



Attendance Policy

St Marks CofE Primary School



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Rationale/Statement of Intent

For a child to reach their full educational achievement a high level of school attendance is essential.

We are committed to providing an education of the highest quality for all our pupils and endeavour to provide an environment where all pupils feel valued and welcome. Every child has a right to access the education to which he/she is entitled. Parents and teachers share the responsibility for supporting and promoting excellent school attendance and punctuality for all.

It is our duty to consistently strive to achieve a goal of 100% attendance for all children. Every opportunity will be used to convey to pupils and their parents or carers the importance of regular and punctual attendance.

For our children to take full advantage of the educational opportunities offered it is vital that children are at school, on time, every day unless the reason for the absence is unavoidable. The routines children develop around attendance and punctuality at school are the same as the expectations of any future employer in the world of work. High attainment, confidence with peers and staff and future aspirations depend on good attendance.

Our Attendance Policy reflects the key principles of that guidance.

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/working-together-to-improve-school-attendance>

This policy is written with the above guidance in mind and underpins our school ethos to:

- promote children's welfare and safeguarding
- ensure every pupil has access to the full-time education to which they are entitled
- ensure that pupils succeed whilst at school

- ensure that pupils have access to the widest possible range of opportunities at school, and when they leave school

Operating the Policy

1. Promoting Good Attendance

The foundation for good attendance is a strong partnership between the school, parents and the child.

To help us all to focus on this we will:

- Report to parents/carers on how their child is performing in school and their attendance. Promote positive attendance messages within our regular newsletters
- Contact parents/carers should their child's attendance fall below the school's target for attendance.

2. Roles and Responsibilities

A member of the Senior Leadership Team will oversee, direct and co-ordinate the school's work in promoting regular and improved attendance. They will ensure that attendance issues are identified at an early stage and that support is put in place to deal with any difficulties.

Daily and frequent monitoring of pupils will be delegated to the attendance officer (AO). The AO may also contact parents. The AO, office team and pastoral lead will work closely together to monitor and identify poor attendance and/or punctuality, and seek support from the SLT where necessary.

If absence is frequent or continuous, except where a child is clearly unwell, staff will discuss with parents/carers the need and reasons for their child's absence and will encourage them to keep absences to a minimum. A note or explanation from a pupil's home does not mean an absence becomes authorised. **The decision whether or not to authorise an absence will always rest with the school.**

Responsibilities of Classroom Staff:

- Ensure that all students are registered accurately.
- Liaise with the Attendance Officer on matters of attendance and punctuality.
- Communicate any concerns/underlying problems that may account for a child's absence, and record on CPOMS

Responsibilities of Pupils:

- Attend every day unless they are ill or have an authorised absence.
- Arrive in school on time.

Responsibilities of Parents and Carers:

Ensuring a child's regular attendance at school is the parent/carer's legal responsibility (section of the 1996 Education Act) and permitting absence from school that is not authorised by the school creates an offence in law.

Parents will:

- Discuss with the class teacher/head teacher any planned absences well in advance.
- Support the school in aiming for 100% attendance each year.
- Make sure that any absence is clearly accounted for by phone on the first and subsequent days of absence, or by email/letter if a phone is unavailable.
- Avoid taking their child out of school for non-urgent medical or dental appointments.
- Only request for leave of absence if it is for an exceptional circumstance.

Recording Attendance

Legally the register must be marked twice daily. This is once at the start of the school day 8.50am and again for the afternoon session at approximately 12.50 for Reception pupils, 1pm for Key Stage 1 and 1.20pm for Key Stage 2.

Lateness/Punctuality

It is important to be on time at the start of the morning and afternoon school sessions. The start of the school day is used to give out instructions or organise work. If a child is late they can miss work, time with their class teacher getting vital information, cause disruption to the lesson for others, and can be embarrassing, leading to possible further absence.

