

St. Mary of the Angels Catholic Primary School

Attendance Policy

Recognising and celebrating the presence of Christ in one another

- ♦ St Mary of the Angels Catholic Primary School aims to be a positive force within the Catholic Church inspired by the life of Christ in the Gospel.
- ♦ The school is committed to the widest and fullest education with ambition for all pupils in a partnership between home, school, parish and community.
- ♦ The school aims to create a happy, ordered environment where all members feel secure and valued.



Attendance Policy

Current date approved:	September 2023
Approved by:	Full Governing body
Date of Next review:	September 2025

Aims of the Policy and Expectations

St. Mary of the Angels is a Roman Catholic Voluntary Aided School where the practice of the faith is fundamental to the whole life of our community. We offer a Primary education to children aged 3 - 11 years. Our School aims to provide the highest standard of Catholic education by living the Mission Statement through our caring code and promoting a respect and understanding for the cultural and religious principles of others.

Every pupil is entitled to access a full-time education. The school firmly believe that all pupils benefit from regular school attendance, educationally, socially and developmentally. It is important for all children to ensure continuity and progression in their education and prevent underachievement. Pupils cannot achieve their full potential if they do not regularly attend school. It is also an integral part of our safeguarding responsibility at St Mary's and therefore is monitored with vigilance by all. We employ strategies to promote full attendance. We prioritise cultivating a safe and supportive environment, as well as strong and trusting relationships with pupils and parents. We will do all we can to encourage parents to ensure that the children in their care achieve maximum possible attendance and that any problems that prevent full attendance are identified and acted on promptly.

At St Mary's Catholic Primary School, we expect all of our pupils to want to come to school. They should want to come because they will find a welcoming environment which is bright and stimulating; the curriculum is relevant and interesting, good behaviour is praised and everyone feels valued and secure.

The school has a duty to make our children's time at school interesting and worthwhile. Parents have a duty to make sure that their children attend. The school is committed to working with parents as the best way to ensure a high level of attendance in line with our Mission Statement outlined above. We aim to promote effective partnership between school and parents and promote attendance and punctuality as achievements.

The school has a legal duty to publish its absence figures to parents and to promote attendance. Parents will receive information in their child's report detailing their attendance record. Attendance will also be referenced at parents' evenings. Good attendance is rewarded by verbal praise and recognition during the year and by individual recognition at the end of the year for those achieving 96%+ attendance or improved attendance, as well as a weekly class award presented in assembly. The suggestions of parents and children about how to encourage attendance are especially welcome.

Roles and Responsibilities:

The Governing Body

The governing body is responsible for:

- Monitoring the implementation of this policy and all relevant procedures across school
- Ensuring that this policy, as written, does not discriminate on any grounds
- Promoting the importance of good attendance through the school's ethos and policies
- Ensuring staff receive attendance training relevant and appropriate to their role
- Regularly reviewing attendance data and support the SLT in setting goals and prioritising areas of focus for attendance support based on data
- Ensuring school leaders fulfil expectations and statutory duties and providing support and challenge on attendance

The Headteacher

The headteacher is responsible for:

- Implementation of this policy

- Monitoring school level attendance data and reporting it as appropriate, identifying areas of intervention and improvement
- Supporting staff with monitoring the attendance of individual pupils
- Monitoring the impact of any attendance strategies
- Work closely with the attendance officer
- Ensure parents are aware of the school's attendance expectations and procedures and their legal duty to ensure that their child attends school regularly and to facilitate their child's legal right to a full-time education
- Ensure that every pupil has access to full-time education and act as early as possible to address patterns of absence or barriers to attendance
- Ensuring communication with parents takes place to discuss attendance issues
- Oversee targeted intervention and support to pupils and families
- Ensure that staff receive training in identifying potentially at-risk pupils, the legal requirements on schools, school strategies and procedures for monitoring and improving attendance and that increased absence from school could indicate a safeguarding concern and how such concerns should be managed

Staff

Staff are responsible for:

