

ST MARY'S CATHOLIC PRIMARY SCHOOL



Attendance and Punctuality Policy

Reviewed: Autumn 2025
Next Review: Autumn 2026

Mission Statement

"Learning together in Faith and Love"

St Mary's is a vibrant Catholic Primary School in North Kensington with a strong sense of community. We are a school that welcomes all children from the ages of 3 to 11 years. Our school serves the Roman Catholic Parish of Our Lady of the Holy Souls, Kensal New Town and other local parishes.

The aims of our schools are:

- To promote Christian values where children live, learn and celebrate the teaching of Christ.
- To provide a curriculum which is broad, balanced and meaningful and where children can experience enjoyment and fulfilment.
- To promote the highest standards of teaching and learning within the framework of the National Curriculum
- To develop in each child a sense of achievement, value and self-worth and to achieve the standards of which they are capable.
- To help our children acquire the skills of independent learning and make sufficiently rapid progress.
- To provide a safe and secure environment where children feel valued, and where they respect, help and care for each other.
- To involve parents in all aspects of their child's education and promote good home/school partnership.
- To develop in our children awareness and respect for the different cultures and religions represented in society and their responsibility to the wider community.
- To foster the continuing development of staff, parents and governors in serving the community.

St. Mary's Values- these are the values that underpin all areas of our school community:

- **Respect**
- **Kindness**
- **Tolerance**
- **Honesty**
- **Responsibility (for ourselves and our world)**
- **Co-operation**

Aim of the Attendance Policy:

This attendance policy ensures that all staff and governors in our school are fully aware of and clear about the actions necessary to promote good attendance.

Through this policy, we aim to:

- Improve pupils' achievement by ensure high levels of attendance and punctuality.
- Achieve a minimum of 96% for all pupils, apart from those with chronic health issues.
- Create an ethos in which good attendance and punctuality are recognised as the norm and seen to be valued by the school.
- Raise awareness of parents, carers and pupils of the importance of uninterrupted attendance and punctuality at every stage of a child's education.
- Ensure that all parents and carers understand the legal framework for attendance in schools.
- Ensure that our policy applies to Nursery and Reception age children in order to promote good habits at an early age.
- Work in partnership with pupils, parents, staff and the Local Authority Early Help Service so that all pupils realise their potential, unhindered by unnecessary absence.
- Promote a positive and welcoming atmosphere in which pupils feel safe, secure and valued, and encourage in pupils a sense of their own responsibility.
- Establish a pattern of monitoring attendance and ensure consistency in recognising achievement and dealing with difficulties.
- Recognise the key role of all staff in promoting good attendance.

Working together to improve attendance

To successfully achieve good attendance and remove any barriers to attendance, it is important for schools, home and local authorities to work together in a supportive partnership.

The school understands there may be barriers to some pupils attending regularly and that these can be complex. The school will work with parents to remove these and to facilitate support. However, when formal support is not successful, or when parents do not engage with the school over poor attendance, the school is required to formalise support (which might involve the local authority partners) or to enforce statutory interventions such as penalty notices to protect the pupil's right to education.

Types of Absence

Pupils are expected to attend school for the entire duration of the academic year, unless there is an exceptional reason for absence. There are two main categories of absence:

- Authorised Absence: when the school has accepted the explanation offered as satisfactory justification for the absence, or given approval in advance for such an absence;
- Unauthorised Absence: when the school has not received a satisfactory reason for absence or has not approved a child's absence from school after a request for a parent/carer.

Expectations & Responsibility of the School

It is the School's responsibility:

- To promote good attendance and punctuality.
- To build strong relationships and work jointly with families, listening to and understanding barriers to attendance and working in partnership with families to remove them.
- To communicate clearly the attendance and punctuality procedures and policies of the school to all families.
- To maintain appropriate attendance and punctuality data and have appropriate registration processes in place which are consistently administered.
- To ensure registers are taken twice a day: at the start of the morning and afternoon sessions.
- To follow up absences and lateness if parent/carers have not communicated reasons to the school.
- To inform parent/carers what constitutes authorised and unauthorised absences.
- To monitor attendance and punctuality at least termly and inform parents via letters and meetings where this falls below expected standards.
- To liaise with Early Help and other outside organisations where a child's attendance is causing concern and support their work with families.
- To share information and work collaboratively with other schools in the area, local authorities and other partners where a pupil's absence is a risk of becoming persistent or severe.
- To report attendance and punctuality data to the Governing Body and explain steps taken to improve both measures.

Expectations & Responsibility of Parents/Carers

The law requires that children of compulsory age (between 5 and 16) must receive a full time education whether in a school setting or otherwise. Under Section 7 of the Education Act 1996, parent/carers have a duty to:

'cause (the child) to receive full time education suitable to his/her age, ability and aptitude and to any special educational needs he or she may have.'