- The school day begins at 8.50am and all pupils are expected to be in school at that time. Morning registration is at 8.50am.
- All lateness is recorded daily.
- A child arriving after Registration at 8.50am and before 9.14am, will be marked 'Late'.
- If a child arrives late, a reason must be given and this will be recorded.
- This information will be required by the courts, should a prosecution for non-attendance or lateness be necessary.
- Arrival after 9.14am will be marked as unauthorised absence code 'U' in line with County and Department for Education (DfE) guidance. This mark shows them to be on site, but is legally recorded as an absence and therefore affects their attendance percentage.
- If a pupil is late due to a medical appointment, they will receive an authorised absence coded 'M'. Please be advised that where possible doctors and dentists appointments are to be made outside of school hours or during school holidays.
- Pupils who are consistently late are disrupting not only their own education but also that of the other pupils. On-going and repeated lateness is considered as unauthorised absence and will be subject to legal action.
- Parents, guardians or carers of pupils who have patterns of lateness will be contacted to discuss the importance of good time keeping and how this might be achieved. If lateness persists, parents, guardians or carers will be invited to attend the school and discuss the problem and support offered.
- If support is not appropriate or is declined and a child has 10 or more sessions of unauthorised absence due to lateness recorded in any 10 week period the school or the Hampshire County Council will be required to issue parents with a penalty notice in accordance with Hampshire's Code of Conduct for issuing penalty notices for non-attendance.(See section 6 of this policy for further detail).

Children should be collected promptly at the end of the school day. Where late collection is persistent and/or significantly late, the school is obliged to take any uncollected pupil to a place of safety and share concerns as necessary with other agencies. If one is available, the school will place a child into the after school club and provide the parent/carer with the bill.

What to do if my child is absent?

Parents/carers must notify the school if their child is going to be absent/late. This message can be telephoned to the school office, the parent can come in person, or a note can be emailed to school. See Hampshire Guidance 'Good practice guidance for attendance and safeguarding' located at <http://documents.hants.gov.uk/childrens-services/CIAS/Goodpracticeguidanceforattendanceproceduresandsafeguarding-May2014.pdf>

If a child is absent and a message has not been received, a member of the office staff will telephone parents to enquire about the reason for the absence.

If a child is absent we will:

- Invite the parent/carer in to school to discuss the situation with our Attendance Officer or Senior Leadership Team if absences persist.
- Refer the matter to the Hampshire's Attendance Legal Panels if absence is unauthorised and becomes significant.

Third Day Absence

Parents should note: If a child is not seen and contact has not been established with any of the named parents/carers after three days of absence, the school is required to start 'child missing in education' procedures as set down by Hampshire County Council Guidance. We will make all reasonable enquiries to establish contact with parents and the child including making enquiries to known friends and wider family.

Ten Days Absence

We have a legal duty to report the absence of any pupils who are absent without an explanation for 10 consecutive days. If the child is not seen and contact has not been established with the named parent/carer then the Local Authority is notified that the child is 'at risk of missing'. Children's Services staff will visit the last known address and alert key services to locate the child. Parents should help the school to help them and the child by making sure the school always has an up to date contact number. There will be requests for any changes in telephone numbers through the year – data sheets will be sent home, and reminders will be sent in Newsletters.

Continued or Ongoing Absence

If a child misses 10% (3 weeks) or more schooling across the school year for whatever reason they are defined as **persistent absentees**. Absence for whatever reason disadvantages a child by creating gaps in his or her learning. Research shows these gaps affect attainment when attendance falls below 95%.

As such we monitor all absence thoroughly and all attendance data is shared with the Local Authority and the Department for Education. If a child has had absence and their attendance level is falling towards 90% we will contact the parents/carers.

Request for Leave of Absence

Amendments to school attendance regulations were updated and enforced from September 2013: Pupil Registration (England) regulations state that Head teachers may not grant any leave of absence during term time unless there are exceptional circumstances. It is important to note that Head teachers can determine the length of the authorised absence as well as whether absence is authorised at all. The fundamental principles for defining 'exceptional' are rare, significant, or unavoidable which means the event could not reasonably be scheduled at another time. There are no rules on this as circumstances vary from school to school and family to family.

There is however, no legal entitlement for time off in school time to go on holiday and in the majority of cases holiday will not be authorised. Parents/carers wishing to apply for leave of absence need to fill in an application form (available from the school office) in advance and before making any travel arrangements.

