



**The Federation of Sacred Heart and St. Mary's
Catholic Primary Schools, Battersea**



St. Mary's R.C. Primary School, Battersea

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Attendance Policy

Adopted by the Governing Body: November 2016

Reviewed (1):

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Reviewed (3):

St. Mary's RC Primary

Whole school Attendance Policy

Introduction

The publication of school's attendance levels is a significant indicator of a school's performance. Regular attendance of pupils correlates closely to raising achievement thus underlying the importance of improving attendance rates in schools. All staff should be committed to the successful implementation of the whole school attendance policy as a necessary step towards improving overall attendance as part of the School Improvement Plan. If children are to derive maximum benefit from their education, they must attend school regularly and on time.

St Mary's is committed to providing full and efficient education to all pupils. We recognise that if pupils are to benefit from education, punctuality and good attendance are crucial. Problems which impede punctuality and regular attendance will be identified and addressed as speedily as possible. Our school is sensitive to the needs of families and will endeavour to communicate as openly and supportively as possible. We can only do our best work in conjunction with the support of parents/carers. St Mary's is committed to working with other agencies e.g. Education Welfare Officers, GP surgeries, health visitors etc, in order to secure the best attendance for its children.

At St Mary's priority will be given to conveying to parents and pupils the importance of regular attendance and punctuality. The vital role of parents is recognised. Where there are problems which affect a pupil's attendance, the school will investigate and strive, in partnership with parents and pupils, to resolve problems quickly and efficiently, aimed at returning the pupil to full attendance at all times.

SECTION 1

Day to day routines

- All classes are required to call attendance registers at the start of the morning sessions and at the start of the afternoon session to record pupils present and absent. The attendance register is a legal document and it is imperative that it is accurate at all times. Registers can be used in a court of law. If a child is late they must give a 'yellow card' to the class teacher to prove that they have been signed in at the office.
- Requirements for completing the register are outlined to teachers during their induction at the beginning of the year. All pupils must have an appropriate mark by their name. Teachers should also undertake a head count to confirm the numbers of pupils present.
- Teachers must ensure that the register is taken by 09:00 and 13:10 each day on time.
- In cases of a pupil being sent home ill, a note will be made by the admin team
- Where a child has 2 or more consecutive days absence due to ill health, the school will request that the parents provide medical evidence. This can be a letter from the doctor, a copy of the appointment time or the prescription you were given by the doctor. Without this evidence the absence will be recorded as unauthorised.
- The School attendance target is 95%. The Government and DFE consider 85% or lower as persistently absent and an immediate referral to Education Welfare will be made leading to a possible legal action.

SECTION 2

Authorised and unauthorised absence

St Mary's will monitor and support pupils to maintain regular school attendance. The register must show whether any absence is authorised or unauthorised. Authorised absence is where the school has either given approval in advance for a pupil of compulsory school age to be away, or has accepted an explanation offered afterwards as satisfactory justification for absence. All other absences are treated as unauthorised. **Schools, not parents, authorise absences.**

- Absence should be authorised where appropriate, and when notification has been received, should be noted on the system, using the standardised symbols outlined. **Under no circumstances should an un-notified/unverified absence be regarded as authorised**
- By law only the school can authorise an absence. A written note or telephone explanation by a parent/carer does not, in itself, oblige the school to authorise the absence if the school does not accept the explanation offered as a valid reason for absence. All reasons for absence must be recorded in the register and notes filed in an agreed place. There must be consistency throughout the school in what is authorised.

The following table outlines categories of absence which can be authorised. For the most up to date absence codes please consult www.dfes.gov.uk/schoolattendance

Type of absence	Symbol	Comment
Medical or dental appointment If in excess of 2 consecutive days per half term, medical evidence will be required.	M	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • This only applies where the pupil is absent from registration. Where the pupil attends registration but then leaves the school, the pupil is marked as present. • Pupils and families should be encouraged to make appointments outside school hours • The school health service will be contacted if absences become unreasonable and health reasons are given in explanation
Illness (NOT medical or dental appointments)	I	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • This code is always to be used when parents phone to say that their child is ill. Parents should always be advised to notify the school as soon as possible when a child is ill. It could also be used when parents send a letter after the period of illness to explain the child's absence.

