

St Mary's Catholic Primary School

Evesham

School Attendance
Policy Statement and Guidelines



Policy updated: January 2022

To be reviewed: January 2023

Covid-19 Statement - January 2022

'Through God's Love
We Will Achieve'

Our Mission Statement

Our school recognises all children as unique gifts from God and is committed to developing the whole child founded on the teachings of Christ.

Our Aims

- * *To recognise that the Gospel Values of Jesus Christ are at the heart of our whole school community.*
- * *To ensure prayer and worship are living and meaningful experiences, so that each child can grow in their own relationship with God and each other.*
- * *To ensure a Catholic ethos is brought to all our teaching and learning as provide a full, balanced and rewarding curriculum, which enables all our children to achieve their potential.*
- * *To develop links between home, school, parish and the wider world community, which will enable the Catholic faith to become an important part in the children's lives.*

Our mission statement, supported by the school's aims, provides the foundation upon which the faith of our community (both children and adults) is nurtured and developed.

Covid-19 Statement:

It is vital that all children continue to attend school for their educational progress, for their wellbeing, and for their wider development. Attendance at School is compulsory. For parents and carers of children of compulsory school age, this means that the legal duty on you as a parent to send their child to school regularly will apply.

A small number of pupils may be unable to attend in line with the most up-to-date public health advice because they are self-isolating and have had symptoms or a positive test result. Parents are informed that they must inform the school immediately, if that is the case. Remote learning will be provided if the child is well enough to work at home, according to our Remote Learning Policy.

Children who test positive for Covid, should be absent from school for their period of isolation and should return to school as soon as this is over. Children who have parents, carers or family members who have tested positive should continue to attend school but should be brought to school by an adult who is negative.

Ultimately, local authorities and schools have a range of legal powers to enforce attendance if a child misses school without a valid reason.

Rationale

This policy has been updated to comply with the 'School Attendance: Statutory Guidelines' document published by the DfE November 2013 (plus more recent updates).

Attendance at school up to the age of 16 is a legal requirement. Irregular attendance seriously disrupts continuity of learning, undermines educational progress and can lead to underachievement and low attainment.

Registration

School begins at 8.55am. Children should arrive in the playground between 8.45 and 8.55am. Our afternoon sessions begin at 1 pm.

The electronic attendance register (on Bromcom) for each class is completed at the beginning of each morning and afternoon session by the class teacher.

Registration closes at 9.10 am for the morning session and 1.05 pm for the afternoon session. If a pupil arrives in the morning after the gates are locked at 8.55 am, parents should take them directly to the school office, where they will be admitted to school, but marked as late (after the final bell at 8.55.am).

Parents are reminded that if a child arrives in school after the register has closed, and an acceptable explanation is not forthcoming, the pupil has to be recorded as 'Late after registers closed' for that session.

Following up absences

The Office Staff note down all absent children. They will check requested absence forms and then will contact parents on any day when a pupil is absent without explanation (i.e. first day contact). Parents should telephone school with reasons for absence, on the first day of absence; the class teacher will be notified. This call and the reason given for absence is noted. Every effort will be made to contact home. Teachers should always contact the school office if parents have informed them of an absence instead, although parents are reminded that it is the office they should contact in the event of absence. Parents should either call the school office, on 01386 446748, send a Dojo Message to the office, or email sme-office@sme.magnificat.org.uk

When the pupil returns to school, parents should provide an explanation for absence.

If a pupil is absent with a regular sickness/illness then the Headteacher should be notified and this should be followed up. These absences could be regular odd days or longer spells. The Head and office staff will monitor such absences closely, if necessary, meeting with the parent in order to ensure there is no additional/other reason for such absences.

Monitoring Attendance

The Headteacher monitors attendance at least half termly and analyses the data.

The office staff are responsible for identifying on registers where no reasons have been given by parents for a pupil's absence. This will be done weekly. In this case, parents will be notified and will be asked for reasons for absence. Authorising absence is the Head Teacher's responsibility. Teachers will also inform the Headteacher of any concerns they may have regarding punctuality or attendance. The Governing Body analyse the attendance/punctuality on a regular basis and the Head Teacher reports on progress made towards our ongoing target of at least 96% overall attendance.

Where school attendance problems occur, we aim to resolve these problems by collaborative working between the parent, the school and the LA. The school works closely with the LA. We 'buy in' the services of an Education Welfare Officer, who

regularly meets with the Head Teacher and Office Staff to discuss attendance. It is the EWO who advises the course of action that should be taken in the case of serious non-attendance or persistent and ongoing lateness. Other agencies such as Children Services and Children Missing Education should be engaged where appropriate.

Attendance/Punctuality Problems

Once alerted to a problem the Headteacher will arrange to meet with parents and discuss issues. An action plan will be formulated and follow up arranged.

Authorised and Unauthorised Absence

An absence is authorized by a written note, a telephone message or a verbal message. Parents are asked always to send a written note, email or Dojo message to the school office.