- Following this policy
- Modelling good attendance behaviour and promoting the importance of good attendance
- Using their professional judgement and knowledge of individual pupils to inform decisions as to whether welfare concerns should be escalated
- Where designated, ensure the attendance register is completed at relevant times during the school day using the DfE attendance codes (See a full explanation of the codes in this document: [Working together to improve school attendance - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/61221/Working_together_to_improve_school_attendance.pdf))
- Office staff are responsible for communicating with parents about absence on a day-to-day basis and record it on the school system

The Education Welfare Officer

The EWO is responsible for:

- Supporting analysis of registers and liaising with SLT and office staff regarding any concerns
- Supporting the school in contacting parents, scheduling attendance review meetings and completing welfare checks where appropriate
- Perform 'late gate' exercises, greeting arrivals at the school gates and noting any late attendees.
- The EWO and the school will follow Education Walsall's guidance and policy in relation to penalty notices being issued

Parents

Parents are responsible for:

- Providing accurate and up-to-date contact details, including ideally four, but a minimum of two emergency contact numbers
- Promoting good attendance with their children
- Making sure their child attends school every day on time by 8:45am
- Contact the school via telephone (leaving a voice message if necessary) to report their child's absence before 9am on the first day of absence and each subsequent day of absence and advise when they are expected to return
- Ensure that, where possible, appointments for their child are made outside of the school day

Punctuality

Staff will open the gate and supervise children from 8:40am. The school day starts at 8:45am. Pupils arriving after the gates close at 8:55am, must be brought to the main school office by their parents.

The morning register will close at 9:00am. Pupils arriving after the register closes will receive a late mark – parents will be asked the reason for the lateness at the school entrance. The afternoon register takes place between 12:45pm and 1:30pm, dependent on the end of lunchtime for each class. It is important for a child's wellbeing, education and future that they understand the importance of arriving on time. If lateness is a recurring issue and persists, then the school will write to the parents and then contact the parents for a meeting. If no improvement is noticed approximately one month later, the EWO will also contact the parents.

Absence Procedures

Parents are required to contact the school office via telephone before 9am on the child's first day of absence. They will be expected to provide a specific explanation for the absence and an estimation of how long the absence will last.

Where a pupil is absent and their parent has not contacted the school by 9:30am to report the absence, administrative staff will contact the parent as soon as is practicable on the first day they do not attend school. If no contact can be made, they will try all of the contacts on the child's record, until they are able to establish the reason for absence. If contact cannot be established, this will be escalated to the Senior Leadership Team who will make the Education Welfare Officer aware of the situation. They will also try to make contact with the parent. If there is no contact made with parent, a home visit will take place on the third school day of absence made by two staff members. A letter will be posted asking the parent to make contact. If no contact can be established, this will be escalated to the local authority, safeguarding services and /or local police to ensure the child is safe and well. (See Walsall children absent from education guidance: [One Minute Guides \(mywalsall.org\)](https://www.mywalsall.org/OneMinuteGuides) and DfE Guidance: [Stat guidance template \(publishing.service.gov.uk\)](https://publishing.service.gov.uk/guidance/6441643/stat-guidance-template) as well as KCSIE.)

The school will always follow up on any absences in order to:

- Ascertain the reason for absence
- Ensure the proper safeguarding action is being taken
- Identify whether the absence is authorised or not
- Identify the correct code to use to enter the data onto the school system – SIMS

The school will not request medical evidence in most circumstances where a pupil is absent due to illness; however, the school reserves the right to request supporting evidence where there are existing concerns about the child's attendance (generally, this will be when attendance has fallen below 90%) or where there is genuine and reasonable doubt about the authenticity of the illness.

We encourage parents to make medical and dental appointments outside of school hours where possible. All unavoidable appointment times should be communicated to the office staff via the Postbox email or telephone. The absence will be counted as authorised if the school are notified in advance and the parent can provide a copy of the appointment letter / card / message. The pupil should be taken out of school for the minimum time necessary.

Parental Absence Requests

Absence requests can be made to the headteacher, via the school postbox email address. The headteacher will only grant leave of absence to a pupil during term time if they consider there to be 'exceptional circumstances'. A leave of absence is granted at the discretion of the headteacher, including the length of time the pupil is authorised to be absent for. Each application will be considered individually, taking into account the specific facts, circumstances, previous attendance record and relevant context behind the request.

