Attendance Policy

St Mark's CofE Primary School

Policy Consultation & Review

This policy is available on our school website and is available on request from the school office. We also inform parents about this policy when their children join our school and regularly thereafter through our school newsletter and other relevant opportunities.

We recognise the expertise our staff build by managing school attendance daily and we therefore invite staff to contribute to and shape this policy and associated attendance and safeguarding arrangements.

This policy will be reviewed in full by the Governing Body on at least an annual basis.

Date Agreed by Governing Body: September 2024

Reviewed September 2025; Next Review September 2027

1. Introduction/Aim

At St Mark's CofE Primary School we believe that regular school attendance is essential if children are to achieve their full potential. We value the attendance of all pupils. Missing out on lessons leaves children vulnerable to falling behind and can put them at risk of wider harm. There is a wide range of evidence as to the health and wellbeing benefits of school-age education. Research commissioned by the Department for Education shows missing school for even a day can mean a child is less likely to achieve good grades, which can have a damaging effect on their life chances. As set out in this policy, we will work with families to identify the reasons for poor attendance and try to resolve any difficulties at the earliest opportunity.

Our attendance policy aims to give clear guidance to staff, parents, pupils, and governors to:

- Promote good attendance, enabling pupil's achievement by establishing the highest possible levels of attendance and punctuality.
- Recognise the key role of all staff in promoting good attendance.
- Provide a clear framework for monitoring and responding to pupil absences, acting early to address patterns of absence.
- Building strong relationships with families to ensure pupils have the support in place to attend school.
- Promote positive support systems and advocate multi-agency approaches to improve attendance.
- Make parents aware of their legal responsibilities and ensure their children have access to the education to which they are entitled.

We recognise that attendance is a matter for the whole school community. Our Attendance Policy should not be viewed in isolation; it is a strand that runs through all aspects of school improvement, supported by our policies on safeguarding, prevention of bullying, behaviour, and inclusive learning. This policy also considers the Human Rights Act 1998, the Equality Act 2010, UN Convention on the Rights of the Child, and other relevant legislation.

2. Legal Framework

This policy meets the requirements of the Working together to improve school attendance from the Department for Education (DfE), and refers to the DfE's statutory guidance on school attendance parental responsibility measures.

Section 7 of the 1996 Education Act states that parents must ensure that children of compulsory school age receive efficient full-time education suitable to their age, ability, and aptitude to any special educational needs they may have, either by regular attendance at school or otherwise. A child is of compulsory school age at the beginning of the term following their 5th birthday. A child ceases to be of compulsory school age on the last Friday

in June of the school year in which they reach the age of 16.

The government expects all schools and local authorities to:

- Promote good attendance and reduce absence, including persistent and severe absence.
- Ensure every pupil has access to full-time education to which they are entitled.
- Act early to address patterns of absence.

Parents are expected to perform their legal duty by ensuring their children of compulsory school age who are registered at school attend regularly.

In accordance with the Education Act 1996, we will work with parents and carers and the Local Authority to ensure that parents and carers are supported to secure education for children of compulsory school age. Where required, we will formalise support and where necessary, work with the LA to use legal measures.

A "Parent" is defined as:

- Any natural parent, whether married or not.
- Any parent who, although not a natural parent, has parental responsibility as defined in the Children Act (1989) for a child or young person.
- Any person who, although not a natural parent, has care of a child or young person.

3. Roles and Responsibilities

At St Mark's CofE Primary School, we believe that improving school attendance is everyone's business. It is a shared responsibility by governors, all school staff, parents, pupils, the wider school community and multi-agency partners. We aim to always work in partnership with our parents.

Role	Name	Contact details
Senior Attendance Lead/Champion	Charles Applegate	01256 346 111 adminoffice@st-markscofe.hants.sch.uk
Pastoral Team Lead	Vicky Elms	
Attendance Officer	Naomi Older	
Named Governor for Attendance	Brian Simmonds	

The Governors of St Mark's CofE Primary School recognises the importance of school attendance and promotes it through the school's ethos and across its policies. They may take an active role in attendance improvement by:

- Setting high expectations of all leaders, staff, pupils, and parents so that

children attend school every day and are safeguarded.

