



Attendance Policy

Education opens a child's life chances. The more successful that education, the more confidence, insight and skill the child has to apply to the increasingly competitive and challenging world they will have to face.

At St Mary's Catholic Primary School, we want to work with parents and carers to ensure that all our children achieve their potential. For them to achieve this, it is essential that they attend school regularly. The vast majority of parents send their children in on time every day. This policy is in line with the 2013 Department for Education expectations. We expect children at this school to have attendance of **at least** 96% preferably higher.

Information for parents/carers:

- By law, you are responsible for making sure that your children are educated between the ages of 5 and 16.
- If your child is registered at school, he or she must go to school on time every day during term-time, unless there is a good reason (such as illness). If they do not go to school regularly, you may be fined.
- It is your responsibility to tell the school if your child cannot attend. Please see absence information below.
- If attendance problems do develop, the school will expect you to help their staff and the education welfare service to solve the problems.
- You do not have a right to take children on holiday in term-time and, by law, the school is unable to authorise term-time holidays unless there are exceptional circumstances.

Monitoring of Attendance and Punctuality

At St Mary's, we have a system to monitor the punctuality and attendance of all children and where there are concerns the school will contact parents to find a way forward to improve attendance and/or punctuality. Parents are, however, expected to contact the school to if there is a problem or medical condition that is likely to affect attendance.

Lateness

School starts at 8.50 am. Parents must make sure children are in school for the start of the day. If a child is late, they should report to the school office, so that the registers can be updated.

If a child arrives after 8.50 am and before 9.00 am, they will be marked as late. If a child arrives after 9:00, they will be marked as unauthorised late which is counted, by law, as an absence.

Absence – First Day Contact

If a child is not at school, by law, we have to find out the reason. If a child is unable to attend school, it is **the parent's responsibility to contact the school on the first day of absence** giving the reason for absence. Parents are required to telephone the school by 9.15am by leaving a message on the answer machine or send a note in with another family member or brother or sister. If the school does not hear from parents, it will try to make contact with them to confirm the reason for absence. The school may need to record the absence as unauthorised if the reason is not in line with school policy.

Medical Appointments during the School Day

Parents are requested to give their child a note with details of the times and reason to hand to the class teacher before the appointment. When collecting or returning their child from an appointment during the school day, parents must check them in and out at the office in order for the school to maintain an accurate register.

Children should only be taken out of school for **their own** appointment – not because another family member, etc. has an appointment. This includes collecting the child early so parents can attend an appointment for someone else.

Law

It is an **offence** under the 1996 Education Act if a child of compulsory school age fails to attend regularly at a school where they are registered and the parents are at risk of prosecution under the Act unless those absences have been authorised. As an alternative to prosecution, parents may be issued with a Fixed Penalty Notice (£60) which is issued under the Borough of Poole's Code of Conduct and is payable to the local authority. Under current regulations, parents may also be fined £60 each for each child if the parents allow the child to take unauthorised leave within term time. The regulations make it clear that the Headteacher may only grant leave for holidays in term time under "exceptional circumstances".

Leave during term time

All requests for leave of absence must be put in writing to the Headteacher, but will only be considered under **exceptional circumstances**. The Headteacher will ask for specific appropriate evidence. Only the parent the child resides with can make an application for a Leave of Absence. If Leave of Absence is taken without authorisation, it will be recorded as unauthorised. In this event, parents may also be subject to a Fixed Penalty Notice.

The table below gives examples of what may or may not be considered an exceptional circumstance.

Examples of Exceptional Circumstances (You may be asked to provide written evidence in certain circumstances)	Not Exceptional Circumstances (These are examples of reasons which are not deemed exceptional)
Return of parent from active service (Forces)	Cheaper holiday dates

Death or terminal illness of a parent, step-parent, sibling, grandparent	Attendance at a wedding or baptism
Young Carers	Visiting relatives either abroad or in the UK
Disability or Respite Leave	Limitations on parents' leave entitlements/dates

What is Authorised Absence

These are examples of absences we are allowed to authorise (at the school's discretion):

- Absence because of illness or treatment
- Absence for educational purposes
- Absence for family bereavement or approved public performance
- Absence for days of religious observance

Why is punctuality and regular attendance so vital?

Children who arrive late often feel anxious and unsettled about joining the class once the school day has begun and this can affect their concentration for a significant part of the morning. School starts at 8.50am and every pupil is expected to be at school before this time. If a child is just 10 minutes late every day this equates to missing nearly an hour of school each week, which is over 3 hours a month.

Learning takes place every day, with teachers planning lessons that build on what the children have already learnt. Missing time from these lessons will leave gaps in knowledge and understanding, which could place the child at a disadvantage.

There is a clear link between poor attendance at school and low achievement. Government figures show that:

- Of pupils who fall below 50% attendance, only 3% will achieve 5 A-C grades at GCSE (including Maths and English)
- Of pupils in the 80%-90% range, only 35% will achieve 5 A-C grades at GCSE (including Maths and English)
- Of pupils below 95%, only 73% will achieve 5 A-C grades at GCSE (including Maths and English)

Ratified by Governors: 11th June 2014

Review due: June 2017