Children who are persistently late or absent soon fall behind with their learning. Children who are absent from school frequently develop large gaps in their learning which will affect their progress and their ability to meet age related learning expectations. A child whose attendance drops to 90% each year will, over their time at primary school, have missed two whole terms of learning.

Punctuality

Punctuality is crucial. Arriving late to school causes disruption to that individual's learning and to that of the other pupils in the class. It is paramount therefore that all pupils arrive at school on time.

It is the parent/carer's responsibility:

- To ensure that their children arrive to school on time. There is a 'soft start' and gates open at 8:45am in the morning.
- Registration takes place at 9.00 am and pupils who arrive after 9.00am will be recorded as late to school.
- Registers close at 9.30 am and after this, lateness is recorded as an unauthorised absence.
- Persistent lateness by a pupil will be dealt with initially between home and school but may be referred to the LA Attendance Team.
- Pupil's attendance and punctuality is recorded on their report and will be passed on to future schools as necessary.
- By law, schools must take a morning and afternoon register and record the attendance or absence of every pupil.

Absences

It is the parent/carer's responsibility:

- To notify the school on the first day of absence before 9:00am or as soon as possible. Parents can report an absence by telephoning the school office, emailing.
- To provide medical evidence, when requested, on the child's return to school.
- To ensure siblings of any child who is absent are in school. Any absence for siblings will be unauthorised.
- To ensure that as far as possible, medical appointments are arranged for outside school hours. Where this is not possible, parents are expected to provide evidence of the appointment in advance, and the child should attend school before/after the appointment.
- To avoid removing children for parent/carers' own appointments.
- To make alternative arrangements for dropping off or collecting their child if they are unable to bring them to school. Where this does not happen, the absence will be unauthorised.

- To liaise with the school as soon as possible regarding any specific issues that might cause absence or lateness, e.g. a sick parent/carer.
- Parents/carers of children for whom we do not know the reason for absence will be contacted after 9:30am.

Illness/Medical absences

In addition to the points above, if a child is repeatedly absent due to illness, the school may request medical evidence for further absences. This can take the form of a GP appointment card, a consultant letter, a copy of a prescription etc.

The school will automatically request medical evidence for any illness absence taken immediately before or after a school holiday.

Procedures for Exceptional Leave

Parents/carers are expected to take their children on holiday during the school holidays to minimise the impact of missing education. Any absence during term time impacts on the child's education and progress. The school is not permitted to approve term-time holidays except in genuinely exceptional circumstances, and are to consider each application for a leave of absence individually before making a decision.

There are 190 school days (380 sessions) a year which your child is expected to attend. There are also 71 days (142 sessions) of school holidays. This is over 13 calendar weeks. Parents should ensure that their holidays are taken during this period. The school holiday dates are published on our school website and leave of absence **will not** be authorised during term time (except in the circumstances outlined below). INSET days are published as soon as the school has agreed these but may be subject to change.

If there are exceptional circumstances as to why a child needs to be absent during term time, parents/carers must complete a leave of absence request form in advance of the trip (at least two weeks prior). The school will consider these requests on a case-by-case basis, and they will use their discretion whilst applying government recommendations. Parents/carers should not assume that requests will be authorised and, therefore, flights and other arrangements should not be booked until the leave has been agreed.

It is the parent/carer's responsibility:

- To obtain a leave of absence form from the school office.
- To complete and submit the form in advance of the period of absence (ideally two weeks prior).

If parents/carers decide to take a holiday without the school's authorisation, the child's absences will be marked as unauthorised. **Fixed Penalty Notices will be issued by the Local Authority for unauthorised holiday absence during term time. This fine is payable at £80 per child, per parent.**

Unauthorised Absence – More formal support

If a pupil has 10 sessions unauthorised absence within a 10-week period, the pupil's parents or carers will receive a 'Notice to Improve' notification via email or letter. Each day of absence is recorded as two sessions (morning and afternoon) so 10 sessions equates to 5 days. Unauthorised absences include:

- Unauthorised absence (where there is no reasonable circumstance for the absence taking place)
- Arriving late after the register has closed,
- Holidays taken during term time,
- Any combination of these.

The 10 weeks can span different terms, different academic years and even different school settings. For instance, if your child misses 3 days of school for a holiday in September (6 sessions) and is late after the register closes on 4 occasions (4 sessions) between September and October, a parent can be issued a 'Notice to Improve' notification. Local authority partners such as the statutory attendance officer may also become involved.

The 'Notice to Improve' notification will set out the expectations that will help to improve attendance such as 'no further unauthorised absences in 3 months'. Should the expectations not be met in the improvement period, then a Penalty Notice may be issued by the local authority to each parent/carer responsible for the child. For unauthorised holiday-related absence that includes 10 sessions in 10 weeks, Penalty Notice can be issued without a 'Notice to Improve' notification being issued. Also any unauthorised absences of 10% or more will be referred to Early Help.

