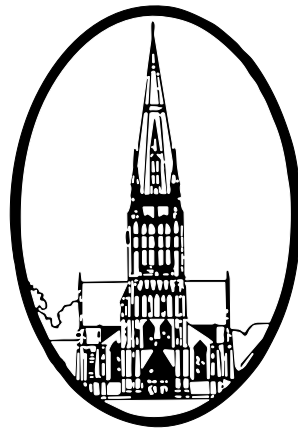


# St. Mary's C. of E. Primary School

*'Feeding the mind, body and spirit so we can be the best we can be.'*



## Attendance & Punctuality Policy

Revised: September 2022

Review date: September 2024

## Mission Statement and Values

*'Feeding the mind, body and spirit so we can be the best we can be.'*

We foster everyone's potential and hunger for learning by serving up a wonderful diet of generosity, sharing and a sense of belonging. We are here to serve our community and we welcome children from all faiths and none. Sit around the table at St Mary's and you will discover a warm welcome and a great community!

The Spiritual Values to which we aspire are:

**Kindness:** in treating others as we would want to be treated ourselves.

**Truth:** in the choices we make and in our dealings with family, friends, school and community.

**Courage:** to stand up for what is right, overcome our fears and aspire to make a positive change.

**Hope:** about the future and know that tomorrow can be even better than today.

**Love:** for ourselves and others, knowing that God loves us.

### **Introduction**

St Mary's is a successful school and your child plays a big part in making it so. Our mission statement '*St Mary's... feeding the mind, body and spirit so we can be best we can be.*' enables and encourages all members of our school 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 school regularly and on time every day, 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 in our 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, hospital appointments which unavoidably fall in school time, emergencies or other unavoidable cause.

Unauthorised absences are those which the school does not consider reasonable (such as medical/ dentist appointments that could be made for after school, school holidays.) and for which no "leave" has been given. This type of absence can lead to Hackney Education using sanctions and/or legal proceedings. This includes:

- Parents/carers keeping children off school unnecessarily – this can be due to child care arrangements, to look after siblings or relatives, attend appointments for other family members or because parents are unwell.
- truancy before or during the school day
- absences which have never been properly explained
- children who arrive at school after 9.10am which results in an unauthorised mark in the register.
- 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 parent's 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 Synergy and

Education Welfare Service (SEWS ) service who work closely with St Mary's to monitor attendance and punctuality on a weekly basis.

### **Absence Procedures:**

Following some high profile cases nationally, where schools have not followed up on absences and children have then come to harm, we as a school have had to implement new procedures. This is part of our safeguarding policy, in line with the statutory Government Guidance 'Keeping Children Safe in Education 2022' and Hackney Education expectations. We are aware that these procedures may seem extreme, but we are following a national approach to maintain children's safety and have to have these robust systems in place. The following measures will be taken in order to adhere to these systems.

### **If your child is absent you must:**

- Contact school by 8.50am on the first day of absence and on each additional day your child is absent;
- Provide medical evidence (medical appointment card/GP/hospital note/prescription) for length absences (More than 3 days)
- It is also your duty to routinely make sure we have three up-to-date phone numbers logged on our system so that we can contact a family member in the event of an absence or an emergency.

### **If your child is absent the immediate steps we will take are:**

(Please see Appendix I for Child missing in Education Procedures)

- Telephone you or any named contact before 9.30am on the first day of absence if we have not heard from you; we may ask Children's Social Care for advice.
- If we still do not hear from you by the following day and we still cannot contact you by phone, **we will** speak to Children's Social Care for advice and **we will** carry out a home visit.
- If on day 3 we have still not managed to speak or see you then **we will** contact Children's Social Care whose advice in these situations is to contact the police who will then take further action.

### **If absences persist we will:**

- Invite you in to discuss the situation with Synergy Education and Welfare Service/ Deputy Headteacher
- Refer the matter to the Synergy Education and Welfare Service if attendance moves below 90%.

### **Telephone numbers**

There are times when we need to contact parents about lots of things, including absence, so please make sure we have three up-to-date phone numbers logged on our system so that we can contact a family member in the event of an absence or an emergency.

## The School Attendance Service

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 Synergy Education and Welfare Services. They 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, Synergy Education and Welfare Service 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 Hackney Education.

Alternatively, parents or children may wish to contact Synergy Education and Welfare Service 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 on our website.

## 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. But please remember that even if your child arrives to school at **8.59am** they will more than likely be marked as late as they have to make their way to the classroom, take off their coat and enter the room. By this time the register may have already been sent to the office.

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 **9.10am** 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 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 Synergy Education and Welfare Service

### **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. It is also attached to policy as Appendix 2) 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 (95%) 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 97% attendance and we will keep you updated 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 achieve this.

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:

The class with the best attendance for the week or the best punctuality are acknowledge and celebrated in our weekly celebration assembly.

The classes with the best weekly attendance and punctuality are 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 and a letter is also sent home to parents/carers.

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

### **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.



## Appendix I

### Child Missing In Education Procedures

In order to maintain the safety of each individual child, school will adhere to the following systems. This links to both the Safeguarding and Attendance Policy.

#### School will:

Ask all parents to take responsibility for school having three up-to-date contact numbers at all times

Give the opportunity to all parents to update their details. This will take place at 'Meet the Teacher,' and at the Autumn and Spring parent's evenings.

Remind parents half termly in the newsletter to update their contact details with the office

Provide a Leavers Form for parents to complete if their child is going to a new school.

#### Parents will:

Be responsible for giving school at least three up-to-date contact numbers and an email address and inform them if these details change.

Phone school by 8:50 each morning if their child will not be in school that day and give a reason for their absence.

Respond to messages left by school otherwise school will automatically follow 'Child Missing in Education' procedures.

## Child Missing in Education Procedures

All children who are not in school to be entered onto SIMS by 10 am each morning and SLT made aware of children who are not in and have not been contactable.



### Day 1 absence

Make contact using all numbers held by school

Check with other school staff

If no response by phone then send a text and email.

If no response by midday and a child is vulnerable or known to Children's Social Care then contact the Fast Team 0208 356 5500 for advice and request a home visit

Speak to the CME Team about outcomes - Billy Baker 0208 820 7060



### Day 2 absence

If no contact has been made repeat day 1 procedures

If a child is vulnerable or know to Children's Social Care contact the Fast Team 0208 356 5500

Home visit to be carried out before 10am by two members of staff.

Speak to the CME Team about outcomes - Billy Baker 0208 820 7060



### Day 3 absence

Repeat day 2 procedures

Speak to the CME Team Billy Baker 0208 820 7060

Contact the police **Appendix 2**

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

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

### Leave of Absence Form

Name of child/children		Year group:	
<b>Leave of Absence requested</b>			
Start date of absence		Return date to school	
Reason for term time absence request. Please provide any evidence that may support your request.			
<b>Declaration</b>			
I have read and understood the information on leave of absence in term time, unauthorised absences and penalty notices.			
Name of parent/Carer			
Signed (Parent/Carer)		Date	
<b>For School Use Only</b>			
Childs attendance %	Child Punctuality %	Any exceptional leave in last 3 years?	
The school has considered your request for leave of absence and your child's absences will be recorded as follows:			
Authorised	Unauthorised	Unauthorised absences to date	