

ATTENDANCE POLICY AND PROCEDURE

This policy has regard to the following guidance and advice:

Working together to improve school attendance (19 August 2024)

Keeping Children Safe in Education (KCSIE 2025)

Children Missing Education (August 2024)

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 reception 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 full potential. 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 and it will monitor and analyse this data regularly to facilitate early interventions to address issues.

The School Attendance Champion (SAC) is **Kate Kiernan**

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.

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.

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 | 8.00am Breakfast Club available from 7.30am | 8.00-8.15am Closes 8.30am | 1.00pm |
| Lower School | 8.25am Breakfast Club available from 8am | 8.40 – 8.50am Closes 9.10am | 1.20pm |
| Senior School | 8.15am | 8.50 – 9.00am Closes 9.15am | 1.40pm |

Please note:

If a Lower School pupil arrives at 8.50 or later 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 9.10am the pupil will be given the code 'U' which means the pupils is in school, but they are unauthorised.

If a Senior School pupil arrives at 9.00am or later they must go to the office and sign into the late book with an explanation. If they arrive after 9.15am the pupil will be given the code 'U' which means the pupil is in school, but they are unauthorised.

Prolonged absence for children in EYFS

In cases of prolonged absence, or when a child is absent without notification, we will attempt to contact the child's parents and alternative emergency contacts.

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. Absences will be recorded on the Attendance Register using the approved codes.

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 should be obtained from the Vice Principal (Lower School) or Principal (Senior School).

Applications for authorised leave of absence during the School day will only be granted in exceptional circumstances and will only be permitted if made in writing.

The School will consider each application for an authorised leave of absence individually, taking into account the specific facts and circumstances, the pupils past attendance record, and the relevant background context behind the request.

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 holiday except in cases of emergency when again permission should be sought from the Vice Principal or the Principal.

If a leave of absence is granted it will be recorded in line with the authorised absence code.

A leave of absence will usually 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.

The law entitles every child of compulsory school age to an efficient, full-time education suitable to their age, aptitude and any special educational need they may have. It is a legal responsibility of every parent to make sure their child receives that education.

This means pupils must attend every day that the School is open, except in a small number of allowable circumstances such as being too ill to attend or being given permission for an absence in advance from the School.

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

The School however, will help parents to understand what is expected of them and why attendance is important to their child's attainment, wellbeing, and wider development and provide clarity on the short and long term consequences of poor attendance.

Reporting duties

The School has statutory reporting obligations if a pupil fails to regularly attend the School. The School must report unauthorised absences for a continuous period of 10 days or more to the local authority.

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

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
- provide regular attendance reports to class teachers/form tutors to facilitate discussions with pupils and to leaders (including SENCo and the Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL))
- conducting 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
- provide data and reports to the Governing Body to illustrate monitoring, action and impact.

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
 - a) offers of support to seek to identify and address any barriers to attendance
 - b) communication with parents
 - c) visits to the family home
 - d) reporting to other agencies such as children's social care; and
 - e) 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 to be managed sensitively.

Additional needs

The School recognises 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. It will also work with parents, and, where appropriate, with the local authority, to develop specific support approaches for attendance for pupils with special educational needs and disabilities e.g., ensuring the provision outlined in a pupil's education, health and care plan is accessed. Suitable strategies will also be considered for pupils with any social, emotional or mental health issues that is affecting their attendance.

Where barriers are outside of the School's control, the School will work with parents and pupils to identify alternative sources of support to consider, where appropriate, making a referral for early help.

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.

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-familial 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.

The School must provide specific pupil information on request to the Secretary of State. This requirement is met by having an electronic management information system containing the required information that can be accessed by the DfE. The School also uses this tool to monitor pupil level attendance and understand trends in attendance patterns.

Where appropriate, the School is expected to inform a pupil's social worker and/or youth offending team worker if there are unexplained absences.

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 the personal data will be in accordance with data protection law.

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

Parent Code of Conduct

Acceptance Form

Reviewed/Approval: July 2025

Next review: Summer 2026

Appendix 1 - Admission Register

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

Maintain an 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 is 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:

- a) The full name of the pupil
- b) The address of the pupil
- c) The full name and address of any parent the pupil normally lives with
- d) At least one telephone number of any parent with whom the pupil lives or can be contacted in an emergency
- e) 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
- f) Name of the pupil's other or future school and pupil's start date or expected start date there, if applicable
- g) 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:

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

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

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

- a) leaves of absence
- b) other authorised reasons
- c) unable to attend school because of unavoidable cause
- d) unauthorised absence.

Remote education

Remote learning is not offered to a pupil who is off school feeling unwell for the day.

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:

- a) 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
- b) 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, alongside identifying what other support and flexibilities can be put in place to help ease the pupil back to school at the earliest opportunity
- c) 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.

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.

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 Head of Lower School/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.