



# St Mary's Church of England Primary School

## *Attendance Policy*



### **Vision statement**

#### **Our Vision**

"Let your light shine before others, that they may see your good deeds and glorify your Father in heaven."

Matthew 5:14-16.

We believe that everyone is precious and loved by God.

We aspire to let our light shine in all that we do.

We nurture and empower one another to flourish.

Together we shine in our world by showing compassion and by serving others.

Let God's light shine through us.

#### **Our Mission**

St Mary's is a small, caring Church of England Primary School. It is committed to supporting our pupils to be happy, successful and fulfilled throughout their lives. We believe that everyone is precious and loved by God. We aspire to be a high achieving school that provides an excellent education:

- promoting the high standards of teaching and learning
- being inclusive, celebrating diversity and valuing all religions, faiths, cultures and backgrounds
- providing a rich and stimulating curriculum that will inspire and challenge
- being a happy, healthy and safe school
- providing excellent care, guidance and support with a strong partnership between school, parents and the community.

We seek to promote six Christian values of wisdom, hope, peace, compassion, love and thankfulness, each linked by our school vision and bible verse. We believe these help to prepare our children to show the "St Mary' Way" and to live a successful and fulfilling life being:

- considerate and respectful with excellent manners
- confident, happy, independent and self-motivated
- co-operative and collaborative
- honest and trustworthy
- resilient, hardworking and determined
- highly principled with moral, spiritual, cultural and social awareness, including shared British Values.

## **1. Aims**

The aim of St Mary's attendance policy is to enable the school to provide a consistent practice that encourages and facilitates the regular attendance of all pupils. Regular attendance at school is key to steady pupil progress and enjoyment of learning, and for this reason the school is dedicated to ensuring its attendance policy is adhered to as much as is possible.

St Mary's takes a whole-school approach to maintaining excellent attendance and it is the joint responsibility of parents/carers, pupils, and all staff members to ensure that children are attending school as they should be. We endeavour to work with families to make sure that any problems or circumstances which may lead or be leading to poor attendance are given the right attention and appropriate support.

This policy is supported by our policies on *Safeguarding and Behaviour*.

## **2. Legal framework**

**The Education Act 1996 states that:**

**The parent/carer of every child of compulsory school age shall cause them to receive efficient full-time education suitable**

- a) to their age, ability and aptitude, and
- b) to any special educational needs they may have, either by regular attendance at school or otherwise.

**A person begins to be of compulsory school age**

- a) when they attain the age of five, if they attain that age on a prescribed day, and
- b) otherwise at the beginning of the prescribed day next following their attaining that age.

**A person ceases to be of compulsory school age at the end of the day which is the school leaving date for any calendar year**

- a) if they attain the age of 16 after that day but before the beginning of the school year next following,
- b) if they attain that age on that day, or
- c) (unless paragraph (a) applies) if that day is the school leaving date next following their attaining that age.

St Mary's is dedicated to complying with attendance laws set out by the legal framework and has set out this attendance policy accordingly.

### **3. Roles and responsibilities of Governing body**

As part of our whole-school approach to maintaining high attendance, the governing body will:

- Ensure that the importance of attendance is made clear by promoting the relevant school policies and guidance directed at parents and staff;
- Annually review the school's attendance policy and ensure that all provisions are in place to allow school staff, parents/carers, and children to implement the policy effectively;
- Nominate or identify a member of the governing body who will take the lead role in monitoring attendance and coordinating provision and policies for attendance; this is currently the chair of the Children, Families and Community committee
- Ensure that all legislation regarding attendance is complied with and that up-to-date guidelines are communicated to parents/carers, children, and staff;
- Work out appropriate and accurate annual attendance numbers and future attendance targets, and submit these to the LA within an agreed timescale each year;
- Take time at governor's meetings to review and discuss attendance issues that have arisen in order to stay on top of expected attendance targets for the year;
- Ensure that the school is implementing effective means of recording attendance and organising that data, including for groups of children and those who are educated off-site;
- Ensure that they are clear on how to analyse attendance data and how to communicate the findings effectively to parents and staff;
- Use any data gathered to devise solutions to problems, make the proper adjustments to attendance coordination and target set for the future.

