



St Mary and St John C.E.V.A. Primary School Attendance & Punctuality Policy

Let your light shine Matthew 5:16

RATIONALE

The law states that children must receive full time education from the ages of 5 to 16. The law also states that it is the parents' responsibility to ensure their child(ren) receive that education.

St Mary & St John Church of England Voluntary Aided Primary School promotes the view that regular, punctual attendance is important to ensure the best possible learning outcomes and overall wellbeing for all of our pupils and we take seriously our responsibility to monitor and promote this. We feel the whole school community has a responsibility for punctuality and attendance and we work closely with parents and carers to promote regular, punctual attendance.

Research shows that children who attend school regularly are likely to be more successful. A pupil who misses a day of school a week misses an equivalent of almost a whole year in their compulsory school life. This obviously leads to gaps in their knowledge that become difficult to fill. A recent national survey has indicated that more than 70% of children who did not attend school regularly when they got to secondary school, admitted to committing at least one criminal offence. It is imperative that poor attendance habits are broken as early as possible.

All children may sometimes be reluctant to attend school. Any problems with regular attendance are best sorted out sensitively between the school, the parents/carers and the child working together to understand the root cause of any anxieties to help resolve them. If the child is reluctant to attend, it is never better to cover up their absence or to give in to pressure to excuse them from attending. This gives the impression that attendance does not matter and may make things worse.

The School does acknowledge that most children will have some unavoidable absence because of illness during their primary years. It is important that children are not sent to school when they are unwell. It is especially important in the event of a stomach upset that the child has at least 48 hours clear at home after the last episode of vomiting or diarrhoea.

Positive approach

We promote good attendance to children and their parents through various mediums, (Word of mouth, Worship, school information meetings, weekly newsletters). We celebrate excellent attendance with end of year certificates. We engage quickly with parents if there are concerns about their child's attendance.

ILLNESS

Guidelines to Parents from NHS (England) regarding when you should keep your child away from school are as follows:

<https://www.nhs.uk/live-well/is-my-child-too-ill-for-school/#:~:text=It's%20fine%20to%20send%20your,to%20wash%20their%20hands%20regularly>

Parents should consider:

Would I take a day off work if I had this condition?

Is my child too ill to leave the house?

Does my child have a condition that could be passed on to other children or school staff?

Is my child's immune system compromised by a pre-existing medical condition or treatment being undertaken at the time eg. Chemotherapy?

The following conditions **would not** routinely be authorised by the Headteacher:

Coughs and Colds- children should not be kept at home and you should only visit your GP if they persist for more than 2 weeks or are accompanied by shivers, drowsiness and a high temperature.

Headache - a child with a minor headache, tummy ache, sore throat or other “aches” doesn’t usually need to be kept off school unless they are more severe and or accompanied by other symptoms. You should visit your GP or walk in centre if symptoms persist.

Illness in the last or first two days of a school term, unless accompanied by evidence of seeking medical advice: stamped doctor/hospital attendance card.

Children **should not attend** school if:

They have an undiagnosed rash or Chickenpox –you should visit your GP or Health Professional.
Vomiting and Diarrhoea-children should not attend school until 48 hours after their symptoms have gone, again if symptoms persist or it regularly occurs you should visit your GP. Children should not regularly suffer from this.(that is more than once a year).

Not every illness needs to keep your children from school, use common sense when deciding whether or not your child is too ill to attend school.

TERM TIME LEAVE OF ABSENCE

In exceptional circumstances (once in a lifetime event) the Headteacher may grant you leave of absence during the school term. This is not a parent’s right and **will not** include time out for a family holiday. Parents/carers must apply to the Headteacher to request leave of absence. Each application will be judged on its own merit. (Appendix 1)

- The Headteacher cannot authorise leave of absence if it overlaps with the beginning or end of term.
- Leave of absence request forms must be signed by all parents with legal responsibility for the child. If a parent does not reside with the child due to family separation, an application must be accompanied by a letter of consent from the absent parent. It is the responsibility of both parents to provide the information required by the school.
- Leave of absence requests will only be accepted from the child’s legal guardians and not by extended family members

Leave of Absence - Changes to School Attendance Regulations from September 2014

From September 2014, The Education (Pupil Registration) (England) (Amendment) Regulations 2013 remove provision for Headteachers to grant term time leave of absence in ‘special circumstances’ and only allow leave to be granted in ‘exceptional circumstances’.

