

# St Mary & St Paul's Primary School



## Attendance Policy

September 2023

**“Life in all its fullness through Learning and  
Love”**

**St Mary & St Paul's CE Primary School**  
**Attendance Policy**

**Statement**

- 1.1 St Mary & St Paul's CE Primary School 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. Our Vision is "Life in all its fullness through Learning and Love" and therefore attendance is essential. 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 the development of positive attitudes towards school. To this end, we strive to make our school a happy and rewarding experience for all children. We will also make the best provision we can for those children who, for whatever reason, are prevented from coming to school.
- 1.2 Once a child is enrolled at school, parents have a legal responsibility to ensure that their child attends every day, unless prevented from doing so by illness or other exceptional circumstances for which absence is authorised by the school.
- 1.3 Under the Education (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2006, the governing body are responsible for making sure the school keeps an attendance register that records which pupils are present at the start of the morning session and during the afternoon session. This register will also indicate whether an absence was 'authorised' or 'unauthorised' and provide reasons why the child is absent.
- 1.4 Definition of 'authorised absence':
  - an absence is classified as authorised when the school has ascertained that a child has been away from school for a legitimate reason and the school has received notification from a parent or guardian. For example, if a child has been unwell, the parent writes a note or telephones the school to explain the absence. Medical appointments will be considered as an authorised absence as the child is not present in school. If parents are able to present the child at the school office before the arranged appointment, they will be able to receive their attendance mark for the session. Exceptional cases of religious observances or particular family circumstances may also result in an authorised absence being granted by the school.
  - only the school can make an absence authorised. Parents and carers do not have this authority. Consequently, not all absences supported by parents and carers will be classified as authorised. For example, if a parent takes a child out of school to go shopping during school hours, or allows a child to stay away from school to celebrate a family birthday or go on a family outing, this will not mean it is an authorised absence.

- an absence is classified as unauthorised when a child is away from school without the permission of both the school and a parent.
- therefore, the absence is unauthorised if a child is away from school without good reason, even with the support of a parent.

## **2 Aims and objectives**

2.1 Our aims and objectives in relation to pupils' attendance are to:

- maximise attendance so that all pupils can gain full access to our curriculum and be enabled to reach their full academic potential and achieve a high level of personal and social well-being;
- ensure that pupils are safe and that their whereabouts are known;
- eliminate unauthorised absence;
- ensure that parents and carers understand clearly when it is appropriate to keep their children off school and when this constitutes unauthorised absence;
- ensure that school staff and parents and carers are familiar with and adhere to our procedures for registering pupils' attendance, and reporting, recording and following up a pupil's absence or lateness;
- ensure that pupils and their parents and carers understand the importance of regular and consistent attendance;
- make clear to parents and carers the consequences of failing to ensure that their children attend school;
- ensure that children enjoy coming to school and are highly motivated to attend regularly and consistently.
- reward children who are good attenders.

### **Registration Times**

Nursery (am) : 8.40am (session finishes at 11.40am)  
 Reception - Year 6 : 8.50 am (gates open at 8.45am)

Nursery (pm) : 12.25pm (session finishes at 3.25pm)  
 Reception – Year 2 : 1.00pm  
 Years 3-6 : Varied starts to the afternoon session

A child will be marked late if they arrive in school after the register has been taken in class – 9.00am. After this time the child will be marked as 'late'.

If the child arrives in school after a further 45 minutes (9.45am) then this is classed as 'late after the register has closed' and this is considered to be an unauthorised absence.

### **3 Procedure if a child is absent**

- 3.1 When a child is absent unexpectedly, the class teacher will record the absence in the register, and will inform the school office staff, who will endeavour to contact a parent or carer.

The school encourages parents to telephone the school to inform them of their child's absence through illness, on the first morning of absence. This prevents school office staff having to make numerous phone calls and provides reassurance of a child's safety in the event that parents cannot be contacted by telephone, for any reason. Parents should not use e-mail or text messaging to inform the school of a child's absence.

