



# Attendance Policy

Last Reviewed: July 2020

Next Review: July 2022

Lead Member of staff	Acting Principal
Introduction	<p>Regular and punctual attendance is of paramount importance in ensuring that all pupils and students have full access to the curriculum. Valuable learning time is lost when pupils and students are absent or late.</p> <p>St Mary's School and College has a duty to promote attendance and equally, parents and carers have a duty to make sure that their pupils and students attend. St Mary's School and College staff are committed to working in partnership with parents and carers as the best way to ensure as high a level of attendance as possible.</p> <p>This policy should be read in conjunction with the 'Missing or Absconding Students Policy'</p>
The Aim of this policy	<p>To convey and work with pupils/students and their parents or carers to educate them on the importance of regular and punctual attendance.</p> <p>To provide clear procedures involving pupils/students, parents or carers relating to school attendance.</p>
Procedures and Practices	<p>For a child to reach their full educational achievement a high level of school attendance is essential. Any pupil or student who is absent from school at the morning or afternoon registration period must have their absence recorded as being authorised, unauthorised or as an approved educational activity (attendance out of school). Only the Acting Principal or a member of staff acting on their behalf can authorise a pupil's or student's absence. If there is no known reason for the absence at registration, then the absence must be recorded in the first instance as unauthorised.</p> <p><b>Lateness</b></p> <p>Morning registration will take place at the start of school at 8.45 am. The registers will remain open for 15 minutes. In cases where the absence at registration was, for example, to attend an early morning medical appointment, the appropriate authorised absence code will be entered.</p> <p>The afternoon registration will be at 13.15 The registers will close at 13.30</p> <p><b>Practice</b></p> <p>Good attendance is important, because:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• statistics show a direct link between under-achievement and attendance below 95%</li> <li>• regular attenders make better progress, both socially and academically</li> <li>• regular attenders find school routines, school work and friendships easier to cope with</li> </ul>

- regular attenders find learning more satisfying
- regular attenders are more successful in transferring between primary school, secondary school, and higher education, employment or training

### **Monitoring Procedure**

A member of the senior leadership team (SLT) will oversee, direct and coordinate the school's work in promoting regular and improved attendance and will ensure the attendance policy is consistently applied throughout the school. This person will also ensure that attendance is recorded accurately and analysed regularly. They will ensure that attendance issues are identified at an early stage and that support is put in place to deal with any difficulties.

If absence is frequent or continuous, except where a child is clearly unwell and there is supporting information to explain the absence, staff will discuss this with parents/carers to establish the reasons for their child's absence. If a number of absences occur and there is no supporting information available, staff will seek to ensure that this is provided, prior to recording the absences as authorised.

A note or explanation from a pupil's/student's home does not mean an absence becomes authorised. The decision whether or not to authorise an absence will always rest with the school. The Acting Principal or a delegated member of staff will make the decision.

The foundation for good attendance is a strong partnership between the school, parents/carers and their child. To help focus on this, the school will:

- provide information on all matters related to attendance in the school's regular/weekly home school newsletter/website / termly report
- report to parents on how their 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 through class competitions, certificates and outings/ events
- set targets for the school and for classes for attendance

### **Responsibilities of classroom staff**

- It is a legal requirement for staff to complete the class register. Our expectation is that where there is a teacher present in the classroom, they are responsible for completing the register. Failure of the teacher or classroom staff to take the register may lead to disciplinary action being taken.

- Ensure that all students are registered accurately using the electronic register and that it is completed on time and accurately
- Promote and reward good attendance with students at all appropriate opportunities
- Liaise with the attendance leader on matters of attendance and punctuality
- Communicate any concerns or underlying problems that may account for a child's absence
- Support pupils and students with absence to engage with their learning once they are back in school.

**Pupils and students will be supported and encouraged to:**

- Attend every day unless they are ill or have an authorised absence
- Arrive in school on time
- Go to all their registrations and lessons on time

**Responsibilities of parents/carers**

*Ensuring your child's regular attendance at school is a parent/carer's legal responsibility (Section 444 of the 1996 Education Act) and permitting absence from school that is not authorised by the school creates an offence in law.*

Parents will:

- inform the school on the first day of absence with the reason for absence (either by email or phone) before **9:00am**. Parents also need to continue to inform the school on each subsequent day of absence.
- discuss with the tutor/class teacher any planned absences well in advance and complete an absence request form.
- support the school with their child in aiming for 100% attendance each year
- make sure that any absence is clearly accounted for by telephone or email on the first and subsequent days of absence.
- avoid taking their child out of school for non-urgent medical or dental appointments
- only request leave of absence if it is for an exceptional circumstance

**What to do if your child is absent?**

A child not attending school is considered a **safeguarding** matter. This is why information about the cause of any absence is always required.

**Day One:**

If a child is absent parents/carers must inform the school by **9.00am** on the first day of absence by telephone or email with an explanation of the absence.

If the school has not heard from parents/carers by the close of registers at **9.00am** the school will telephone parents/carers. This is because the school has a duty to ensure a child's safety as well as their regular school attendance.

Parents and carers should continue to inform the school on each subsequent absence.

The school's administration team will follow up any unexplained absences with a telephone call to parents/carers. They will then advise key staff of the reason provided. The team will also record this in the class registers. The Acting Principal or a member of SLT with responsibility for attendance will be informed of any unexplained absence on the same day that it is registered. We cannot accept verbal messages from parents/carers via transport escorts. A written letter in a sealed envelope may be provided via transport escorts. The note or letter must be signed and dated by a parent/carer.

