St Mary's Colchester

ATTENDANCE POLICY

This policy has regard to the following guidance and advice:

Working together to improve school attendance (July 2026)
Keeping Children Safe in Education (KCSIE 2026)
Children Missing Education (Updated September 2025)
Behaviour in schools, advice for headteachers and school staff (February 2024)
Mental health and behaviour in school (November 2018)

The **aims** of this policy are:

- to develop and maintain a whole school culture that promotes the benefits of good attendance;
- to ensure, so far as possible, that every pupil in the School is able to benefit from and make their full contribution to the life of the school;
- to prioritise and, where possible, improve attendance and punctuality across the School, reduce absence and set out the School's approach to the management of absence/non-attendance;
- to recognise the linkages between attendance/absence and pupil wellbeing, specifically ensuring the consistent whole school approach to safeguarding; and
- to help to promote a whole school culture of safety, equality and protection.

Responsibility

The Governing Body has overall responsibility for all matters which are the subject of this policy. They recognise that improving attendance is a school leadership issue and have appointed a designated senior leader to have overall responsibility for championing and improving school attendance at St Mary's, referred to in this policy as SAC (School's attendance champion).

The Governing Body, to ensure the efficient discharge of its responsibilities under this policy, have allocated the following tasks to the SAC:

- Keeping the policy up to date and compliant with the law and best practice
- Monitoring of the implementation of the policy
- Seeking input from interested groups (such as pupils, staff, parents) to consider improvements to the School's processes under the policy

This policy will be reviewed at least annually by the Governing Body.

The importance of good attendance

St Mary's aspires to high levels of attendance from all pupils. Good attendance is essential for all pupils to get the most out of their school experience, including their attainment, well-being and wider life choices.

It is vital that children develop regular attendance habits at an early age. Therefore, the school encourages parents of Kindergarten and Prep children who are not yet of

compulsory school age to send their children to every session that is available to them. Every child enrolled at our school is expected to attend every day they are required to, on time, so that they can achieve their very best. We monitor and manage attendance and punctuality across all year groups and expect parents to notify the school of any absence.

St Mary's School recognises the importance of developing good patterns of attendance from the outset. This is an integral part of the School's ethos and culture. In building a culture of good school attendance it recognises:

- the importance of good attendance, alongside good behaviour, as a central part of the school's vision, values, ethos, and day to day life;
- the interplay between attendance and wider school improvement efforts, building it into strategies on attainment, behaviour, bullying, special educational need support, supporting pupils with medical conditions and/or disabilities, mental health issues, safeguarding wellbeing, and support for disadvantaged pupils;
- the importance of setting high expectations for the attendance and punctuality of all pupils and communicating these regularly and effectively to pupils and parents;
- that attendance is never 'solved' and is a continuous process requiring revision and updating of messages, processes and strategies; and
- children missing education can act as a vital warning sign to a range of safeguarding issues, including neglect, sexual abuse and child sexual and criminal exploitation.

We acknowledge that attendance is the essential foundation to securing positive outcomes for all pupils and that everyone has a responsibility to take proactive steps to manage and improve attendance across the School community.

The School will consistently promote the benefits of good attendance, setting high expectations for every pupil and consistently communicating those expectations to pupils and parents.

Where there are challenges to attendance, the School will work effectively and respectfully with pupils, their families and, where appropriate, local authorities to address them.

The School will respond to non-attendance and/or lateness proactively, firmly, consistently and with care, with appropriate reference to this policy, its safeguarding and behaviour policies and the School's terms and conditions. It will act in a proportionate and targeted way in response to data or intelligence and ensure intervention is regularly reviewed.

The School has robust systems in place to track and record attendance, reasons for absence and patterns at an individual level and by cohorts or groups in order to identify pupils at risk of non-attendance and those who are persistently absent. It will monitor and analyse this data regularly to facilitate early interventions to address issues.

The School Attendance Champion (SAC) is **Assistant Principal (Pastoral, Safeguarding and Pupil Wellbeing)**

The SAC's responsibilities are

- to set a clear vision for improving attendance in school
- to establish and maintain effective systems for tackling absence and make sure the systems are followed by all staff
- to regularly monitor and evaluate progress, including the efficacy of the school's strategies and processes
- to have oversight of and analyse attendance data, and
- to communicate clear messages on the importance of attendance to pupils and parents.

Safeguarding and Attendance

St Mary's School recognises that children missing education can act as a vital warning sign to a range of safeguarding issues, including neglect, sexual abuse and child sexual and criminal exploitation.

This Attendance Policy works in conjunction with our Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy. All staff must be alert to attendance patterns that may indicate safeguarding concerns and must report these immediately to the Designated Safeguarding Lead.

Attendance concerns that require immediate safeguarding action include:

- Any unexplained absence for a child with a social worker, on a child protection plan, or identified as a child in need
- Patterns of absence that may indicate exploitation, abuse or neglect
- Absence coinciding with known risk factors (e.g. before/after school holidays, specific days of the week)
- Prolonged absence without satisfactory explanation
- Inability to contact parents/carers about a child's absence

All staff must report attendance-related safeguarding concerns via MyConcern and to the Designated Safeguarding Lead immediately.

