

St Mary's Catholic Primary School

Evesham

## School Attendance Policy Statement and Guidelines



Policy updated: January 2018

To be reviewed: January 2020

'Through God's Love  
We Will Achieve'

### ***Our Mission Statement***

*Our school recognises all children as unique gifts from God and is committed to developing the whole child founded on the teachings of Christ.*

### ***Our Aims***

- \* *To recognise that the Gospel Values of Jesus Christ are at the heart of our whole school community.*
- \* *To ensure prayer and worship are living and meaningful experiences, so that each child can grow in their own relationship with God and each other.*
- \* *To ensure a Catholic ethos is brought to all our teaching and learning as provide a full, balanced and rewarding curriculum, which enables all our children to achieve their potential.*
- \* *To develop links between home, school, parish and the wider world community, which will enable the Catholic faith to become an important part in the children's lives.*

*Our mission statement, supported by the school's aims, provides the foundation upon which the faith of our community (both children and adults) is nurtured and developed.*

### **Rationale**

This policy has been updated to comply with the 'School Attendance: Statutory Guidelines' document published by the DfE on 30<sup>th</sup> August 2013.

Attendance at school up to the age of 16 is a legal requirement. Irregular attendance seriously disrupts continuity of learning, undermines educational progress and can lead to underachievement and low attainment.

### **Registration**

School begins at 8.55am. Children should arrive in the playground between 8.45 and 8.55am. Our afternoon sessions begin at 1.15 pm for Key Stage 1 and 1.30 pm for Key Stage 2.

The attendance register for each class is completed at the beginning of each morning and afternoon session by the class teacher, and then returned to the office. The attendance codes, as shown on the list kept in each register, should be used to indicate attendance or absence, and any reasons for absence provided by parents.

Registration closes at 9.10 am for the morning session and 1.20 pm or 1.35 pm for the afternoon sessions. If a pupil arrives in the morning after registers close, parents should take them directly to the school office, where the register will be amended to read absent/late.

Parents are reminded that if a child arrives in school after the register has closed, and an acceptable explanation is not forthcoming, the pupil has to be recorded as 'unauthorised absent' for that session.

### **Following up absences**

The Office Administrator or Office Assistant notes down all absent children. They will check holiday forms and then will contact parents on any day when a pupil is absent without explanation (i.e. first day contact). Parents should telephone school with reasons for absence, on the first day of absence; the class teacher will be notified. This call and reason for absence is noted. Every effort will be made to contact home.

When the pupil returns to school, parents should provide an explanation for absence.

If a pupil is absent with a regular sickness/illness then the Head Teacher should be notified. These absences could be regular odd days or longer spells.

### **Monitoring Attendance**

The Head Teacher monitors attendance regularly and analyses the data.

The Office Administrator or Office Assistant are responsible for identifying on registers where no reasons have been given by parents for a pupil's absence. This will be done weekly. In this case, parents will be notified and will be asked for reasons for absence. Authorising absence is the Head Teacher's responsibility. Teachers will also inform the Head Teacher of any concerns they may have regarding punctuality or attendance. The Governing Body analyse the attendance/punctuality on a regular basis and the Head Teacher reports on progress made towards the attendance target agreed with the LA.

Where school attendance problems occur we aim to resolve these problems by collaborative working between the parent, the school and the LA. The school works very closely with the LA. The school 'buy in' the services of an Education Welfare Officer, who attends school regularly and meets with the Head Teacher to discuss attendance. It is the EWO who advises the course of action that should be taken in the case of non-attendance or lateness. Other agencies such as Children Services should be engaged where appropriate.

### **Attendance/Punctuality Problems**

Once alerted to a problem the Head Teacher will arrange to meet with parents and discuss issues. An action plan will be formulated and follow up arranged.

### **Aauthorized and Unauthorized Absence**

An absence is authorized by a written note, a telephone message or a verbal message.

Parents are asked always to send a written note.

All letters explaining the reason for absence should be kept in a special folder inside the register for the remainder of the school year. The Head Teacher uses the following criteria when deciding whether or not to authorize an absence.

Absence can be **authorized** if:

- Illness
- Hospital, doctor, dentist or other medical related appointment
- A family emergency under compassionate reasons
- A special family event

Schools, not parents, authorise absence. Schools must adhere to the Department for Education Guidelines in authorising absence. Unauthorised absence is of particular concern to the school. The figures are collected and published.

**Unauthorised absences** are those where children are kept away from school without a valid reason; also when parents or carers do not let the school know why their child is away, it is counted as an unauthorised absence.

Children should not be kept away from school:

- To go shopping
- To visit relatives
- Because of getting up late
- Because they don't feel like going to school
- To look after other members of the family
- For holidays

### **Requests for Absence**

Parents do not have the right to remove their children from school in term time for a holiday. The Head Teacher will only authorize absence from school in exceptional circumstances, for example religious observance or absence on compassionate grounds.