All letters explaining the reason for absence should be kept securely in the office in the attendance folder, for the remainder of the school year. The Headteacher uses the following criteria when deciding whether or not to authorize an absence.

Absence can be **authorised** if:

- Illness
- Hospital, doctor, dentist or other medical related appointment
- A family emergency under compassionate reasons
- A special family event (only under certain circumstances)

Schools, not parents, authorise absence. Schools must adhere to the Department for Education Guidelines in authorising absence. Unauthorised absence is of particular concern to the school. The figures are collected and published.

Unauthorised absences are those where children are kept away from school without a valid reason; also when parents or carers do not let the school know why their child is away, it is counted as an unauthorised absence.

Children should not be kept away from school:

- To go shopping
- To visit relatives
- Because of getting up late
- Because they don't feel like going to school
- To look after other members of the family
- For the majority of holidays

Requests for Absence

Parents do not have the right to remove their children from school in term time for a holiday. The Headteacher will only authorise absence from school in exceptional circumstances, for example religious observance or absence on compassionate grounds.

The Headteacher may authorize only part of an absence, for example, two days of a week's absence to attend a family Baptism may be authorised. This allows time to attend the special event and additional travel time only.

If parents remove a child from school during term time they must accept that the child will miss the work being covered. We do not routinely give work for a child to take on holiday, or save work for a child to do on their return.

If parents take their child from school for a holiday, their child's absence will be recorded as unauthorized in the class register. If any child's attendance continues to be an issue, having taken term-time holiday, further action may be taken, including Penalty Notice fines. The Local Authority have legal powers to use parenting contracts, parenting orders and penalty notices to address poor attendance.

Strategies for Promoting Good Attendance

At St. Mary's we offer an environment in which all pupils feel valued and welcomed. We will endeavour to demonstrate to pupils that their presence in school is important and that they will be missed if they are absent or late, and that follow-up action will be taken.

We will:

- Provide a broad and varied curriculum for all pupils
- Provide a safe, secure and welcoming environment
- Ensure parents and families are reminded of the importance of good attendance (via newsletters, school website, the prospectus, parent curriculum evenings and consultation evenings etc)
- Highlight examples of good attendance (e.g. individual pupils, whole classes or key stages) each week, on the 'St. Mary's Attendance Stars' board in the school hall
- Present certificates at special assemblies at the end of each term, with prizes and metal attendance badges given to those pupils who achieve 100% attendance for an academic year (badges are then worn by those pupils the following year)
- Organize a special event at the end of the summer term for all 100% attending pupils
- Award the 'Attendance Cup' to the highest attending class during an academic year
- Liaise regularly with the Education Welfare Officer in order to address any attendance concerns
- Regularly discuss attendance matters with the Governing Body

Appendices:

1. Request for absence form

Application for leave of absence for the purposes of a family event, religious observance or an extended trip overseas during term time:

St. Mary's Catholic Primary School, Evesham

The School's Policy

The school considers that all absences from school will disrupt a child's continuity of learning. As a consequence it believes that absences should be kept to a minimum in order to maximise your child's potential.

What the Law says

Regulations make it clear that parents do not have any right or entitlement to take a child out of school for the purposes of a term-time holiday.

It is the decision of the Head Teacher as to what might constitute exceptional circumstances and each request for term-time absence will be considered on an individual basis. A Head Teacher will not accept as an exceptional circumstance the fact that a holiday is cheaper during term-time.

An exceptional circumstance is much more likely to be a one-off, unique situation such as a parent, grandparent or other close relative is seriously ill and the holiday proposed is likely to be the last such holiday; or there may have been a significant trauma in the family recently and the Head teacher might consider that an immediate holiday might enable the child concerned to better deal with the situation; or the holiday might be a unique, one-off never-to-be-repeated occasion which can only take place at the time requested.

The Head Teacher will also look very carefully at the child's previous attendance record and should he or she have concerns, for example, should the child's average attendance be below 95%, it is highly unlikely that the Head teacher will agree to authorise any further absence.

Other factors will include the likely impact on the child's education, particularly in terms of continuity of learning; **there is a strong link between the amount of absence in a school and the qualifications that its pupils achieve**; whether the absence falls during a year in which the child is due to take a public examination or be involved in Government tests (e.g. SATs), at the beginning of the academic year etc.

Applying for Leave of Absence for Holidays during Term Time

Applications should be made using the reverse side of this form at least 6 weeks in advance of the proposed holiday dates. (Parents are advised to apply for leave of absence before they confirm their holiday arrangements.) **Parents will be informed of the outcome of their application for leave of absence.**

Please attach a letter, explaining why you are requesting a period of absence from school for your child. No absence will be authorised without a supporting letter of explanation.

Date: Signed (Parent/Carer)

Part 3 – To be complete by Head teacher (or nominated person)

Leave of absence authorised/ not authorised /part-authorized (number of days authorized: _____)

Reasons given:

You may wish to make an appointment to discuss this decision with the Head teacher.

Date: Signed