

St Mary Magdalen's Catholic Primary School



Absence and Attendance Policy

Governors' Committee Responsible:	Curriculum
Status:	Non-statutory
Review Cycle:	Every two years
Date Written/Last Review:	2 November 2023
Date of Next Review:	1 November 2025

MISSION STATEMENT

We are a Roman Catholic community, placing God at the centre of our lives. Christian values permeate every aspect of the school day. As a small friendly school, we aim to produce the warmth and intimacy of the family. We recognise each individual as special and loved by God, caring for one another and fostering love, trust and respect. When mistakes are made we recognise them as opportunities for learning and consequent reconciliation.

We aim to help all children fulfil their potential. We have high expectations of the children; we want them to do their best socially, personally, academically and spiritually.

We recognise each child's full entitlement to education. We value children's uniqueness and endeavour to nurture their potential. We strive to promote in them a sense of personal worth and self-confidence, as well as an awareness of their responsibilities to self and others.

INTRODUCTION

We expect all children to attend every day when the school is in session, as long as they are fit and healthy enough to do so. Although parents/carers have the legal responsibility for their child's attendance we do all we can to encourage the children to attend. We believe that the most important factor in promoting good attendance is the development of positive attitudes towards school. To this end, we strive to make our school a happy and rewarding experience for all children. We will praise those children whose attendance is very good. We will also make the best provision we can for those children who, for whatever reason, are prevented from coming to school.

This policy has been written to adhere to the relevant Children Acts, Education Act, regulations and guidance from the Department for Education in addition to guidance from the local authority. Please see:

https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/739764/Guidance_on_school_attendance_Sept_2018.pdf

The full governing board is responsible for making sure the school keeps an attendance register that records which pupils are present at the start of both the morning and the afternoon sessions of the school day. This register will also indicate the category of absence in line with borough policy.

AIMS AND OBJECTIVES

This Attendance Policy ensures that all staff and governors in our school are fully aware of and clear about the actions necessary to promote good attendance.

Through this policy we aim to:

- improve pupils' achievement by ensuring high levels of attendance and punctuality;
- achieve a minimum of 97% attendance for all children, apart from those with chronic health issues;
- create an ethos in which good attendance and punctuality are recognised as the norm and seen to be valued by the school;
- raise awareness of parents/carers and pupils of the importance of uninterrupted attendance and punctuality at every stage of a child's education;
- work in partnership with pupils, parents/carers, staff and the Education Welfare Service so that all pupils realise their potential, unhindered by unnecessary absence;
- promote a positive and welcoming atmosphere in which pupils feel safe, secure and valued, and encourage in pupils a sense of their own responsibility;
- establish a pattern of monitoring attendance and ensure consistency in recognising achievement and dealing with difficulties;
- recognise the key role of all staff in promoting good attendance.

We maintain and promote good attendance and punctuality through:

- raising awareness of attendance and punctuality issues among all staff, parents/carers and pupils;

- ensuring that parents/carers have an understanding of the responsibility placed on them for making sure their child attends regularly and punctually;
- equipping children with the life skills needed to take responsibility for good school attendance and punctuality appropriate to the child's age and development;
- maintaining effective means of communication with parents/carers, pupils, staff and governors on school attendance matters;
- developing and implementing procedures for identifying, reporting and reviewing cases of poor attendance and persistent lateness;
- supporting pupils who have been experiencing any difficulties at home or at school which are preventing good attendance;
- developing and implementing procedures to follow up non-attendance at school.

DEFINITIONS

Authorised Absence

- An absence is classified as authorised when a child has been away from school for a legitimate reason and the school has received notification from a parent/carer. For example, if a child has been unwell, the parent/carer writes a note or telephones the school to explain the absence.
- Only the school can make an absence authorised. Parents/carers do not have this authority. Consequently, not all absences supported by parents/carers will be classified as authorised. For example, if a parent/carer takes a child out of school to go shopping during school hours, this will not mean it is an authorised absence.

Unauthorised Absence

- When a child is away from school without the permission of both the school and parent/carer.
- When a child is away from school without good reason, even with the support of a parent/carer.
- If a child stays at home because another member of the family is ill.

Persistent Absence

- When a pupil's overall absence equates to 10% or more of their possible sessions.

IF A CHILD IS ABSENT

- Parents/carers must contact the school office by 9.00am on each day of absence. If a parent/carer does not contact the school, the school office staff will endeavour to contact the parent/carer. If this is not possible the absence will be marked as unauthorised.
- Parents/carers must ring on each day of absence.

