



# **St Mary's R.C. Primary School Attendance Policy**

## **June 2020, reviewed Sep 2021, Sep 2023, August 2024**

### **Vision:**

We believe that every child is a gift from God, therefore, we aim to provide an outstanding and happy Catholic education which develops the 'whole child' whilst enabling them to reach their full potential.

### **Mission statement:**

**We love God** ... so we follow the examples of Jesus

**We love learning** ... so we always do our very best in everything

**We love each other** ... so we treat each other as we want to be treated

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## Statement of Intent

St. Mary's RC Primary School believes that in order to facilitate teaching and learning, good attendance is essential. Pupils cannot achieve their full potential if they do not regularly attend school.

We are committed to:

- following the framework set in Section 7 of the Education Act 1996 which states that:

*'the parent of every child of compulsory school age shall cause him / her to receive efficient full time education suitable:-*

*(a) to age, ability and aptitude and*

*(b) to any special educational needs he/ she may have either*

*by regular attendance at school or otherwise'.*

- promoting and modelling good attendance behaviour
- ensuring equality and fairness of treatment for all
- implementing our policies within the Disability Discrimination Act (2010)
- early intervention and working with other agencies to ensure the health and safety of our pupils
- rewarding regular attendance

## **1. Key Roles and Responsibilities**

- 1.1. The Governing Body has overall responsibility for the implementation of the Attendance Policy and procedures of St. Mary's RC Primary School.
- 1.2. The Governing Body has overall responsibility for ensuring that the Attendance Policy, as written, does not discriminate on any grounds, including but not limited to ethnicity/national origin, culture, religion, gender, disability or sexual orientation.
- 1.3. The Governing Body has responsibility for handling complaints regarding this Policy as outlined in the school's Complaints Policy.
- 1.4. The Headteacher will be responsible for the day-to-day implementation and management of the Attendance Policy and procedures of St. Mary's RC Primary School.
- 1.5. Staff, including Teachers, support staff and volunteers will be responsible for following the Attendance Policy and for ensuring pupils do so too. They will also be responsible for ensuring the Policy is implemented fairly and consistently.
- 1.6. Staff, including Teachers, support staff and volunteers will be responsible for modelling good attendance behaviour and implementing the agreed Policy.
- 1.7. Parents and carers will be expected to take responsibility for the attendance of their child/children during term-time.
- 1.8. Parents and carers will be expected to promote good attendance behaviour and ensure that pupils attend school every day.
- 1.9. Pupils are responsible for their own attendance at school and any agreed activities throughout the school year.

## **2. Definitions**

- 2.1. St. Mary's RC Primary School defines "absence" as either:
  - arrival at school after the register has closed
  - not attending school for any reason
- 2.2. St. Mary's RC Primary School defines an "authorised absence" as:
  - an absence for sickness for which the school has granted leave
  - medical or dental appointments which unavoidably fall during school time for which the school has granted leave
  - religious or cultural observances for which the school has granted leave
  - an absence due to a family emergency
- 2.3. St. Mary's RC Primary School defines an "unauthorised absence" as:
  - parents/carers keeping children off school unnecessarily or without reason
  - truancy before or during the school day
  - absences which have never been properly explained
  - arrival at school after the register has closed

- shopping, looking after other children or birthdays
- day trips and holidays in term time which have not been agreed
- leaving school for no reason during the day

2.4. St. Mary's RC Primary School defines "persistent absenteeism (PA)" as:

- missing 10 per cent (10%) or more of schooling across the year **for whatever reason**  
**Please note this was previously 15% but as of Sep 2015 is 10%.**

### 3. Training of Staff

- 3.1. At St. Mary's RC Primary School, we recognise that early intervention can prevent poor attendance. As such, Teachers will receive training in identifying potentially at risk pupils.
- 3.2. Teachers and support staff will receive regular and ongoing training as part of their development.

### 4. Pupil Expectations

- 4.1. Pupils will be expected to attend school every day and on time.

### 5. Absence Procedures

- 5.1. Parents/carers must contact the school as soon as possible on the first day of absence.
- 5.2. A phone call/text message/email will be made to the parent/carer of any child who has not reported their absence on the first day that they do not attend school.
- 5.3. In the case of persistent absence, arrangements will initially be made for parents to speak to the class Teacher/Headteacher.
- 5.4. Letters will be sent advising parents/carers of their child's persistent absence and requesting an improvement.
- 5.5. Strategies will be put in place to help and support the family to improve attendance, eg meetings with Headteacher, request for medical evidence for any further absence, support from school Family Worker etc.
- 5.6. If pupil absence drops below 90 per cent (90%), and following school support systems there is no improvement, the local Education Welfare Officer will be informed.

### 6. Contact Information

- 6.1. Parents/carers must provide accurate and up to date contact details.
- 6.2. Parents/carers are responsible for updating the school if the details change.

