St Mary's Catholic School
Attendance policy

Academic Year	Headteacher	Deputy Headteacher	Assistant Headteacher Pastoral	Attendance Officer	Chair of Governors
2025-26	Emma Patterson	Danielle Largue	James McDonald	Sarah Clarke	Mick McGhee

Introduction
St Mary's Catholic School Attendance Policy takes into account the guidance set out in the DfE Document 'School Attendance; Guidance for maintained schools, academies, independent schools and local authorities August 2020' and 'Working together to improve school attendance August 2024'. Regular and punctual school attendance is important. Students need to attend school regularly if they are to take full advantage of the educational opportunities available to them by law. St Mary's Catholic School fully recognises its responsibilities to ensure students are in school and on time, therefore having access to learning for the maximum number of days and hours. We firmly believe that it is only through excellent attendance and punctuality that students are able to flourish and reach their full potential.

Our policy applies to all children registered at this school and this policy is made available to all parents/carers of students who are registered at our school on our school website or available from reception for those without access to the internet.

This policy has been written to adhere to the relevant Children Acts, Education Acts, Regulations and Guidance from the Department for Education in addition to guidance from the Local Authority.

Although parents/carers have the legal responsibility for ensuring their child's good attendance, the Head teacher and Governors at our school work together with other professionals and agencies to ensure that all students are encouraged and supported to develop good attendance habits. Procedures in this policy are followed to ensure this happens.

Children who are persistently late or absent soon fall behind with their learning .Children who are absent from school frequently develop large gaps in their learning which will impact on their progress and their ability to meet age related learning expectations. A child whose attendance drops to 90% each year will, over their time at primary school, have missed two whole terms of learning.

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. Our school target for attendance is 95% and above.

Through this Policy we aim to:

- Improve pupils' achievement by ensuring high levels of attendance and punctuality.
- Achieve a minimum of 95% 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, staff and the Attendance 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.
- Recognise the role of class teachers as they will be able to identify where attendance is having an impact on attainment.

We maintain and promote good attendance and punctuality through:

- Raising awareness of attendance and punctuality issues among all staff, parents and pupils.
- Ensuring that parents 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, students, staff and governors on school attendance matters.
- Developing and implementing procedures for identifying, reporting and reviewing cases of poor attendance and persistent lateness.
- Supporting students who have been experiencing any difficulties at home or at school which are preventing good attendance.
- Supporting students with SEND or medical needs so that they are able to have excellent attendance.
- Developing and implementing procedures to follow up non-attendance at school.

Procedures

Our school will undertake to follow the following procedures to support good attendance:

- To maintain appropriate and effective registration processes.
- To maintain appropriate attendance data.
- To rigorously monitor attendance data of all students.
- To communicate clearly the attendance procedures and expectations to all staff, governors, parents and students.
- To have consistent and systematic daily records which give detail of any absence and lateness.
- To follow up absences and persistent lateness if parents/carers have not communicated with the school.
- To inform parents/carers what constitutes authorised and unauthorised absence.
- To strongly discourage unnecessary absence through holidays taken during term time.
- To work with parents to improve individual pupils attendance and punctuality.
- To refer to the Attendance Service or appropriate agencies of any child whose attendance causes concern and where parents/carers have not responded to school initiatives to improve.
- To report attendance statistics to the Local Authority and the DfE where requested.
- All staff should be aware that they must raise any attendance or punctuality concerns to the nominated person with responsibility for monitoring attendance.

Responsibilities

All members of school staff have a responsibility for identifying trends in attendance and punctuality. The following includes a more specific list of the kinds of responsibilities which individuals might have.