If term time leave is taken without prior permission from the school, the absence will be unauthorised and if the number of sessions absent hits the thresholds set down in Hampshire's Code of Conduct parent/carers will be issued with a fixed penalty fine, or other legal action in accordance with the code (see section 6 for details).

Taking holiday in term time will affect your child's schooling as much as any other absence and we expect parents to help us by not taking children out during school time.

Understanding types of absence:

Pupils are expected to attend school every day for the entire duration of the academic year, unless there is an **exceptional reason** for the absence. There are two main categories of absences:

- Authorised Absence: is when the school has accepted the explanation offered as satisfactory justification for the absence, or given approval in advance for such an absence. If no explanation is received, absences cannot be authorised.
- Unauthorised Absence: is when the school has not received a reason for absence or has not approved a child's leave absence from school after a parent's request. This includes:
 - Parents giving their children permission to be off school unnecessarily such as for shopping, birthdays, to look after siblings
 - Truancy before or during the school day
 - Absences which have not been explained

A school can, if needed, change an authorised absence to an unauthorised absence and vice versa if new information is presented. Any changes will be communicated to parents/carers. An example of this would be where a parent states a child is unwell but on return to school there is evidence they have been on holiday.

Legal guidance (National and Local Authority)

For national guidance refer to: '**Parental responsibility measures for behaviour and attendance**' which covers legal measures for non-attendance

<http://www.gov.uk/government/publications/parental-responsibility-measures-for-behaviour-and-attendance>

Penalty Notices or Non Attendance and other Legal Measures:

In Education law, parents/carers are committing an offence if they fail to ensure the regular attendance of their child of compulsory school age at the school at which the child is registered, unless the absence has been authorised by the school.

Legal Measures for tackling persistent absence or lateness

Hampshire Schools and Hampshire County Council will use the full range of legal measures to secure good attendance. Legal measures will only be considered through a referral to Hampshire's Attendance Legal Panels where:

- 1. The child or family do not require the support from any agency to improve the attendance.**
- 2. The child has 10 or more sessions of unauthorised absence and parents are complicit in the child's absence.**

The following legal measures are for pupils of compulsory school age who are registered at a school:

- Parenting contracts set at Education Planning Meetings
- Parenting orders
- Penalty Notices
- Education Supervision Orders
- Prosecution

Legal Measures for absence taken when the head teacher has declined parent/carers request for leave of absence

Where a pupil has unauthorised absence due to either:

1. Non approval of a parent/carers request for leave of absence or
2. A holiday that has been taken without permission

and the unauthorised absence is for 10 or more sessions (5 days) in any 100 possible school sessions, and takes the pupil below 90% attendance rate, then a penalty notice for non-attendance may be issued.

Where a child has unauthorised absence the school must enforce Hampshire's Code of conduct for issuing Penalty Notices or follow its guidance on other Legal Measures for Non-Attendance. The code of conduct is a statutory document that ensures that powers for legal sanctions are applied consistently and fairly across all schools and their families within the authority.

A copy is available from <https://www.hants.gov.uk/educationandlearning/behaviour-attendance-parents>

The code of conduct states that:

Schools or Hampshire Local Authority will issue a Penalty Notice for any unauthorised absence where the pupil has been:

- Absent for 10 or more half-day sessions (five school days) of unauthorised absence during any 100 possible school sessions – these do not need to be consecutive.
- Persistently late (coded U) for up to 10 sessions (five days) after the register has closed
- Persistently late before the close of the register (coded L), but the school has met with parents and has clearly communicated that they will categorise as unauthorised any further lateness (code O), and where the threshold of 10 sessions (five days) has been met.
- Absent for any public examinations of which dates are published in advance
- Absent for any formal school assessments, tests or examinations where the dates have been published in advance.
- Unless the issuing of a Penalty Notice would conflict with other intervention strategies in place or other sanctions already being processed.

If a child's unauthorised absence meets any of the above criteria and the family or child do not require any agency support to improve the attendance then a single Penalty Notice is issued for either:

1. 10 sessions of unauthorised absence or lateness in any 10 week school period, and takes the pupil below 90% attendance rate.

2. 1 or more sessions of unauthorised absence during a public exam, formal school assessment or testing where dates are published in advance.

