



St Mary's CE Primary School

Felsham Road

Putney

Attendance Policy

Vision: Delivering excellence, allowing all to flourish

Mission: Creating a culture of wonder, guided by Christian faith

Values: Endurance, Compassion, Thankfulness

November 2020

Introduction

This policy has been developed for use by school staff and governors to ensure best possible attendance outcomes for all pupils at the school. It is also intended to provide clear structures for attendance practice and to provide guidance for parents/carers and pupils.

The school staff and governors of St. Mary's CE Primary School, alongside the Diocese and LEA, believe that it is essential for all pupils to attend school regularly and avoid any absence. Any loss of time at school can adversely affect a child's attainment as all pupils benefit from regular school attendance.

To this end we will do all we can to encourage parent/carers to ensure that the children in their care achieve maximum possible attendance and that any problems that prevent full attendance are identified and acted on promptly.

Parents should be aware that the school day contains two sessions, morning and afternoon. For example, if a pupil is reported to have missed two sessions – it may mean they have missed a whole day's schooling, or the equivalent of two mornings; two afternoons; or a combination of a morning or an afternoon session.

Addendum – COVID-19 Pandemic:

Adjustments to the start and end of the school day

During the COVID-19 pandemic the start and end of the school day have been staggered to allow for social distancing and therefore children are arriving school at different times to their peers and in some cases their siblings in other classes. A 'soft start' to the day has also been introduced so that wherever possible siblings can arrive and leave together, reducing the number of times that parent/carers need to visit school at each end of the day. These timings are amended to respond to the ever changing situation. Parent/carers should refer to the current version of the daily procedures for timings.

During the Autumn Term 2020 the focus is on getting children into school. We appreciate that the staggered start times make it difficult for all children to arrive on time. The school gates close at 9.05am. Any child who enters school through the office or who is sent to the office after the register has been completed in class will receive an 'L' code.

If there has been no request for late attendance or an alternative reason for lateness is not provided, then the child will be registered as late (after registration closes – U) after 9.30am.

Any parent/carer who is anxious about their child attending school due to the current pandemic should discuss their concerns with the Head Teacher. Guidance states that all pupils and students should continue to attend education settings at all local COVID alert levels unless they are one of the very small number of pupils or students under paediatric or other specialist care and have been advised by their GP or clinician not to attend an education setting. Where this is the case,

medical evidence should be sent to the Head Teacher who will ensure learning is provided for children who are self-isolating.

Children who are absent from school due to having the virus or through having to self-isolate will be coded as an 'X' (COVID related absence). Remote education will be provided.

Children who have to self-isolate as a result of travel to an area where there are rules requiring self-isolation will be coded as a 'G' (unauthorised holiday). Learning will not be provided for children who are self-isolating for this reason. Parent/carers will provide evidence of the need for self-isolation.

Expectations

We expect that all pupils on roll will:

- Attend school on each day the school is open to pupils as long as they are fit and healthy enough to do so
- Arrive at registration sessions and lessons punctually:
 - The bell rings at 8:55am and the gate closes at 9am – after this time, pupils enter the school via the office and will be marked in the register as late (before registration closes – L)
 - After 9:15am, if there has been no request for late attendance or an alternative reason for lateness is not provided then the child will be registered as late (after registration closes – U)
- Attend all the required lessons and engage with the education being provided
- Arrive at school appropriately prepared for the day

We expect that all parents/carers will:

- Discuss promptly with the Head Teacher any problems that might deter their child from attending school
- Provide up to date contact details
- Ensure regular school attendance and be aware of their legal responsibilities
- Ensure that the child/children in their care arrive at school each day punctually and properly prepared for the school day
- Contact the school before 8:30am whenever their child/children is/are unable to attend school, on the first day and every subsequent day of his/her/their absence, and
- send a note/email detailing the reasons for absence
- **The school reserves the right to ask a parent to provide medical evidence where children are ill on the first and/or last days of term/half term.**
- Contact the school promptly whenever any problem occurs that may keep the child away from school
- Make written requests in advance for foreseen absences
- Collect their child promptly at the correct time

We expect that school staff will:

- Maintain at least three contact details for each family, at least one of which should be for a person or persons outside of the immediate family

- Keep regular and accurate records of attendance for all pupils, at least twice daily
- Monitor every pupil's attendance
- Contact parents as soon as possible (by 11:30am) on the first day of absence where no message has been received to explain the absence
- Follow up all unexplained absences to obtain notes giving a reason for the absence and the likely date of return
- Emphasise the importance of good attendance and take positive steps to encourage it
- Provide a welcoming atmosphere for children
- Provide a safe learning environment
- Provide a sympathetic response to any parent/carer/pupil's concerns
- Make initial enquiries of parents/carers of pupils who are not attending regularly, express their concern and clarify the school's and the LEA's expectations with regard to regular school attendance
- Ensure irregular or concerning patterns of attendance are identified early and steps are taken to improve attendance wherever possible
- Refer a parent who is repeatedly late to collect their child from school to Wandsworth Children's Services

Definition of authorised absence:

An absence is classified as authorised when the school has ascertained that a child has been away from school for a legitimate reason and the school has received notification from a parent/carer *e.g. if a child is unwell and the parent writes a note/email/telephones the school to explain the absence. Exceptional cases of religious observance or particular family circumstances may result in an authorised absence being granted by the school. Exceptional cases would be those in which recent or imminent bereavement is a factor.*

Only the school can authorise an absence. Parent/carers do not have this authority. Consequently, not all absences supported by parent/carers will be authorised by the school.