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A stay in hospital
Religious Observance	R	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • This is observance of a day by a religious body to which the parents belong • Pupils and parents should be encouraged to give advanced warning
Interviews	J	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Year 6 may have interviews, tests or attend open days for secondary schools • Nursery children may have induction days or taster sessions at their new schools • Advanced notice is expected
Dual registered pupils	D	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A pupil is registered at two schools when there is an intention for the pupil to return to mainstream school. • Both institutions are responsible and should mark the pupil as present and absent accordingly • When reporting attendance to parents, the attendance at both institutions is taken into account
Family Holidays (Please see additional section)	H	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • It is St Mary's policy to encourage 100% attendance at school. Therefore parents should not take holidays in term time • Each request should be considered individually. Parents should be reminded of the effects of absence in terms of the progress the child is making and interruption to the programme of work
Extended Family Holiday	F	
Holiday NOT agreed or in excess of agreement	G	
Exclusion	E	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Absence is authorised for the period of the exclusion • In case of permanent exclusion there are set points where a child's name can be removed from the school roll
Traveller children when the family is travelling	T	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Travellers must NOT be removed from the roll of a school whilst travelling. Dual registration is allowed • Whilst travelling, the school place is held open and the

		<p>absence is authorised</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Attendance at school is the priority over use of distance learning packs.
Educated off site	B	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Attending 'taster' days at other schools. Schools should ensure that they have in place arrangements whereby the provider of the alternative activity provided 'off site' can notify the school of any absences by individual pupils so that the school can record the pupil absence using the appropriate code.
Educational visit or trip	V	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Field trips, visits, approved sporting activities – these only apply when the activity prevents the pupil from attending registration. A register should be taken on the field trip or visit to confirm each pupil's attendance Includes residential trips
Family bereavement or a child caring for a sick relative	C	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Schools may authorise absence of 3 days per academic year for young carers. Where education is affected on a long term/permanent basis, there should be a consideration of a referral to EWS to seek family support Schools have the discretion to authorise absence due to family bereavement – 3 days per academic year.
Special occasions Other authorised circumstances	C	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> These are cases where each individual occasion for each pupil is considered on its merits e.g. taking part in a public performance Authorisation should not be given if the event will become regular, if no advance request was made or if the overall attendance is poor School places a compulsory school age pupil on a part timetable as part of re-integration, then the school is authorising the pupil's

		absence from the session
Approved sporting activity	P	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The pupil is participating in or attending an approved sporting activity that is supervised in that behalf by the Headteacher of the school
Non compulsory school age absence	X	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Pupils who have not attained the age of 5 years at the start of term in which the session takes place.
Enforced closure	Y	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Burst boiler Floods Damage Bad weather Can ONLY be used if the WHOLE school is closed NOT for partial closure of school. If less than the whole school closure must use code C for year groups or pupils who are involved or affected by the closure.
Pupil not yet on roll	Z	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> School may store details of pupils who are to be admitted in a 'pre-admission' group which is then 'rolled' forward at the start of term. If the pupil does not turn up at the official start date then they will be shown as unauthorised absent and the LEA should be advised
School closed to pupils	#	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Between terms Half terms Occasional days when the whole school are on holiday Teacher INSET days Use of schools as polling stations

Requests for special leave and overseas visits during term time

(Please also refer to the document 'Family Holidays during term time and extended visits overseas – Additional information for parents and carers' for more detail)

Taking your child out of school during term time for a holiday, without the school's permission may result in a fixed penalty notice of £50 per child, being issued.

The general rule is no holidays will be authorised during term time. **There is no parental right to a ten-day period and schools are not obliged to agree to family holidays during term time.** The ten day period merely reflects the remit of the school to authorise the absence. Where pupils of compulsory school age are concerned, all applications should be carefully considered on their merits in the light of the need to maintain continuity of learning, e.g. Observance of religious holidays is likely to be approved, whereas booking holidays during term time because it is cheaper, is likely to be rejected. **Only in exceptional circumstances will special leave be granted in any one school year.** All requests for special leave during term time should be made in writing to Associate Head.

Unauthorised absence

Type of absence	Code	Comment
Unauthorised absence not covered by any other code or description	O	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Pupil's/parent's/sibling's birthday • Shopping • Hair cut • Market day • Couldn't get up
No reason yet provided for absence	N	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Every endeavour should be made to establish the reason for a pupil's absence from school. Until a reason is obtained, the absence must be coded using Code N. If no reason for absence provided after a reasonable amount of time, Code N should be replaced with Code O (Normally a week.)
Holiday taken without authorisation OR extended holiday taken without prior authorisation Usually results in a fixed penalty notice of £50 per child	G	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Absence is unauthorised if the school does not agree • Schools may agree a period of exceeding 10 days only in the most exceptional circumstances • Absence is unauthorised beyond the point of expected return if the pupil has been permitted to take a holiday and does not return when due. The DFE advise that a pupil can be taken off roll