The government has not defined the *‘exceptional circumstances’* referred to in the 2013 regulations other than it is **a one-off, life time event - this does not include family holidays**. The Department for Education states that it is for the Headteacher to decide what he/she views as ‘exceptional circumstances’. The current guidance on granting leave of absence in exceptional circumstances says that schools should consider each request individually.

At St Mary & St John Church of England Voluntary Aided Primary School we will consider factors such as:

- The nature of the request and why it could not be taken in the school holidays

- General welfare of the pupil, school attendance record and family circumstances
- Pupil's educational needs and ability to catch up on work missed
- Proximity of SATS and other examinations
- The frequency of such requests from the pupil's parents
- Amount of time requested
- Whether the parent gave advance notice

'Exceptional' circumstances will be regarded as one-off situations.

Should a Service family wish to cite serving overseas or prior to a longer deployment as a reason for absence, the Army Welfare Office (or equivalent) will be asked to verify the application.

If an event can reasonably be scheduled outside of term time then it is unlikely that the absence will be authorized.

The following **will not** be considered as 'exceptional':

- Relatives coming to visit
- Parents occupation commitments
- Family holiday
- Cheaper flights/holidays in England and abroad or availability of desired accommodation
- Family day trips and outings
- Spectating at an event that the child is not participating in.
- Visiting family/friends who have different half terms or holiday
- Overlap with the beginning or end of term of a sibling
- Poor weather experienced in school holiday periods

Examples of Authorised Absence

- Sickness, where **the child is too ill to leave the house** (if absences are excessive, evidence of medical consultation will be required and a doctor's note may be requested)
- When a family needs to spend time together to support each other during or after a crisis.
- **Emergency** medical/ dental appointments
- Days of religious observance
- Exceptional family circumstances (e.g. family wedding*/terminal illness/bereavement/funeral)
- *Family wedding - a maximum of 3 days for a family wedding abroad of a close family member (including a day to travel each way). Anything more would be looked upon as a holiday.
- a maximum 1 day for a family wedding or funeral of a close family member in the UK. Where a parent is getting married, recent tests cases have suggested that either parent knows a child should legally be in school and therefore should make wedding arrangements within school holiday period
- Approved educational activity: **participating** in a competition / examination
- Fixed term exclusion

Examples of Unauthorised Absence

- Frequent absences attributed to minor ailments (colds, etc) but not supported by medical evidence

- Holidays
- Sleeping-in / tiredness
- To avoid being late for school
- One child is ill, so all are kept off school
- Shopping / Birthday/ Treats/Concerts
- Day trips
- Looking after siblings or sick parents
- Non-urgent medical or routine dental appointments
- Waiting in for a delivery
- Unexplained absence

Examples of Approved Educational Activities off-site

- Field trips and educational visits in this country and overseas
- Participation at approved sporting activities
- Special tuition organised through the school
- External examinations e.g. ballet, music, school entrance examinations

Definitions

Every half-day absence has to be classified by the school (not by the parents) as either **Authorised** or **Unauthorised**. This is why information about the cause of each absence is always required, preferably in writing or by telephone. Reasons such as “unwell” or “ill” cannot be authorized; you will need to inform the school of the symptoms.

Authorised absence

Only the Headteacher can authorise an absence. An absence is classified as authorised when 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 sick during the night and the parent telephones the school to explain the absence.

Unauthorised absence

An absence is classified as unauthorised when a child is away from school without the permission of the Headteacher. Unauthorised absences are those which:

- the school does not consider reasonable (including when parents untruthfully cite illness when taking holiday)
- for which no explanation for the absence has been given
- the absence has never been properly explained
- planned term time absence that has not been agreed by the Headteacher in advance of the absence

Penalty notices:

Penalty notices will be used as a deterrent to prevent a pattern of unauthorised absences developing.

You may be aware that the Department for Education has recently announced national changes to penalty notices issued for unauthorised absence in term time. These changes came into effect on 19th August 2024.

The changes to be aware of are:

- Penalty notices issued for offences that take place after 19 August 2024 will be charged at a new rate of £160 per parent per child. This can be paid at £80 if paid within 21 days.