The role of parents/carers

The School expects all parents to:

- make any application for authorised leave of absence at the earliest opportunity
- notify the School of any absence or delay as soon as reasonably possible in accordance with this policy and, when doing so, give an accurate explanation for this; and
- cooperate with the School to explore possible barriers to attendance and to improve it where attendance has been raised as an issue.

Celebrating Good Attendance

The School recognises the importance of celebrating and rewarding good attendance to reinforce positive attendance habits and to acknowledge pupils' commitment to their education.

The School will communicate attendance expectations and celebrate good attendance through:

- Set expectations at new parent induction meetings and transition events
- Individual letters to parents/carers celebrating higher attendance percentages
- Information shared at parents' evenings and parent consultation meetings

The School will celebrate good attendance through:

- Verbal praise from class teachers/form tutors for good attendance
- Recognition of good attendance in end-of-year reports and references

The School will promote the importance of good attendance through:

- Regular assemblies highlighting the link between attendance and achievement
- PSHE lessons exploring the importance of attendance and the impact of absence on learning

The School will ensure that its approach to celebrating attendance is inclusive and sensitive to pupils who may have legitimate reasons for absence (e.g. chronic medical conditions, SEND). Recognition will also be given to pupils who have worked hard to improve their attendance, even if they have not achieved 100%.

The School Day
At the Senior School, registers are taken at the beginning of each lesson to identify any absences from lessons that might occur after the morning or afternoon registration.

	Entry to school/Kindergarten	**Morning Registration**	**Afternoon Registration**
Kindergarten	08.00 Breakfast Club available from 07.30	08.35 - 08.50 Closes 09.05	13.55
Lower School	08.25 Breakfast Club available from 8am	08.35 – 08.50 Closes 09.05	13.55
Senior School	08.30 Breakfast available from 08.00	08.35 – 8.50 Closes 9.05	13.55

Please note:
If a Lower School pupil arrives after 08.49 (from 08.50 onwards) they must go to the office with a parent/carer and sign into the late book with an explanation as to why they are late. If they arrive after 09.05 the pupil will be given the code 'U' which means the pupil is in school, but they are unauthorised.

If a Senior School pupil arrives after 08.49 (from 08.50 onwards) they must go to the office and sign into the late book with an explanation. If they arrive after 09.05 the pupil will be given the code 'U' (unauthorised absence – arrived after the register closed).

Communication during the school day
In line with the School's Mobile Phone Policy (see Behaviour Policy), pupils are not permitted to use mobile phones during the school day. Parents who need to contact their child during the school day should contact the School Office, who will relay messages appropriately.

This ensures that:
The School maintains oversight of all communication with pupils
Safeguarding arrangements are maintained
Parents cannot inadvertently facilitate unauthorised absence by communicating directly with pupils

Prolonged absence for children in EYFS
In cases of prolonged absence (10 consecutive days), or when a child is absent without notification, we will attempt to contact the child's parents and alternative emergency contacts. **The Designated Safeguarding Lead will be informed of any such absence, and we will implement our safeguarding procedures as set out in our Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy.** We will also refer any concerns to local children's social care and/or request a police welfare check **in line with our duty to safeguard children who may be missing from education.**
When deciding whether a child's absence is prolonged, we will consider

- patterns and trends in the child's absences and their personal circumstances
- vulnerability of the child and their parents, as well as circumstances in their home life

We will also implement our safeguarding procedures and refer any concerns to local children's social care and/or request a police welfare check.

Reporting absence
If a pupil is absent for any reason the parent/carer should contact the school offices via the St Mary's app or by phoning and selecting the absence line.

The School will record absences on the Attendance Register using the approved codes.

Where a pupil is absent and the School has not been notified of the reason, the School will attempt to contact parents/carers on the first day of absence by 09:30. **If we are unable to make contact, or if the absence raises safeguarding concerns, the Designated Safeguarding Lead will be informed and appropriate action will be taken in accordance with our Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy, including potential referral to children's social care or police.** This ensures we can quickly identify any safeguarding concerns and confirm the pupil's whereabouts."

Safe and Well Checks (Home Visits)

Where a child has not attended school and we have been unable to make contact with parents/carers, the school may conduct a home visit to establish the child's whereabouts and safety. **This will be treated as a safeguarding concern and managed in accordance with our Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy.**

Authorisation and Procedures
All home visits will be:

- Authorised by the Designated Safeguarding Lead or a Deputy Designated Safeguarding Lead
- Conducted by two members of staff following a risk assessment
- Conducted by staff who are alert to potential indicators of abuse, neglect or exploitation
- Recorded on MyConcern with outcomes and next steps documented
- Followed by appropriate action, including referral to children's social care or police where safeguarding concerns are identified

What Staff Should Observe
During home visits, staff should observe and report any concerns about:

- The child's physical appearance, demeanour or wellbeing
- The home environment
- The behaviour or presentation of parents/carers
- Any indicators of abuse, neglect, exploitation or other safeguarding concerns

If No Contact is Made
If no one is home, staff will leave a card requesting urgent contact with the school. The DSL will consider referral to external agencies if safeguarding concerns exist, including potential referral to children's social care or a request for a police welfare check.

