**

The headteacher (or someone authorised by them), local authority or the police can fine parents for the unauthorised absence of their child from school, where the child is of compulsory school age, by issuing a penalty notice.

If the school issues a penalty notice, it will check with the local authority before doing so, and send it a copy of any penalty notice issued.

Before issuing a penalty notice, the school will consider the individual case, including:

* Whether the national threshold for considering a penalty notice has been met (10 sessions of unauthorised absence in a rolling period of 10 school weeks)
* Whether a penalty notice is the best available tool to improve attendance for that pupil
* Whether further support, a notice to improve or another legal intervention would be a more appropriate solution
* Whether any obligations that the school has under the Equality Act 2010 make issuing a penalty notice inappropriate

A penalty notice may also be issued where parents allow their child to be present in a public place during school hours without reasonable justification, during the first 5 days of a suspension or exclusion (where the school has notified the parents that the pupil must not be present in a public place on that day).

Each parent who is liable for the pupil’s offence(s) can be issued with a penalty notice, but this will usually only be the parent/parents who allowed the absence.

The payment must be made directly to the local authority, regardless of who issues the notice. If the payment has not been made after 28 days, the local authority can decide whether to prosecute or withdraw the notice.

If issued with a **first** penalty notice, the parent must pay £80 within 21 days, or £160 within 28 days.

If a **second** penalty notice is issued to the same parent in respect of the same pupil, the parent must pay £160 if paid within 28 days.

A **third** penalty notice cannot be issued to the same parent in respect of the same child within 3 years of the date of the issue of the first penalty notice. In a case where the national threshold is met for a third time within those 3 years, alternative action will be taken instead.