## **School leadership team**

As part of our whole-school approach to maintaining high attendance, the school leadership team will:

- Be active in their approach to promoting good attendance to pupils and their parents/carers, which includes forming positive relationships with families;
- Ensure that the school's teaching and learning experiences encourage regular attendance and that pupils are taught the value of high attendance for their own progression and achievement;
- Coordinate with the governing body to monitor the implementation of the attendance policy and its effectiveness, with an annual full policy review;
- Ensure that all staff are up to date with the school's attendance policy and government legislation, and that staff are fully trained to recognise and deal with attendance issues;
- Ensure that government legislation on attendance is complied with and that they (the leadership team) are up to date with any legislation changes and how to implement them;
- Nominate or appoint a senior manager to take the responsibility of overseeing and monitoring attendance provision and that this person has sufficient time and resources to give to this job;
- Liaise regularly with the school attendance officer and school office staff to gain an insight into attendance data and possible issues.
- Report to the governing body each term and the lead governor for attendance half-termly on attendance records, data and provision;
- Ensure that systems to record and report attendance data are in place and working effectively;
- Develop multi-agency relationships to help with poor attendance and support families who are having difficulties getting their child to attend;
- Document any specific interventions or steps taken to work with families to improve their child's attendance in case of future legal proceedings.

## **Parents and carers**

As part of our whole-school approach to maintaining high attendance, we request that parents/carers:

- Engage with their children's education – support their learning and take an interest in what they have been doing at school;
- Promote the value of good education and the importance of regular school attendance at home;
- Encourage and support their children's aspirations;
- Follow the set school procedure for reporting the absence of their child from school (see section 4), and include an expected date for return;
- Do everything they can to prevent unnecessary school absences, such as by making medical and dental appointments outside of school hours;
- Use the school as a support when they or their child are having difficulties, and work to form a positive relationship with the school so that there is easy communication when a problem arises;
- Keep the school informed of any circumstances which may affect their child's attendance;
- Enforce a regular routine at home in terms of homework, bedtime, etc. so that the child is used to consistency and the school day becomes part of that routine. It is vital that the child receives the same message at home as they do at school about the importance of attendance;
- Do not take their children out of school during term time. If parents/carers would like to make a special request for this, they may do so to the Headteacher (see section 4.6);
- Sign a home-school agreement.
- Attend meetings with the attendance officer and school staff to discuss any concerns regarding attendance and punctuality. The purpose of these is to discuss any difficulties and suggest possible further support.

## **Pupils**

As part of our whole-school approach to maintaining high attendance, we request that pupils:

- Be aware of the school's attendance policy and when and what they are required to attend. This will be communicated to them through the school staff, parents/carers, and the school timetable;
- Speak to their class teacher or another member of staff if they are experiencing difficulties at school or at home which may impact on their attendance;
- Attend all lessons ready to learn, with the appropriate learning tools requested and on time for the class. Lesson times will be made clear through their school timetable;
- Follow the correct set school procedure if they arrive late (see section 4.9). This will help the school to monitor attendance and keep accurate records for the child's individual attendance, and is also vital for health and safety in the event of a school evacuation;
- Sign a home-school agreement.

## **4. Categories of absence and procedure for reporting absences**

Absences will be treated as unauthorised unless a satisfactory explanation /evidence (medical appointment letters, evidence from GP) for the pupil's absence is given to the school. Parents/carers cannot authorise absences.

Staff should make it clear on the school register when taking attendance whether a child's absence is authorised or unauthorised. If they have not received evidence from the parent, the office will clarify if the absence is authorised or unauthorised.

When a child is to be absent from school without prior permission, parents/carers should inform the school by telephone on the first day of absence and let them know what date they expect the child to return. Where possible, parents should follow this up in writing to the school email address for parents or to [school@stmarys.islington.sch.uk](mailto:school@stmarys.islington.sch.uk)

**4.2 Illness** Most cases of absence due to illness are short term, but parents/carers will need to make a phone call to alert the school on the first day and if possible each day of absence. When the child returns to school the parent/carer needs to send an email explaining the absence – this is for the child's school records.

For prolonged absence due to illness, parents/carers may be asked to provide the school with medical evidence such as a note from the child's doctor, an appointment card or a prescription paper.