Emergency Situations
Where a home visit identifies immediate safeguarding concerns, staff should contact the police on 999 and inform the Designated Safeguarding Lead.

Authorised absences
An authorised absence means that the School has either given approval in advance for a pupil to be away (granted as an authorised leave of absence) or has accepted an explanation offered afterwards as justification for absence.

Applications for authorised leave of absence
Any authorised leave of absence must be requested from the Vice Principal (Lower School) or Principal (Senior School).

Applications for authorised leave of absence during the School day must be made in writing in advance.

While independent schools have discretion over authorising term-time absence, St Mary's has chosen to adopt a policy that reflects our commitment to maximising learning time and ensuring pupils benefit fully from their education.

Leave of absence during term time will only be granted in exceptional circumstances. The School expects parents/carers to arrange holidays, family visits and other non-essential absences during the school holidays.

The School will consider each application for an authorised leave of absence individually, taking into account:

- The specific facts and circumstances of the request
- The pupil's past attendance record
- The timing of the request (e.g. proximity to examinations, assessments, or key learning periods)
- The educational impact of the absence
- The length of the proposed absence
- The relevant background context behind the request

Exceptional circumstances are rare and unavoidable events that could not reasonably be scheduled outside of term time.

The following will NOT normally be considered exceptional circumstances:

- Family holidays or trips, regardless of cost, timing or destination
- Availability of cheaper holidays during term time
- Parental work commitments or availability (unless in the exceptional circumstances outlined above)
- Birthdays or family celebrations
- Shopping trips or days out
- Visiting relatives (unless in exceptional circumstances such as serious illness)
- Attending weddings or other family celebrations (unless the pupil has a significant role in the ceremony)

The School will not normally authorise leave of absence for family holidays during term time. Parents do not have an automatic right to withdraw pupils from school for holidays.

The School recognises that family time is important and encourages parents to take advantage of the school holiday periods for family holidays and trips. The School publishes term dates well in advance to enable parents to plan accordingly.

Medical and dental appointments:
Apart from illness, no pupil should be absent from School without prior permission from the Vice Principal (Lower School pupils) or the Principal (Senior School pupils).

Dental or medical appointments should be made during School holidays or outside of school hours wherever possible. Where this is not possible (e.g. hospital appointments, specialist consultations, orthodontic treatment), parents/carers should:

- Provide as much notice as possible (ideally at least one week in advance)
- Provide evidence of the appointment (e.g. appointment card, letter, email confirmation)
- Arrange for the pupil to attend school before and/or after the appointment wherever possible to minimise disruption to learning
- Seek permission from the Vice Principal or the Principal in advance of the appointment

Where a pupil has regular medical or dental appointments (e.g. weekly physiotherapy, orthodontic treatment), parents should discuss this with the Vice Principal or Principal to agree a suitable arrangement that minimises disruption to the pupil's education.

Religious observance:
A leave of absence will be authorised for religious observance if the day concerned is exclusively set apart for religious observance by the religious body to which parents and pupils belong.

Parents are expected to make a request for this type of leave of absence in advance, providing details of:

- The specific religious observance
- The date(s) required
- The religious body to which the family belongs

The School respects the religious beliefs of all families and will work with parents to ensure pupils can observe important religious days while minimising disruption to their education.

Other exceptional circumstances:
For any other requests for leave of absence, parents should provide:

- A detailed explanation of the circumstances
- Why the absence cannot be scheduled during school holidays
- The educational benefit (if applicable)
- Any supporting evidence or documentation
- The proposed dates and duration of absence

The Vice Principal or Principal will consider the request and respond in writing, normally within 5 working days during term time.

Consequences of persistent unauthorised absence:
Parents are bound by the School's Terms and Conditions and the Parent Code of Conduct relating to attendance. Failure to ensure a child's attendance or engage with the School about attendance concerns could amount to a breach of contract or a finding that the parent is treating the School unreasonably.

Where a pupil has persistent unauthorised absence (including repeated unauthorised holidays), the School may:

- Require a meeting with parents/carers to discuss the concerns
- Issue a formal written warning
- Implement additional monitoring of attendance
- In serious cases, require the withdrawal of the pupil from the School in accordance with the Terms and Conditions

The School will always seek to work in partnership with parents to resolve attendance concerns before taking formal action. However, the School has a duty to all pupils to maintain high standards of attendance and to ensure that the education of other pupils is not disrupted by poor attendance patterns.

Support for parents:
The School recognises that there may be genuine reasons why families face challenges with attendance. Parents who are experiencing difficulties ensuring their child's attendance are encouraged to speak to their child's Form Tutor/Class Teacher, the School Attendance Champion, the Vice Principal, or the Principal in confidence. The School will work with families to identify and address barriers to attendance wherever possible.

Reporting duties
The School has statutory reporting obligations in relation to pupil attendance and safeguarding.

