



St. Mary's Catholic
Primary School

Attendance Policy

Accepted by the Full Governing Body: May 2021
To be reviewed: May 2024

General principles

Good attendance results in children usually making good, consistent progress in their work. St Mary's Catholic Primary School expects good attendance from its pupils, in order for them to make the most of the opportunities offered by the school. We rely on our partnership with parents to ensure that this is achieved.

Parents are asked to notify the school of all absences on the first day and always to ensure that any absence is covered by a note, phone call, visit to the school office etc on a child's return to school. Any absence which is known about in advance should be notified to the school in writing beforehand using the 'Application for leave of absence from school' form, available from the school office. Absences, including unauthorised absences, are noted on School Reports.

The School Day

Our school day starts at 8:55am. The school gate opens at 8:35am and children go into school at 8:45am. Registers are marked shortly before 8:55am. Pupils who are not present for registration will be marked initially as absent. If they arrive before 9:00am, this will be changed to present but late. Any pupil arriving after 9:00am will be marked as late but this is also recorded as an unauthorised absence and we will ask for a parental/carers explanation. The afternoon session begins at 1:00pm.

If any child is absent but without an explanation, St Mary's safeguarding procedure is to contact parents/carers for an explanation as soon as possible and before 10:00am to ensure that the child/family is safe. Should the school not be able to contact the family and there is reason to believe a child is in immediate danger or at risk of harm, a referral should be made to children's social care (and the police if appropriate). Children deemed 'missing in education' due to lack of attendance will be referred to DCC 'Children missing in education' department. The contact for this will be 01305 224762.

Authorised and unauthorised absence

The law requires that all schools must show the difference between authorised and unauthorised absence.

Authorised absence can be:

- Illness
- Medical or dental appointments which cannot be arranged outside school hours.
- Days of religious observance.
- Any leave of absence (which will only be authorised in exceptional circumstances) (see below)
- Compassionate reasons at the Headteacher/Governors' discretion.

Unauthorised absence would include:

- Truancy
- Staying at home to look after younger children or sick relatives.
- Going shopping, having hair cut or other tasks that can be carried out at other times.
- Any absence which the school has not been informed about, either by letter, visit to the school office or telephone call.

Holidays in Term Time

Taking holidays in term time affects children's achievement as much as any other absence and we expect parents to help us by not taking children away in term time. Any financial savings made by taking a holiday in school time are offset by the cost to a 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. Leave will only be granted in exceptional circumstances only at the discretion of the Headteacher/Governors. In making a decision, the Headteacher/Governors will consider the circumstances of each application individually, including the child's/children's current attendance record.

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, issued by the Local Authority.

Children Missing in Education – CME

This refers to children who stop attending school, and we have been unable to contact the family. It can be because families have left the area without parents notifying us. A referral form is completed and it would be sent to the CME administrator at Dorset County Council. Where a pupil has not returned to school for ten days after an authorised absence or is absent from school without authorisation for twenty consecutive school days, the pupil can be removed from the admission register when the school and the local authority have failed, after jointly making reasonable enquiries, to establish the whereabouts of the child. This only applies if the school does not have reasonable grounds to believe that the pupil is unable to attend because of sickness or unavoidable cause.

Monitoring Attendance

Attendance will be monitored as follows:

- An attendance log will be kept.
- The percentage figures for each child will be noted half termly and reported.
- All parents/carers will be given a copy of their child's/children's attendance record at parent consultation meetings in the autumn and spring terms. Attendance for the whole year is reported to parents in the summer term as part of the child's/children's report.
- The average percentage attendance for the whole school will be noted annually.
- The school Administration Manager will be responsible for this monitoring, in close liaison with the Headteacher.
- Teachers will note both authorised and unauthorised absences in the registers.
- Parents who have not submitted a note for their child's absence or contacted the school will be contacted by the school.