- If a child is not present the class teacher will leave the register blank and the Administrative Officer will record the correct absence category following receipt of absence notification from the parent/carer.
- If a child has a medical appointment a copy of the appointment card, email, text, or letter should be provided to the school ahead of the appointment. Wherever possible appointments should be made outside of school hours but if not, the child should return to school as soon as possible to complete the school day.
- If there is any doubt about the whereabouts of a child, the Class Teacher should take immediate action by notifying the school office. The school will then be in contact straight away with the parent/carer in order to check on the safety of the child.
- The school alerts the LA if it is deemed that a child is 'missing from education' as part of safeguarding procedures as this could be a possible indicator of other issues such as neglect, abuse, or child sexual exploitation. On the sixth day of absence, if no reason has been provided, then a referral will be made to the Education Welfare Service and more formal checks will be made.
- All absences are recorded as either authorised or unauthorised. It is important that the school receives accurate information – either by email, letter or telephone notification – to determine the correct category. The Chair of Governors in collaboration with the Headteacher has the responsibility to determine whether an absence is authorised or unauthorised.

REQUESTS FOR LEAVE OF ABSENCE

- Children are expected to attend school for all sessions so that they can make the most progress possible. However, we do understand that occasionally there are very exceptional circumstances under which a parent/carer may legitimately request leave of absence for a child.
- Under these circumstances parents/carers are requested to complete a Request Form for Leave of Absence from School, which may be followed up with an appointment with the Headteacher to discuss reasons for the request. Forms are available from the school office.
- Parents/carers do not have the right to take their child out of school for holidays. The Headteacher does not have authority to approve absence for general family holidays.

LONG TERM ABSENCE

- If a child is absent for three days, the school will advise parents/carers to consult their GP and send the school notification of this.
- If a child's attendance is under 90% the school will request proof of illness by asking the parent/carer to provide a medical appointment card, evidence of prescribed medication, a letter from the GP or permission to speak to the doctor's surgery. If this is not provided the absences will be unauthorised. If unauthorised absences persist a referral to the Education Welfare Service will be made.
- When children have an illness that means they will be away from school for over five days, the school will contact the parents/carers and work closely with them to support the child's return to school.

- If the absence is likely to continue for an extended period, or be a repetitive absence, the school will contact support services so that arrangements can be made for the child to be given some tuition outside school.
- If children are taken out of school on holiday, work will not be provided by the school.

REPEATED ABSENCES

- Absence data is closely monitored by the Administrative Officer and discussed with the Headteacher. They monitor high levels of absence and patterns of absence.
- The school will contact the parent/carer of any child who has an unexplained absence requesting details of the reason for the absence.
- The school will write to the parent/carer outlining their concerns.
- If a child has a repeated pattern of absences, the parents/carers will be asked to visit the school and discuss the problem.
- The Education Welfare Officer (EWO) visits the school on a termly basis and will review all cases where attendance has fallen below 90%.
- When attendance is below 90% proof of absence will be required, for example in the case of illness, a medical appointment card, evidence of prescribed medication, a letter from the GP, or permission to speak to the doctor's surgery. If this is not provided the absences will be unauthorised. If unauthorised absences persist a referral to the Education Welfare Service will be made.
- If attendance does not improve, the EWO will arrange a visit with the parents/carers at school or home and seek to ensure that the parents/carers understand the seriousness of the situation.
- The school and EWO will work with the family to support an improvement in attendance so that the case can be closed.
- If these interventions do not achieve an improvement further action by the EWO may include a Fixed Penalty Notice or prosecution of the parents/carers.

LATENESS

- The school gates open at 8.30am to allow children to be in class and ready to start learning by 8.40am.
- Children arriving after 9.10am will be deemed as late and marked in the register accordingly (code L). Children who are persistently late miss significant learning opportunities – the start of the day is a particularly important time to share information for the day.
- Parents/carers or children are required to report to the office to ensure that the attendance register is updated.
- Late entries will be monitored regularly, and statistics published annually. Lateness figures will be reported in pupils' end of year school reports.
- The school will contact the parent/carer of any child who is repeatedly late for school. The parents/carers may be asked to visit the school and discuss the problem. If the situation does not improve, the school may involve the EWO who will arrange a visit at school or at home and seek to ensure that the parents/carers understand the

seriousness of the situation. Together the school and EWO will identify strategies with the parent/carer to resolve the lateness issues.