Examples of absence that is unauthorised:

- Child's or family members' birthday/s
- Shopping trips
- Where there are excessive amounts of authorised absence due to illness (at the school's discretion but usually 5 or more days in a half term period)
- Where the child has gone to bed late and has 'slept in'
- Parent/carer has an appointment and takes child with them
- Another child in the family is ill, so all are kept off school
- The child has to look after a younger sibling/child on a school day
- Picking up someone from an airport
- Family bereavement
- Family memorials

SECTION 3

Lateness

Punctuality is monitored through the late book and register. Pupils are expected to arrive at school at 8:50am, and registered by 9.00. Pupils arriving after 08.50 are expected to sign in at the office in the late book for Health and Safety reasons. Staff in the office will issue a yellow card, which must be given to the class teacher. This lets the teacher know that the child has been registered at the office. If a child goes to class without a card the teachers must send the child to the office to be signed in.

Lateness	Comments	Code
Arrival between 8.50 and 9.00	<p>Pupils who arrive after 8.50 with acceptable reasons for lateness are counted as absent, the absence is authorised, but the pupil is late</p> <p>Pupils who arrive after 9.00 with unacceptable reasons for lateness are counted as absent, the absence is unauthorised, and the pupil is late with code U</p>	<p>L</p> <p>U</p>
Arrival after 9.00	<p>Pupils who arrive after 9.00, but with acceptable reasons for lateness are counted as absent, the absence is authorised but the pupil is late with code U</p> <p>Pupils who arrive after close of registers with unacceptable reasons, the absence is unauthorised</p>	U

Lateness at the end of the day is a separate policy – all enquiries about this should be made to the Associate Headteacher

SECTION 4

Resolving school attendance problems

St Mary's Primary School believes that where problems of attendance occur the key to successfully resolving these problems is engaging the child through collaborative working between the parent, the school and the LEA. St Mary's believe that the best way to resolve attendance issues, is on a voluntary basis, with the school being supportive to the families concerned. If, however, issues cannot be resolved this way, then the school may refer problems to the Education Welfare Service.

Monitoring attendance: ABSENCE

- On the first day of absence – Parents will phone the school before 8.50am on the morning of the first absence to give a reason for the absence. Office staff will send a text message home where appropriate to find out the reason for absence
- Where we are not able to ascertain a reason for the absence on the day, it will be recorded as code N in the register. This code will remain for 1 week, giving parents/carers a chance to inform the school of the reason for absence. If no reason is given during this time, the code N will become a code O, meaning 'no reason given for the absence'. Code O is an unauthorised absence.
- Please see section 5 below for the consequences of excessive absence and what happens after we have monitored the attendance of every child every half term.
- Vulnerable pupils will be reported to DMS and a phone made home on the first day of absence

Monitoring attendance: PUNCTUALITY

- 'Late Gates' are done every day at St Mary's.
- Code L is recorded on the register if a child is late between 8.50 and 9.00.
- Code U is recorded on the register if a child is late at 9:00 when the registers close. Time will be taken from the clock in the school office.
- Please see section 5 below for the consequences of excessive lateness and what happens after we have monitored the lateness of every child every half term.

Monitoring attendance: SICKNESS

- After the second consecutive day of absence due to sickness the school will need a doctor's note/medical evidence to authorise the absence.
- If the amount of absence due to sickness is an unacceptable amount, the school will need to have a doctor's note for **any** days off sick.
- If a child is absent for three consecutive days OR If a child's attendance falls below 95% (unauthorised or unexplained) a letter will be sent from school.
- After 5 days of consecutive absence we will ask to meet with you.
- If after 6 weeks there has been no improvement parents/carers will be sent a letter from EWO informing them of low attendance and to invite them to a meeting in school with the School Attendance Panel.
- If there is still no improvement parents/carers will be invited to attend a Borough Attendance Panel at the Town Hall.

SECTION 5

Penalty Notices Explained

If after reading this section, you still have questions please contact our Wandsworth Education Welfare Officer Haddy Crookes.

What is a penalty notice (PN)?

A PN offers a swift intervention that may be used to combat attendance problems before they become entrenched and where Wandsworth considers that prosecution may be inappropriate or unwarranted at that time. A PN can be a suitable intervention in circumstances where the parent is judged to be capable of securing their child's regular attendance but is not willing to take responsibility for doing so.

