

# St Mary's Catholic Primary School



## Attendance Policy

## **Missions Statement**

With Jesus, we learn together through faith and love.

## **Aims of the policy**

St. Mary's Catholic Primary school seeks to ensure that all its pupils receive a full-time education which maximises opportunities for each pupil to realise their true potential. For our children to gain the greatest benefit from their education it is vital that they attend regularly and your child should be at school, on time, every day the school is open unless the reason for the absence is unavoidable.

It is very important therefore that you make sure that your child attends regularly and this Policy sets out how together we will achieve this.

## **Why regular attendance is so important**

Poor attendance can lower a child's confidence, self-esteem, security at school and their academic success.

Any absence affects the pattern of a child's schooling and regular absence will seriously affect their learning. Any pupil's absence disrupts teaching routines so may affect the learning of others in the same class.

***Ensuring your child's regular attendance at school is your legal responsibility and permitting absence from school without a good reason creates an offence in law and may result in prosecution under the Education Act 1996.***

## **Promoting Regular Attendance**

Helping to create a pattern of regular attendance is everybody's responsibility - parents, pupils and all members of school staff.

*To help us all to focus on this we will:*

- Give you details on attendance in our regular newsletters.
- Report to you annually on how your child is performing in school, what their attendance and punctuality rate is and how this relates to their attainments.
- Celebrate good attendance by displaying individual and class achievements.
- Reward good or improving attendance.
- Run promotional events when parents, pupils and staff can work together on raising attendance levels across the school.
- Contact parents if the school has a concern about a child's attendance.
- Try to work with parents to improve their child's attendance.

## **Absence Procedures**

### **If your child is absent you must:**

- Contact us as soon as possible on the first day of absence.
- Send a note in or an e-mail on the first day they return with an explanation of the absence -you must do this even if you have already telephoned us.

### **If your child is absent we will:**

- Telephone or text you on the first day of absence if we have not heard from you.
- Invite you in to discuss the situation with our Headteacher if absences persist.
- Refer the matter to the Participation Key Worker if attendance moves below 90%.

The school will always support parents who have difficulty with writing letters.

If the parents do not inform the school about their child's absence the absence will be marked as unauthorised.

## **Understanding types of absence**

Every half-day absence from school has to be classified by the school (not by the parents), as either AUTHORISED or UNAUTHORISED. This is why information about the cause of any absence is always required, in writing. The Headteacher alone has the authority to authorise/unauthorise any absences.

Authorised absences are mornings or afternoons away from school for a good reason like illness, medical/dental appointments which inevitably fall in school time, emergencies or other unavoidable cause.

Unauthorised absences are those which the school does not consider reasonable and for which no "leave" has been given. This type of absence can lead to the Local Authority (Participation Team) using sanctions and/or legal proceedings. This includes:

- parents/carers keeping children off school unnecessarily,
- truancy before or during the school day,
- absences which have never been properly explained,
- children who arrive at school too late to get a mark,
- shopping, looking after other children or birthdays,
- day trips and holidays in term time which have not been agreed,
- excessive illness without medical evidence.

Whilst any child may be 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 your child is reluctant to attend, it is never better to cover up their absence or to give in to pressure to excuse them from attending. This gives the impression that attendance does not matter and usually makes things worse.

You can support your child by:

- Ensuring regular and early bedtimes.
- Helping with homework.
- Having uniform and equipment prepared the night before.
- Providing a healthy breakfast.
- Reporting any academic or social concerns promptly.
- Retaining open & honest communication with your child's school.
- Being positive about school (even if your own experience was less than positive).
- Encouraging your child to invite friends home for play dates.

**If a child is sick on either side of a school holiday the school may request medical evidence to show the child has been ill. This evidence may be a medical appointment card from the doctors.**

## **Lateness**

Poor punctuality is not acceptable. If your 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, this can be embarrassing for the child and can also encourage absence.

## **How we manage lateness**

The school day starts at **8:50 a.m.** and we expect your child to be in class at that time.

Registers are marked by **8:50 a.m. and 1:00 p.m.** and your child will receive a late mark if they are not present at those times.

At **9:20 a.m. and 1:15 p.m.** the registers will be closed. In accordance with the Regulations, if your 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 if the problem persists.

If your child has a persistent late record you will be asked to meet with the Assistant Headteacher or Headteacher to resolve the problem, but you can approach us at any time if you are having problems getting your child to school on time.

### **Leave during term time**

Taking holidays in term time will affect your child's schooling as much as any other absence and we expect parents to help us by not taking children away in school time.

Remember that any savings you think you may make by taking a holiday in school time are offset by the cost to your child's education.

There is **no** automatic entitlement in law to time off in school time to go on holiday.