Definition of unauthorised absence

An absence is classified as unauthorised when a child is away from the school without the permission of **both** the school and the parent. Therefore, the absence is unauthorised if a child is away from school without good reason, even with the support of a parent/carer *e.g. holidays, if a parent/carer takes their child out of school to go shopping during school hours, allows a child to stay away from school to celebrate a family birthday or to go on a family outing.*

Holidays

Authorised leave will **not** be granted for holidays. The school holiday dates are published in advance and we strongly advise parents/carers to book their family holidays during the school holidays.

Should parent/carers choose to take their children out of school during term time then learning will not be provided for the period of the absence and normal class routines will apply.

Parents who choose to take a leave of absence which has **not** been authorised by the Head Teacher may receive a penalty notice from the Local Education Authority.

No parents/carers can demand leave of absence for their child/children as a right.

Encouraging Good Attendance

St. Mary's encourages regular attendance in the following ways:

- By providing a caring and welcoming learning environment
- By responding promptly to a child/parent's concerns about the school or other pupils
- By marking registers accurately and punctually during morning and afternoon registration. If pupils arrive at school after the close of the register without a written explanation, the lateness will be recorded as an unauthorised absence and the pupil's name recorded in the late book in case of a fire drill or emergency
- By monitoring pupils, informing parents/carers in writing of irregular attendance, arranging meetings with them if necessary and referring the family to the Education Welfare Service if the irregular attendance continues

Responding to Non-Attendance

When a pupil does not attend school we will respond in the following manner:

- On the first day of absence, if no note or telephone call is received from the parent/carer the school will endeavour to contact them by 11:30am that day. If the family are not contactable on the telephone, then all of their emergency contacts will be telephoned until a reason for absence has been found
- If emergency contacts are exhausted and there is still no reason for absence, then a home visit will be carried out
- If there is no response from telephone or home visit contact by the end of the first day, the school will make a referral to Wandsworth Children's Services
- Failure by parent/carers to comply with the expectations set by the Local Authority (LA) could result in further or legal action, an application for an Education Supervision Order, or court prosecution

Changing Schools

It is important that if families decide to send the child/children in their care to a different school they inform St. Mary's in writing as soon as possible. A pupil will not be removed from this school roll until the following information has been received in writing and the Wandsworth in-year transfer form or equivalent has been completed by the parent/carer and signed by the Head Teacher. The letter should contain:

- The reasons for sending the child/ren to a different school
- The date the pupil will be leaving this school and starting the next
- The address of the new school
- The new home address, if it is known/applicable

The pupil's school records will then be sent securely on to the new school as soon as possible. If a parent/carer appears to have removed their child from school or the child has completely stopped attending without providing the above information, the family will be referred to Wandsworth Children's Services immediately.

The same will apply to families transferring *into* St. Mary's. St. Mary's will contact the Head Teacher of the child/rens' current school (if it is a state maintained school in Wandsworth) as a matter of professional courtesy, before offers are made to any families on the register of continued interest.

School Organisation

In order for the School's Attendance Policy to be successful, every member of staff will make attendance a high priority and convey this to the pupils at all times. Parent/carers need to support these views in the home to ensure that children are receiving consistent messages about the value of education.

In addition to this, the School has the following responsibilities:

Head Teacher, Governors, Designated Safeguarding Leads and school staff with an overall responsibility for attendance to:

- Agree a whole school attendance policy
- Ensure that the registration procedures are carried out efficiently and that appropriate resources are provided
- Initiate a scheme for contacting parents on the first day of absence
- Consult and liaise closely with Children's Services on a regular basis and take responsibility for ensuring appropriate pupils are identified and referred without delay
- Ensure that key staff have time-tabled periods for liaison and follow-up work with Children's Services and appropriate access to attendance data
- Monitor and evaluate attendance and report to governors once a term
- Hold School Attendance Panels (SAPs) where appropriate
- Complete Penalty Notice Referral (PNR) forms and accompanying evidence where there are unauthorised absences.

Deputy Head Teachers to:

- Oversee the registration process and ensure that registers are completed accurately and punctually
- Liaise with the Children's Services when necessary
- Reinforce good practice at key stage meetings
- Share the class teacher's concerns regarding the early identification of disaffection with the Head Teacher

Class Teachers to:

- Complete registers accurately and punctually at least twice daily
- Inform the designated person in charge of overall attendance of concerns
- Monitor pupils whose attendance is of concern to ensure immediate follow up of any further absences from school or individual lessons
- Discuss absences with a pupil on their return to school to ascertain the reason behind the absence and minimise the likelihood of further absence

- Be alert to early signs of disaffection which could culminate in nonattendance and report these concerns as soon as possible to the Deputy Head Teachers

Administrative Staff to:

- Follow up any unexplained non-attendance
- Record all reasons for absences in the register
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- Follow up all non-attendance
- Take, record and log messages received around attendance and ensure they are shared with all relevant staff
- Write letters to parents regarding attendance
- Keep and maintain electronic late registers and draw any concerns to the Head Teacher’s attention
- Support the Head Teacher in monitoring attendance, preparing reports in SIMs etc.

Links with other School Policies and Practices

This policy links with and should be read in conjunction with a number of other school policies, practices and action plans including:

- Safeguarding and Child Protection
- The Home School Agreement
- Inclusion
- Data Protection
- Admissions

Consultation and Participation

The policy is reviewed biennially by the Pupil Committee of the governing board and following committee approval is formally adopted by the school.

Monitoring and Review

We will review this policy once every other year as well as responding to trends that suggest the need for earlier review.

Name/s and job title of reviewer	Date of review	Date of governor approval	Suggested date for review
Cheryl Payne Head Teacher	March 2014	March 2014	March 2015
Cheryl Payne Head Teacher	November 2017	November 2017	November 2018
Cheryl Payne Head Teacher	September 2018	October 2018	September 2020
Cheryl Payne Head Teacher	September 2020	November 2020	September 2022