- Identifying a member of the governing body to lead on attendance matters and ensuring that there is a named senior manager to lead on attendance.
- Prioritising attendance in strategies, such as raising attainment, behaviour and combatting bullying, special educational needs and disabilities, wellbeing, and safeguarding.
- Ensuring school leaders fulfil expectations and statutory duties by rigorously evaluating the effectiveness of the school's attendance procedures so that consistent attendance support is provided for all pupils.
- Ensuring the schools' attendance management processes are delivered effectively, and that consistent attendance support is provided for pupils who require it most by prioritising the staff and resources needed. This includes ensuring schools engage and work effectively with the local authority School Attendance Support Team and wider local partners and services.
- Regularly reviewing attendance data, discussing, challenging trends, and helping school leaders focus improvement efforts on the individual pupils or cohorts who need it most.
- Ensuring high aspirations are maintained for all pupils and processes for support are adapted to the individual needs of pupils including those with long term illnesses, special educational needs and disabilities, pupils with a social worker, those pupils under the Virtual School and pupils from cohorts with historically lower attendance such as those eligible for free school meals.
- Ensuring all school staff receive adequate training on attendance and that relevant staff have access to opportunities to share and learn from good practice in other schools.
- Ensuring that attendance data is shared with the Local Authority or Department for Education in line with statutory reporting deadlines.
- Reviewing the school's Attendance Policy on at least an annual basis, ensuring that the required resources are available to fully implement the policy, which is published and publicised regularly so that it is easily accessible to pupils, parents and staff.

The Senior Management Team at St Mark's CofE Primary School will:

- Actively promote the importance and value of good attendance to pupils and their parents.
- Form and maintain positive relationships with pupils and parents.
- Ensure that there is a whole school approach which reinforces good school attendance, with good teaching and learning experiences, with a whole school culture that encourage all pupils to attend and to achieve.
- Make sure all teaching and non-teaching staff know the importance of good attendance, are consistent in their communication with pupils and parents, and receive the training and professional development they need.
- Have a clear school attendance policy which all staff, pupils and parents understand. Monitor the implementation and effectiveness of the Attendance Policy and ensure that the policy is reviewed annually.
- Ensure the school have accurate, complete admission and attendance registers and have effective day to day processes in place to follow-up absence.
- Regularly monitor and analyse attendance and absence data to identify pupils or cohorts that require support with their attendance and put effective strategies in place.
- Share information and work collaboratively with other schools in the area, local authorities, and other partners where a pupil's absence is at risk of becoming persistent or severe.
- Ensure that there is a named Senior Attendance Champion to lead on attendance and allocate sufficient time and resource.
- Attend the termly school attendance supporting meetings with the local authority, focusing on those pupils with severe absence, making sure a regularly reviewed plan is in place.

All staff at St Mark's CofE Primary School will:

- Actively promote the importance and value of good attendance to pupils and their parents.
- Form positive relationships with pupils and parents.
- Contribute to a whole school approach which reinforces good school attendance; with good teaching and learning experiences that encourage all pupils to attend and to achieve.
- Know the importance of good attendance, are consistent in their communication with pupils and parents, and receive the training and professional development they need.

The member of staff responsible for attendance will work to further develop relationships with families to bring about improved attendance. This may involve seeking multi-agency support.

St Mark's CofE Primary School requests that parents:

- Take a positive interest in their child's work and educational progress.
- Ensure their child has regular attendance at school.
- Instill the value of education and regular school attendance within the home environment.
- Contact the school if their child is absent to let them know the reason why and the expected date of return, following this with a note wherever possible. This can be done through email or by calling the school office, including leaving a voice mail if required.
- Avoid unnecessary absences; for example, by making medical and dental appointments for outside of school hours.
- Ask the school for help if their child is experiencing difficulties with any aspect of their schoolwork or home and family life.
- Inform the school of any change in circumstances that may impact on their child's attendance.
- Support the school by becoming involved in their child's education, forming a positive relationship with school, and acknowledging the importance of children receiving the same messages from both school and home.
- Maintain effective routines at home to support good attendance.
- Attend all meetings requested to discuss attendance issues.