- 3.2 When the child returns to school, a note should be brought from a parent or carer to explain the absence, and confirm its duration, even if the parent telephoned the school on the first day of absence.
- 3.3 A note may be sent to the school prior to the day of absence, e.g. if a child has an unavoidable medical appointment.
- 3.4 If there is any doubt about the whereabouts of a child, the class teacher should take immediate action by notifying the school office. The school will then be in contact straight away with the parent or guardian, in order to check on the safety of the child.
- 3.5 The school learning mentor / family support worker has an open door policy and is available to talk to parents / carers about any attendance concerns that they may have.
- 3.6 The school will follow Knowsley's attendance procedures (see Appendix A) and will support the family in encouraging the child / children to come back to school.

### **4 Requests for leave of absence for a child**

- 4.1 We believe that children need to be in school for all sessions, so that they can make the most progress possible and do not miss out on crucial learning which may put them at an educational disadvantage. However, we do understand that there are exceptional circumstances in which a parent may legitimately request leave of absence for a child to attend, for example, a special religious event (such exceptional circumstances would not include normal events such as birthdays or regular religious ceremonies). We expect parents and carers to contact the school to obtain authorisation at least a week in advance.

#### **4.2 Term Time Holidays**

Parents and carers have no statutory right to withdraw their children from school for a family holiday. Children are required to attend school for 190 days in a school year, leaving 175 days of weekends and school holidays.

Parents and carers should always endeavour to arrange family holidays when their children are not required to be in school. Obviously, there are cases of exceptional circumstances where requests will be authorised but

generally a holiday will be an unauthorised leave of absence. However, where a child has attendance above 98% that academic year and in the last 2 terms - no fixed penalty (EPN) will be issued for one holiday up to five consecutive days. As a school we appreciate what benefits a holiday might have educationally but only when school attendance is taken as a priority.

- 4.3 Our school considers pupils' continuous attendance at school to be so essential for their academic achievement that all holidays are now considered to be unauthorised absences. Both the school and the Local Authority take the issue of school attendance very seriously and parents should be aware that where leave of absence is taken during term time without permission they may be issued with Education Penalty Notice fines of £60 (rising to £120) per parent per child by the Local Authority. Parents must notify school of they are intending to remove a child for a family holiday, following which the headteacher, in consultation with the Chair of the Governing Body, will be notified if required.
- 4.4 Any child who has to leave school early for a specific reason (such as a medical appointment) should be signed in or out as appropriate, in order that the pupils on site can be monitored in case of an emergency.
- 4.5 In an emergency, all registers and the sign in / out book should be taken outside for a pupil count.
- 4.6 Once pupils have entered the school building, they must not leave the premises unless their parents have been notified and given permission.
- 4.7 After registration, registers should be sent to the office. Whereby they are kept readily available in case of an emergency.

#### **Long-term absence**

- 5.1 When children have an illness that means they will be away from school for over five days, the school will do all it can to send work home, so that, where possible, the child can keep in touch with the learning going on in their class.

#### **6 Repeated unauthorised absences**

- 6.1 The school will contact the parent or carer of any child who has an unauthorised absence. If a child has a repeated number of unauthorised absences, the parents or carers will be asked to visit the school to discuss the reasons. If the situation does not improve, the school will then contact the LA support services, who will visit the home and seek to ensure that the parents or carers understand the seriousness of the situation.
- 6.2 The governors, supported by the LA, reserve the right to consider taking legal action, possibly resulting in a fixed penalty fine, against any parents or carers who repeatedly fail to accept their responsibility for sending their children to school on a regular basis.
- 6.3 The school will also contact parents or carers of any child who is repeatedly late for school as this has an impact on their learning. Regular absence from

the start of lessons means that the child misses the teaching input which is vital to learning.