- Any second penalty notice issued to the same parent for the same child within a rolling 3-year period will be issued at the rate of £160 to be paid within 28 days with no option for a discounted rate.
- The threshold at which a penalty notice **must** be considered is set at 10 sessions (equivalent to 5 days) of unauthorised absence within a rolling 10-school week period. This may include absences as a result of arriving late after the register closes. The 10 school weeks may span different terms or school years.
- A maximum of 2 penalty notices may be issued to a parent for the same child within a rolling 3-year period, so at the 3rd (or subsequent) offence(s) another course of action will need to be considered (such as prosecution).
- Only penalty notices issued for absences taking place after 19 August 2024 will count towards the above thresholds.

Where an absence has been unauthorised, a letter will be sent to the parents (See Appendix D) A copy of this is sent to the Local Authority along with a copy of the attendance register, a copy of the request for absence, and contact details of both parents. The Inclusion officer will then contact the family directly.

When the LA has issued a Penalty Notice in respect of unauthorised absence, this is both Term Time Leave of Absence and other absence (Illness), should there be a repeat offence the Penalty details will be forwarded to the Leicestershire Police for inclusion on the NPC. This is recorded as an offence against a child and will show up on DBS checks requested by Parents for support in their work role. This may prevent them from working with children.

Flexi Schooling

There is no legal obligation for us to agree to a parents request for flexi schooling. This includes children who are electively home educated where parents also want their children to be enrolled at our school. Any requests for a school place will follow our school's Admissions Policy.

Expected attendance level

The Department for Education expects all children to achieve an attendance level of at least 90 percent in every school year. The school has an agreed target of 97%. Pupils who fall below this target will be monitored by the Headteacher and intervention strategies put in place where appropriate. Attendance below 90% will be reported to the school governors and is flagged by the Local Authority (SIDO) Officer.

Each child's attendance can be summarised as:

99%+	Less than 2 days absence in the year	Excellent - meeting high standards of expectation – attendance at this level will ensure your child is enjoying and achieving along with their peers
97.5% - 98.9%	Less than 5 days absence in the year	Minimum Expected – attendance at this level is not significantly negatively impacting on your child's learning but should be monitored carefully and further absence avoided
96% – 97.4%	More than 8 days absence in the year	Below Expected – this level of attendance will now be negatively impacting on your child's learning. You should now be working with the school to improve this attendance
91% – 95.9%	More than 17 days absence in a year	Causing concern – the cumulative effect of this level of absence could now impact on your child's overall levels at SATS and up to GCSE if not addressed
90% or below	More than 19 days absence in a year	Serious concern – your child is now falling into 'persistent absence'. It is affecting attainment and progress and may lead to your prosecution for failing to ensure your child's regular attendance at school. Unless medical evidence is provided it is likely that all further absence will now be unauthorised

Teachers are not expected to set work for absent pupils where the absence is due to an unauthorised holiday in term time or short-term illness.

WHAT HAPPENS WHERE ATTENDANCE IS POOR?

Parents/Carers are expected to contact school at an early stage and to work with the staff in resolving any problems together. This is nearly always successful. If difficulties cannot be sorted out in this way, the School may refer the child to the Social Inclusion Development Officer (SIDO) from the Local Authority (Rutland).

Alongside the school, the SIDO will also try to resolve the situation (of poor attendance) by agreement but, if other ways of trying to improve the child's attendance have failed, the SIDO can use court proceedings to prosecute parents/carers and fixed penalty notices can be applied. These will be issued by the Local Authority for absence from school in the following circumstances: These will be issued by the Local Authority for absence from school in the following circumstances:

- Truancy
- Parentally-controlled absence
- Term time absence which has not been previously agreed by the Headteacher or when permission has not been previously sought
- Persistent lateness
- Absence that has not been authorised by the Headteacher

Parents/Carers may wish to contact the SIDO themselves to ask for help or information. The SIDO is independent of the School and will give impartial advice. The telephone number is available from the School or by contacting the Local Authority.

DELETING A CHILD'S NAME FROM THE REGISTER

A child's name can only be deleted from the register if the parent/guardian provides this information in writing, giving the child's leaving date and details of next educational establishment. This will be confirmed with the receiving school or current school. Failure to follow this procedure will result in the child being reported to the Local Authority as a Child Missing in Education.

If a registered child has been continuously absent for at least 20 school days and after reasonable enquiry neither the School nor the LA (through the SIDO) has been able to locate the child the child's name may be removed from both the admissions register and the attendance register and the Headteacher will inform the Area Child Protection Committee or the Child Protection Officer in the LA.

Any name deleted from the register must be notified immediately to the LA.