REWARDS FOR GOOD ATTENDANCE

- Children who have 100% attendance will receive a certificate for attendance awarded at the last assembly of each term.
- The school's attendance targets are set in line with borough expectations.

MONITORING AND REVIEW

- It is the responsibility of the full governing board to monitor overall attendance and they will request an annual report from the Headteacher. The full governing board also has the responsibility for this policy and for seeing that it is carried out. The full governing board will therefore examine closely the information provided to them and seek to ensure that our attendance figures are as high as they should be.
- The rates of attendance will be reported in the termly Headteacher's reports.
- The school will keep accurate attendance records on file for a minimum period of three years.
- The Administrative Officer will be responsible for monitoring lateness and attendance throughout the school. Any concerns about a child's absence will be brought to the attention of the Headteacher and agreed procedures put into place.

Signed 

(for and on behalf of the Governing body)

Date 2/11/2023

St Mary Magdalen's Catholic Primary School



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Email: admin@st-marymagdalens.richmond.sch.uk
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Date

Dear Parent/Carer

At St Mary Magdalen's Catholic Primary School we aim to build a working partnership between the family and school to ensure that every child has an equal opportunity to learn. We believe that if children are to gain the greatest benefit from their time at school it is essential that they attend regularly. Many parents/carers may not realise the effect of absence or lateness on their children. Any children who miss school are running a serious risk of being left behind in their progress.

Together with the Education Welfare Service we operate a traffic light system to highlight attendance. Below is listed the table of attendance for your information:

Gold = 100%	Your child's attendance is excellent.
Green = 96% to 99.9%	Your child's attendance is good.
Amber = 90% to 95.9%	Your child's attendance is below average, and they could be missing up to twenty days each year. Your child may not be able to keep up with their work. You need to think about the importance of good attendance.
Red = below 90%	Your child's attendance is a cause for concern and they are missing so much time it will be impossible to keep up with their work. A referral will be made to the Education Welfare Officer (EWO) who may be able to offer support in strategies toward good attendance. Parents/carers may be prosecuted for failing to ensure good attendance. Things need to improve before it is too late.

Following the termly visit of our EWO, you have been sent this letter because your child's attendance has fallen below the acceptable level. A coloured summary of your child's attendance is attached to this letter. Please do not hesitate to contact me at school should you wish to discuss this further.

Yours sincerely

Headteacher

St Mary Magdalen's Catholic Primary School



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Date

Dear Parent/Carer

Following my 'phone call/meeting with you, I would like to confirm that [INSERT CHILD'S NAME] attendance is [INSERT]%.

Given that this attendance is below 90% they are now persistently absent from school, and we are concerned about the impact this will have on them.

Please be advised that St Mary Magdalen's will no longer authorise any absences for [INSERT CHILD'S NAME] unless you provide medical evidence of an illness. This does not need to be a letter from the GP, it can be an image of a dated prescription with your child's name on it, an emailed image of an appointment text, or email or appointment letter or card. You can also grant us permission to speak to the doctor's surgery.

We want to work with you to improve [INSERT CHILD'S NAME] attendance so please do not hesitate to contact us if there is anything we can do to support you or if you have any questions about this letter and would like to discuss the matter further.

Yours sincerely

Headteacher



St. Mary Magdalen's Catholic Primary School

REQUEST FOR EXCEPTIONAL TERM-TIME LEAVE OF ABSENCE

Parents/Carers have a statutory obligation to ensure that their child/ren attend school on time, every day during term time. There is no entitlement to leave of absence during term time. Term time leave will only be authorised in exceptional circumstances, at the discretion of the Headteacher and in accordance with the school policy as agreed by the Governing Body.

- Leave to attend family events (other than funerals of close relatives) will not be authorised
- Leave which is requested retrospectively (after date of travel) will not be authorised
- Unauthorised leave of 3 school days or more will trigger a fine of up to £120 per child/per parent
- Extended term-time leave for medical reasons will require supporting documentation from G.P., hospital or medical consultant/professional

If applying for exceptional leave for more than one pupil, please complete a separate form per child

Name of child _____ Class _____

Reason for leave request :

Proposed departure date (first day of absence from school) _____

Proposed return date (return date to school) _____

Number of school days absent _____

Name of Parent/Carer _____

Date form completed and submitted _____

Please note – forms must be submitted to the School Office at least two weeks in advance of departure date.

Office use :

Request for leave has been **AUTHORISED / UNAUTHORISED**

Fine to be triggered **YES / NO**

Any other details :

Signed:

Date: