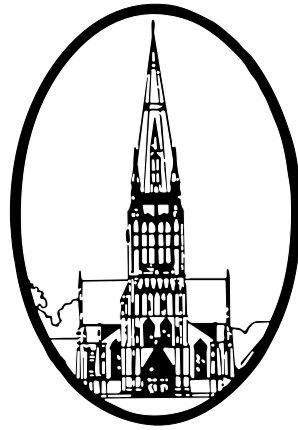


St. Mary's C. of E. Primary School

'Through God's love, we strive to be the best we can be.'



Attendance & Punctuality Policy

Revised: February 2017

Review date: February 2019

Mission Statement and Values

“Through God’s love, we strive to be the best we can be.”

St Mary’s is an inspiring and creative school which fosters a love of learning as well as developing skills for life. We strive to enhance every child’s moral, spiritual, intellectual, social and physical well-being and celebrate every child’s gifts.

As a faith school we hold **love** at the centre of all we do. This and the following values reflect the ethos of our school.

Respect – ourselves, each other and our environment

Courage – to stand up for what is right, overcome our fears and embrace new challenges

Truth – in the choices we make and our dealings with family, friends, school and community

Hope – that inspires us to look forward in confidence to a better life for all

Introduction

St Mary’s is a successful school and your child plays their part in making it so. We aim for an environment which enables and encourages all members of the community to strive to be the best they can be. For our children to gain the greatest benefit from their education it is vital that they attend regularly and your child should be at school, on time, every day the school is open unless the reason for the absence is unavoidable.

It is very important therefore that you make sure that your child attends regularly and this Policy sets out how together we will achieve this.

Why regular attendance is so important

Learning: – Any absence affects the pattern of a child’s schooling and regular absence will seriously affect their learning. Any pupil’s absence disrupts teaching routines so may affect the learning of others in the same class.

Ensuring your child’s regular attendance at school is your legal responsibility and permitting absence from school without a good reason creates an offence in law and may result in prosecution.

Safeguarding: – Your child may be at risk of harm if they do not attend school regularly. Safeguarding the interests of each child is everyone’s responsibility and within the context of this school, promoting the welfare and life opportunities for your child encompasses:-

Attendance
Behaviour Management
Health and Safety
Access to the Curriculum
Anti- bullying

Failing to attend this school on a regular basis will be considered as a safeguarding matter.

Promoting regular attendance

Helping to create a pattern of regular attendance is everybody's responsibility – parents, pupils and all members of school staff.

To help us all to focus on this we will:

- Give you details on attendance and punctuality in our weekly newsletter and on our website.
- Report to you at least termly on how your child is performing in school, what their attendance and punctuality rate is and how this relates to their attainments;
- Celebrate good attendance by displaying individual and class achievements on our website and weekly newsletter;
- Reward good or improving attendance through assemblies, certificates and events.

The Law relating to attendance

Section 7 of the Education Act 1996 states that *'the parent of every child of compulsory school age shall cause him / her to receive efficient full time education suitable:-*

- (a) to age, ability and aptitude and*
 - (b) to any special educational needs he/ she may have*
- Either by regular attendance at school or otherwise'*

The Law relating to safeguarding

Section 175 of the Education Act 2002 places a duty on local authorities and governing bodies to have regard to guidance issued by the Secretary of State with regard to safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children and students under the age of 18.

Understanding types of absence

Every half-day absence from school has to be classified by the school (not by the parents), as either AUTHORISED or UNAUTHORISED. This is why information and evidence about the cause of any absence is always required.

Authorised absences are mornings or afternoons away from school for a good reason like illness, medical/dental appointments which unavoidably fall in school time, emergencies or other unavoidable cause.

Unauthorised absences are those which the school does not consider reasonable and for which no "leave" has been given. This type of absence can lead to Hackney Learning Trust using sanctions and/or legal proceedings. This includes:

- Parents/carers keeping children off school unnecessarily
- truancy before or during the school day
- absences which have never been properly explained
- children who arrive at school too late to get a mark
- shopping, looking after other children or birthdays
- day trips and holidays in term time which have not been agreed.

Whilst any child may be off school because they are ill, sometimes they can be reluctant to attend school. Any problems with regular attendance are best sorted out between the school, the parents and the child. If your 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 usually make things worse.

Persistent Absenteeism (PA):

A pupil becomes a 'persistent absentee' when they miss 10% or more schooling across the school year for whatever reason. Absence at this level is doing considerable damage to any child's educational prospects and we need parents fullest support and co-operation to tackle this.

We monitor all absence thoroughly. Any case that is seen to have reached the PA mark or is at risk of moving towards that mark is given priority and you will be informed of this immediately.

PA pupils are tracked and monitored carefully by the Deputy Headteacher who is the School Attendance Officer. All PA cases are also automatically made known to the Hackney Learning Trust School Attendance Officer; Laurel Theodosiou (HLT Attendance Officer) works closely with St Mary's to monitor attendance and punctuality on a regular basis.