1. It is widely known that the link between a student's attendance and attainment is irrefutable.
2. Early poor attendance habits follow through into secondary school and employment.
3. Graduates earn, on average, double that of young people that leave school with no qualifications.
4. All Hillingdon schools are encouraged to adopt a policy of not authorising leave unless for reasons the Head deems Exceptional.
5. The Head Teacher will meet personally with every family applying for Exceptional Leave to stress the importance of good school attendance habits and links between attendance and attainment.
6. Exceptional Leave will always be refused in Years 2 and 6.
7. Exceptional leave will always be refused when a student's attendance is less than 95%.
8. Exceptional leave should always be refused when school is aware of any truancy.
9. Exceptional leave should always be refused when requests are regular (annual) or when patterns become identifiable.
10. Reasons for Exceptional Leave should be logged on the student's record and shared as part of the transfer/transition process.

The Participation Team can issue Penalty Notices or initiate legal action for any unauthorised leave including 'exceptional leave' at the request of the Headteacher.

**A Penalty Notice will only be issued for the first offence. Any further offences will result in a summons being issued without a further Penalty Notice being issued.**

## **Collection at the End of the School Day**

If parents are late collecting their children then their children will wait outside the school office.

When parents come to collect their children they will have to sign them out and give a reason for being late. If a parent is going to be late they should phone the school and inform when they will be arriving and why they are late.

The school discourages late collection of children as we do not have staff that are free to supervise the children and it can be distressing for young children.

At the end of the school day, if children are not collected and their emergency contacts details are not current, the school may have to involve Social Services.

## **Persistent absenteeism (PA)**

A pupil becomes a 'persistent absentee' when they miss 10% or more schooling across the school year for whatever reason including being late. Absence at this level is doing considerable damage to any child's educational prospects and we need parent's fullest support and cooperation to tackle this. All PA cases are also automatically made known to the Participation Officer.

We monitor all absence thoroughly. Any case that is seen to have reached the PA mark or is at risk of moving towards that mark is given priority and you will be informed of this immediately.

PA pupils are tracked and monitored carefully through our pastoral system and we also combine this with academic mentoring where absence affects attainment.

All our PA pupils and their parents are subject to an Action Plan and review. The plan may include: allocation of additional support through a Mentor or an LSA, use of circle time, individual incentive programmes and participation in group activities around raising attendance. If internal interventions by the school are not successful in addressing the attendance concerns a referral the Participation Team may be necessary.

## **The Participation Officer**

Parents are expected to contact school at an early stage and to work with the staff in resolving any problems together. This is nearly always successful. If difficulties cannot be sorted out in this way, the school may refer the child to the Participation Officer from the Local Authority. They will also try to resolve the situation by agreement but, if other ways of trying to improve the child's attendance have failed and unauthorised absences persist, these Officers can use sanctions such as Penalty Notices or Summons to Court.

Penalty Notices are issued per parent/carer per child (currently £60 rising to £120 if unpaid after 21 days. If unpaid after 28 days a summons to Court will be issued for each unpaid Penalty Notice). The summons will be for the original offence of failing to ensure regular school attendance. The legislation is the Education Act 1996 sec. 444(1) and 444(1A).

**Parents that have previously been issued with Penalty Notices for their children's unauthorised absences, in the event of further unauthorised absences may be summoned to Court without another Penalty being issued.**

*"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 Participation Team themselves to ask for help or information. They are independent of the school and will give impartial advice. Their telephone number is 01895 250858 or [participationteam@hillingdon.gov.uk](mailto:participationteam@hillingdon.gov.uk)

## **School targets, project and special initiatives**

The school has targets to improve attendance and your child has an important part to play in meeting these targets.

The minimum level of attendance for this school is **95%** attendance and we will keep you updated regularly about progress to this level and how your child's attendance compares.

Our target is to achieve better than this however because we know that good attendance is the key to successful schooling and we believe our pupils can be amongst the best in Hillingdon.

Through the school year we monitor absences and punctuality to show us where improvements need to be made.

A school display is used to promote good attendance.

## **Telephone numbers**

There are times when we need to contact parents about different things, including absence, so we need to have your contact numbers at all times. So help us to help you and your child by making sure we always have up to date numbers – if we do not then something important may be missed. There will be regular checks on telephone numbers throughout the year. In addition to the main parent/carer's contact number we require at least one additional contact person.

## **Those people responsible for attendance matters are:**

Mrs Chavez, Attendance Officer

Mr Ellis, Assistant Headteacher

Mrs Chandarana, Assistant Headteacher

Miss Shevlin, Headteacher

Mr Cooper, Governor with responsibility for attendance

## 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.



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**I have read and understood the terms and conditions of the Attendance Policy at St Mary's Catholic Primary School. I understand it is updated annually and the policy can be found on the school website.**

**Pupils' Names:** \_\_\_\_\_ **Classes:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Parent/Carer's Name:** \_\_\_\_\_ **Sign:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Date:** \_\_\_\_\_