



Roman Catholic Diocese of Hexham and
Newcastle

St Mary's RC Primary School: Attendance and Punctuality Policy



Excellence, inspired by Gospel values

Headteacher: Mr David Miller

Chair of Governors: Mrs Michelle Harris

Date: December 2018

Date for Review: December 2021

Attendance and Punctuality Policy

Rationale

At St Mary's RC Primary School we expect all children on roll to attend every day, when the school is in session, as long as they are fit and healthy enough to do so. We do all we can to encourage the children to attend, and to put in place appropriate procedures. We believe that the most important factor in promoting good attendance is development of positive attitudes towards school. To this end, we strive to make our school a happy and rewarding experience for all children. Although we highlight those children whose attendance is very good, we also make the best provision we can for those children who, for whatever reason, are prevented from coming to school.

Statement of intent

St. Mary's RC Primary 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:

Ensuring parent/carers follow the framework set in section 7 of the Education Act 1996, which states that:

"The parent/carer 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 in accordance with the Equality Act 2010.
- Early intervention and working with other agencies to ensure the health and safety of our pupils.
- Rewarding regular attendance.

1 - Legal framework

This policy has due regard to legislation and statutory guidance, including, but not limited to, the following:

- Education Act 1996
- Equality Act 2010
- Education (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2006 (As amended)
- Children (Performances and Activities) (England) Regulations 2014
- Children and Young Persons Act 1963

- DfE (2018) 'School attendance'
- DfE (2015) 'Child performance and activities licensing legislation in England'
- DfE (2018) 'Keeping children safe in education'
- DfE (2016) 'Children missing education'

This policy will be implemented in conjunction with the following school policies:

- Complaints Policy
- Assertive Discipline and Positive Behaviour Management Policy
- Keeping Children Safe in Education
- Children Missing Education

2 - Roles and responsibilities

The governing body has overall responsibility for:

- The implementation of the Attendance Policy and procedures of St. Mary's RC primary school.
- 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.
- Handling complaints regarding this policy as outlined in the school's Complaints Policy.
- Having regard to 'Keeping children safe in education' (2018) when making arrangements to safeguard and promote the welfare of children

The Headteacher is responsible for the day-to-day implementation and management of the Attendance Policy and procedures of the school, and distributing these to parent/carers.

Staff, including teachers, support staff and volunteers, are responsible for:

- Following the Attendance Policy and ensuring pupils do so too. They are also responsible for ensuring this policy is implemented fairly and consistently.
- Modelling good attendance behaviour.
- Using their professional judgement and knowledge of individual pupils to inform decisions as to whether any welfare concerns should be escalated.

Parent/carers are expected to take responsibility for the attendance of their child during term-time.

Parent/carers are expected to promote good attendance behaviour and ensure that their child attends school every day.

3 - Definitions

For the purpose of this policy, the school defines:

- **"absence"** as:
 - Arrival at school after the register has closed.
 - Not attending school for any reason.
- 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.
 - Participation in sporting events may be considered.
- An **"unauthorised absence"** as:
 - Keeping children off school unnecessarily or without reason.
 - Absences without explanation.
 - Arrival at school after the register has closed (without notice).
 - Absence due to shopping, looking after other children or birthdays.
 - Absence due to day trips or holidays in term-time which have not been agreed.
 - Leaving school for no explainable reason during the day.
- **"Persistent absenteeism"** as:
 - Missing more than 10 percent of schooling (at any point) across the year for any reason.

4 - Attendance monitoring procedures

Parent/carers are required to contact the school as soon as possible on the first day of their child's absence in person, by telephone, first day response text or in person providing a reason for the absence.

A phone call will be made, or a text message sent to the parent/carer of any child who has not reported their child's absence on the first day that they do not attend school.

The school will inform the Local Authority, on a termly basis, of the details of pupils who fail to attend regularly, or who have missed 10 school sessions (5 days) or more without permission.

If a pupil's attendance drops below 96%, parents/carers will be informed via a letter and a meeting may be requested.

Where a pupil has not returned to school for 10 days after an authorised absence, or is absent from school without authorisation for 20 consecutive school days, the school will remove the pupil from the admissions register if the school and the Local Authority have failed to establish the whereabouts of the child after making reasonable enquiries.

5 - Persistently absent

If a pupil is persistently absent e.g. their attendance falls below 90%, the matter will be referred to the Headteacher and who will attempt to resolve the situation through a parent/carer agreement.

If the situation cannot be resolved and attendance does not improve, the Headteacher will report to the Local Authority, who has the power to issue sanctions such as prosecutions or penalty notices to parent/carers.

6 - Attendance register

Designated staff members will take the attendance register at the start of each school day and at the start of the afternoon session. This register will record whether pupils are:

- Present.
- Absent.
- Attending an approved educational visit.
- Unable to attend due to exceptional circumstances.