The School must report to the local authority:

- Deletions from admission register: When a pupil is to be deleted from the admission register at non-standard transition points (see Appendix 1 for full details of when this applies and what information must be provided)

- Sickness absences: When a pupil is recorded as absent using code I (illness) and there are reasonable grounds to believe the pupil will miss 15 consecutive school days or more, or when cumulative illness absences in the current school year reach or exceed 15 school days

The School recognises that children missing education (CME) can act as a vital warning sign to a range of safeguarding issues, including neglect, sexual abuse, child sexual exploitation and child criminal exploitation.

The School will make a CME referral to the local authority when:

- A pupil's whereabouts are unknown and there are safeguarding concerns
- The School has reason to believe a pupil may be missing from education

- A pupil has been absent for an extended period without explanation and the School has been unable to make contact with parents/carers or establish the pupil's whereabouts
- There are concerns that a pupil may have been removed from the country without the School's knowledge

All CME referrals will be made in accordance with the School's Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy and local safeguarding partnership protocols.

Action will be taken in accordance with the Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy if any absence of a pupil from the School gives rise to concern about their welfare.

The DSL will be informed immediately of any attendance concerns for:

- Children with a social worker
- Children on a child protection plan
- Children in need
- Looked after children
- Previously looked after children
- Any child where absence may indicate a safeguarding concern

Notification to External Agencies
The School will inform a pupil's social worker of any unexplained absences on the same day that the absence occurs. This applies to all children with an allocated social worker, including those on child protection plans, children in need plans, and looked after children.
The School will also inform a pupil's youth offending team worker of any unexplained absences where the pupil is subject to a court order or is being supported by the youth offending service.

Where a pupil has persistent unauthorised absence, the School will:

- Meet with parents/carers to discuss the concerns and explore barriers to attendance
- Implement appropriate support strategies and interventions
- Monitor attendance closely with regular review meetings
- Consider whether the absence raises safeguarding concerns requiring referral to children's social care

In cases where parents/carers fail to ensure their child's attendance despite the School's support and intervention, and where this amounts to a breach of the School's Terms and Conditions or constitutes unreasonable treatment of the School, the School may take action in accordance with its Terms and Conditions. This may include, in the most serious cases, requiring the withdrawal of the pupil from the School.

All reporting to external agencies will be recorded by the DSL and monitored to ensure appropriate follow-up action is taken.

The School will maintain clear records of:

- All CME referrals and outcomes
- Notifications to social workers and youth offending teams
- Safeguarding concerns arising from attendance patterns
- Decisions made regarding support and intervention
- Communication with parents/carers about attendance concerns

These records will be stored securely in accordance with the School's data protection and record retention policies.

Monitoring Attendance

The School will undertake regular data analysis to identify and provide additional support to pupils or pupil cohorts that need it, and to look at historic and emerging patterns across the School and develop strategies to address them.

The analysis may include:

- Monitoring and analysing weekly attendance patterns and trends
- Regular attendance reports to class teachers/form tutors to facilitate discussions with pupils and leaders (including SENCo and the Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL))
- Thorough analysis of half-termly, termly and full year data to identify patterns and trends
- Benchmarking attendance data at whole school, year group and cohort level to identify areas of focus for improvement
- Devising specific strategies to address poor attendance for individual pupils and cohorts
- Monitoring the impact of school-wide attendance efforts, including any specific strategies implemented; and
- Providing data and reports to the Governing Body to illustrate monitoring, action and impact.

The School will pay particular attention to patterns of absence that may indicate underlying issues, including:

- Absences on specific days of the week (e.g. Mondays, Fridays)
- Absences before or after school holidays
- Absences during particular lessons or activities
- Frequent short-term illnesses without medical evidence
- Absences coinciding with known family events or circumstances

The School uses the following definitions to identify pupils requiring additional support:

Persistent absence: A pupil is classified as persistently absent when they miss 10% or more of their possible school sessions (equivalent to missing one half-day or more per week on average)

Severe absence: A pupil is classified as severely absent when they miss 50% or more of their possible school sessions

The School will implement a graduated response to absence:

Attendance below 95% (emerging concern):

- Form Tutor/Class Teacher to discuss attendance with pupil and/or parents/carers
- Monitoring of attendance patterns to identify any triggers or barriers
- Offer of support to address any identified barriers

Persistent absence (below 90%):

- Meeting with parents/carers led by the School Attendance Champion (SAC) or Phase Lead/Assistant Principal (Pastoral) Lower School
- Development of an attendance support plan with clear targets and review dates
- Referral to relevant support services where appropriate (e.g. school nurse, pastoral team, Family Help)
- Weekly monitoring of attendance with regular communication to parents/carers

Severe absence (below 50%):

- Urgent meeting with parents/carers led by the SAC and/or senior leader
- Comprehensive assessment of barriers to attendance
- Development of intensive support plan involving external agencies where appropriate
- Consideration of referral to local authority attendance services
- Daily monitoring of attendance with immediate follow-up of any further absence

Immediate safeguarding assessment by the DSL to ensure there are no child protection concerns. The DSL will consider whether the absence may indicate that the child is suffering or at risk of suffering significant harm, and will make appropriate referrals to children's social care and/or other agencies in accordance with our Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy.