The Head Teacher may authorize only part of an absence, for example, two days of a week's absence to attend a family Baptism may be authorized. This allows time to attend the special event and additional travel time only.

If parents remove a child from school during term time they must accept that the child will miss the work being covered. We do not routinely give work for a child to take on holiday, or save work for a child to do on their return.

If parents take their child from school for a holiday, their child's absence will be recorded as unauthorized in the class register. If any child's attendance continues to be an issue, having taken term-time holiday, further action may be taken, including Penalty Notice fines. The Local Authority have legal powers to use parenting contracts, parenting orders and penalty notices to address poor attendance.

### **Strategies for Promoting Good Attendance**

At St. Mary's we offer an environment in which all pupils feel valued and welcomed. We will endeavour to demonstrate to pupils that their presence in school is important and that they will be missed if they are absent or late, and that follow-up action will be taken.

We will:

- Provide a broad and varied curriculum for all pupils
- Provide a safe, secure and welcoming environment
- Ensure parents and families are reminded of the importance of good attendance (via newsletters, school website, the prospectus, parent curriculum evenings and consultation evenings etc)
- Highlight examples of good attendance (e.g. individual pupils, whole classes or key stages) each week, on the 'St. Mary's Attendance Stars' board in the school hall

- Present certificates at special assemblies at the end of each term, with prizes and metal attendance badges given to those pupils who achieve 100% attendance for an academic year (badges are then worn by those pupils the following year)
- Organize a special event at the end of the summer term for all 100% attending pupils
- Award the 'Attendance Cup' to the highest attending class during an academic year
- Liaise regularly with the Education Welfare Officer in order to address any attendance concerns
- Regularly discuss attendance matters with the Governing Body

**Appendices:**

1. Request for absence form

**Application for leave of absence for the purposes of a family event, religious observance or an extended trip overseas during term time:**

**St. Mary's Catholic Primary School, Evesham**

The School's Policy

The school considers that all absences from school will disrupt a child's continuity of learning. As a consequence it believes that absences should be kept to a minimum in order to maximise your child's potential.

What the Law says

Regulations make it clear that parents do not have any right or entitlement to take a child out of school for the purposes of a term-time holiday.

It is the decision of the Head Teacher as to what might constitute exceptional circumstances and each request for term-time absence will be considered on an individual basis. A Head Teacher will not accept as an exceptional circumstance the fact that a holiday is cheaper during term-time.

An exceptional circumstance is much more likely to be a one-off, unique situation such as a parent, grandparent or other close relative is seriously ill and the holiday proposed is likely to be the last such holiday; or there may have been a significant trauma in the family recently and the Head teacher might consider that an immediate holiday might enable the child concerned to better deal with the situation; or the holiday might be a unique, one-off never-to-be-repeated occasion which can only take place at the time requested.

The Head Teacher will also look very carefully at the child's previous attendance record and should he or she have concerns, for example, should the child's average attendance be below 95%, it is highly unlikely that the Head teacher will agree to authorise any further absence.

Other factors will include the likely impact on the child's education, particularly in terms of continuity of learning; **there is a strong link between the amount of absence in a school and the qualifications that its pupils achieve**; whether the absence falls during a year in which the child is due to take a public examination or be involved in Government tests (e.g. SATs), at the beginning of the academic year etc.

Applying for Leave of Absence for Holidays during Term Time

Applications should be made using the reverse side of this form at least 6 weeks in advance of the proposed holiday dates. (Parents are advised to apply for leave of absence before they confirm their holiday arrangements.) **Parents will be informed of the outcome of their application for leave of absence.**

**Application for leave of absence for the purposes of a family event, religious observance or an extended trip overseas during term time:**

<b>Part 1- School to complete this section before sending home</b>		
Child(ren)'s name		Class/Form
<p>Level of attendance during last academic year ....., current academic year .....</p> <p>Child(ren) will /will not * be sitting examinations/SATs * during this year. (* delete as appropriate).</p> <p>Other relevant information e.g. out of school learning planned/ presentation day .....</p>		
<b>Part 2- Parent/Carer to complete</b>		
<b>To: The Head teacher/Chair of Governors of St. Mary's Catholic Primary School</b>		
Dates for which leave of absence is requested		
From:  (first day of absence)	To:  (last day of absence)	Number of School Days:
Destination:		
<p><b>Please attach a letter, explaining why you are requesting a period of absence from school for your child. No absence will be authorised without a supporting letter of explanation.</b></p> <p>Date: ..... Signed ..... (Parent/Carer)</p>		
<b>Part 3 – To be complete by Head teacher (or nominated person)</b>		
<p><b>Leave of absence authorised/ not authorised /part-authorized (number of days authorized: _____)</b>  <b>Reasons given:</b></p>    <p><b>You may wish to make an appointment to discuss this decision with the Head teacher.</b></p> <p>Date: ..... Signed .....</p>		