St Mary's RC Primary School

# Attendance and Punctuality Policy

Although parents have the primary responsibility for ensuring their child receives a suitable education, either by regular attendance at school or otherwise, St Mary's School recognises the very important part it has in ensuring pupils attend school regularly, in helping parents to ensure excellent attendance and punctuality and in maintaining up to date and thorough records on attendance and absence.

At St Mary's all pupils are expected to attend school for the full 190 days of the academic year unless they are unwell or there is an exceptional reason for absence which has been authorised by the Headteacher. Only by being present at school each day can pupils fully benefit from the broad range of educational experiences provided. Parents and school staff work together in partnership to ensure that every pupil has access to a full time education by attending school each day.

At St Mary's School we aim to achieve and maintain high standards in attendance and punctuality. The overall weekly attendance of pupils is consistently over 95%. The school aims for attendance to be over 96% each year and regularly achieves this aim.

Any absence during term time can seriously disrupt a pupil's continuity of learning. Not only do they miss out on the teaching provided on the day of absence, they are also less prepared for the lessons that take place when they return. Prolonged or persistent absence from school means that pupils do not make sufficient progress and ultimately do not reach their full potential.

**Promoting excellent attendance and punctuality**

At St Mary's we ensure that children want to come to school on time each day by providing a broad, balanced curriculum that interests and challenges children of all abilities. Our school is a welcoming place where each child is treasured as a unique person made in God's image.

We encourage excellent attendance and punctuality by:

- Clearly stating our high expectations to parents and pupils
- Explaining to parents and pupils why regular attendance at school is so important
- Meeting with parents where attendance or punctuality is a concern to discuss the situation and providing support and advice where necessary
- Discussing attendance and punctuality at parent meetings/ evenings and at other times if concerns arise
- Collecting and analysis attendance and punctuality data regularly and using the results to inform and improve our practice
- Publishing the results of attendance for each class in the weekly newsletter
- Congratulating the classes with the best attendance for the week at the whole school assembly.
- Awarding theses classes with the attendance mascots
- Awarding certificates at the end of the year for pupils with 100% attendance as part of our whole school certificate

**Parental Responsibility**

Parents have the prime responsibility for ensuring that registered pupils of compulsory school age attend school regularly and on time. It is desirable, therefore, that parents or carers should be the first line of contact whenever the child is absent from school. If a pupil does not attend regularly, the school will work closely with parents to resolve any issues before making a referral to the Educational Welfare Officer (EWO).

It is the parents', or carers', responsibility to contact the school by 10.00am on the first day of their child's absence, giving the reason for the absence. If the school does not receive notice from parents or carers, then school office staff will telephone to enquire as to why the child is not at school. The need for this action is noted on the child's records.

Where a child's attendance drops below 93%, the school will contact parents or carers to discuss the child's absence.

Where attendance drops below 93% without good reason, a referral to the Education Welfare Officer (EWO) may be made. Parents will also be contacted if a child is consistently late for school.

**Emergency contact information from parents**

Each September we request that parents complete an emergency contact form which allows us to contact parents if we have a concern or there is an emergency regarding their child. This could be because of illness, injury or non attendance or collection from school.

We ask for at least two telephone numbers for both mother and father, if applicable, and for the telephone number of an emergency contact we could go to if we are unable to reach the parents. This could be another relative (over 18) or a family friend or a childminder. We regularly ask parents to contact the school office if they need to tell us of any changes to this information.

**Concerns about pupil absence**

Where a child is deemed vulnerable and there has been no engagement from the parent /carer regarding the child's absence the school should consider visiting the parent and child at home. If contact is still not made, the school should inform the social worker or family support worker supporting the family (if in place) or should consider requesting a police welfare check, informing the police of their concerns and asking them to raise questions about school attendance.

**Pupil registration and lateness**

The Headteacher ensures that two registers are maintained. These are:-

- The admissions register - known as the school roll
- The attendance register

***The admissions register***

The Headteacher ensures that the admissions register, or school roll, is kept up to date and includes the names of all pupils registered at the school.

***The attendance register***

The Headteacher ensures that an attendance register for all pupils on role is taken twice a day; once at the start of the morning session and once during the afternoon session. This is a legal requirement.

Morning registration takes place at 9.00am for all classes.
Afternoon registration takes place at 1.15pm for Foundation Stage and Key Stage 1 pupils and 1.30pm for Key Stage 2 pupils.
Registration for nursery pupils takes place at 9.00am for the morning group and 12.30pm for the afternoon group.

For each pupil the register must be marked either as present, engaged in an approved educational activity away from the school site or absent.

If a pupil is absent without explanation once the register has been called, school administration staff will contact the parents as soon as possible (before 10 am for morning sessions) to establish the reason for this absence.

There are two types of absence. These are defined as:-

- **Authorised** (where the school approves the child's absence).
- **Unauthorised** (where the school does not approve the child's absence).

**Requests for pupil absence**

The DfE states that it is the Headteacher's decision to authorise an absence during term time but that she can only do so in 'exceptional circumstances'. Parents must write a letter, in advance, requesting permission and giving the reason for the absence. They must also provide, where possible, evidence to support their request. The Headteacher will then meet with parents to discuss the request. Requests for leave for family holidays will not be classed as 'exceptional circumstances'. Parents are advised to avoid booking family holidays, trips or events during term time.

In considering any request for absence in 'exceptional circumstances' the school will look at the individual circumstances and take account of:-

- The age of the pupil
- The time of year proposed for the trip
- Its nature and the parents' wishes
- The overall attendance pattern of the pupil
- The pupil's stage of education and their progress]

**Unauthorised absence**
If a pupil is absent for any reason without explanation or authorisation the absence is deemed to be unauthorised.

