



ATTENDANCE POLICY

ST MARY'S LEWISHAM CE PRIMARY SCHOOL

Our Vision

To be a learning community that promotes the unique gifts, wellbeing and potential of every person. Our work is founded on the life and teaching of Jesus Christ, building on His message of equality, peace and justice, guided by His words '*As I have loved you, so you must love one another*' (John 13:34).

St Mary's CE Primary School: Attendance Policy

This policy reflects the visions and aims of St Mary's CE school by encouraging staff, parents and children to maximise the learning experience in order to allow all children to reach their full potential. This policy aims to provide clear procedures and expectations for children, parents and staff relating to school attendance.

Overall aims for our pupils

- Regular and punctual attendance is of paramount importance in ensuring that children have full access to the curriculum. In order to achieve this, students should have an attendance of at least 95%.
- Children should be at school, on time, every day that the school is open. This means the child must arrive before 9am in order to avoid a late mark. The register closes at 9:30 am and so, if a child arrives after this time, they will receive an unauthorised absence mark.
- The only acceptable circumstances for lateness and absence would be illness and 'exceptional circumstances'. In this situation it is the responsibility of the parent to phone the school at the earliest possible time to share this information.

Definitions

- **Unauthorised absence** - an absence which the school does not consider reasonable such as: Parents keeping the child off school unnecessarily, truancy before or during the school day, absences which have not been properly explained and children who arrive too late to school to receive a mark (after 9:30am).
- **Authorised absence** - mornings or afternoons away from school for a reason such as genuine illness or other unavoidable causes (which can be explained through evidence from parents).

Legal Responsibility

Parent(s) have the legal responsibility to secure their child full time education which meets their needs.

The school have the legal responsibility to register attendance and notify the Local Authority of absence from school.

The local authority have the legal responsibility to provide education and enforce attendance.

Parental engagement

Parents are expected to understand and adhere to the following:

- Permitting absence from the school without a good reason is an offence by the parent. There is a legal responsibility for parents to ensure their child attends school regularly.
- If your child is reluctant to attend school (showing signs of school refusal) then it is imperative to discuss this issue with the school. Trying to cover up concerns and excuse them from attending to avoid the issue will only make the situation more difficult. Please make the school your first call in this instance and we will work in partnership to support you.
- If any issues with regards to attendance (e.g. family matters) occur, it is expected for the parent to contact the school at the earliest possible stage and to work with staff to resolve any barriers to the child's learning.
- On the first day of your child's absence you are expected to make contact by 9:15am. This will then need to be followed up by a written note (a verbal message will not be accepted) on their return to school, which will detail a clear reason for the absence.
- There is no entitlement for parents to remove their children in term time for holidays. (Please see below for further information regarding holidays in term time.)
- If your child is leaving the school you are expected to keep the school informed. (Please see below for further information regarding Child Missing Education).

Emergency Contact & First Day Calling Procedures

The school will make checks to ascertain the whereabouts of a child where a pupil has unauthorised absence for 5 consecutive school days with no contact from the parent/carer.

The following checks will be completed before referring to the local authority:-

- On the first day of a child's absence the school will call the parents if they have failed to make contact.
- If there is no response the school will ring the numbers on the contact list until a reply is received.
- If there is no response, the school will send a text and a home visit will be made if possible.

- If there is no response we will speak to siblings and known relatives within the same education provider or at any other school.
- Liaison with other known professionals who may be working with the family.
- The school has an obligation to make a referral to the MASH team if there are additional safeguarding concerns.

After making the checks mentioned above, a child of compulsory school age is deemed as a Child Missing Education. The Lewisham's Children Missing Education referral form will be completed on the 10th day of absence. The school will contact the Police once all other stages have been completed and there is still no contact regarding the child.

Other School Procedures

- The school produces regular attendance reports which identify irregular or persistent absence, lateness and holidays taken. All of concern, e.g. below 90% attendance, are shared with the governors, the Attendance Welfare Officer and the Attendance Team at the Local Authority.
- To keep parents informed of attendance issues by sending out attendance letters when needed. Staff will attempt to meet and work with the family in order to improve the child's attendance.
- If issues regarding attendance cannot be solved between the school and parent or the parent is not willing to work with the school then the school will be obligated to contact the Attendance Welfare Officer and share the relevant information.
- In respect of Nursery places, if attendance is consistently low the school will attempt to make contact with the parents and allow a limited time for attendance to improve. The Headteacher has the discretion to ultimately withdraw the nursery place if attendance does not improve sufficiently.

