

'Loving to Learn, Learning to Love'



Attendance Policy

Last Approved: October 2020

Review Date: October 2021

Objectives

- To acknowledge the impact of non-school attendance on individual pupil's levels of achievement.
- To acknowledge that non-attendance and patterns of poor attendance rather than unauthorised absence is the key issue.
- To establish the importance of punctuality in attending both school and lessons.
- To bring about positive change to existing trends and statistics.
- To ensure all stakeholders work to support and promote the importance of children attending school regularly.
- To inform and support families working to improve their children's attendance.
- To encourage parental responsibility through providing efficient ways in which parents can implement their responsibility for their child's attendance record.

Policy and Procedures.

We recognise that it is important that all schools follow the same procedure to ensure that the statutory duties are carried out by the Educational Welfare Officer (EWO), which supports appropriate action being taken when parents/carers fail to ensure good school attendance.

To further support the Attendance Policy, we:-

- Have clear registration procedures to encourage positive attitudes toward attendance and punctuality and to identify pupils at risk of meeting attendance targets.
- Work with parents/carers to support any of our families with any difficulties that may impact upon their child's attendance by enlisting partner agency support where appropriate, for example Education Welfare Officer, School Nurse.
- Support learning and positive attitudes to behaviour by investigating the barriers to good attendance through attendance clinics.
- Have developed supportive systems of sanctions and rewards.
- Undertake analysis of patterns of absence via regular register checks and termly attendance reports, which are reported to the Federation Board of Governors.
- Ask the parent/carer to ensure that up to date contact telephone numbers and any change of address is forwarded to the school office.
- Share common strategies and language to reinforce the attendance policy in respect of key areas of concern, for example:-

Authorised and non-authorised attendance:

- We clearly differentiate between authorised and non-authorised attendance.
- We authorise absence only when the reason (illness, bereavement, and religious observation) can be seen as a genuine explanation of the absence.
- Evidence is required for any medical appointments, for example hospital or dentist.
- If a child returns to school during the session from the appointment, they will be given the mark for the session.

Persistent Absenteeism

- Following DfE guidelines, the Persistent Absentee (PA) rate is attendance which is below 90%.
- If a pupil's attendance drops to 90% and below, parents/carers will receive notification. Further absences will not be authorised without medical evidence. Medical evidence is any medicine or prescription with the child's name and date on, or a note from the doctor or hospital.

Attendance

Regular attendance at school is vital if children are to make good progress and to benefit from the opportunities that school offers. We aim for our whole school attendance and for the attendance of individual children to be above 96%. If a child's attendance drops below 96% the school may contact parents/ carers to discuss why and to agree strategies to raise attendance to above 96%.

Parents/carers are legally responsible for ensuring that children of compulsory school age attend school regularly. Parents/carers of children who are not yet of compulsory school age attend school are strongly encouraged to ensure their child attends school regularly in order to establish good habits of attendance and punctuality for later years.

The school and the Local Authority work together to ensure that parent/carers meet their responsibility. Attendance issues are dealt with in the first instance by the school. If this does not lead to an improvement in attendance, it is followed by referral to the Education Welfare Officer (EWO), who can provide an important link between school and families but who can also invoke statutory action to ensure regular attendance if necessary.

Punctuality

The school gates open to pupils at 8:30am. Registration for all pupils is 8:40am. The gates are locked promptly at 8:45am; any child arriving after this time must come to the school office to be recorded as late.

The school keeps records of all late arrivals, with names of late arrivals being entered into the "late book" which is kept in the School Office. Late arrivals are monitored weekly.

Our Home School Links Worker conducts daily punctuality / late gates. If a child is consistently late, parents are invited to attend a meeting to discuss punctuality with the Head of School and/or the Educational Welfare Officer.

If no improvement occurs, an official referral the Education Welfare Officer is made and parent/carers may receive penalty notices / fines.

Recording Absence and Punctuality

Every half term the school is required to submit details of Persistent Absence to the Educational Welfare Officer. We are required to inform how many half days were missed due to authorised and unauthorised absence. Children are classed as Persistent Absentees if their attendance is below 90%. This is recorded as a percentage attendance and is used as an overall guide to the school's success in promoting good attendance and punctuality.