### **Day Three:**

If a child is absent for two consecutive days and the school has not heard from parents/carers despite further attempts by email and phone, then on the third day of absence the school will complete a home visit. If the pupil/student resides in another Local Authority area, we will contact that area's social care team. The school will make all reasonable enquiries to establish contact with parents/carers and the child, including making enquiries to known friends and wider family.

If a child is not seen and contact has not been established with any of the named parents/carers, after three days of absence the school is required to start child missing in education procedures as set down by County Council guidance.

### **Day Ten:**

The school has a legal duty to report the absence of any pupil/student who is absent without an explanation for ten consecutive days. If the child is not seen and contact has not been established with the named parent/carer, then the local authority is notified that the child is at risk of missing from education. Children's Services staff will visit the last known address and alert key services to locate the child. If the school has any reasonable concern about the wellbeing of the child, the Day Ten process may be started before day ten is reached.

After three weeks' maximum, if a pupil/student is still absent with no reason why from parents/carers or any uncertainty around their absence, the Acting Principal must contact the 'child missing in education lead at the relevant Local Authority'. Because St Mary's is

geographically within East Sussex, we will also inform the ESCC Child missing in education (CME) lead. If a pupil/student is placed at the school by a different Local Authority, the school will subsequently contact the pupil's/student's LA under guidance of East Sussex CME lead

### **Lateness/punctuality**

It is important to be on time at the start of the morning and afternoon school sessions and to lessons.

The school day begins at **8.45am** and all pupils and students are expected to be in school at this time. Morning registration is at **8.45am** and it closes at **9.00am**.

All lateness is recorded daily. A pupil/student is considered late if they arrive after **9:15am** for morning registration and after **13:30pm** for afternoon registration. (This information will be required for legal reasons should a prosecution for non-attendance or lateness be necessary). Any pupil or student arriving after these times will be marked as having an unauthorised absence unless there is an acceptable explanation i.e. school transport was delayed, in which case the appropriate code will be used.

Arrival after the close of registration will be marked as **unauthorised absence** and coded **L** in line with East Sussex County Council and Department of Education guidance. This mark shows them to be on site, but is legally recorded as an absence.

If a pupil/student is late due to a medical appointment, they will receive an **authorised absence**, coded **M**. Where possible, doctors and dentist's appointments are to be made outside of school hours or during school holidays.

If a pupil/student travels by bus/taxi to school and the transport is late this will be recorded as **authorised**.

### **Absence requests**

We ask that parents and carers inform school in advance, via the submission of an Absence Request form of any medical and dental appointments or requests for absence.

All requests will be passed to the Acting Principal to consider approval.

A copy of the absence request and any related documentation will be stored in the pupil's/student's file.

### **Leave of Absence in Term Time**

Families are strongly encouraged not to request to take their child out of school for family holidays or events during term time. Any absence request in term time will be reviewed by the Acting Principal and will only be approved in exceptional circumstances. Benefits of cost, convenience or availability do not constitute exceptional circumstances.

Requests for leave of absence during term time should be made to the Acting Principal in writing **at least 15 school days prior** to the requested absence date. Any request will be judged on a case-by-case basis.

- Should a request not be agreed and subsequently the child is absent from school, the absence will be recorded as unauthorised. On the pupil's/student's return, appropriate action will be taken by the school, up to and including requesting the child's Local Authority issues a fixed penalty notice (where 10 sessions have been missed) or takes further action against the parents/carers of the child who has been absent.

### **Continued or persistence absence**

Absence is defined as 'Persistent Absence' if attendance falls below 90% (e.g. they miss 10% of school, which equates to three weeks of absence) or more across the school year.

Absence for whatever reason disadvantages a child by creating gaps in their learning. Research shows these gaps affect attainment when attendance falls below 95%.

As such, the school monitors all absence thoroughly and all attendance data is shared with the local authority and the Department for Education.

If a child has had absence and their attendance level is falling towards or below 90%, we will contact parents/carers and invite them in to discuss the situation. Persistence absence is monitored at the end of every 'long term' (3x annually). A meeting will be organised to review and address the issue. All persistent absentee pupils/students and their parents/carers will be subject to an Attendance Plan or home school contract.

The school has a legal duty to publish its absence figures to parents and carers and to promote attendance. Equally, parents/carers have a duty to make sure that their child attends. School staff are committed to working with parents and carers as the best way to ensure as high a level of attendance as possible.

The school will refer the matter to the relevant Local Authorities' Attendance Legal Panels if absence is unauthorised and falls below 90%

	<p><b>Identified pupils/students with specific medical, therapy or Special Educational needs, who have a high level of absence, will be supported by the following strategies:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Weekly monitoring of attendance and absence</li> <li>• Recording absence as authorised using the appropriate code</li> <li>• Working with the Local Authority to record such absences as authorised to reflect attendance is as good as can be expected for these pupils/students and the school</li> <li>• Provide home visits where appropriate</li> <li>• In exceptional circumstances, we recognise that some pupils/students are not 'available for learning' and work with the LA and other agencies to allocate appropriate provision which may not be within our school</li> </ul>
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Persons with particular responsibilities	Acting Principal SENCO
Monitoring and Evaluation	Consultant CEO Governors SLT Ofsted S20 Inspections
Additional statutory guidance	Useful links:  Ofsted: <a href="http://www.ofsted.gov.uk">http://www.ofsted.gov.uk</a> DfE: <a href="http://www.education.gov.uk">http://www.education.gov.uk</a>
Definitions / Acronyms	Authorised means authorised by the school. Unauthorised means not authorised by the school CME – Child Missing Education