



Attendance Policy

Rationale

Regular attendance at school is essential to ensure uninterrupted progress and to enable children to extend their potential. The attendance pattern for all children is monitored weekly, with the schools seeking to work actively with parents to ensure a regular pattern is maintained. We expect all children on roll to attend every day, when the schools are in session, as long as they are fit and healthy enough to do so.

We do all we can to encourage the children to attend, and to put in place appropriate procedures to support this.

We believe that the most important factor in promoting good attendance is development of positive attitudes towards school and learning.

Introduction

Poor attendance can seriously affect each child's: -

- Attainment in school
- Relationships with other children and their ability to form lasting friendships
- Confidence to attempt new work and work alongside others

Each child's attendance can be summarised as:

- 96% + Good – Well done!

This will help all aspects of their progress and life in school. This will give them a good start in life and supports a positive work ethic.

- 95% Average – Well done, strive to build on this.
- 85-94% Low – Absence is now affecting attainment and progress at school. Please work urgently to improve the situation.
- Below 85% Unacceptable – Absence IS causing SERIOUS CONCERN. It WILL BE affecting attainment and progress and is disrupting your child's learning.

Your child's school will work with you and the Education Welfare Officer (EWO) to improve your child's attendance if there is no immediate improvement this term.

Permitting absence from school without a good reason is an offence by the parent. Only the school can 'authorise' absence.



The school will not assess all reasons as 'valid'. Non-attendance is an important issue that is treated seriously.

However, each case is different and the school acknowledges that no one standard response will be appropriate in every case. Consideration is given to all factors affecting attendance before deciding what intervention strategies to apply.

a) In every case, early intervention is essential to prevent the problem from worsening. It is essential that parents keep the school fully informed of any matters that may affect their child's attendance; they are reminded of this duty in the school prospectus.

b) Prior to the engagement of the EWO, the school may make a visit to the child's home or issue letters to parents clearly defining the concerns within school regarding a pupils' absence. It is hoped that a quick response and change in levels of absence will prevent the need for EWO involvement. Further details regarding roles and responsibilities, is identified in the appendix to this policy.

Principles

Arrival and Registration

All children should be in the school ready to register at the time set out in the School Prospectus. The register is taken twice a day. A day counts as 2 attendances. If a child arrives after the registration period, he/she must report to the school office and will be marked in as 'Late'.

Arrival after 8.55am is recorded as late. Children arriving after 9:30am are regarded as being late after the registers have closed and this classes as one session of unauthorised absence.

Parental Responsibility

Throughout this policy the term 'parent' represents either a single parent, both parents; and/or the carer with whom the child resides.

Parents are informed of their responsibility to ensure their children attend regularly, in the school prospectus. Punctuality is also stressed as lateness impacts on learning not only for the individual, but the class as a whole.

Attendance is discussed with each parent at consultation evenings.

Parents have a legal obligation to ensure their children receive a full time education; this is achieved by regular attendance at school.

Illness and Medical Appointments

When a child is unwell, parents should contact the school before 9.00am on the first day of absence informing the school of the reason for the absence. This may be done by e-mailing the school business manager joxley@nmm.srscmat.co.uk The class teacher/business manager will record the absence in the register.



As part of our Safeguarding Procedures, the school office will endeavour to contact the parent or carer if no message has been received regarding the reason for the absence to check on the safety of the child.

Where a medical appointment is necessary, or your child is ill, please ensure that:

- Every effort has been made to arrange medical appointments outside school hours (especially optician or dentist check-ups)
- An appointment card or verification by the doctors/dentist/hospital has been obtained.
- If it is necessary for a child to be out of school for this reason, the child is returned to school directly after the appointment.
- If your child is absent due to vomiting/ diarrhoea, then they should not return to school for the next 48 hours after the last time that the child is sick. This is to reduce the risk of infection to other children and adults at the school. (for full details on recommendations of how long a child should remain off school for different illnesses/ infections, please refer to the Medical and Medicines Policy)
- Medical certificates may be requested for absence greater than five days. If a pupil requires time away from school to attend an appointment, then parents must bring a copy of the hospital letter or appointment card to school for the absence to be authorised.

The Law and School Attendance

Amendments have been made to the 2006 regulations in the Education (Pupil Registration) (England) (Amendment) Regulations 2013.

These amendments, as described below, came into force on 1 September 2013. They can be found on the Department for Education website:

<http://www.education.gov.uk/schools/pupilsupport/behaviour/attendance/a00223868/regulationsamendments>

Term-time holiday –The Education (Pupil Registration) (England) (Amendment) Regulations 2013 allowed Headteachers to grant leave of absence for the purpose of a family holiday during term time in “special circumstances”.

Headteachers may not grant any leave of absence during term time unless there are exceptional circumstances. Subsequently, the Headteacher will now determine the number of school days a child can be away from school if any such leave is granted.

This means that holidays taken during term time will be recorded as **unauthorised** in the register, unless there are exceptional circumstances, for which the Headteacher must be contacted to discuss the matter and the circumstances involved. The decision rests with the Headteacher, and families have no “right” to such leave. The application for leave must be made in advance by the parent with whom the pupil normally resides and must clearly state the special circumstances they wish to be considered. The ‘Leave of Absence Request Form’ must be completed and



signed by **both** legal guardians, this should then be returned to the school office for processing. If a child has two legal guardians and the form has not been signed by both, the form will be returned to the child's main address.

School Responsibility

The school is bound by the statutory requirement under Section 538 of the Education Act 2006 which requires governing bodies to provide information requested by the Secretary of State. This includes absence data that will be collected every term through the School Census.