A PN will be paid to Wandsworth who will retain the revenue to cover the costs of issuing or enforcing the notices. **The penalty is £50 if paid within 28 days of receipt of invoice, rising to £100 if paid after 28 days but within 42 days of receipt of invoice.** An invoice served by post is deemed to have been received on the second day after posting it by first class post.

How can I be issued with a PN in relation to attendance?

- Unacceptable amounts of unauthorised absences may lead to a penalty notice being issued. The school decides what constitutes an unacceptable amount.
- Every half term, Mrs Ahern and the Wandsworth Education Welfare Officer check the attendance of all children in the school.
- If attendance falls below 90% (approximately 10 school days) in a given period (usually $\frac{1}{2}$ a term) due to unauthorised absence (code U, O, N, G - unauthorised holiday or excessive Code C) or excessive illness (5 days or more, code I)—a letter to parents from school indicating that EWS has been informed, will be issued.
- Parents/carers who fall into the above category may be invited to an attendance panel at the school with Associate Head and the Wandsworth Education Welfare Officer to discuss the attendance and inform parents of the next steps. We always use discretion here particularly where the child has been ill for over 5 days.
- Where no reasonable excuse has been given for the absences or excessive illness, you will be asked to attend a Borough Attendance Meeting at the Town Hall. During this period of 15 school days, if the child is ill a doctor's note must be given to the office for the absence to be authorised. If there is no doctor's note, the absence will not be authorised, and the parent/ carer will be subject to a penalty notice.
- If you take your child out of school during term time for a 'holiday' without the permission of the school you may be issued with a penalty notice upon your return.
- You can also be issued with a fine if there are 10 or more unauthorised absences (code U, O, G, N) on your child's record in a 3 calendar month period.

How can I be issued with a PN over punctuality?

- Every half term Associate Head will analyse lateness data.
- A penalty notice can also be issued if there are 10 or more code U (late after 9:00am) on your child's attendance record in a 3 calendar month period

Criteria for court/court panel

Parents who have been invited in for an attendance panel at the school, and are then subject to a further 15 school days of monitoring, will be monitored closely again over the next half term period. If the child's attendance is still less than 90% over the next half term period, then court proceedings may ensue. There must be 5 major contacts from the EWO (Educational Welfare Officer) to the parents before they are taken to court. These 5 contacts can be any of the following in any number and any order:

- Home visit.
- 1st court warning letter.
- 2nd court warning letter.
- Phone calls from EWO.
- Further specific monitoring by the EWO of your child within the school day.
- Invited into the school to discuss the situation.
- Letters from the Schools Attendance Officer

If there is no/unsatisfactory improvement after EWO intervention, then the EWO will write to the parent/carer to advise of a referral to court panel.

All cases of children on roll but not attending, poor attendance and lateness are dealt with under section 444 of 1996 Education Act, through the use of first and second court warning notices – issued by the welfare officer as part of the '5 major contacts' procedures.

All cases of children not enrolled are dealt with under Section 443 of the 1996 Education Act, through the use of the Attendance Order Procedure.

The LA can also apply for an Education Supervision Order under Section 36 of the Children Act 1989, to assist parents/carers to carry out their parental responsibility by working in partnership.

If the unsatisfactory improvement after one term is due to difficulties not attributable to the parents, the LA will advise.

SECTION 5

Roles of those involved with attendance and punctuality

Headteacher

- On the gate every morning at 8.50am

Site Manager

- Lock main gate at 9.00

Teachers

- Will ensure that all registers are taken accurately and immediately taken to the office. They will also ask for notes/letters explaining absences and lateness.
- They will form positive links with parents; positively promote good attendance within the classroom, communicate with the Associate Head

Office staff

- Will text parents/carers on the morning of first absence to ask for an explanation – text messages sent will be recorded on the system, including those where no response either by text or phone.
- Will notify Associate Head, of any patterns of lateness and attendance that are causing concern.
- Will form positive links with parents and outside agencies.
- Will set up the registers at the beginning of the school year.
- Receive telephone communication from parents/carers, will record that information correctly and arrange for that to be communicated to the teaching staff or Deputy Head for consideration or authorisation.
- Assist Associate Head in the collection of data.
- Assist Associate Head with the admission and off rolling procedures.
- Will notify Associate Head, Learning Mentor and the Wandsworth Education Welfare Officer of any patterns of lateness and attendance that are causing concern (including more than two days consecutive absence.).
- Will send a letter home following a 2 day consecutive absence.
- Will send a letter home requesting a meeting with the Associate Head Teacher after 5 days consecutive absence.