The school will use the national attendance codes to ensure attendance and absence are monitored and recorded in a consistent way. The following codes will be used:

- / = Present in the morning
- \ = Present in the afternoon
- L = Late arrival before the register has closed
- C = Authorised absence
- E = Excluded but no alternative provision made
- H = Authorised holiday
- I = Illness
- M = Medical or dental appointments
- R = Religious observance
- B = Off-site education activity
- G = Unauthorised holiday
- = Unauthorised absence
- U = Arrived after registration closed
- N = Reason not yet provided
- X = Not required to be in school
- T = Gypsy, Roma and Traveller absence
- V = Education visit or trip
- P = Participating in a supervised sporting activity*
- D = Dual registered - at another educational establishment
- Y = Exceptional circumstances
- Z = Pupil not on admission register

Every entry received into the attendance register will be preserved for three years.

*All requests for absence due to a sporting activity must be made via a letter (and signed) by the Club and / or organisation organising the activity.

7 - Lateness

Punctuality is of the utmost importance.

The school day starts at 9:00am (although pupils are encouraged to be in school by 8:45am). Pupils should be in their classroom no later than 9:00am.

Registers must be complete no later than 9:05am. Pupils will receive a late mark if they are not in their classroom by this time.

After lunch, registers are marked by 13:05pm. Pupils will receive a late mark if they are not in their classroom by this time.

Being late to school can be really upsetting for children; if they miss the input at the start of the lesson, or miss the instructions for the activity, they can panic or feel 'lost'. The first 10 minutes is also a time for prayers, sharing news and basic skills work - another important part of school life. Equally being 10 minutes late each day is the same as only having 4 English lessons that week instead of 5.

8 - Term-time leave

At St. Mary's RC primary, our aim is to prepare pupils for their future lives and careers. With this in mind, we require parent/carers to observe the school holidays as prescribed.

The Headteacher is unable to authorise holidays during term-time.

Any requests for leave during term-time will be considered on an individual basis.

If parent/carers take their child out of school during term-time without authorisation from the Headteacher, they may be subject to sanctions such as penalty fines.

A parent/carer requesting a leave of absence during term time should make the application in writing at least four weeks in advance using *appendix 2* of this policy (Please ensure you have read the notes on the back page of the form)

The Headteacher may invite parent/carers in to school to discuss the application if there is reason to believe the absence may have a detrimental impact on the child's education.

The school will reply to all applications stating whether or not the absence has been agreed and outlining the pupils' current attendance.

If a parent/carer removes their child from school without requesting a leave of absence or without authorisation from the Headteacher, the parent/carer will be informed that a referral is being made to the Local Authority requesting a Penalty Notice be issued.

9 - Penalty Notice for unauthorised leave of absence

The Local Authority may issue a Penalty Notice to any parent/carer if:-

- A pupil is absent for 10 or more half-day sessions (five school days) of unauthorised absence during any 100 possible school sessions - these do not need to be consecutive;
- Persistently late (coded U) for up to 10 sessions (five days) after the register has been closed;
- Absent for any public examinations of which dates are published in advance
- Absent for any formal school assessments, tests or examinations where the dates have been published in advance;

Consideration will be given to cases where the issuing of a Penalty Notice would conflict with other intervention strategies in place or other sanctions already being processed. If, after a warning letter has been issued, there is sufficient irregular attendance to merit a Penalty Notice, it must be issued unless there are exceptional reasons against taking this action.

10 - Truancy

- Truancy means any absence of part, or all, of one or more days from school, during which the school has not been notified of the cause behind such absence.
- All pupils are expected to be in their classes by 9:00am and 13:00pm, where the teacher will record the attendance.
- Any pupil with permission to leave the school during the day must be signed out at the school office and sign back in again on their return.
- If truancy is suspected, the Headteacher will contact the parent/carer in order to assess the reasons behind the child not attending school.

The following procedures will be taken in the event of a truancy:

- In the first instance, a letter of warning will be sent to the parent/carers of the pupil, stating that any future occurrences could result in further action being taken.
- If any further truancy occurs, then the school will consider issuing a penalty notice.

11 - Religious observances

The school will take advice from local religious leaders of all faiths to establish the appropriate number of days of absence required for religious festivals.

Parent/carers are required to inform the school in advance if absences are required for days of religious observance.

12 - Appointments

As far as possible, parent/carers are encouraged to book medical and dental appointments outside of school hours.

If the appointment requires the pupil to leave during the school day, they will be signed out at the school office by a parent/carer.

Pupils will attend school before and after the appointment wherever possible.

In all instances, proof of appointment will be requested.

13 - Young carers

The school understands the difficulties that face young carers.

The school will endeavour to identify young carers at the earliest opportunity from enrolment at the school and throughout their time at the school.

The 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.

14 - Performances/ activities/ sports

Under Section 37 of the Children and Young Persons Act 1963, all pupils engaging in performances/activities (whether they, or another person, receives payment or not), which require them to be absent from school, are required to obtain a licence from the Local Authority which authorises their absence(s).

Where a pupil requests to be absent for a performance or activity, the individual or organisation responsible for organising, producing or running the activity/performance is required to request a licence from the Local Authority.

Where an application does not specify dates, and it has been approved by the Local Authority, it is at the discretion of the Headteacher to authorise the leave of absence for each day.

The organiser of the performance/activity has the right to appeal the decision to a magistrates' court, including its refusal, revocation or variation, and against any condition under which a licence is granted or an approval is given.