## **7 Rewards for good attendance**

- 7.1 While the school would always seek to avoid disadvantaging children who, through illness or other circumstances, have been unavoidably absent from school, we do, on a half termly basis give attendance incentive rewards or certificates for children with 100 per cent attendance over a term or a whole school year, in order to maintain a focus on the importance of regular attendance.

## **8 Attendance targets**

- 8.1 The school sets attendance targets each year. These are agreed by the senior staff and governors as part of our annual target-setting process. The targets are challenging yet realistic, and based on attendance figures achieved in previous years. The school considers carefully the attendance figures in line with national expectation when setting its own targets. Our target is for every child to be in school for 100% of the time.

## **9 Children who are away from school for a period of days**

- 9.1 The school will attempt to make contact with all children who are away from school on a daily basis.
- 9.2 Should the child not be seen after a period of 5 days then a home visit will be arranged by two members of the pastoral team.
- 9.3 Should the school not be able to contact the parents / carers of the child they will complete the following actions
- try all emergency contact numbers to see if other family member, neighbours or friends have had recent sight of the child and family
  - attempted to speak to neighbours
  - speak to other agencies or settings known to the family in case they have been in contact
  - make a number of visits including at different times of the day to include meal times
  - leave a letter requesting the parents/carers contact school
  - consider whether there is information to believe the child and family have simply moved away and the child is deemed 'CME'
  - discuss any concerns with Children's Services
- 9.4 If the school are still unable to make contact with the family and see the child then a referral to the Police should be made and a request for a welfare check to be completed.

## **10 Monitoring and review**

- 10.1 It is the responsibility of the governing body to monitor overall attendance, and they will request an annual report from the headteacher. The governing body also has the responsibility for this policy, and for seeing that it is

carried out. The governors will therefore examine closely the information provided to them, and seek to ensure that our attendance figures are as high as they can be.

- 10.2 The school will keep accurate attendance records on file for a minimum period of three years.
- 10.3 Class teachers will be responsible for monitoring attendance in their class, and for following up absences in the appropriate way. If there is concern about a child's absence, they will contact the school office immediately. If there is a longer-term general worry about the attendance of a particular child, this will be reported to the headteacher, who will contact the parents or carers.
- 10.4 Attendance will be monitored by the family support worker, deputy head teacher and headteacher.
- 10.5 This policy will be reviewed every three years by the governing body or sooner if necessary.

Signed : The Governing Body

Date : September 2023

## Appendix A

### **St Mary & St Paul's CE Primary** **Attendance Strategy (in line with Knowsley Attendance Service Strategy)** **'Every Day Counts'**

#### **Level 1 – Universal (School)**

- Step 1 – Phone calls to parents (first day response)
- Step 2 – Stage 1 letter (see appendix 1)
- Step 3 – Initial meeting (this may take place at the gate / needs to be a face to face conversation)
- Step 4 – Home visit (if the child is not attending at all – 2 members of staff)
- Step 5 – Stage 2 letter / Offer of Early Help (see appendix 2)
- Step 6 – If attendance hasn't improved over the period of 6 weeks, then refer to SAS

#### **Level 2 – School Attendance Service (SLA states that we have 2 hours per week)**

- Step 1 – If a caseload family (all siblings will be included – referring school's allocation). SAS to set up an Attendance Improvement Meeting (AIM) with action plan for family to follow. If this improves over 3 weeks they can come off the list and another family referred. If not, continue to support for 3 weeks.

#### **Level 3 – Family First**

- Step 1 – If attendance hasn't improved over 6 weeks at Level 2 the family are to be referred to Family First for additional support

#### **Level 4 – Social Care (Educational Neglect)**

#### **Educational Penalty Notice (EPN)**

- Sitting alongside this system is the EPN – the LA have recognised that fining parents doesn't seem to have a great deal of impact. Further reviews to follow.

- 6 sessions unauthorised – initial letter
- 10 sessions unauthorised – EPN notice issued

#### **Letters**

- There are also other letters to be send to families if attendance improves