**4.3 Medical or dental appointments** Parents/carers should make every effort to ensure these appointments are made outside of school hours. Where it cannot be avoided, children should attend school for as much of that day as possible.

**4.4 Authorised absences**-There may be some instances where the school will authorise absence such as for a family bereavement.

**4.5 Exclusion** Exclusion is treated as an authorised absence. The Headteacher/class teacher will arrange for work to be sent home.

**4.6 Family holidays and extended leave** Parents/carers should ensure that family holidays and extended leave are arranged outside of school term time. Parents/carers do not have the automatic right to remove their child from school during term time for this reason. Requests for leave from school should be made in writing to the Headteacher at least 4 weeks in advance of the leave being taken. In the case of unforeseen circumstances, such as a family bereavement that requires the child to travel to another country, this will be taken into consideration. Retrospective applications will not be considered and this time taken will be processed as unauthorised absence.

All requests for authorised absence will be responded to in writing, and will outline the details of when the child is expected to return to school. Parents/carers should contact the school immediately if there will be a cause for delay from the stated date of return.

If permission is not granted, but the child is still absent, the absence is classed as unauthorised and parents/carers may be issued with a penalty notice.

If a parent chooses to take their child out of school during term time, but does not wish to complete the leave of absence form (i.e. for the absence to be authorised) they should contact the school, ideally in writing, to confirm what dates the child will be absent for. If there is no known return date, the school will need regular contact from the parent to update them on the circumstances and provide an indication of a return date. If we are unable to contact a parent during their absence and have no known return date, we are likely to follow safeguarding procedures in line with the missing children procedures.

#### **4.7 Religious observance**

St Mary's recognises that there may be times where children of different faiths observe religious festivals that fall outside of school holidays and weekends, and will allow authorised absence for these times based on guidance from the local authority.

Parents/carers will be aware of these dates and should give the school written notification in advance.

**4.8 Late arrival** Registration takes place between 9:00am and 9:05am. Pupils who arrive after this time but within the registration period will be marked as late. The registration period ends at 9:30am.

Pupils and parents/carers who arrive after 9.05am should go straight to the school office to sign in and give a reason for their lateness. Any unjustifiable reason for absence will be marked as unauthorised. It is vital that pupils sign in at the office to ensure that appropriate health and safety regulations are followed and that all pupils are accounted for. Children are given a 'late slip' to hand to their classteacher. This confirms to the classteacher that the child has been registered by the office.

A register is also taken at the start of the afternoon (this is staggered, for example 1:00pm for Reception and 1:30pm for keystage 2)

Persistent lateness may result in the issue of a penalty notice and/or a meeting with the attendance officer and school staff.

### **5. School action: following up absences**

Class registration details are passed to the school office at the end of the registration period. If a child is absent but the school have not been informed of the reason for the absence, the school will text the family asking them to call the school. If the school does not hear from the family, they will follow the text with a phone call by 10:30 at the latest. Details of any conversations following the text or follow-up call, will be logged on the school's system (Arbor). The school has a priority list for families that need to be contacted first when they are absent.

If a pattern of unauthorised absences emerges, the School Home Support worker will contact the parent/carer to discuss possible reasons and school support systems that could help.

Parents/carers will be contacted if a pupil gives a reason for an unauthorised absence and there is doubt about the truth of the reason.

Class teachers will ask children about any absence upon the pupil's return from being away. This is for the school records and is necessary no matter what the reason or length of the absence.

The school will take action against any pupils who are discovered to be truanting and parents/carers will be contacted to discuss possible reasons and school support systems that could help.

### **Children missing from education**

- All children, regardless of their age, ability, aptitude and any special education needs they may have, are entitled to a full-time education. Our school recognises that a child missing education is a potential indicator of abuse or neglect and will follow the school procedures for unauthorised absence and for children missing education.
- The school expects parents to provide at least two emergency contact numbers for each child and will use both numbers, if necessary, as part of the First Day calling process.
- Parents should always inform us of the reason for any absence. Where contact is not made, a referral may be made to another appropriate agency (Pupil Services, Social Care or Police).
- Our school must inform the local authority of any pupil who fails to attend school regularly, or has been absent without school permission for a continuous period of 10 days or more.

**This policy will be reviewed annually.**

Approved by governors: December 2022