Further information can be found at: Attendance guidance for parents | Hampshire County Council (hants.gov.uk)

Pupils will:

- Be aware of the school's attendance policy and when and where they are required to attend. This will be communicated to them by school staff, parents and through the school timetable.
- Speak to their class teacher or another member of staff if they are experiencing difficulties at school or at home which may impact on their attendance.
- Attend all lessons ready to learn, with the appropriate learning tools requested and on time for the class.
- Follow the school procedure if they arrive late. This will help the school to monitor attendance and keep accurate records for the child's individual attendance. This is also vital for health and safety in the event of a school evacuation.

4. Categorising Absence and Attendance

When marking our registers, we will apply the national codes as outlined and regulated by the Department for Education guidance to accurately record and report attendance.

4.1 Leave of Absence

Since September 2013, changes to Government regulations and guidance mean that Headteachers can no longer authorise leave of absence unless there are exceptional circumstances. Generally, the DfE does not consider a need or desire for a holidayor other absence for the purpose of leisure and recreation to be an exceptional circumstance. Leave of absence should not be granted for a pupil to take part in protest activity during school hours. All absences associated with a holiday or other absence for the purpose of leisure and recreation during term time will be marked as unauthorised within the register. Any parents known to have removed their child from school for the sole purpose of a holiday or other absence for the purpose of leisure and recreation may be referred to the Local Authority and be issued with a penalty notice fine or referred to the Local Authority to consider prosecution.

We believe that children need to be in school for all sessions so that they can make the most progress possible. However, we do understand that there are times where a parent may legitimately request leave of absence for a child due to 'exceptional circumstances'. At St Mark's CofE Primary School, leave of absence is only granted at the discretion of the Headteacher and shall not be granted unless there are 'exceptional circumstances'. St Mark's CofE Primary School will respond to all applications for leave of absence in writing.

Parents wishing to apply for leave of absence during term time must apply in writing to the Headteacher at least a month before the planned leave (see Appendix 2) through the online form. If a written request for leave of absence is not completed and the leave is taken without a request being submitted, the leave will not be considered by the Headteacher, and it will be marked as unauthorised. St Mark's CofE Primary School will treat each application individually and may discuss with you the circumstances of the application before a decision is made. Retrospective requests will not be considered and therefore will result in the absence being categorised as unauthorised.

A penalty notice request or a referral for prosecution may be submitted to the Local Authority should: -

- The parent fails to submit a leave of absence request in advance of taking the leave.
- An application for a leave of absence is not agreed by the Headteacher but is still taken.
- A longer period is taken more than the agreed number of days.

When absence is granted by the Headteacher, the parents will need to agree a date of

return. If a pupil fails to return on the expected date and contact is not received from, or made with the parents, school will seek advice from the Local Authority. This could result in possible children missing from education procedures being instigated.

The 1996 Education Act also sets out the circumstances in which a pupil has not failed to attend school regularly and therefore the parent has not committed an offence.

4.2, 4.3, 4.4 are examples of these. The full list is in the Appendix 6.

4.2 Medical Appointments and absence due to illness

Parents should try to make appointments outside of school hours wherever possible. Where appointments during school time are unavoidable, we ask that parent notifies the school in advance of the appointment wherever possible. The pupil should only be out of school for the minimum amount of time necessary for the appointment. In most circumstances, a child should not miss a whole day at school for an appointment. If a pupil must attend a medical appointment during the school day, they must be collected by a parent/carer, and be signed out by the Office before leaving. No pupil will be allowed to leave the school site without parental confirmation, and without being collected by a safe adult.