Parents and carers will be warned of the likelihood of a penalty notice being issued for unauthorised absence either via a letter, through the leave of absence request form, or through the schools attendance policy and website. The penalty notice is a fine that is issued to each parent/carer who condoned (or was responsible for the child) during the period of unauthorised absence for which the fine has been issued. For each case of unauthorised absence the school or Hampshire County Council will decide whether a Penalty Notice is issued to one or more parent/carers for each child. NB. This could mean four penalty notices for a family with two siblings both with unauthorised absence for holiday ie. One PN for each child to each parent.

Each penalty notice carries a fine of £60 if paid within 21 days of the penalty notice being posted. If the fine is not paid within 21 days the Penalty is automatically increased to £120 if paid within 28 days. If the fine remains unpaid the Hampshire County Council will consider prosecution for the non-attendance. Payment methods are detailed on the Penalty Notices themselves. Penalties are to be paid to Hampshire County Council and revenue resulting from payment of Penalties is used by the County Council to help cover the costs of issuing Penalty Notices and/or the cost of prosecuting recipients who do not pay.

For further information parents/carers can request a leaflet from their school and should visit Hampshire County Councils website at: <https://www.hants.gov.uk/educationandlearning/behaviour-attendance-parents>

Frequently Asked Questions

My Child is trying to avoid coming to school. What should I do?

Children are sometimes reluctant to attend school. Any problems with regular attendance are best sorted out between the school, the parents and the child. If a child is reluctant to attend, it is never better to cover up their absence or to give in to pressure to excuse them from attending. This gives the impression that attendance does not matter and may make things worse.

Contact the school office immediately and openly discuss your worries. Your child could be avoiding school for a number of different reasons. It is important that we identify the reason for your child's reluctance to attend school and work together to tackle the problem. In some cases you may find it helpful to discuss the circumstances of your child's difficulties with another professional.

What can I do to encourage my child to attend school?

Make sure your child gets enough sleep and gets up in plenty of time each morning. Ensure that he/she leaves home in the correct clothes and properly equipped. Show your child, by your interest, that you value his/her education.

Be interested in what your child is doing in school, chat to them about the things they have learnt, what friends they have made and even what they had for lunch!

For many parents, your child attending school may be your first experience of being separated from them. This can seem daunting at first for both of you but consistency and a caring supportive home and school life will make the transition a quick and easy experience for you both.

Leavers

If your child is leaving our school (other than when transferring to secondary school), parents are asked to:

Give the school comprehensive information about their plans including any date of a move and your new address and telephone numbers, your child's new school and the start date when known. ***This should be submitted to our school in writing.***

If pupils leave and we do not have the above information then your child is considered to be a 'Child Missing in Education'. This requires schools and local authorities to then carry out investigations to try and locate your child which includes liaising with Children's Services, the Police and other agencies. By giving us the above information, these investigations can be avoided.

Absence through child participation in Public Performances, including theatre, film or TV work and Modelling

The regulations related to children participating in public performances are separate to those around authorising leave of absence. Head teachers can authorise this absence.

National Advice – <https://www.gov.uk/child-performance-licence-england-scotland-wales>

Parents of a child performer can seek leave of absence from school for their child to take part in a performance. They must contact the Headteacher to discuss the nature and frequency of the work, whether the child has a valid performance licence and whether education will be provided by the employer during any future leave of absence. Any absence recorded as part of a child's participation in a public performance is recorded as C, an authorised absence.

Absence through competing at regional, county or national level for Sport

Parents of able sportsmen and women can seek leave of absence from school for their child to take part in regional, county, national and international events and competitions. It is however, down to the headteacher's discretion whether to authorise this and they will wish to discuss with you the nature and frequency of the absence and how learning will continue if absence occurs. Permission for your child to leave early or arrive late to attend coaching and training sessions are also at the discretion of the Head teacher and are not likely to be approved if it is a regular event, unless the sports club or association are providing an education tutor as part of their coaching.

Gypsy Roma Traveller Showman and Showman families

For further advice and guidance on Attendance & GRT and Showman see County guidance at:

<http://documents.hants.gov.uk/childrens-services/HIAS/Promotingpupilattendanceandrecordingabsence-section6.pdf>

Please note pupils must have attended 200 sessions in a rolling 12month period to be able to request leave for work purposes

Further support and guidance is available from Hampshire's EMTAS service.