Learning Mentor

- Will work with persistent lates and absentees and vulnerable families.

Associate Head

- Will oversee the implementation of the attendance policies and procedures.
- Ensure the collection of accurate statistical data, monitor, analyse and evaluate data collected.
- Form positive links with outside agencies such as the Education Welfare Service (EWS) and Social Services and parents.
- Will refer pupils to the EWS using the referral form.
- Report termly to the governing body on attendance.

The Governing Body

- Will see that the registers are properly kept.
- Ensure that regular returns of attendance figures are made to Wandsworth.
- Produce an annual report to parents/carers in which the school's attendance figures are included.

The Education Welfare Service

- The EWS will work in accordance with the guidelines, policies and conditions of service of Wandsworth Council and the Local Authority (LA). Will maintain confidentiality in accordance with council policies. Any information relating to parental contacts or other agency involvement outside the school, *will* be shared with the school unless specific consent has not been given to the EWS
- Will assess pupils within 2 weeks of a referral – such cases will necessitate a family intervention plan to be drawn up, and this will be reviewed on a 6 weekly basis. An assessment could include home visits, office interviews, telephone contact with families and discussion with the school or other agencies.
- Written records summarising 'agreed action' will be kept for each EWS visit.
- Will make referrals to court as and when necessary.

Roles and responsibilities of the school, parents/carers and pupils

Pupils will:

- Attend school regularly.
- Arrive on time.

Parents/carers will:

- Ensure their child attends school regularly (at least 95%).
- Ensure their child arrives on time for school.
- Contact the school on the first day of absence, if their child is unable to attend for a valid reason and/or provide a note if they wish the absence to be considered for authorisation.
- Ensure their child is prepared with the necessary uniform to attend school.
- Support the school in its aim to raise the achievement of their child through full school attendance.
- Under Section 7 of the Education Act 1996, parents/carers are ultimately responsible for ensuring that their child/children attend and stay at school.
- Collects their child from school on time every day

St Mary's RC Primary School will:

- Ensure efficient and accurate registration of pupils.
- Contact the parents/carers if a child fails to attend without a satisfactory explanation.
- Provide regular reports on the school's attendance statistics.
- Promote positive attendance by taking account of pupil's individual needs.
- Have in place clear communication routes to discuss any difficulties which may be preventing a pupil from attending school.
- Expect parents and carers to support the school to raise the achievement of their child through full school attendance.

Wandsworth Education/EWS will:

- Issue fixed penalty notices where appropriate – including those for unauthorised 'holidays'.
- Ensure that parents/carers are fulfilling their statutory obligations as to their child's education including, where necessary, taking action through the courts (section 444 of Education Act 1996). Conviction following an offence under section 444 attracts a fine of up to £1000.
- Also apply, if necessary, to the Family proceedings court for an Education Supervision Order (ESO) (section 36 of the Children Act 1989). This will apply to cases of unauthorised absence invoking statutory backing for a planned programme for a child in collaboration with the parents/carers. The effects of an ESO will be to place a child under the supervision of the LA for a specifically defined period. At this time EWO are designated by the LA to be the named Supervising Officers in such cases. As such they are required to advise, assist and befriend the child, reinforce parental responsibility and give reasonable direction to ensure the child's proper education.

SECTION 6

Promoting positive attendance

At St Mary's Primary School, we give high priority to the collecting and publicising of data related to attendance and punctuality. The most up to date attendance figures for each class can be seen in the main reception area. We have a consistent and

supportive attitude towards attendance and punctuality, and wish above all, to resolve any problems on a voluntary basis. We firmly believe that establishing contact with home on the first day of absence is crucial to improving our attendance figures, and the quality and consistency of the education each child receives. All parents/carers know what are grounds for authorisation of absence and the attendance policy is explained when the child is admitted to the school.

We record and promote good attendance in the following ways:

- The Head or Associate Head goes through the % figures for attendance for each class for the week. The winning class is presented with a trophy during whole school assembly.
- Certificates are given out half termly for 100% attendance.
- Annual certificates are given out for 100% attendance.
- Attendance and punctuality figures are recorded on the report to Parents and Carers at the end of the academic year, along with positive comments for effort where appropriate.
- Attendance and punctuality certificates are given out for 100% attendance and punctuality at the end of the academic year.
- We ensure our parents/carers receive accurate and clear information about the child's education and how important it is that pupils attend school.
- Coloured letters are sent out each term. **Green letters indicate attendance of 95% and upwards. Orange letters indicate attendance of 90-95%. Red, letters indicate attendance of less than 90%.**