

St. Mary of the Angels Catholic Primary School Attendance Policy

Mission Statement

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 of all pupils in a partnership between home, school, parish and the community.*
- ♦ *The school aims to create a happy, ordered environment where all members feel secure and valued.*

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.

Regular school attendance for all children is important to ensure continuity and progression in their education. It is a school's responsibility to monitor and actively pursue the goal of regular attendance. The school should use strategies to promote full attendance, with 90% being a minimum expectation for pupils before intervention is sought.

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.

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. Good attendance is rewarded by verbal praise and recognition during the year and by individual certificates and stickers termly for those achieving 98%+ attendance. The suggestions of parents and children about how to encourage attendance are especially welcome.

Parents

The school requires the following support from parents and legal guardians:

Your child should come to school every day. When children are absent from school, they are classed as authorised or unauthorised.

Authorised absence are mornings or afternoons away from school for a good reason e.g. illness or other unavoidable causes.

Unauthorised absences are those which the school does not consider reasonable and for which no "leave" has been given. This includes keeping children off school for trivial reasons, term time holidays other than in exceptional and unavoidable circumstances and absences which have not been properly explained. Providing a note may not be sufficient if the reason given is not "unavoidable".

Amendments to the Education Regulations mean that since September 2013 Head Teachers "may not authorise any leave of absence during term time unless there are exceptional Circumstances". Exceptional circumstances do not include family holidays, visiting relatives or friends, spectating at sporting or other events, looking after unwell family members, baby sitting

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younger family members, birthdays or shopping, parental work circumstances, parental access arrangements, treats, schools having holidays at different times etc. If you choose to take your child out of school during term time without leave of absence being granted then it will be recorded as an unauthorised absence on the school register.

If you consider that a request for leave of absence during term time is for 'exceptional circumstances' then a written request should be made in advance of the date requested to the Head Teacher on a form available from the school office, stating the exceptional circumstances.

Where attendance falls below 90%, school will engage with the Local Authority Education Welfare Officer 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 an Attendance 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.

Late arrivals

Arrival after the register closes at 9.05am is classed as a Late arrival. Late arrival can cause a child to be very anxious and reluctant to come to school for fear of being different or at fault. Where possible, parents are encouraged to ensure prompt arrival in school, encouraging good habits for the future in their children.

Dental and GP appointments during the school day will only be authorised in exceptional circumstances such as for emergency or orthodontic treatment. Proof must be provided of all such medical, dental or hospital appointments and we would request that parents try to arrange any hospital appointments for school holidays or, if more urgent, the start or the end of the school day.

We encourage parents to be honest with us, even if we cannot authorise the request as children are not comfortable when keeping secrets.

Any problems about attendance are best sorted out between the school, parents and the child. It is better for parents not to give in to pressure from their child to excuse them from school. This gives the impression that attendance does not matter and may make things worse. When there are difficulties, parents are expected to contact school at an early stage and to work with the headteacher and support staff to resolve problems together. This is nearly always successful.

Procedures

The school applies the following procedures in deciding how to deal with individual absences:

Illness and other legitimate reasons

If a child is unfit for school, parents should contact the school as soon as possible – either by telephone or by sending a message by letter at the earliest opportunity.

If school does not receive notification of why a pupil is absent, parents will be contacted to provide an explanation and to provide information to explain where the child is on the day of absence. Frequent or long, unexplained absences, from school, will result in the school referring the matter to the Educational Welfare Officer (EWO) who will then visit children and parents at home. Where a child's attendance falls below 90%, the Educational Welfare Officer will also be informed and may contact the family. Should there be frequent absence for illness, the school may request proof of illness; where this is not provided, the absence will be recorded as unauthorised.

Registration

The school, at present, uses a computerised registration system. The register is taken electronically at the start of each morning and afternoon.

Data is sent remotely to the Office.