Absence of a child from a traveller family that has left the area may be authorised if the absence is for work purposes only and it is believed that the family intends to return. To ensure the continuity of learning for Traveller children, dual registration is allowed. That means that a school cannot remove a Traveller child from the school roll while they are travelling. When the Traveller is away the home school holds the place open and records the

absence as authorised through the T code. Distance Learning packs for traveller children are not an alternative to attendance at school.

Record Preservation

School registers are legal documents. We will ensure compliance with attendance regulations by keeping attendance records for at least 3 years.

Monitoring Procedures

The Head Teacher and Governors are responsible for this policy. The Head Teacher is responsible for its implementation.

The pastoral lead, Attendance Officer, Head Teacher, SENCO, Governors and Children's Services regularly monitor attendance at school and any irregular patterns of absence are investigated. Each year the school monitors individual pupil and whole school attendance figures.

Reviewed: September 2022

To be Reviewed: Summer 2024

Annex A: DfE guidance - Summary table of responsibilities for school attendance (September 2022)

All pupils

Parents are expected to:	Schools are expected to:	Academy trustees and governing bodies are expected to:	Local authorities are expected to:
<p>Ensure their child attends every day the school is open except when a statutory reason applies.</p> <p>Notify the school as soon as possible when their child has to be unexpectedly absent (e.g. sickness).</p> <p>Only request leave of absence in exceptional circumstances and do so in advance.</p> <p>Book any medical appointments around the school day where possible.</p>	<p>Have a clear school attendance policy on the school website which all staff, pupils and parents understand.</p> <p>Develop and maintain a whole school culture that promotes the benefits of good attendance.</p> <p>Accurately complete admission and attendance registers.</p> <p>Have robust daily processes to follow up absence.</p> <p>Have a dedicated senior leader with overall responsibility for championing and improving attendance.</p>	<p>Take an active role in attendance improvement, support their school(s) to prioritise attendance, and work together with leaders to set whole school cultures.</p> <p>Ensure school leaders fulfil expectations and statutory duties.</p> <p>Ensure school staff receive training on attendance.</p>	<p>Have a strategic approach to improving attendance for the whole area and make it a key focus of all frontline council services.</p> <p>Have a School Attendance Support Team that works with all schools in their area to remove area-wide barriers to attendance.</p> <p>Provide each school with a named point of contact in the School Attendance Support Team who can support with queries and advice.</p> <p>Offer opportunities for all schools in the area to share effective practice.</p>

Pupils at risk of becoming persistently absent

Parents are expected to:	Schools are expected to:	Academy trustees and governing bodies are expected to:	Local authorities are expected to:
<p>Work with the school and local authority to help them understand their child's barriers to attendance.</p> <p>Proactively engage with the support offered to prevent the need for more formal support.</p>	<p>Proactively use data to identify pupils at risk of poor attendance.</p> <p>Work with each identified pupil and their parents to understand and address the reasons for absence, including any in-school barriers to attendance.</p> <p>Where out of school barriers are identified, signpost and support access to any required services in the first instance.</p> <p>If the issue persists, take an active part in the multi-agency effort with the local authority and other partners. Act as the lead practitioner where all partners agree that the school is the best placed lead service. Where the lead practitioner is outside of the school, continue to work with the local authority and partners.</p>	<p>Regularly review attendance data and help school leaders focus support on the pupils who need it.</p>	<p>Hold a termly conversation with every school to identify, discuss and signpost or provide access to services for pupils who are persistently or severely absent or at risk of becoming so.</p> <p>Where there are out of school barriers, provide each identified pupil and their family with access to services they need in the first instance.</p> <p>If the issue persists, facilitate a voluntary early help assessment where appropriate. Take an active part in the multi-agency effort with the school and other partners. Provide the lead practitioner where all partners agree that a local authority service is best placed to lead. Where the lead practitioner is outside of the local authority, continue to work with the school and partners.</p>