Unexplained Absence

When a child is repeatedly absent and no satisfactory reason is given, the parent/carers will be investigated and may be liable for prosecution and/or a fine from the Local Authority.

Regular attendance monitoring is carried out by the school. Children who have repeated unauthorised absences, holidays or otherwise, will be contacted by Early Help following a referral by the school and may be invited in to an attendance meeting to discuss absences and any appropriate support.

Penalty Notices

Penalty notices can be issued when parents take children on term-time holidays and when notices to improve have not resulted in improved attendance.

A maximum of two penalty notices within a rolling three-year period. The details are as follows:

- First offence - The first time a Penalty Notice is issued, the amount will be £80 per parent, per child if paid within 21 days. This increases to £160 per parent, per

child if paid after day 21, until day 28. Any non-payment of the Penalty Notice may be referred to the Magistrates Court.

- Second offence (within 3 years) - the second time a Penalty Notice is issued, the amount will be £160 per parent, per child if paid within 28 days. Any non-payment of the Penalty Notice may be referred to the Magistrates Court.
- Third offence and any further offences (within 3 years) - the third time an offence is committed, a Penalty Notice will not be issued, and the case may be presented straight to the Magistrates' Court under s.444 of the Education Act (1996) or other legal interventions considered. The Magistrates' Court can order fines up to £2500 per parent, per child.

Procedures for Monitoring Attendance and Punctuality

The Attendance team meet regularly to identify pupils whose attendance is below the threshold and less than 90% as well as children who have been late or absent more than 10 times in a 10 week period.

- Parent/Carers of children with attendance below 85% will be asked to attend a meeting with representatives from the Attendance team. An Attendance Action Plan will be agreed to monitor and improve the pupil's attendance. A referral to Early Help may also be made.
- Parent/Carers of children with attendance less than 90% may also be asked to a meeting depending on circumstances and evidence received from parents
- If attendance does not improve, a 'Notice to Improve' will be issued.
- If attendance still does not improve, a referral will be made to the Local Authority and fines will be issued.

Role of the Early Help Service & Local Authority

- To investigate absence that exceeds more than 10%, and to hold meetings with these parents as required.
- To investigate any unexplained absence which exceeds more than 15 consecutive days.
- To ensure parents are aware of their legal duty under the Education Act to ensure their children attend school.
- To refer cases to the Local Authority for prosecution where persistent absenteeism has not improved despite thorough intervention and support from the school and Early Help Practitioner.
- To report accurate whole school and individual attendance data when required.

Children Missing in Education

If a child is absent (unexplained) for at least 20 consecutive days, the family will be referred as a CME case for the Local Authority.

Persistent Latecomers

Children who repeatedly attend school late after 9:00 am will be brought to the attention of the Head of School. Warning letters will be issued to the parents/carers of these children.

Parents/carers should note that children who arrive late after 9:30 am are given a 'U' code, which is the equivalent of an unauthorised absence and this will affect the child's attendance figures. A Notice to improve or a Fixed Penalty Notice may be issued to parents/carers whose child has 10 sessions unauthorised absence within a 10-week period.

Promoting Good Attendance

We celebrate good attendance throughout our School by

- By sharing % attendance on the weekly newsletter
- By awarding classes in FS / KS1 / KS2 who achieve greater than 95% attendance at weekly Friday assembly
- By awarding individual children who demonstrate improving attendance
- By awarding individual children who get 100% attendance for the whole academic year (September to July)
- By rewarding the 100% A & P with special events (3 term per school calendar year).

Leaving During the School Day

During school hours the school staff are legally in loco parentis and therefore must know where the pupils are during the school day.

- Pupils are not allowed to leave the premises without prior permission from the school.
- Parents are requested to **confirm in writing**, by letter or email, the reason for any planned absence, the time of leaving, the expected return time.
- Pupils must be signed out on leaving the school and be signed back in on their return.
- Where a pupil is being collected from the school, parents are to report to the school office before the pupil is allowed to leave the site.
- If a pupil leaves the school site without permission their parents will be contacted. *Should the school be unable to make contact with the family it may be appropriate, in certain circumstances, to contact the Police and register the pupils as a missing person.*

Changing Schools

It is important that if families decide to send their child to a different school that they inform St Mary's Catholic Primary School as soon as possible.

A pupil will not be removed from the school roll until the following information has been received and investigated:

- The date the pupil will be leaving the school and starting the next
- The address of the new school
- A new home address if appropriate

The pupil's school records will then be sent to the new school. In the event that the school has not been informed of the above information, the family will be referred to the local authority Tracking Officer and Education Welfare.