Absence Procedures:

If your child is absent you must:

- Contact us as soon as possible on the first day of absence;
- Send a note in on the first day they return with an explanation of the absence – you must do this even if you have already telephoned us;
- Or, you can call into school and report to reception, who will arrange for a member of staff to speak with you.
- Provide medical evidence (medical appointment card/GP/hospital note/prescription) for length absences (More than 3 days)

If your child is absent we will:

- Telephone you on the first day of absence if we have not heard from you;
- Invite you in to discuss the situation with our Attendance Officer/ Deputy Headteacher if absences persist;
- Refer the matter to the Hackney Learning Trust Education Attendance Officer if attendance moves below 85%.

Telephone numbers

There are times when we need to contact parents about lots of things, including absence, so we need to have your contact numbers at all times. So help us to help you and your child by making sure we always have an up to date number – if we don't then something important may be missed. There will be regular checks on telephone numbers throughout the year.

The School Attendance Officer

Parents 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 School Attendance Officer from Hackney Learning Trust. He/she will also try to resolve the situation by agreement but, if other ways of trying to improve the child's attendance have failed and unauthorised absences persist, these Officers can use sanctions such as Penalty Notices or prosecutions in the Magistrates Court. Full details of the options open to enforce attendance at school are available from the school or Hackney Learning Trust.

Alternatively, parents or children may wish to contact the SAO themselves to ask for help or information. They are independent of the school and will give impartial advice. Their telephone number is available from the school office or by contacting Hackney Learning Trust.

Lateness

Poor punctuality is not acceptable. If your child misses the start of the day they can miss work and do not spend time with their class teacher getting vital information and news for the day. Late arriving pupils also disrupt lessons, can be embarrassing for the child and can also encourage absence. Please be advised that lateness is recorded and specific codes attached depending on how late the child is.

How we manage lateness at St Mary's

The school day starts at **9am** and we expect your child to be in the classroom by **8.55am** ready to start lessons at **9am**. The school gate opens at **8.50am** to allow children time to get to their classrooms and be ready for their learning at **9am**. The school gate will close at **9am**, and children arriving after this time will enter school via the main reception- this indicates that your child is late and will be recorded as late on the register.

Registers are marked and sent to the main reception by **9am** and your child will receive a late mark if they are not in by that time.

At **9.25am** the registers will be closed. In accordance with the Regulations, if your child arrives after that time they will receive a mark that shows them to be on site, but this will **not** count as a present mark and it will mean they have an unauthorised absence. This may mean that you could face the possibility of a Penalty Notice if the problem persists.

If your child has 2 or more late marks in a week; a letter will be sent home as a reminder about the importance of regular attendance and punctuality.

If your child has a persistent late record you will be asked to meet with the Deputy Headteacher to resolve the problem, but you can approach us at any time if you are having problems getting your child to school on time.

If punctuality continues to be a cause for concern a referral will be made to the HLT Attendance officer.

Holidays in Term Time

Taking holidays in term time will affect your child's schooling as much as any other absence and we expect parents to help us by not to take children away in school time. Remember that any savings you think you may make by taking a holiday in school time are offset by the cost to your child's education.

There is **no** automatic entitlement in law to time off in school time to go on holiday.

All applications for leave must be made in advance (Form can be obtained from main reception or on the school website) and at the discretion of the school a maximum of 10 days in any academic year may be authorised. In making a decision the school will consider the circumstances of each application individually, including any previous pattern of leave in term time. It is important that you understand the circumstances when leave in term time will **not** be agreed by us:

- When a pupil is just starting the school. This is very important as your child needs to settle into their new environment as quickly as possible.
- Immediately before and during assessment periods (SATS) or any other public examinations.
- When a pupil's attendance record already includes any level of unauthorised absence.
- Where a pupil's attendance rate is already below (90%) or will fall to or below that level as a result of taking holiday leave.
- Where the request is not exceptional or has happened on previous occasions.

Any period of leave taken without the agreement of the school, or in excess of that agreed, will be classed as unauthorised and may attract sanctions such as a Penalty Notice.

St Mary's Attendance Target

The school has targets to improve attendance and your child has an important part to play in meeting these targets. St Mary's has high expectations for attendance which we have maintained for many years.

The minimum level of attendance for this school is 96% attendance and we will keep you updated regularly about progress to this level and how your child's attendance compares. Our target is to achieve better than this however because we know that good attendance is the key to successful schooling and we believe our pupils can be amongst the best in the city.

Through the school year we monitor absences and punctuality to show us where improvements need to be made.

Promoting Good Attendance and Punctuality

It is important to remember that the vast majority of children at St Mary's arrive to school on time and every day. An important part of our policy is that this good practise is commended and celebrated. In order to do this we:

We have two trophies, one for attendance and one for punctuality. The class with the best attendance for the week or the best punctuality are awarded the trophies in our weekly celebration assembly.

The classes with the best weekly attendance and punctuality are publicised in the school hall on the Attendance and Punctuality board. The results are also publicised in our weekly newsletter and on our school website.

Individual pupils with 100% attendance or 100% punctuality in a term are awarded with a certificate in our celebration assembly.

Pupils who achieve 100% attendance or 100% punctuality for the academic whole year will receive a certificate and a medal.

Summary

The school has a legal duty to publish its absence figures to parents and to promote attendance. Equally, parents have a duty to make sure that their children attend. All school staff are committed to working with parents and pupils as the best way to ensure as high a level of attendance as possible and that every child's welfare and life opportunities are promoted.