Persistently absent pupils

Parents are expected to:	Schools are expected to:	Academy trustees and governing bodies are expected to:	Local authorities are expected to:
<p>Work with the school and local authority to help them understand their child's barriers to attendance.</p> <p>Proactively engage with the formal support offered – including any parenting contract or voluntary early help plan to prevent the need for legal intervention.</p>	<p>Continued support as for pupils at risk of becoming persistently absent and:</p> <p>Where absence becomes persistent, put additional targeted support in place to remove any barriers. Where necessary this includes working with partners.</p> <p>Where there is a lack of engagement, hold more formal conversations with parents and be clear about the potential need for legal intervention in future.</p> <p>Where support is not working, being engaged with or appropriate, work with the local authority on legal intervention.</p> <p>Where there are safeguarding concerns, intensify support through statutory children's social care.</p> <p>Work with other schools in the local area, such as schools previously attended and the schools of any siblings.</p>	<p>Regularly review attendance data and help school leaders focus support on the pupils who need it.</p>	<p>Continued support as for pupils at risk of becoming persistently absent and:</p> <p>Work jointly with the school to provide formal support options including parenting contracts and education supervision orders.</p> <p>Where there are safeguarding concerns, ensure joint working between the school, children's social care services and other statutory safeguarding partners.</p> <p>Where support is not working, being engaged with or appropriate, enforce attendance through legal intervention (including prosecution as a last resort).</p>

Severely absent pupils

Parents are expected to:	Schools are expected to:	Academy trustees and governing bodies are expected to:	Local authorities are expected to:
<p>Work with the school and local authority to help them understand their child's barriers to attendance.</p> <p>Proactively engage with the formal support offered – including any parenting contract or voluntary early help plan to prevent the need for legal intervention.</p>	<p>Continued support as for persistently absent pupils and:</p> <p>Agree a joint approach for all severely absent pupils with the local authority.</p>	<p>Regularly review attendance data and help school leaders focus support on the pupils who need it.</p>	<p>Continued support as for persistently absent pupils and:</p> <p>All services should make this group the top priority for support. This may include a whole family plan, consideration for an education, health and care plan, or alternative form of educational provision.</p> <p>Be especially conscious of any potential safeguarding issues, ensuring joint working between the school, children's social care services and other statutory safeguarding partners. Where appropriate, this could include conducting a full children's social care assessment and building attendance into children in need and child protection plans.</p>

Support for pupils with medical conditions or SEND with poor attendance

Parents are expected to:	Schools are expected to:	Academy trustees and governing bodies are expected to:	Local authorities are expected to:
<p>Work with the school and local authority to help them understand their child's barriers to attendance.</p> <p>Proactively engage with the support offered.</p>	<p>Maintain the same ambition for attendance and work with pupils and parents to maximise attendance.</p> <p>Ensure join up with pastoral support and where required, put in place additional support and adjustments, such as an individual healthcare plan and if applicable, ensuring the provision outlined in the pupil's EHCP is accessed.</p> <p>Consider additional support from wider services and external partners, making timely referrals.</p> <p>Regularly monitor data for such groups, including at board and governing body meetings and with local authorities.</p>	<p>Regularly review attendance data and help school leaders focus support on the pupils who need it.</p>	<p>Work closely with relevant services and partners, for example special educational needs, educational psychologists, and mental health services, to ensure joined up support for families.</p> <p>Ensure suitable education, such as alternative provision, is arranged for children of compulsory school age who because of health reasons would not otherwise receive a suitable education.</p>

Support for pupils with a social worker

Parents are expected to:	Schools are expected to:	Academy trustees and governing bodies are expected to:	Local authorities are expected to:
<p>Work with the school and local authority to help them understand their child's barriers to attendance.</p> <p>Proactively engage with the support offered.</p>	<p>Inform the pupil's social worker if there are any unexplained absences and if their name is to be deleted from the register.</p>	<p>Regularly review attendance data and help school leaders focus support on the pupils who need it.</p>	<p>Regularly monitor the attendance of children with a social worker in their area.</p> <p>Put in place personal education plans for looked-after children.</p> <p>Secure regular attendance of looked-after children as their corporate parent and provide advice and guidance about the importance of attendance to those services supporting pupils previously looked after.</p>