Attendance targets and reporting to governors:

The School's whole-school attendance target is 96%, which reflects our commitment to maximising learning time. This exceeds the national threshold for persistent absence (90%) and demonstrates our high expectations for all pupils.

The SAC will provide termly reports to the Governing Body including:

- Whole school attendance percentage and comparison to national/local averages
- Attendance by year group and identified cohorts (e.g. SEND, children with social workers)
- Number and percentage of pupils classified as persistently absent
- Number and percentage of pupils classified as severely absent
- Analysis of attendance patterns and trends
- Impact of attendance interventions and strategies implemented
- Planned actions to improve attendance in the following term

The Governing Body will use this data to hold senior leaders to account for attendance outcomes and to inform strategic decisions about resource allocation and support.

The School has high expectations of pupils as to their attendance and has systems in place to manage poor attendance.

Pupils should be aware that:

- they are expected to be present in-person for the duration of each School day
- they are expected to arrive on time and attend all timetabled lessons
- they should not leave a lesson or the School site without permission
- they should engage with the School's arrangements for recording and managing attendance as set out in this policy
- any unexplained absence will be followed up
- persistent lateness or non-attendance will result in action being taken by the School. This could include:

    - offers of support to seek to identify and address any barriers to attendance
    - communication with parents
    - visits to the family home
    - reporting to other agencies such as children's social care; and
    - sanctions against them or their parents in line with the School's behaviour policies.

- If pupils are having difficulties that might discourage or prevent them from attending School or specific lessons regularly, they may speak to any member of staff, although in the first instance they would be encouraged to speak to their Form Tutor/Class teacher. Pupils are assured that this information will be managed sensitively.

Additional needs

The School recognises that some pupils may find it harder than others to attend School, and will work with those pupils and parents to try and remove barriers to attendance by building strong and trusting relationships and working together to put the right support in place.

The School will make reasonable adjustments where a pupil has a disability that puts them at a substantial disadvantage, in comparison with pupils without a disability, in relation to school attendance. This is in accordance with the School's duties under the Equality Act 2010.

The School will work closely with the Assistant Principal (SEND and Inclusion) parents/carers and, where appropriate, external specialists, to develop specific support approaches for attendance for pupils with special educational needs and disabilities. This will include ensuring the provision outlined in a pupil's education, health and care plan (where applicable) is accessed.

Examples of reasonable adjustments the School may consider include:

- Flexible or phased start times to support pupils who find transitions difficult
- Adjusted timetables or reduced timetables (as part of a planned reintegration programme with clear review dates)
- Additional breaks or access to a quiet space during the school day
- Adjustments to uniform requirements for pupils with sensory needs
- Provision of additional support during unstructured times
- Use of visual timetables or social stories to support understanding of routines
- Adapted physical education activities or alternative arrangements
- Access to specialist equipment or resources to support attendance

Any reasonable adjustments will be:

- Agreed in partnership with parents/carers and, where appropriate, the pupil Documented clearly with specific objectives and success criteria
- Reviewed regularly (at least termly) to ensure they remain appropriate and effective
- Adjusted or withdrawn if they are no longer necessary or if the pupil's needs change

The School recognises that some pupils with medical conditions may experience barriers to attendance. The School will work with parents/carers, healthcare professionals and, where appropriate, external medical services, to ensure pupils with medical conditions can attend school safely and access their education.

This will include:

- Ensuring Individual Healthcare Plans are in place for pupils with complex or long-term medical needs
- Making reasonable adjustments to support attendance (e.g. rest breaks, access to medication, adapted physical activities, access to medical facilities)
- Liaising with healthcare professionals to understand the impact of medical conditions on attendance and to ensure appropriate support is in place
- Providing appropriate staff training on medical conditions and emergency procedures
- Considering referrals to specialist services (e.g. school nurse, hospital education services, specialist medical education support) where appropriate
- Ensuring medication is stored and administered safely in accordance with the School's Supporting Pupils with Medical Conditions Policy

Where a pupil's medical condition results in extended absence, the School will:

- Maintain regular contact with the pupil and family

- Liaise with medical professionals to understand the prognosis and expected return to school
- Consider provision of work or educational support during absence (where the pupil is well enough)
- Plan for reintegration to school, including any phased return arrangements
- Monitor the pupil's wellbeing and academic progress during and after the period of absence

The School's approach to supporting pupils with medical conditions is set out in full in the Medical Conditions Policy.

Suitable strategies will be considered for pupils with any social, emotional or mental health issues that are affecting their attendance.

This may include:

Referral to the school's pastoral support team or mental health lead
Referral to external mental health services (e.g. CAMHS, private counselling services, school nurse)
Development of a tailored support plan addressing specific barriers to attendance
Liaison with parents/carers to ensure a coordinated approach
Consideration of temporary adjustments to timetable or expectations while support is put in place
Regular monitoring and review of the pupil's wellbeing and attendance

See the "Mental Health and Attendance" section of this policy for further details on how the School responds to mental health concerns.

Where barriers to attendance are outside of the School's control, the School will work with parents and pupils to identify appropriate sources of support.