Leave of Absence During Term Time

As a school, we aim to raise attainment and attendance to meet national requirements, therefore any absence during term-time will **not** be authorised. The Law states that parents **DO NOT** have an automatic right to take their child out of school in term-time.

If the leave in term time **is not authorised** and/or exceeds the 3 days that may be granted by the Headteacher, then a referral form will be completed for a fixed penalty notice (fine) to be issued which is £60 per pupil per parent. **This is solely at the discretion** of the Headteacher and the Governing Body.

Therefore, parents/carers are requested to apply for a leave of absence during term time and must follow these steps:

An '**Application for leave of absence form during term time**' must be completed at least four weeks before the potential absence. The form is available from the school office.

A meeting will be arranged to see the Education Welfare Officer, home school link worker and/or a member of SLT to discuss the **potential** leave of absence.

Invitations to this meeting will be sent to anyone whom makes an application. If the application is made late, the meeting will be held in absences and the information will be delivered to the home address. This meeting is held to:

- Emphasise that a leave of absence will impact on achievement and will not be authorized.
- Advise families that pupils will be taken off roll after 20 school days of absence and would then need to re-apply for a place at this school, should a place still be available.

Any leave or suspected leave in term time will be recorded as unauthorised (G code)

- If there are unauthorised absences more than 3 days or six sessions, this will result in a referral to the Education Welfare Service to issue a Penalty Notice fine of £60 per adult, per child. This will lead to action by the Education Welfare Officer as follows:

Level 3

- After 6 days unauthorised absence (12 unauthorised sessions), penalty warning letters are issued, which state that parent/carers have 20 school days to improve attendance.
- During the 20-day period, the Education Welfare Officer conducts a home visit or telephone contact takes place.
- If there is no improvement in attendance in the 20 day period, a fine will be issued (£60 per child, per parent)
- The parent/carer has 21 days to pay (£60 per parent, per child), if the fine is not paid after 21 days the fine will double to £120 per parent, per child unless not paid within 28days
- If the fine is not paid within 28 days, the matter will proceed to court.

Level 4

- The matter would move to level 4 if previous fines haven't worked or if parents/carers have previous convictions for non-school attendance.
- Warning letters 1 and 2 are sent
- An attendance review meeting is held with the Education Welfare Officer, the EWO manager, the Head of School and parents/carers.
- The case will proceed to court; this then carries a heavier fine and possible custodial sentence. If a parent/carer is found guilty in any cases that proceed to court, it results in a criminal conviction.

*Families are advised of the above by letter following the meeting.

The Registration Process.

1. Class teachers are responsible for maintaining an accurate class attendance register, although other adults may complete the register under the teacher's direction (e.g. Teaching Assistants).
2. Registers must be completed in blue or black ink (absence in red). Data from registers will be transferred to the school's information management system (SIMS) on a daily basis by clerical staff.
3. The attendance register is marked twice a day at the start of the morning and beginning of the afternoon. For each pupil, the register must be marked either as present or absent. Absences will only be authorised by the school when a satisfactory explanation has been given by parents (e.g. illness). Explanation must be in person, or by telephone message on the first day of absence.
4. Correct codes for recording attendance and absence are set out in each register. Only the Home School Links Worker enters these codes.
5. Morning (am) is counted as one session and afternoon (pm) is counted as another session. Pupil attendance at school is 2 sessions per day.

Timetable of Registration.

Reception	Key Stage 1	Key Stage 2
8:40am Morning Registration 12.30pm Reception Afternoon Registration	8:40am Morning Registration 12.30pm Afternoon Registration	8:40am Morning Registration 12:50pm Y3 Afternoon Registration 1:10pm Upper Key Stage 2 Afternoon Registration

Our Head of School has the responsibility for monitoring attendance and highlighting concerns through regular review meetings with the Home/School Link Worker and Education Welfare Officer. If there is marked improvement in attendance, then a letter of improvement is sent to parents.

Rewards

Children who have 100% attendance and no lates have their names put into a draw to win a £10 voucher and a certificate each half term.

