



SCHOOL ATTENDANCE POLICY

1. Mission Statement

St Mary's is a place where a strong sense of self worth and community is underpinned by Christian values. A place where the whole child is able to develop in a secure and happy environment. A place that offers an excellent and enjoyable curriculum that addresses the needs of each child and opens windows on a world outside their experience. A place where we expect to have personal responsibility for ourselves, our actions and our learning.

2. Parents/Carer Responsibilities

Parents/carers have a legal duty as well as a moral obligation to ensure that children of compulsory school age attend on a regular and full-time basis. Parents/carers should ensure that if their child is to be absent from school for any unavoidable reason (such as sickness) they should contact the school as soon as possible and before 9.00am on the first morning of absence. This may be done by telephone, in person or by email. The school should then be kept informed on a day to day basis.

3. Term Time Leave of Absence

We are always concerned about the amount of school time pupils miss as a result of family holidays. There is no entitlement to time off during term time. Leave of absence is only allowed at the discretion of the Executive Headteacher, in accordance with the school policy as agreed by the Board of Governors. Each request is judged on a case by case basis and is viewed in line with the school's Equal Opportunities Policy and the Human Rights Act.

It is our policy that:

- Only in exceptional circumstances will holidays be allowed, and then only up to a maximum of two weeks. (The cheaper cost of holidays in term time is not an acceptable reason for an application).
- a pupil's overall attendance pattern will be taken into consideration when a holiday request is received.
- The pupil's stage of education and progress will be taken into account when a holiday request is received.
- Parents wishing to apply for leave of absence for term-time holidays need to complete an application form well in advance and before booking. A request in writing should be submitted to the Executive Headteacher who will consider the request and advise of her decision, providing a leave of absence form for completion, if applicable. Further time than allowed will be unauthorised and parents risk their child being taken off the school roll.
- Time out of school should be minimized by timing holidays at either end of a school break.
- When an employer will only allow specific term-time dates for holidays, the parents will be asked for a letter from the employers stating this.
- Taking holidays in September should be avoided as it is very unsettling for a child to miss the start of the school year. Holidays in SATs week in Year 6 will not be authorised.
- If the school does not agree and you take your child on holiday, the absence will be unauthorised.
- You should remember that the more time a child misses from school, the more difficult it is for them to catch up with their work. Valuable learning time is lost. A good understanding of the work can only take place when the pupil is in the classroom. Children can also suffer socially when absent from their peers for any period of time.

4. Leavers

If a child is leaving other than at the end of Year 6, parents are asked to:

- Give the school full information about their plans, including date of move, new address (or at least the town you are moving to), name of new school and start date, when known, and reasons for moving.

- Confirm the school has a current mobile phone number.
- Take our school compliment slip so the new school can easily contact us and records be transferred.
- Let us know when you move.

5. Children Missing Education

When pupils leave and you have not given us the above information, and we cannot contact you, then your child is considered to be a Child Missing Education. This means that the local authority has a legal duty to carry out investigations, which will include liaising with Children's Services (formally Social Service), the police and other agencies, to try to track and locate your child.

By giving us the above information, unnecessary investigations can be avoided.

6. Unauthorised Absence

There are times when children are absent for reasons which are not permitted by law. These are known as "unauthorised absences". Examples of unauthorised absences are:

- Waiting on a delivery.
- Going for a family day out.
- Sleeping in after a late night.
- Going shopping or for a haircut.
- Because it is a child's birthday.
- Unapproved holidays
- Where there is no explanation for the absence or where the explanation or reason for the absence is considered unsatisfactory.

Unauthorised Absences have to be reported to the Local Authority. The School Attendance Service may contact you and consider taking legal action against you if your child has unauthorised absences.

7. School Responsibilities.

The school will record and monitor attendance in accordance with both the statutory requirements and with the principle that regular, uninterrupted attendance is vital to a child's educational progress.

Registers will be called twice daily at the start of each morning and afternoon session and will be kept open for a maximum of 30 minutes (in accordance with DFE guidelines). Any child arriving after the registers has been called will be recorded as late for that session. If a child arrives after the register has closed but their parent/carer provides them with a note detailing an acceptable reason to the school, they are marked as authorised absence for that session. If they are late and fail to provide an acceptable reason they will be marked as unauthorised absence for the whole of that session.

Teachers will complete the register in accordance with the guidance they have been given. The Executive Headteacher and Education Welfare Officer, will inspect registers periodically in order to ensure that they are being satisfactory maintained and to ensure that any potential attendance difficulties are identified at an early stage.

Should a class teacher have particular concerns about an individual child's attendance or punctuality, the Executive Headteacher should be informed. The school Office Manager will alert the Executive Headteacher if any child's attendance falls below the school average.

If a child is absent the class teacher will not enter any code in the register, leaving the office staff to select the correct code for that absence. The School Office Manager will aim to contact by telephone, any parent who has failed to inform school of the

reason for an absence (first day calling – the primary aim being to check on the safety of the child). The phone call should be done, wherever possible, by 10am.

Where children have an illness that means they will be away from school for over five days, the school will, if requested, send material home so that they can keep up with school work. If the absence is likely to continue for an extended period, or be a repetitive absence, such as necessary stays in hospital, the school will contact the Education Welfare Officer so that arrangement can be made for the child to be given tuition outside of school.

The Executive Headteacher will regularly review attendance data and will use this data during meetings with the School's Attendance Officer and Governing Body. These meetings will agree on attendance thresholds and targets and will identify respective tasks and follow-up actions for both the school and attendance service.

The school will employ a number of strategies to promote regular, punctual attendance:

- The Executive Headteacher and class teachers will communicate regularly with parents/cares on attendance matters.
- Children who have 99% or 100% attendance in any one term will receive an Excellence Certificate for attendance, awarded at a FAB Assembly.