Any request should be submitted as soon as it is anticipated and, where possible, at least two weeks before the absence. The headteacher may require evidence to support any request for leave of absence.

Valid reasons for authorised absence may include: illness and medical appointments, family bereavement and funerals, religious observance (where the day is exclusively set apart for religious observance by the religious body to which the child's parent(s) belong. If necessary, the school will seek advice from the parents' religious body.

Family holidays are not considered to be an exceptional circumstance, neither are birthdays/treats or family parties, visiting relatives or friends, spectating at events, looking after unwell family members, parental work circumstances or parental access arrangements.

If term-time leave is not granted, the absence will be recorded as an unauthorised absence and may result sanctions, such as a penalty notice.

We do not permit parents to take their child away from the school premises during lunch times. However, if there are exceptional circumstances, parents may seek permission from the headteacher. It is at the headteacher's discretion as to whether this permission be granted.

Legal Sanctions

The school or local authority can fine parents for the unauthorised absence of their child from school, where the child is of compulsory school age. If issued with a fine, or penalty notice, each parent must pay £60 within 21 days or £120 within 28 days. The payment must be made directly to the local authority. Penalty notices can be issued by a headteacher, the local authority or the police.

The decision on whether or not to issue a penalty notice may take into account:

- The number of authorised absences occurring within a rolling academic year
- One-off instances of irregular attendance, such as holidays taken in term time without permission
- Where an excluded pupil is found in a public place during school hours without a justifiable reason

If the payment has not been made within 28 days, the local authority can decide whether to prosecute or withdraw the notice.

SEND and Health Related Absences

The school recognises that pupils with SEND and/or health conditions, including mental health issues, may face greater barriers to attendance than their peers, and will incorporate robust procedures to support pupils who find attending school difficult. In line with the SEND Policy and Supporting Pupils with Medical Conditions Policy, the school will ensure that reasonable adjustments are made for disabled pupils to reduce barriers to attendance, in line with any EHC plans that have been implemented. The school will secure additional support from external partners to help bolster attendance where appropriate.

Where the school has concerns that a pupil's non-attendance may be related to mental health issues, parents will be contacted to discuss the issue and whether there are any contributory factors to their child's lack of attendance. Where staff have a mental health concern about a pupil that is also a safeguarding concern, they will inform the Designated Safeguarding Lead and the Child Protection and Safeguarding Policy will be followed. All pupils will be supported with their mental health and a referral to our school Pastoral Lead may take place as necessary.

If a pupil is unable to attend school for long periods of time due to their health, the school will:

- Inform the LA if a pupil is likely to be away from the school for more than 15 school days.
- Provide the LA with information about the pupil's needs, capabilities and programme of work.
- Help the pupil reintegrate at school when they return.

- Make sure the pupil is kept informed about school events and clubs.
- Encourage the pupil to stay in contact with other pupils during their absence.

The school will incorporate an action plan to help any pupils with SEND and/or health issues cope with the stress and anxiety that attending school may cause them. Such plans will be regularly monitored and reviewed until the pupil is attending school as normal and there has been signs of significant improvement.

To support the attendance of pupils with SEND and/or health issues, the school will consider:

- Holding regular meetings to evaluate any implemented reasonable adjustments.
- Incorporating a pastoral support plan.
- Carrying out strengths and difficulties questionnaire.
- Identifying pupils' unmet needs through assessment
- Using an internal or external specialist.
- Enabling a pupil to have a reduced timetable.
- Ensuring a pupil can have somewhere quiet to spend lunch and breaktimes.
- Phased returns to school where there has been a long absence.
- Assessing whether any additional needs are impacting upon attendance and offering tailored support to meet their individual needs.

Attendance Monitoring

Attendance and absence data is monitored by the school admin staff with any concerns escalated to the senior leadership team. Fortnightly meetings are held in school with the local authority Education Welfare Officer (EWO).