**Persistent absence**
The DFE defines persistence absence as school age pupils missing more than 10% of the sessions within an academic year. Therefore, any pupil attending for only 90% of the time, or less than 90%, will be considered to have persistent absence.

**Children at risk of missing education**

'All children, regardless of their circumstances, are entitled to a full time education which is suitable to their age, ability, aptitude and any special educational needs they may have. Children missing education (CME) are at significant risk of underachieving, being victims of abuse, and becoming NEET (not in education, employment or training) later on in life.' *DFE guidance Jan 2015*

All schools must inform their local authority of any pupil who is going to be deleted from the admissions register where they:

- Have been taken out of school by their parents and are being educated outside the school system eg home education;
- Have ceased to attend school and no longer live within reasonable distance of the school at which they are registered;
- Have a medical condition certified by the school medical officer that the pupil is unlikely to be in a fit state of health to attend school;
- Are in custody for a period of more than four months due to a final court order and the proprietor does not reasonably believe they will be returning to the school at the end of that period; or
- Have been permanently excluded.

When the school becomes aware that a deletion is to be made it will notify the local authority of the deletion. The school will inform the local authority of any pupil who fails to attend school regularly, or has been absent without the school's permission for a continuous period of 10 days or more.

Children Missing Education (CME) / Children at Risk of Sexual Exploitation (CSE) Process Map
– Please see appendix 1.

**Punctuality**
At St Mary's School we believe that being on time for school is essential for the continuity of education of all pupils. Pupils who are consistently late for school disrupt not only their own education but also that of others. Where persistent lateness gives cause for concern further action is taken.

**Register procedures**
St Mary's School begins at 9.00am and all pupils are expected to enter through the main pupil entrance and be in the school playground by **8.55am.**

Registers are marked at the beginning of each half day session. All children must be marked for each session.

Any child arriving after 9.00am is deemed to be late for school and should enter through the school's main visitor entrance. Children must report to the school officer and, if accompanied by a parent or carer, a reason should be given for this lateness.

**Persistent lateness**
In the first instance, parents of persistently late children receive a letter reminding them of the time school begins and of the importance of their children being punctual. If punctuality does not improve parents are issued a second letter inviting them to come and explain their child's persistent lateness to the Headteacher. If a pupil continues to be persistently late, parents may be issued with a Penalty Notice by the Lambeth Court's Officer.

### In summary: What is the responsibility of parents?

- Parents should support the school in its aim to improve attendance and punctuality
- Ensure that their child attends school every day
- Ensure that their child arrives on time for school every day

- If absence is unexpected, parents should contact the school before ten o'clock to report that their child is unwell and will not be attending
- Parents should contact the school on a daily basis to explain why their child cannot attend
- In some cases further evidence of a child's illness, such as a doctor's note may be requested
- Parents are asked to make all appointments, including medical and dental appointments, outside of the school day where possible.
- We ask that parents do not allow their children to have time off school unless it is an exceptional circumstance and has been requested in advance and authorised by the Headteacher.
- If parents have any concerns regarding their child's absence we ask that they speak to the child's teacher, the Inclusion Manager or the Headteacher.

# Appendix 1

Children Missing Education (CME) / Children at Risk of Sexual Exploitation (CSE) Process Map

| | ME | SE |
|---|---|---|
| ay 1 | hool to make first day absence calls / sends text messages | ntact parent and inform social worker if one is located/ preventative worker / school police ficer if applicable |
| ay 5 | hool to conduct reasonable checks ie a home visit, nergency contact numbers, letters. Where no contact can made with parent, school to write to parent and issue urt warning letter 1. | form local authority EWO. Where child is emed vulnerable and there has been no gagement from parent /carer, the school should nsider requesting a police welfare check, then the hool must inform the police of their concerns and k them to raise questions about school attendance. |
| ay 10 | hool to issue court warning letter 2 | cal authority EWO to conduct home visit tween day 5 – 10 and feed back to school and ofessionals, where no contact has been made. |
| ay 11 | here checks have been made by the school (i.e. phone lls, text messages, letters, contacting emergency numbers pplied by parents/ careers and home visits) and there is ll no response, the school should complete a CME ferral to the local authority EWO. | |
| ay -18 | cal authority EWO to carry out checks such as; ntacting admissions, home local authority where plicable, YOS, housing benefit and then feedback to hool and pupil tracking officer. | |
| ay )-21 | fter 20 consecutive days of absence and when the local thority has carried out its checks, the school can remove e pupil from the school roll. ff roll form to be sent to CME officer. | |

To note:

- Absence calls / text messages are to be carried out during the process
- If a pupil is found to be at home during the 10 days of absence, the school should consider a fine or escalate the case to the local authority court panel whilst considering a preventative service intervention
- Where there have been two episodes of 10 consecutive days of absence, schools should be escalating the case to the local authority court panel
- Where a case is complex, such as CP/CSE, case discussions should take place with local authority EWO
- Where an unauthorized term time holiday has been taken and the family have not returned on their stated day of return and it had been more than 10 school days, there should be a referral to the local authority EWO service

Further sources of information
For further information and advice please contact Patrick Ackason, Education Welfare Service Courts and Enforcement Manager.
020 7926 8626
packason@lambeth.gov.uk
DFE statutory guidance can be obtained from the www.gov.uk website.
https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/395138/Children_missing_education_Statutory_guidance_for_local_authorities.pdf