Children who have 100% attendance and no lates for the whole academic year receive an end of year treat and their names are put into a draw to win a £50 voucher.

The attendance of each class is displayed on our attendance monitor in the hall each week, to encourage competition. The class with the highest attendance receives a trophy to keep for the week.

Any class with 100% attendance for a week receives five minutes extra playtime.

The weekly attendance of each class is displayed in their classroom along with a red (below 96%) or green (96% or above) spot which is given out by 'attendance prefects'.

Children receive a green (96% and above), amber (90%-95.99%), or red (below 90%) certificate each term to inform them and their parents/ carers about their attendance.

Involvement of Education Welfare.

Once a formal referral to the Education Welfare Officer (EWO) has been made, the following procedures will apply:

- Attendance meeting in school as well as a more formal meeting with the EWO should no improvement be made.
- Home visits to parents to discuss any contributory factors, which may be affecting attendance and possible solutions and support.
- Court action if attendance rate fails to improve, could result in fines and / or prison sentence for parents if the fine is not paid.
- Fixed penalty notice for non-attendance.

Fixed Penalty Fine

Two Levels

Level 3

- After 3 days unauthorised absence (6 unauthorised sessions), penalty warning letters are issued, which state that parent/carers have 20 school days to improve attendance.
- During the 20 day period, Education Welfare Officer conducts a home visit or telephone contact takes place.
- If there is no improvement in attendance in the 20 day period, a fine will be issued (£60 per child, per parent)
- The parent/carer has 21 days to pay (£60 per parent, per child). If the fine is not paid after 21 days, the fine will double to £120 per parent, per child unless not paid within 28days
- If the fine is not paid within 28 days, the matter will proceed to court.

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- Warning letters 1 and 2 are sent.
- An attendance review meeting is held with the Education Welfare Officer, the EWO manager, Head of School and parents/carers.
- The case will proceed to court; this then carries a heavier fine and possible custodial sentence. If a parent/carer is found guilty in any cases that proceed to court, it results in a criminal conviction.

Action to implement and support this policy

St Mark's CE Primary School will therefore:

- Ensure a common approach and language to ensure clarity and understanding for all stakeholders.
- Ensure that attendance is a regular feature on newsletters to parents and that the attendance policy is displayed on the school's website.
- Ensure attendance is the responsibility of the Head of School with support from the Home School Links Worker and Education Welfare Officer. The Head of School will ensure that there is adequate record keeping within our school to ensure accurate and consistent identification of vulnerable children and families.
- Emphasise the importance of regular and sustained attendance by an early and consistent response to non-attendance and not authorising absence unless it clearly meets the statutory criteria.
- Clearly enforce responses to late arrival.
- Establish appropriate priorities for action i.e. when making first-day contact, target vulnerable children first, then children being monitored by the school and the Education Welfare Officer, then other pupils as necessary, taking account of individual needs.
- Use all contact with parents to clarify and reinforce their responsibility to have their child in school and to contact the school when there is a genuine reason for non-attendance.
- Confirm the reason for refusing to authorise non-attendance/ leave in exceptional circumstances in writing to parents, warning them that if they take the child out of school without authorization for a period of 20 school days or longer, the child will be taken off roll and the parent/carer will have to reapply for their place on their return, should a place still be available.
- Use a system of rewards that recognise "improving" attendance in addition to recognition of good attendance, including sending letters to parents/ carers if their child's attendance is improving.
- Use of attendance colour code system. (please see following pages)
- Monitor and evaluate effectiveness of this policy annually.

SUMMARY

- We recognise that regular attendance is crucial to pupils achieving their potential.
- Our key concern is non-attendance, rather than whether attendance is authorised or not.
- Our most effective response will be achieved by a common policy supported by a common language.
- Our reason for developing an attendance policy is to enable us to clarify and reinforce parents'/carers' responsibility to have their child(ren) attend school regularly, or to inform the school when there is a genuine reason for non-attendance.
- This aim will be best achieved by working in partnership with parents and carers to maximise their children's attendance.
- The impact of the policy to be evaluated through half-termly attendance reports and an annual review of attendance and the attendance policy.

Signed:

Co-Chair Local Governing Board

Date:

Review date: October 2021