## **7. Education Welfare Officer**

- 7.1. If they are persistently absent with no signs of improvement, pupils will be referred to the local School Education Welfare Officer who will attempt to resolve the situation by agreement.
- 7.2. If the situation cannot be resolved and attendance does not improve, the local Education Welfare Officer has the power to issue sanctions such as prosecutions or penalty notices.

## **8. Lateness**

- 8.1. Punctuality is of the utmost importance and persistent lateness will not be tolerated.
- 8.2. The school day starts at 8:50am. Pupils should be in their classroom by 9:00am at the latest ready to start the day.
- 8.3. Registers are marked by 9:00am. Pupils will receive a late mark if they are not in their classroom by this time.
- 8.4 The register closes at 9:15am. Attendance after the register closes will receive a mark to show that they are on site and noting the time of arrival.

## **9. Term Time Leave**

- 9.1. At St. Mary's RC Primary School, our aim is to prepare pupils for their future lives and careers. With this in mind, we require parents/carers to observe the school holidays as prescribed.
- 9.2. Following the September 2013 amendment to The Education (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2006, Headteachers no longer have the discretion to authorise holidays during term time.
- 9.3. Leave during term time will only be authorised in exceptional circumstances, for example, bereavement or serious illness.
- 9.4. Any requests for leave during term time will be considered on an individual basis and the pupil's previous attendance record will be taken into account.
- 9.5. Requests for leave will not be granted in the following circumstances:
  - immediately before and during assessment periods
  - when a pupil's attendance record shows any unauthorised absence
  - where a pupil's authorised absence record is already above 10 per cent (10%) for any reason
- 9.6. If term time leave is not granted, taking a pupil out of school will be recorded as an unauthorised absence and may attract sanctions such as a Penalty Notice.

**Please see new information below regarding the government (Department for Education) introduction of a new national framework for penalty notices. The changes will come into effect for fines issued after 19 August 2024.**

The government (Department for Education) introduced a new national framework for penalty notices which parent/carers must pay if they take a child out of school during term time. The changes will come into effect for fines issued after 19 August 2024.

**How are parents fined?**

If parents/carers take a child, or children, out of school for an unauthorised absence, each parent will be issued with a penalty notice fine, for each absent child.

For example: two siblings absent for leave during term time would mean that each parent will receive two separate fines. **What will happen the first time?**

The first time a penalty notice is issued for term time leave or unauthorised absence the amount will be £160 per parent, per child when paid within 28 days. The amount is reduced to £80 per parent, per child if the fine is paid within 21 days.

**What will happen a second time? (within three years)**

If parents/carers take a child, or children out of school for a second time a penalty notice will be issued for £160 per parent, per child and paid within 28 days. There is no reduction for prompt payment. **How many days does the government count as an unauthorised absence?**

Penalty notice fines will be issued for term time leave or unauthorised absence of five or more days (10 sessions), in a 10 week school period. **What happens if parents don't pay the fine?**

If parents/carers do not pay the fine within the timescales, the council may refer the case to the Magistrates Court for non-school attendance proceedings under the Education Act 1996 and the Education and Inspections Act 2006.

**What happens after a third time? (within three years)**

If parents/carers are issued with a penalty notice a third time for either term time leave or unauthorised absence the case will be presented directly to the Magistrates' Court and a fine of up to £2,500 can be issued.

We urge parents/carers not to interrupt their children's schooling and talk to their head teacher before requesting leave of absence.

## **10. Monitoring**

10.1. St. Mary's RC Primary School monitors attendance and punctuality throughout the year.

10.2. St. Mary's RC Primary School attendance target is 96 per cent (96%).

10.3. Details of our absence levels can be found upon request from the office.

## **11. Religious Observances**

11.1. St. Mary's RC Primary School will take advice from local religious leaders of all faiths to establish the appropriate number of days required for religious festivals.

11.2. Parents must inform the school in advance if absences are required for days of religious observance.

## **12. Appointments**

- 12.1. As far as possible, parents/carers should attempt to book medical and dental appointments outside of school hours.
- 12.2. Where this is not possible, a note and appointment card should be sent to school.
- 12.3. If the appointment requires the pupil to leave during the school day, they must be signed out by a parent/carer.
- 12.4. Pupils must attend school before and after the appointment wherever possible.

## **13. Young Carers**

- 13.1. St. Mary's RC Primary School understands the difficulties that face young carers.
- 13.2. St. Mary's RC Primary School will endeavour to identify young carers at the earliest opportunity from enrolment at the school and throughout their time at the school.
- 13.3. St. Mary's RC Primary School takes a caring and flexible approach to the needs of young carers and each pupil will be examined on a case-by-case basis, involving other agencies if appropriate.

**Policy approved      Sep 2016, reviewed/amended 2020, reviewed 2023, August**

**Signed                      Chair of Governors**