The school will monitor attendance at a pupil level and identify whether or not there are particular groups of children whose absences may be a cause for concern. Pupil-level absence data will be collected each term and published at national and local authority level through the DfE's school absence national statistics releases. The underlying school-level absence data is published alongside the national statistics. The school will compare attendance data to the national average, and share this with the governing board. School will also monitor individual year groups, individual pupils, demographic groups (where this group is 5% or more of the pupil numbers), pupils with SEND, Looked after Children and children eligible for pupil premium.

Monitoring may include:

- Patterns in use of certain codes
- Particular days of poor attendance
- Historic trends of attendance and absence
- Barriers to attendance

The school will analyse attendance and absence data regularly to identify pupils or cohorts that need additional support with their attendance, and use this analysis to provide targeted support to these pupils and their families. We will look at historic and emerging patterns of attendance and absence, and then develop evidence based strategies to address these patterns. We will always take into account the sensitivity of some of the reasons for pupil absence and will approach families to offer support. The school will provide regular attendance reports to class teachers and other school leaders, to facilitate discussions with pupils and families and use data to monitor and evaluate the impact of any interventions put in place in order to modify them and inform future strategies.

The following monitoring arrangements will be used to ensure attendance is 95% or more:

- Any member of staff concerned about a pupil's attendance should report their concerns to the DSL/Headteacher, logging the information electronically, to allow them to take the appropriate action.
- The School Administrator will print off an overview of every class attendance weekly and give it to the Headteacher for monitoring.
- Parents of children whose attendance falls below 92% (pupils at risk of persistent absence) will be monitored and informed via letter pointing out their child's attendance patterns. A printout will be attached. This will take place at least termly. Referrals to the school nurse will be considered for those children with an attendance rate below 92% due to health related absences and medical evidence will be required to be presented to school.
- Parents of children whose attendance falls below 90% or whose attendance has not improved since previous monitoring, will then be either contacted by phone/email or invited, by letter, to discuss any problems and look at strategies for improvement either in school. This may include communication with the school's EWO in school, or a visit made to the home. Medical evidence of absences will be requested.
- Good attendance will be encouraged in school. Pupils who achieve excellent attendance or improved attendance will receive recognition, to celebrate achievement. Individual classes will also be celebrated for good attendance.

Reducing Persistent and Severe Absence

Persistent absence is where a pupil misses 10% or more of school, and severe absence is where a pupil misses 50% or more of school.

The school will use attendance data to find patterns and trends of persistent and severe absence and hold regular meetings with the parents of pupils who the school (and/or local authority) considers to be vulnerable, or are persistently or severely absent, to discuss attendance and engagement at school. School and the Education Welfare Officer can provide access to wider support services to remove the barriers to attendance.

The school will allow sufficient time for attendance interventions and engagement strategies to improve pupils' attendance ; however, where these do not have the desired effect and attendance falls below 90%, school will engage with the Local Authority Education Welfare Officer, as part of our safeguarding responsibility, to assist in supporting the child and the parents to return to good attendance as quickly as possible. This can result in a need for a School Attendance Review Meeting with senior staff and parents present. Should persistent absence continue to affect a child's education, the Local Authority will pursue the non-attendance more formally which can often result in court attendance and fines.

Arrival and Collection Procedures

The official start and finish times for the schools are detailed in the relevant school prospectus that can be found on the school website. As a guide, the school day starts at 8.45am and finishes at 3.15pm. The main school entrances are opened at 8.40am for children to enter school. Children should enter the school via the specific arrangements for that particular year group – this will be communicated at the beginning of each school year.

Children arriving before the start of the school day are the responsibility of their parents/carers. Where school has concerns regarding children being left unsupervised before the school entrances are opened, parents will be contacted accordingly. This is particularly the case for children younger than 10 years old. From 8.40am onwards, there will always be a member of school staff supervising each gate entrance and helping safeguard children. Parents/carers are encouraged to pass on any messages to any of the staff on the gates themselves or via the school office.

School gates will be locked at 8:55am each morning; any late arrivals should enter school via the main school office.