The Senior Leadership Team and all staff work to ensure a high level of enjoyment and commitment to learning as a means of ensuring regular attendance.

Specific responsibilities for attendance matters are identified in the appendix. The Headteacher holds responsibility for attendance matters, supported by the Office Administration staff and the Education Welfare Officer (EWO). Where school attendance problems occur, the schools will endeavour to work with parents in the interests of the child to achieve a positive resolution. Attendance is recorded and data stored and analysed.

It is a statutory duty for Class teachers to call and maintain accurate registers; these are legal documents, and may be called for as evidence by the court. Class teachers are legally responsible for marking their class attendance register twice per day at the start of each session. Registers are marked electronically.

The Headteacher, not parents, authorises absence.

Saint Mary's Catholic Voluntary Academy follow the DfE guidelines in authorising absence. Absence for any reason during term time is discouraged.

Absence known to be for the following reasons would be authorised:

- Illness
- Religious observance
- Attendance at medical appointments which cannot be made outside school hours

When it has become necessary to make a referral to the Education Welfare Officer (EWO), all further absences will be unauthorised pending investigation. The EWO liaises with the schools regarding absences following contact with the parents.

School will follow a four-step process with regards poor attendance:

Level 1 – Teacher contact parents/carers on an informal basis to discuss what the child has missed e.g. 'It's a shame that Paddy missed PE yesterday'.

Level 2 – Letter from the Headteacher to parents/carers with the absence rate and the specific concerns e.g. 'Paddy has SATS next year'.



Level 3 – Parents/Carers are invited into school to discuss the concerns with the Headteacher. Early help team are asked to visit.
Level 4 – DCC education welfare officer is contacted.

We aim to:

- Reinforce and promote the high expectations for excellent attendance and punctuality via the school newsletter, website and app. All parents are informed of the impact that missed days in school has on children.
- Continually monitor both persistent absence and persistent lateness and take the necessary measures
- Not grant approval for any holidays taken in term time unless there are exceptional circumstances as per our attendance policy

Once per term, every parent/carer will receive their child's attendance as a percentage along with information about what constitutes good attendance and the importance of good attendance for children.

Absence during Term Time

The Governors recognise the recent change to the law and that pupil absence during term time can seriously disrupt a pupil's continuity of learning. Parents are therefore strongly urged to avoid booking a family holiday in term time to avoid breaking the law.

Parents do not have an automatic right to withdraw pupils from school for a holiday and, in law, have to apply for permission in advance. Such permission can only be granted where the Headteacher agrees that there are "special circumstances" to be taken into account.

Applications for absence must be received at least 4 school weeks prior to the planned absence.

When application is made for authorised absence during term time and it is agreed that there are "special circumstances", the Headteacher then also gives consideration to:

- The nature of the proposed absence and the "special circumstances" that are presented
- The attendance pattern in the present and previous academic years. Examples of what may constitute exceptional circumstances:
 - i. To have a short absence to attend a family funeral or to attend a special religious/cultural festival, may constitute an exceptional circumstance.
 - ii. If a parent, due to the nature of their work, cannot possibly take time off during the regular school holidays, then this might constitute an exceptional circumstance (e.g. Police or Armed Forces Personnel).



This will need to be evidenced by a letter from the employer. Factors indicated above will still be taken into account.

Note:

To have a week's winter or summer holiday in school time, because the cost is cheaper during term time, **does not constitute** an exceptional circumstance.

When an absence is authorised, parents will be provided with written evidence in the form of a proforma signed by the Headteacher.

Definitions

Every half-day absence has to be classified by the school (not by the parents) as either AUTHORISED or UNAUTHORISED.

This is why information about the cause of each absence is always required in writing (letter or email).

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 or guardian. For example, if a child has been unwell and the parent writes a note or telephones the school to explain the absence. Only the school can make an absence authorised.

Unauthorised Absence

An absence is classified as unauthorised when a child is away from school without the permission of the Headteacher. Unauthorised absences are those, which the school does not consider reasonable and for which no authorisation has been given.

This includes:

- Parents keeping children off school unnecessarily
- Absences that have never been properly explained
- Holidays/Family events that have not been agreed to having any exceptional circumstances.
- Truancy before or during the school day

Penalty Notices:

Penalty Notices for Absence from school can be issued by the Attendance and Behaviour Service (Derbyshire County Council) based on requests from schools and the police.

The following circumstances are considered as appropriate reasons for the issuing of Penalty Notices:

- Parentally condoned absences



St Ralph Sherwin

Today Rather Than Tomorrow

- Holidays/Family events in term time where no exceptional circumstances were agreed
- Excessive delayed return from Holidays/Family events whether or not exceptional circumstances were agreed beforehand by the Head of School
- Persistent lateness after the register has closed
- Truancy, including truancy sweeps
- Allowing a child to be in a public place within the specified timescale when excluded from School

The absence of a pupil from school in any of these circumstances will result in a Penalty Notice being considered. If the Headteacher makes the decision that a Penalty Notice is appropriate then the letter from school advising you of this will be sent home via the pupil's bag (known as pupil post) or posted to the home address held on the school database. One letter per parent will be sent. If the absence is taken, despite not being authorised by the Headteacher, you may be fined by the Local Authority.

Schools do not issue fines to parents. Fines are issued and administered by the Local Authority (Derbyshire County Council).

This policy will be reviewed every three years according to the schedule for policy review.

Date Approved: Jan 2024 Date for Review: Jan 2027