Sickness reporting
The School does not routinely request medical evidence for short-term illness. However, the School may request medical evidence where:

- A pupil has frequent short-term absences due to illness
- There are concerns about the pattern or nature of illness absences
- Absence due to illness is prolonged (typically more than 5 consecutive school days)
- The School needs to make decisions about reasonable adjustments or support

Medical evidence may include appointment cards, prescriptions, or a letter from a GP or medical professional.

The School will make a sickness return to the local authority if a pupil is recorded in the attendance register as absent using the national absence code I (unable to attend because of sickness) and there are reasonable grounds to believe that the pupil will have

to miss 15 consecutive school days or more for illness or the pupil's total number of school days missed during the current school year because of illness (whether consecutive or cumulative) will reach or exceed 15 school days.

Mental Health and Attendance

The School recognises that poor attendance can be both a symptom and a cause of mental health difficulties. Mental health problems can develop into safeguarding concerns, and staff must be alert to warning signs that may indicate a pupil is experiencing mental health difficulties.

Warning signs that staff should be alert to include:

- Significant changes in behaviour, mood or engagement with school
- Withdrawal from friends, activities or social situations
- Difficulty sleeping or changes in sleep patterns
- Changes in eating habits or weight
- Physical signs of self-harm
- Expressing feelings of hopelessness, worthlessness or suicidal thoughts
- Increased anxiety about attending school or specific lessons
- Persistent physical complaints (e.g. headaches, stomach aches) with no apparent medical cause
- Deteriorating attendance patterns, particularly when linked to other concerning behaviours

Where staff identify warning signs or have concerns about a pupil's mental health in relation to their attendance, they must:

- Report concerns to the Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL) or Deputy DSL immediately
- Not attempt to diagnose mental health conditions, but share observations and concerns
- Continue to monitor the pupil and document any further concerns

The DSL will assess whether the concern meets the threshold for a safeguarding referral and will coordinate appropriate support, which may include:

- Referral to the school's mental health support services or pastoral team
- Liaison with parents/carers to discuss concerns and identify support strategies
- Referral to external mental health services (e.g. CAMHS, school nurse, GP)
- Development of an attendance support plan that addresses mental health needs
- Referral for Family Help or early help services where appropriate

If a member of staff believes that a pupil is in immediate danger of harming themselves or others, they must:

- Not leave the pupil alone
- Call 999 immediately

- Inform the DSL as soon as possible

The School will ensure that any mental health interventions offered are safe, effective and appropriate for the child's needs, and will work in partnership with parents/carers and external agencies to provide coordinated support.

Attendance concerns relating to mental health will be handled sensitively and with appropriate regard to the pupil's welfare, while maintaining the expectation that pupils attend school regularly wherever possible.

Young carers

The School recognises that some pupils have caring responsibilities for family members, which may impact their attendance, punctuality, attainment, behaviour and wellbeing.

Staff should be alert to potential indicators that a pupil may be a young carer, including:

- Patterns of lateness or absence
- Tiredness or difficulty concentrating
- Anxiety about being away from home
- Taking on responsibilities beyond their years
- Limited time for homework or extracurricular activities

Where staff identify a pupil who may be a young carer, they should:

- Report this to the DSL or pastoral team
- Approach the conversation sensitively with the pupil and family
- Offer appropriate support and reasonable adjustments where needed
- Consider referral to young carers' services or other support agencies

The School will work with young carers and their families to identify and implement support that enables the pupil to attend school regularly while balancing their caring responsibilities.

Early help and external support
Where barriers to attendance are outside of the School's control, the School will work with parents and pupils to identify appropriate sources of support.

This may include:

Community-based early help: Signposting to universal services available to all families (e.g. parenting programmes, community groups, voluntary sector support, faith-based organisations)

Specialist services: Referral to specialist services where appropriate and with parental consent, such as:

- Educational psychology services
- Child and adolescent mental health services (CAMHS)
- Family therapy or counselling services
- Specialist medical services
- Bereavement support services

Family Help (targeted early help): Where families have more complex needs requiring coordinated multi-agency support, the School may make a referral to the local authority's Family Help services. This is a targeted level of support that sits between universal early help and statutory intervention.

The School will consider making a Family Help referral when:

- Multiple barriers to attendance have been identified (e.g. housing issues, financial difficulties, parental mental health, family breakdown)
- The family would benefit from coordinated support from multiple agencies
- Previous school-based interventions have not resulted in improved attendance
- There are emerging concerns about the pupil's welfare that require external expertise

All referrals for external support will be:

- Made with parental consent (unless there are safeguarding concerns that override this requirement)
- Discussed with parents/carers in advance wherever possible
- Made in accordance with local safeguarding partnership protocols and the School's Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy
- Followed up to ensure the family has received the support offered
- Reviewed regularly to monitor impact on attendance

Where a pupil is receiving support from external agencies, the School will:

- Maintain regular communication with the agencies involved (with parental consent)
- Attend multi-agency meetings where appropriate
- Ensure school-based support is coordinated with external support
- Share relevant information about the pupil's attendance and progress (in line with data protection requirements)
- Review the effectiveness of support arrangements regularly