Collection arrangements for children will be communicated at the beginning of each school year as relevant for their specific year group. For most year groups, the dismissal process will involve teachers making eye contact with the respective parent (or agreed 'collector') before releasing the child to them. This will be conducted as swiftly but safely as possible. Children attending the After School Club will be subject to the specific arrangements of the club for both school arrival and school collection. For older children, those of year six age, parents may consent for their child to walk home unaccompanied. For this to take place, written parental consent is requested (preferably via email) to be maintained on the school file.

Late collection: It is both distressing and upsetting for children when they are collected late. Whilst it is in the best interests of children for them to be collected promptly. Any children collected after a ten-minute window will be recorded as having been collected late and this will be logged on their educational record / in the late book and this will be reviewed at professional meetings. On the rare occasions that it be required, it is the responsibility of parents to contact school and advise if they are running late. Any children not collected by 3.25pm will be taken to the school office by their teacher and will be asked to sit in the entrance area. A designated safeguarding leader (DSL) will then determine the necessary course of action in accordance with local authority safeguarding procedures. In the first instance, this will certainly result in attempted contact with parents via the teacher, and then additional contacts logged on the child's record. A DSL may determine it appropriate for the child to be cared for in the After School Club, with parents incurring the costs of this childcare as per the charges of the club.

It is essential that parents ensure that school has the most current contact details for at least two contacts who are able to care for the child. If the child has not been collected after one hour and no contact has been made, the DSL may then determine it necessary to contact Walsall Safeguarding Services or to refer the matter to the police where contact has been unsuccessful. School will write to the child's home informing the parent of the actions taken to safeguard their child. A full report of the incident will be written and placed in the child's school file.

Frequent lateness is unacceptable and may be indicative of neglect as is detailed in the school's safeguarding and child protection policy. If a child is frequently collected late, a letter will be sent home with arrangements to discuss the issue with parents and may result in a referral being made or additional support being sought through the local authority's early help support mechanism. If no improvement is made, a further letter will be sent home and a referral made to the Educational Welfare Officer.

Information regarding the collection of pupils and nominated collector. UNDER NO CIRCUMSTANCES ARE CHILDREN ALLOWED OFF THE PREMISES WITH ANYONE OTHER THAN AUTHORISED COLLECTORS i.e. THOSE SPECIFIED BY PARENTS OR LEGAL GUARDIANS. Parents must share with school the authorised collectors of their child and if there are any changes to these arrangements, parents need to inform the school immediately either by contacting the school office, or by writing to the class teacher. In cases where the new "collector" is unknown to the school, the school will ask for an introduction to the new "collector" to ensure they know by sight who is collecting the child. (It is the parent's/carer's responsibility to ensure the school knows who will be picking up their child.) If this introduction is not possible, school will request appropriate security measures are applied, usually requiring the agreeing of a photograph of the person and/or a password to ensure the safe collection of children.

All parents/carers need to be aware that school will always err on the side of caution and if needs be, will delay the collection of the child in question until the member of staff is completely satisfied. If there is a request for a specific person NOT to be allowed to collect a child (e.g. in child protection or child custody cases), legal written instructions must be provided to the school by the parents so that the school is fully informed. Where legal instructions are not provided, school will endeavour to ensure that the request is complied with as part of its safeguarding responsibilities to all children. Parents need to be aware though that with no legal written instructions, the school cannot legally prevent the child being collected by someone who has parental responsibility for them.

Conclusion

The school will work to cultivate strong, respectful relationships with parents and families to ensure their trust and engagement. Open and honest communication will be maintained with pupils and their families about the expectations of school life, attendance and performance so that they understand what to expect and what is expected of them. The school will liaise with other agencies working with pupils and their families to support attendance.

Parents should feel supported by the school's Attendance Policy. Parents should be aware of the attendance monitoring procedures in place and of actions that will be taken to address poor attendance/punctuality. Parents are welcome to discuss attendance concerns with the class teacher, headteacher or the EWO (contact details from the school office), whenever they feel it is appropriate. The school's policy should be conveyed to the parents by the school prospectus, website, information/newsletters and by talking to them as and when appropriate.