TEMPORARY SCHOOL CLOSURES

If St Mary & St John has to close due to severe weather conditions, fire or INSET, no attendance registers are needed.

If the school is to be closed due to adverse weather conditions e.g. snow, parents are asked to follow the guidance for notification as per 'snow closure' letter. All parents are given a copy of this in the Autumn Term and reminded of this at the time when adverse weather is forecast. Details will also be given on the school website.

ADDITIONAL STRATEGIES

Regular reminders to all parents:

- Regarding school procedures on attendance and absence particularly with regard to holidays.
- Regarding term dates for the current and following academic year will be published on the school website

- School begins at 8.45am; the first 15-minute session of the day is prime learning time which allows children to settle and refocus on the previous day's learning and/or ensure misconceptions are addressed before starting the current day's learning.

SCHOOL DAILY PROCEDURES

Parents/carers:

- If a pupil is unfit for school, parents/carers are asked to contact the School on the first day of absence by 09.00am either by telephone or email.
- In exceptional circumstances or if there are high levels of absence, further evidence of a child's illness, such as a doctor's note, may be requested.
- Parents/carers should be made aware that absence due to sickness and/or diarrhoea requires the child to be absent from school for 48 hours from the cessation of the illness.

School Staff:

- Each class will have an electronic attendance register on SIMS register, which will be called at the beginning of every session (am and pm registration).
- The electronic register on SIMS will indicate whether a child is present (diagonal mark) or absent (appropriate code) and will be saved.
- The office administrator will identify if the child is engaged in an approved educational activity off site, 'ill' or at medical appointment (or other authorised absence) by inserting the appropriate letter and adding parents given reason.
- If a pupil is absent at morning registration and the school has not received an explanation for the absence by 09.15am the School will contact the Parent/Carer by telephone to ascertain the reason for absence.

Pupils – Punctuality and Absence

- The doors are opened and children welcomed at 8.40am. Registration is between 8.55am and 9.00am. A pupil arriving in class between 9.00am and 9.20am will receive a late mark. A pupil arriving after 9.20am when the register has closed will have been marked as absent. An absence code will be recorded in the register according to the reason given. If no valid reason is given, the pupil will receive a 'u' code (unauthorised absence).
- The afternoon register is taken at 1.10pm. Pupils are expected to be settled in class for registration at 1.10pm. A pupil arriving in class between 1.10pm and 1.20pm will receive a late mark. A pupil arriving after 1.40pm when the register has closed, will have been marked as absent and an absence code will be recorded in the register according to the reason given. If no valid reason is given, the pupil will receive a 'u' code (unauthorised absence).
- Pupils who arrive late (after 9.00am or 1.10pm) must be escorted to the school office by the adult with responsibility for that child and report to the school office to be signed in.
- Pupils, whose parents have arranged in advance for them to leave school before the end of the day, must report to the school office to be signed out.

Headteacher:

- The Headteacher, Governing Body and Local Authority Attendance Officer monitors attendance and lateness. Where there is a pattern beginning to emerge or attendance falls below 90% in any one term and/or there 4+ broken weeks, the parents are contacted by letter. A standard letter for punctuality will be sent (Appendix B). A letter pertaining to low attendance will be sent by the Headteacher, to meet the circumstances. (Appendix C)
- If there is no improvement, the Headteacher will phone the parents and arrange a meeting to discuss the situation or contact the parents by letter.
- If unresolved, the Headteacher will contact the Local Authority Attendance Officer (SIDO).

HOW TO MAKE A REQUEST FOR LEAVE OF ABSENCE

Requests for permission for an exceptional leave of absence for a pupil during term time must be made in advance, either by filling in our school 'Exceptional Leave of Absence' form or in writing to the Headteacher by the parent with whom the pupil normally resides. In separated families, the application must be accompanied by a letter of consent from the absent parent.

The Headteacher will only approve the request in *exceptional circumstances*. It is important to note that Headteachers can determine the length of the authorised absence as well as whether absence is authorised at all.

Unauthorised leave of absence will be reported to the Local Authority and may lead to prosecution under The Education Act 1996.