Class teachers are responsible for:

- Maintaining class registers and completing them accurately via Arbor in accordance with school policy, and forwarding completed registers to school office staff after registration closes.
- Informing the nominated person where there are concerns and acting upon them
- Where poor attendance occurs ensuring appropriate school staff are informed.
- Emphasising with their class the importance of good attendance and promptness.
- Ensuring appropriate school staff are informed of additional information provided by the child so it can be recorded in line with school policy
- Discussing attendance issues and support at parents evenings where necessary

The Head teacher, Deputy Headteacher and Assistant Headteacher Pastoral are responsible for:

- Overall monitoring of school attendance
- Trends in authorised and unauthorised absence
- Contacting families where concerns are raised about absence including arranging meetings to discuss attendance issues
- Providing support and intervention for students whose attendance is poor
- Monitoring individual attendance where concerns have been raised
- Making referrals to the Attendance Service
- Providing reports and background information to inform discussion with the school's LA Attendance Officer
- Liaising with other professionals to determine potential sources of difficulties and reasons for absence.
- Refer to outside agencies for additional support for families including School Health, CYPS, Attendance Service, Police, Youth Offending Team & Social Care

Staff in the School Office are responsible for:

- Collating and recording registration and attendance information.
- Taking and recording messages from parents regarding absence
- Ensuring Absence and Lateness is recorded
- Contacting parents of absent children where no contact has been made.
- Recording details of children who arrive late or go home early

The Attendance Officer is responsible for:

- Keeping an overview of class and individual attendance looking particularly for either poor overall attendance, anomalies in patterns of attendance and/ or unusual explanations for attendance offered by children and their parents/ carers and reporting concerns to the Head teacher
- Sending out standard letters regarding attendance
- First Day Response: Contacting home if no reason for absence is received (phone call or text message)
- Providing additional support to Parents / carers and pupils.
- Improving school attendance by carrying out home visits, attending meeting with the parent / carer
- To identify with parents the reason for poor attendance and work with parents to achieve improved attendance and reduce exclusions
- Monitor attendance levels & punctuality
- Offer parent contracts and attendance plans
- Identify patterns of absence
- Talk to students on a 1:1 basis regarding attendance related matters
- Offer group work sessions to remove the barriers to attendance including friendship groups

Parents/ Carers are responsible for:

- Ensuring that their child attends school regularly and punctually, unless prevented from doing so by illness or attendance at a medical appointment.
- Contacting the school office on the first morning of absence and each consequent day of absence, by phonecall or by Arbor message.
- Informing the school in advance of any medical appointments in school time. For the absence to be recorded as a medical absence we do require evidence from the doctor or dentist. (Appointment card/letter)
- Making requests for authorised absence in term time, only if absolutely necessary as these are not automatically authorised.
- Talking to the school as soon as possible about any child's reluctance to come to school so that problems can be quickly identified and dealt with.

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 carer. For example, if a child has been unwell and the parent telephones the school to explain the absence.

Only the school can make an absence authorised. Parents do not have this authority. Consequently not all absences supported by parents will be classified as authorised.

Unauthorised absence
An absence is classified as unauthorised when a child is away from school without the permission of the school. Therefore the absence is unauthorised if a child is away from school without good reason, even with the support of a parent.

Registers
- Registers are legal documents and will be marked for every lesson of the day including am/pm registration.
- Parents must always give reasons for absence to the school.
- Schools are to determine whether absence is authorised or unauthorised in exceptional circumstances, considering factors such as frequency, duration, attendance patterns, i.e. within reason. Staff must be observant of situations where absence is continually condoned by parents.

Reintegrating Long Term Absentees
Following a long period of absence, a child may feel vulnerable, so staff may wish to arrange a phased or gradual return, allocation of a 'Key Worker', consider whether Special Needs support is appropriate, ensure that all staff are aware of the situation and nominate a key person to monitor the child's reintegration into school. All children must feel welcomed back and know from whom they can seek help.

Registration
All the school gates open at 8.00am until 8.45am. This time is sufficient for all pupils to come into their classroom. Any students failing to be in registration by 8.45am will be deemed as 'late'.

Each class teacher has the responsibility for keeping an accurate record of attendance. Any pupil who is absent must be recorded for each lesson of the day.

All attendance records are documented using Arbor software, which is supported by the Trust and Local Authority. Attendance registers are legal documents and these must be kept secure and preserved for a period of three years after the date they were last used.