Serious Violence and Attendance

The School recognises that pupils with poor attendance or disrupted education may be at higher risk of involvement in serious violence, either as victims or perpetrators. This risk is particularly elevated for pupils who:

- Have experienced suspensions or permanent exclusions
- Have spent time in alternative provision
- Have a history of offending or contact with youth justice services
- Are frequently absent without authorisation

- Show patterns of absence at specific times (e.g. particular lessons, days of the week)

Staff should be alert to times when pupils may be at highest risk of involvement in serious violence, including:

- Journey to and from school (particularly straight after school)
- During periods of absence from school
- During unstructured times (break, lunch, before/after school)
- When absent from specific lessons

Any member of staff who has concerns about a pupil's potential involvement in serious violence, or who becomes aware that a pupil is carrying, threatening with, or using a weapon (or expressing intent to do so), must report this to the DSL or Deputy DSL's immediately.

The DSL will:

- Assess the immediate risk to the pupil and others
- Consider whether the concern meets the threshold for a safeguarding referral
- Liaise with police where there is an immediate risk or evidence of criminal activity
- Work with parents/carers to address concerns (unless this would increase risk to the pupil)
- Consider referral to relevant support services (e.g. youth offending team, violence reduction unit, Family Help services)

For pupils identified as being at risk of involvement in serious violence, the School will offer early, evidence-based support, which may include:

- Targeted mentoring programmes
- Therapeutic support or counselling
- Engagement with specialist services (e.g. youth workers, violence reduction programmes)
- Development of a risk assessment and safety plan
- Close monitoring of attendance patterns and immediate follow-up of absences
- Liaison with external agencies including police, social care and youth justice services

The School will work proactively to identify and support pupils at risk, recognising that good attendance and engagement with school is a protective factor against involvement in serious violence.

Information Sharing

Personal information on attendance will only be shared in line with legal obligations and having regard to government guidance on attendance, safeguarding and children missing education.

The School, local authorities and other local partners will work together and share data on individual cases where it is of benefit to a pupil (e.g. health services where there are medical conditions or the police where there are extra-familiar harms) and where appropriate the school will attend regular targeting support meetings.

The School is legally required to share information from the registers with the local authority. As a minimum this will include:

- New pupil and deletion returns
- Attendance returns
- Sickness returns

The law allows local authority officers access to the attendance and admission registers of all types of schools to carry out their functions under the Education Acts to support joint working between schools and local authorities. These officers are also permitted to take digital or physical extracts of the School's registers.

Record keeping and confidentiality
All records created in accordance with this policy are managed in accordance with the School's policies that apply to the retention and destruction of records.

The information created in connection with this policy may contain personal data. The School's use of personal data will be in accordance with data protection legislation, which comprises:

- The Data Protection Act 2018
- The UK General Data Protection Regulation (UK GDPR)
- The Data (Use and Access) Act 2025

Personal information on attendance will only be shared in line with legal obligations and having regard to government guidance on attendance, safeguarding and children missing education. Further information about how the School processes personal data is set out in the School's Privacy Notices.

This policy should be read in conjunction with other policies:
Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy
Children Missing Education
Behaviour Policy
Special Educational Needs Policy
Terms and Conditions
Pupil Code of Conduct
Parent Code of Conduct
Acceptance Form

Reviewed/Approval: Autumn 2026
Next review: Autumn 2027

Appendix 1 - Admission Register

In accordance with the requirements of the School Attendance (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2024 the School will:

Maintain and admission register of all pupils (of both compulsory and non-compulsory school age) admitted to the School (also known as the school roll); and

Inform the local authority of any pupil who is going to be added to or deleted from the School's admission register at non-standard transition points.

The admission register must be kept electronically and a back-up copy of the register must be made at least once a month in the form of an electronic or printed copy.

The School ensures that every entry in the School's admission register is preserved for six years beginning with the day on which the entry has been made, and every back-up copy of the register is preserved for six years after the end of the school year it relates to.

The admissions register contains specific personal details of every pupil in the School, including their date of admission, information regarding parents and carers and details of the school they last attend.

A pupil's name can only be deleted from the admission register for a reason set out in regulation 9 of the School Attendance (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2024. When any of the situations set out in regulation 9 occurs, the pupil's name must be deleted.

Where the School notifies the local authority that the pupil's name is to be deleted from the admissions register, the School must provide it with the following information:

- The full name of the pupil
- The address of the pupil
- The full name and address of any parent the pupil normally lives with
- At least one telephone number of any parent with whom the pupil lives or can be contacted in an emergency
- The pupil's future address, the full name and address of the parent who the pupil is going to live with, and the date the pupil is expected to start living there, if applicable
- Name of the pupil's other or future school and pupil's start date or expected start date there, if applicable
- The ground (prescribed in regulation 9) under which the pupil's name is to be deleted from the admissions register.

Appendix 2 - Attendance Register

The School records and monitors the attendance of all pupils (both of compulsory and non-compulsory school age)

The School uses the appropriate national attendance and absence codes system to enable it to record and monitor attendance and absence in a consistent way which complies with regulation 10 of the Attendance Regulations.