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- (1) Staff should ensure there is a mark in the box for each child present for each session
- (2) Registers are marked at the start of the morning and afternoon sessions and closed at 9.05am and 1.25pm.
- (3) The Office staff update absence data daily, following first day calling and by checking late book entries, letters, verbal and phone messages.
Codes for absence are applied using up to date DfE, guidance. Parents may be required to give the address where their child is not in school and the school may visit to check on the child's welfare.
- (4) Teachers should add a note to the register or inform the office if they have been informed of the reason for absence.

Authorised Absence

If an absence has been authorised, the appropriate coding, should be entered on the SIMS system. Where children are unable to attend due to bad weather and the reason for non-attendance seems reasonable, they will be given a Y code rather than an authorised absence mark. However, if it seems as if a child should have been able to come to school and children in similar circumstances are attending, an unauthorised absence mark will be given.

Unauthorised Absence

Where no explanation is given to a child's absence or if the school does not accept the explanation given, the absence must be recorded as unauthorised. Routine dental/medical appointments other than hospital Appointments, will manually be recorded as unauthorised. The class teacher and Head teacher have a duty to monitor each child's unauthorised absences.

Monitoring Attendance

It is important that the class teacher and the Headteacher monitor attendance and where necessary, involve the school's EWO. At present the school's EWO contacts the school fortnightly. The following monitoring arrangements will be used to ensure attendance is 95% or more.

- (i) Any member of staff concerned about a pupil's attendance should report their concerns to the Headteacher, who will take the appropriate action.
- (ii) The School Administrator will print off an overview of every class attendance monthly and give it to the Headteacher for monitoring or more frequently if there are concerns.
- (iii) Parents of children whose attendance falls below 92% will be sent a letter pointing out their child's attendance. A printout will be attached.
- (iv) Parents of children whose attendance falls below 90% whose attendance has not improved since previous monitoring will then be either contacted by phone or invited, by letter, to discuss any problems and look at strategies for improvement either in school, with the school's EWO in school or a visit made to the home. Any attendance printout will be attached
- (v) Good attendance will be encouraged in school. Pupils who achieve 100% will receive certificates on an annual basis, and stickers each term, to celebrate achievement.

Holidays

Holiday leave in term time should be avoided at all times and cannot be authorised unless it is classed as an exceptional circumstance. In the event of exceptional circumstances, leave of absence may be requested on a holiday form completed by the parent in advance. Leave for up to 10 days per school year may be requested.

Parents must be aware that children who miss out on education suffer personal impact and are at an immediate disadvantage relative to their peers. The Governing Body of this school wish to emphasise the detrimental effect that this can have on your child's education.

Parents should also note that where an unauthorised holiday absence results in a child's attendance being below 90% on their return, this will result in a fixed penalty fine being taken by the Local Authority.

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Lateness

We actively discourage lateness by a pupil. Any child's lateness should be recorded in the school's lateness monitoring book. Children not arriving in class until after the register closes will be given a late mark. If lateness persists, then the school will contact the parent and if no improvement is noticed, the EWO. If the child arrives after the close of registration then he/she would have been initially marked absent. The office staff will amend the register. This is very important especially in the case of an evacuation of the building. Arriving after registration has closed without a good reason may be recorded as an unauthorised absence.

EWO/Other Agencies

The school's parent support worker should be involved, as soon as concerns arise regarding attendance/punctuality. The school's EWO needs to work closely with the school in monitoring attendance and lateness. It is important to fill in the EWO forms stating:-

- (a) Why the school wants the EWO to make a visit
- (b) What action the school has already taken.

This allows any follow up needing to take place by the EWO Service to be more structured. In the event of prosecution, the school's registers and documentation would be used.

The school will refer children to the school nurse, social services, or any other agency, where it is deemed appropriate, to offer support and guidance regarding attendance issues. This is done in collaboration with the EWO service.

The school and the EWO will always seek to resolve attendance difficulties by agreement but, if other ways of trying to improve a child's attendance have failed, these officers can use penalty notices or court proceedings to prosecute parents or to seek an education supervision order on the child.

Conclusion

Parents should feel supported and not threatened 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, support assistants, 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.

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S. W. Hines 23/9/19.