Attendance targets

The school sets attendance targets each year; the attendance targets are then agreed with the LA Education Development Partner (EDP) as well. The targets are challenging yet realistic, and based on attendance figures achieved in previous years. The school considers carefully the attendance figures for other similar schools when setting its own targets.

Low attendance figures mean 'requires improvement' or even 'special measures' therefore, Ofsted use attendance as a limiting factor. This means that no matter how hard the parents, staff and governors work to improve the school, we cannot be judged as good or outstanding without good attendance.

Monitoring and Review

- The school monitors attendance and punctuality regularly throughout the year.
- Leave of absence request forms can be found in *appendix 2* (Please ensure you read the notes on the back page)
- Any changes made to this policy will be communicated to all members of staff and parent/carers.

The Attendance and Punctuality Policy will be reviewed on a triennial basis.
This policy was reviewed by Governors on: Thursday 13th December 2018

Signed:

Name: (Headteacher) Date:

Name: (Chair of Governors) Date:

Appendix 1:

Attendance Monitoring Procedures

St. Mary's RC Primary school has adopted the following attendance monitoring procedures, to ensure that pupils' attendance meets the expected standard, and effective intervention is provided where pupils' attendance falls below the standard:

1. The Headteacher will receive a weekly attendance summary detailing those pupils whose attendance has fallen below (or is at risk of falling below) 96% to date.
2. If parents/carers do not contact the school office on the first day of absence, the school's office staff will contact parent/carers. 'N' codes are used to indicate that the pupil is absent for a reason not yet provided; these N codes are reported to the Headteacher/ attendance officer daily. If a reason for absence cannot be obtained, the absence will be considered unauthorised.
3. If a pupil's attendance is at risk of falling below 96%, the Headteacher may seek to discuss this with parent/carers, if necessary.
4. Half-Termly attendance warning letters are sent out to all parents of children whose attendance is less than 96%; this is to keep all parents informed.
5. Persistent absence means an attendance of below 90%. If a pupil's attendance is below or at risk of falling below 90%, a letter will be sent home explaining that the pupil's attendance is now being monitored, and outlining the possible consequences.
6. The pupil's attendance will be monitored for two weeks and, if attendance does not improve after this time, parent/carers will be required to attend a meeting in school with the Headteacher/ classroom teacher to set targets for their child. If parent/carers are unwilling to cooperate, or are genuinely unable to attend, a referral may be required to the local authority attendance officers who will then conduct a home visit.
7. After the two-week monitoring period, and if targets are met, parent/carers will be informed of the improving attendance. Regular monitoring and communication with the parent/carers will continue until attendance stabilises.
8. If targets are not met, the Headteacher and a minimum of 2 governors will meet to assess all the information available; at this point the school may decide to make a referral to the Local Authority.

Appendix 2:



Application for Leave of Absence during Term Time
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Pupil Details			
Name:		DoB:	
Address:			
Class/ Form:			

Leave of Absence Request Details			
Start date of requested leave:		End date:	
Return to school date:		No of days:	
What are the <u>exceptional circumstances</u> for your leave of absence request that you wish the school to consider?			
Name of parent/ carer (print):			
Signature:		Date:	
Name of parent/ carer (print):			
Signature:		Date:	

For School Use		
Current attendance:		
Previous LOA this academic year:		
Does the LOA request time coincide with SATS / other examination periods:		
Any mitigating / aggravating circumstances (including any ongoing medical issues):		
Child's current / potential level of attainment:		
Is the LOA approved?	YES	NO
If YES - Number of days to be authorised for this LOA application:		
Signature of Headteacher:		Date:
Register Code to be used for this LOA		

St Mary's Roman Catholic Primary School

REQUEST FOR LEAVE OF ABSENCE DURING TERM TIME

Important information for Parent/carers

Parents are required under the Education Act (1996) to ensure their child attends school regularly. As a parent/carer, you can demonstrate your commitment to your child's education by not allowing your child to miss school for anything other than an exceptional and unavoidable reason. There is no automatic right to take a child out of school during term time but the law does allow Headteachers to consider individual requests to authorise a leave of absence in exceptional circumstances.

However, the Headteacher must be satisfied that the exceptional circumstances justify an authorised absence and it is entirely the responsibility of the parent submitting the request to **provide sufficient information and evidence** in order to establish this fact.

The request for an authorised leave of absence must be made at least 2 weeks in advance and the Headteacher may contact the parent/carer to discuss the request before a decision is made. If the circumstances relating to this request are considered exceptional and the absence is authorised, the expectation is that child's attendance will be of a satisfactory level both prior to and after the date covered by the request.

If the request for a leave of absence is refused and the absence is recorded as unauthorised, the Headteacher may refer the matter to the Local Authority and a Penalty Notice may be issued.

A Penalty Notice is a fine of £60 if paid within 21 days of receipt, rising to £120 if the notice is paid after 21 days but within 28 days.

If the penalty is not paid in full by the end of the 28 day period the Local Authority may prosecute for the offence to which the notice applies.

Where there is more than one child, each parent may be issued with a Penalty Notice in respect of each child.