The attendance register is kept electronically and a back-up copy of the register is made at least once a month in the form of an electronic or printed copy.

The School will also use these records to identify patterns of poor attendance (at individual and cohort level) and work with pupils and parents to resolve any issues before they become entrenched.

The School is required by law to take attendance registers twice daily - once at the start of the morning session and once during the afternoon session.

On each occasion it will be recorded whether every pupil is:

- physically present in school when the attendance register begins to be taken, or
- absent from the school when the attendance register begins to be taken but attends before the taking of the register has ended, or
- attending a place other than the school, or
- absent.

The circumstances in which a pupil may be recorded as attending a place, other than the school, can include:

- Attending educational provision arranged by a local authority
- For an educational visit or trip arranged by or on behalf of the school and supervised by a member of school staff
- Attending a place for an approved educational activity that is a sporting activity
- Attending an approved educational activity that is work experience provided under arrangements made by the school as part of the pupil's education
- Attending a place for any other approved educational activity.

Recording absence

Absence will be recorded in accordance with the national absence codes set out in regulation 10 of the School Attendance (Pupil Registration) (England) (Regulations) 2024 and statutory guidance Working together to improve school attendance relating to:

- leaves of absence
- other authorised reasons
- unable to attend school because of unavoidable cause
- unauthorised absence.

Remote education

Remote education

Remote education is not a substitute for in-person attendance. The School's expectation is that all pupils attend school in-person unless there are exceptional circumstances that make this impossible.

Remote learning is not offered to a pupil who is off school feeling unwell for the day. Where a pupil is well enough to engage with education but genuinely unable to attend school in-person due to exceptional circumstances (e.g. recovering from surgery, awaiting a school place following a move, temporary medical condition preventing travel), the School may provide remote education for a time-limited period.

The School is required to record all absence from in-person lessons.

The School may, in limited circumstances, provide remote education to enable pupils, who are well enough to learn but unable to attend the School site, to keep pace with their education.

In the limited circumstances when the School decides to use remote education for individual pupils when they are absent, the following will be considered:

- Ensuring mutual agreement of remote education by the School, parents or carers, potentially pupils, and if appropriate a relevant medical professional. If the pupil has an Education, Health and Care plan or has a social worker, the local authority should also be involved in the decision

- If remote education is being used as part of a plan to reintegrate a pupil back to school, putting a formal arrangement in place to review its efficacy regularly (at least fortnightly), alongside identifying what other support and flexibilities can be put in place to help ease the pupil back to school at the earliest opportunity

- Setting a time limit within which the period of remote education provision should be reviewed, with the aim that the pupil returns to in person education with the required support in place to meet their needs. If remote education needs to continue beyond 4 weeks, a comprehensive review must take place involving senior leaders, parents/carers, and where appropriate, relevant professionals (e.g. medical professionals, SENCO, social worker). The review should reassess the necessity of remote education and set a clear plan for return to in-person attendance."

Any provision of remote education will be:

- Agreed in advance with parents/carers and, where appropriate, relevant professionals
- Time-limited with regular review (at least fortnightly)
- Part of a clear plan to return the pupil to in-person attendance
- Recorded as absence in the attendance register using the appropriate code

Pupils who are absent from school and receiving remote education still need to be recorded as absent using the most appropriate absence code. The School will keep a

record of, and monitor pupil's engagement with remote education, but this is not formally tracked in the attendance register. Where appropriate, this information may be used to make support plans for a pupil's reintegration to school. Support plans will be reviewed regularly and will be stated how often when the plan is put in place.

Unauthorised absence

The "unauthorised absence" code will be used when prior permission for absence has not been given and where the School is not satisfied with the explanation given for absence or delayed attendance meaning that the code for "unable to attend due to an exceptional circumstance" is not appropriate. Examples include:

a) holiday has not been authorised by the School or is in excess of the period determined by the Vice Principal/Principal
b) the reason for absence has not been provided
c) a pupil is absent from school without authorisation
d) a pupil has arrived in school after registration has closed and without reasonable explanation.

Appendix 3

Please see below the most commonly used codes at the school.

Please note: Statutory Guidance should still be referred to ensure the correct codes are being used.

Code	Meaning	When to Use at St Mary's
**/ or **	Present	Pupil in school for AM/PM registration
L	Late (before register closes)	Lower: 08:50-09:04, Senior: 08:50-09:04
U	Late (after register closes)	Lower: after 09:05, Senior: after 09:05
I	Illness	Pupil absent due to sickness
M	Medical/dental appointment	With evidence of appointment
C	Authorised leave of absence	Exceptional circumstances only
H	Authorised holiday	Rarely used (exceptional circumstances only)
G	Unauthorised holiday	Term-time holiday without authorisation
O	Other unauthorised absence	Absence not accepted as valid
N	Reason not yet provided	Temporary code until explanation received
B	Off-site educational activity	School trips, visits, work experience
R	Religious observance	Day set apart for religious observance
Y	Exceptional circumstances	Severe weather, transport failure, etc.