Lateness
Repeated absence at the beginning of a school session can amount to failure to attend regularly for the purpose of 1996 Education Act. The school seeks to improve general punctuality and to improve attitude of persistent offenders by:-
- Informing parents of our expectations and offer ways of helping avoid lateness.
- Parents of persistent offenders must be contacted, and reported to the Attendance Officer if no improvement.
- Praise and acknowledge latecomers who improve.
- Ensure that staff set a good example by arriving punctually for lessons.
- All children and parents must understand that lateness is actively discouraged, although sensitivity may be appropriate in some cases.
- Schools may use other incentives to improve levels of punctuality
- The attendance officer and pastoral team will support students and families with any of the above issues.

- Students who persistently fail to arrive at school punctually with no suitable reason for their lateness will be sanctioned in line with the school behaviour policy.

Children who are persistently late miss a significant amount of learning, often the most important aspect, as the beginning of the day is where the teacher explains the learning and what each child is expected to achieve. Where there have been persistent incidents of lateness parents/carers will receive a letter advising them of the concerns and the school will provide opportunities for parents/carers to seek support and advice to address these issues.

Absences
Parents/carers should contact the school on the first day of their child's absence. When parents/carers notify us of their child's absence it is important that they provide us with full and accurate details of the reason for their absence and expected date of return. This information is used to determine whether the absence is authorised or unauthorised. Parents/Carers must contact school on each day of absence.

Where we have not received reasons for a child's absence we contact the parents requesting these details. If this information is not given by the specified date then the absence will be recorded as an unauthorised absence (Attendance Code O).

Illness
When children have an illness that means they will be away from school long term, the school will do all it can to send material home, so that they can keep up with their school work.

If the absence is likely to continue for an extended period, or be a repetitive absence, the school will contact the support services (Bridges Hospital Teaching – Newcastle LA only) to see if arrangements can be made for the child to be given some home tuition outside school.

Where over the course of an academic year, a child has repeated periods of illness, the school will write to parents to ask them to provide medical evidence for each future period of illness related absence. This evidence could be a Doctor's note, appointment card/letter or copy of a prescription. We may seek written permission from you for the school to make their own enquiries. Alternatively we may make a referral to the School Health Advisor to offer support.

Parental Request for Absence from School for Holiday
With effect from September 2013 the government abolished the right of Head teachers to authorise absence specifically for holidays of up to 10 days per year if special circumstances exist. Instead, Head teachers will only be allowed to grant leave of absence for any reason if they are satisfied exceptional circumstances exist. Parents are encouraged to keep open lines of communication with school over absence as persistent absence can be considered a safeguarding matter.

Addressing Attendance Concerns
The school expects attendance of at least 95%.

It is important for children to establish good attendance habits early on in their primary school career. It is the responsibility of the Head teacher and the governors to support good attendance and to identify and address attendance concerns promptly. In our school parents are to ensure their child attends school regularly and punctually and therefore when become concerned about attendance we will inform parents/carers of our concerns. Initially concerns about attendance are raised with parents via letters which are sent home, parents may be offered a parent contract. A parent contract is an agreement / action plan which looks at ways to work together to improve attendance. There will be opportunities for the parent/carer to discuss reasons for absence and support to be given by the school with the aim to improve attendance. Where a child's attendance record does not improve over a period of time then the school has a responsibility to make a referral to the LA Attendance Officer.

The Attendance Service will look at each case and may issue fixed penalty notices to parents where there is poor attendance.

The LA Attendance Service working jointly with Legal Services may also consider:

- Applying for a parenting order
- Applying for an education supervision order
- School Attendance Order (If parent has not registered their child in a school)
- Community Order

The LA Attendance Officer can remotely check and monitor attendance levels. The LA Attendance Officer regularly carries out register checks to identify children with low attendance.

Rewards & Recognition

Although good attendance is an expectation the school seeks to improve whole school attendance by offering incentives, this may include:

- 100% Certificates
- Prizes
- Positive Postcards
- Letters
- School / Class Events
- Trips

Policy review date	**By whom**	**Approved** *(insert date)*
September 2025	Local Governing Committee	5th Sept 2025