Further guidance can be found at <http://www.gov.uk>

Ways for parents to encourage attendance:

- Ensure that your child has the correct uniform and equipment .
- Ensure that school uniform, including PE kit, swimming kit, pens pencils are ready the night before. Encourage your child to help you to do this.
- Find out regularly your child's absence and keep you own record.
- Talk regularly with your child about school and how they feel about it. Children are more likely to attend if they feel supported and parents speak positively about the school and their class teacher. If you have any concerns speak to the school about them rather than share them with your child.
- Phone the school as soon as possible to tell them of any absence and when you expect your child to return.
- Only allow days at home for genuine illness.
- Avoid any absence from school for reasons other than your child's illness.
- Have good routines at home to ensure homework is completed and know the school day routines.
- Praise and reward good attendance: even small successes eg going in to school promptly.

Other tips to help secure good attendance:

- If there is a problem with your child's attendance, talk calmly to your child and listen to the explanation. There is always an explanation. It may seem trivial to you but it's serious enough to make your child anxious.

- Talk to the school to resolve issues. They may be able to help and support you and your child. You are not alone.
- Be particularly watchful and supportive in the run up to tests and aware of homework deadlines.
- Check homework activities and 'hand ins' regularly for gaps as well as completed activities
- Help them catch up with missed work – a missed day doesn't mean missed work.
- Remember to praise your child.

Appendix B



Date.....

Dear

I notice from the year register that has now been late to school on 10 occasions.

Punctuality is extremely important in school as lateness not only disrupts the learning of your child but also the rest of the class. Settling work starts as soon as children enter the classroom. Although a few minutes may not seem long, 5 minutes lateness per day amounts to 25 minutes per week adding up to over 3 whole weeks in the year. It is also important to instil in your child good habits and discipline for their independence in the future.

If you would like a copy of the school's attendance and punctuality policy, it is available on the school website or I would be pleased to let you have a copy.

I hope you are able to resolve the situation to ensure arrives on time from now on.

Yours sincerely,

Headteacher
For and on behalf of the Governing Body of St Mary & St John C.E.V.A. Primary School



Appendix C

Date.....

Dear

I am writing to alert you that’s attendance has dropped below the trigger point of 96% according to our data.

.....’s record shows sessions (half days) and unauthorised sessions (due to lateness after register closed/holiday/unexplained/other) of schooling has been missed this academic year.

Therefore, the local authority, the Governors and I will be monitoring’s attendance closely.

Regular and punctual attendance is both a legal requirement and essential for your child to maximise their educational opportunities.

Attendance can be summarised as:

99%+	Less than 2 days absence in the year	Excellent - meeting high standards of expectation – attendance at this level will ensure your child is enjoying and achieving along with their peers
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96% – 97.4%	More than 8 days absence in the year	Below Expected – this level of attendance will now be negatively impacting on your child’s learning. You should now be working with the school to improve this attendance
91% – 95.9%	More than 17 days absence in a year	Causing concern – the cumulative effect of this level of absence could now impact on your child’s overall levels at SATS and up to GCSE if not addressed
90% or below	More than 19 days absence in a year	Serious concern – your child is now falling into ‘persistent absence’. It is affecting attainment and progress and may lead to your prosecution for failing to ensure your child’s regular attendance at school. Unless medical evidence is provided it is likely that all further absence will now be unauthorised

A copy of the school’s attendance and punctuality policy is available on the school website. Alternatively, I would be pleased to let you have a paper copy on request.

I appreciate the absence(s) may have been unavoidable due to severe or ongoing illness or other medical needs requiring substantial recovery time. If this is the case, please ensure the school has been informed if you have not already done so. If this is not the case and there is anything that is impacting on’s regular attendance and you would like to discuss this so that we might support you and, please make an appointment to see me.

Yours sincerely,

Headteacher

For and on behalf of the Governing Body of St Mary & St John C.E.V.A. Primary School



Appendix D

Date.....

Dear,

I am aware that during this term, you removed your child/ren from school for a family holiday from to which was not authorised.

I must now make you aware that I will be advising the School Inclusion Officer for the local authority of this absence in order that it is recorded formally on the attendance records.

In line with Government policy, I will be discussing the possibility of sanctions for unauthorised absences with the school's Governing Body, who will consider issuing penalty notices should this type of absence be repeated in the future.

When the LA has issued a Penalty Notice in respect of unauthorised absence, this is both Term Time Leave of Absence and other absence, should there be a repeat offence the Penalty details will be forwarded to the Leicestershire Police for inclusion on the NPC. This is recorded as an offence against a child and will show up on DBS checks requested by Parents for support in their work role. This may prevent them from working with children.

Yours sincerely,

Headteacher
For and on behalf of the Governing Body of St Mary & St John C.E.V.A. Primary School