Role of the Attendance Welfare Officer

The Attendance Welfare Officer (AWO) work for the local authority and their aim is to improve the attendance of children in their borough. The AWO will try to work with parents to resolve situations which are impacting upon attendance. However, if these methods have been tried and failed (or there is a lack of cooperation), these officers can use court proceedings to prosecute parents or to seek an Education Supervision Order on the child.

Holidays in term time

As stated, parents have no legal entitlement to remove their children during term time for a holiday. However, if you, the parent, do decide to take your child out of school you will need to:

- Complete the 'Leave of absence request' form which is available from the school office.
- The form **must** be completed and returned to the office 14 days before the start date of the absence.
- The 'exceptional circumstances' must be clearly stated on the form. Please be aware that the governors have agreed that lower costs/cheaper air fares etc. will no longer be accepted as 'exceptional circumstances'.
- Be aware that completing the form **does not** automatically guarantee the request for leave will be accepted. The Headteacher has the authority to decide whether or not to authorise the absence. The Headteacher will take into account: the reason for the absence, whether the child will miss any preparations for tests, whether the child will miss tests or exams and the child's previous attendance record which includes any patterns of absence.
- If the holiday is authorised and your child fails to return to school, your child can be removed from the school roll after 10 days of the agreed return date.
- If you take your child on an unauthorised holiday, a referral will be made to the Attendance Welfare Legal Team, who may choose to prosecute.

Strategies for promoting excellent attendance

The aim of these strategies is to ensure excellent attendance, over 95%, is promoted throughout the school and remains high profile. It also aims to reward this excellent attendance and punctuality. St Mary's Primary School does this through:

- **Weekly celebration assemblies** - these are held every week on Friday. The classes with the highest attendance/punctuality receive the attendance rosette which is then displayed on the classroom door of the winning class. They also receive an extra 10 minutes of play time. This promotes healthy competition between year groups to improve attendance.
- **School Newsletter** - the newsletter is used to highlight the importance of attendance and punctuality. It includes information on rewards and highlights those who have been praised for excellent attendance.
- **Breakfast Club** - breakfast club runs daily in order to support parents by dropping their children off from 7.30am onwards. This removes one of the barriers, particularly for working parents, and allows the children the chance to gain excellent attendance.
- **Staff promoting good attendance** - teachers will make it commonplace to praise excellent attendance and to encourage whole class participation in achieving the class attendance reward.
- **End of term attendance rewards** - these are given to individuals who have achieved a certain percentage e.g. 100% over the term. There are also more specific awards e.g. for children who have achieved 100% for two terms running. These are presented at the end of term assembly by the Headteacher.
- **Attendance meetings** - Miss Soares monitors trends and patterns in attendance and punctuality and these are then shared during attendance meetings.

Vulnerable children can then also be monitored in order to comply with the existing safeguarding policy.

Children missing education

If your child is leaving the school to either go to another school or to be home-schooled parents will be asked to:

- Provide full information regarding the move. This means the date of the move, the new address/town/area if you are moving away, the new school name and start date and the reason for the move.
- Confirm the school has your current contact details.
- Take St Mary's Primary School contact details so the new school can contact us for the transfer of records.
- Keep us informed through the process.

If the above actions are not taken and we are unable to contact you, then your child is considered to be a **Child Missing Education**. This means that the Local Authority has a legal duty to liaise with other agencies e.g. Children's Services in order to locate your child. By giving the above information, unnecessary investigations can be avoided.

St Mary's School Inclusion team

- Miss Iolanda Soares - Senior Admin Officer
- Mrs Caroline Maseko - SENCO
- Mr Matthew Wright – Deputy Headteacher
- Miss Christine Bernard - Headteacher

Summary

With the support of all in the community of St Mary's CE Primary School, we will continue to work hard to achieve excellence in our attendance and punctuality. The summary of daily procedures is as follows:

Daily Procedures	By whom
Parents ensure their child is in school on time. Before 8.45am.	Parent/carer (not older siblings)
Make contact (via phone) by 9:15am if the child is not well or there are 'exceptional circumstances'.	Parent/carer (again a verbal message from a sibling etc. will not be accepted)
Pupils arriving after 9am are given a late mark on the register.	School office/admin officer
Pupils arriving after 9:30am are registered as an unauthorised absence for the morning session.	School office/admin officer

Teachers record attendance promptly in the morning to assist the admin officer.	Class teacher
First day absence phone calls are made to the parents who have not made contact with school as asked.	Admin Officer
Written note to include the date(s) and reason for the absence to be brought to the office upon the child's return to school.	Parent/carer

Through parental engagement and the continued hard work of all staff from St Mary's, we will attain our goal of excellence and achieve 95% and above.

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