In line with Department for Education guidance, if we do have a genuine concern about the authenticity of the illness, we may ask the parent to provide medical evidence, such as a prescription, appointment card, or other appropriate form of evidence. If the school is not satisfied about the authenticity of the illness, the absence will be recorded as unauthorised.

Where a child has an emerging a pattern of non-attendance, we will discuss the reasons for absence with the child's parent. We will invite parents to attend a support meeting as an appropriate early intervention strategy. As part of this support, we may seek consent from parents and the pupil as appropriate to make a referral to the School Nursing Team and/or to liaise with the child's healthcare professional.

Where a pupil has a verified and chronic health condition, we will aim to work with parents to ensure children have access to education and provide appropriate support in line with Supporting pupils with medical conditions at school and Hampshire policies regarding supporting children with health issues, Behaviour and attendance resources for schools | Hampshire County Council (hants.gov.uk). We will also consider whether an Individual Healthcare Plan is required.

4.3 Pupil Absence for the purposes of Religious Observance

St Mark's CofE Primary School acknowledges the multi-faith nature of British society and recognises that, on some occasions, religious festivals may fall outside school holiday periods or weekends and is recognised as such by a relevant religious authority.

Where this occurs, the school will consider either authorising the pupil absence or making special leave for religious observance. Parents are requested to give advance notice to the school.
Working together to improve school attendance - GOV.UK (www.gov.uk) page 86.

4.4 Parent travelling for occupational purposes

The pupil is a mobile child and their parent(s) is travelling in the course of their trade or business and the pupil is travelling with them. A mobile child is a child of compulsory school age who has no fixed abode and whose parent(s) is engaged in a trade or business of such a nature as to require them to travel from place to place.

To ensure we can effectively support all our pupils, we ask that parents:

- Advise the school of their forthcoming travelling patterns as soon as these are known and before they happen; and
- Inform the school regarding proposed return dates.

4.5 Unauthorised Absence

Absence will not be authorised unless parents have provided a satisfactory explanation and it is accepted as such by the school. The decision to authorise absences is at the discretion of the Headteacher. Examples of unsatisfactory explanations include but are not limited to (ie these will not be authorised):

- A pupil's/family member's birthday.
- Shopping for uniforms.
- Inadequate clothing for school.
- Child being used as a carer.
- Problems with transport.
- Sickness of a parent, or other family member
- Arrangements or appointments for cutting the pupil's hair.
- Closure of a sibling's school for INSET (or other) purposes.
- An unwillingness to attend school, or inability to attend owing to inadequate personal/family organisation.
- A refusal to attend school on health grounds but where the pupil is considered well enough to attend.
- Family holidays.
- Cheaper holidays/flights in the UK or abroad.
- Relatives coming to visit.
- Trip of a lifetime.
- Visiting family or friends who have different half term holiday dates.
- Family weddings for more than 1 day or visits to see family abroad.
- Absences taken without the authorisation of the school.
- Extending the time off if a pupil has not come back to school after an agreed absence.

4.6 Absence through competing at regional, county or national level for Sports and Competitions

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.

4.7 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.

5. Our Procedures

5.1 Register Keeping and Recording

The Education (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2006, as amended by 2016 regulations, require schools to take an attendance register twice a day, once at the start of the morning session and then again during the afternoon session.

For the purpose of this policy, the school defines:
"Absence" as:

- Arrival at school after the register has closed.
- Not attending school for any reason.

"Regular" attendance as:

- Attendance at every session the school is open to pupils unless their absence has been authorised.

Pupils must arrive in school by 8:50am on each school day.

The register for the first session will be taken at 8:50am and will be kept open until 9:20am. The register for the second session will be taken at approximately 12:50pm for Reception pupils, 1pm for Key Stage 1 and 1:20pm for Key Stage 2.

Registers are legal records and all schools must preserve every entry in the attendance or admission register for 6 years from the date the data was entered. As the attendance register is a record of the pupils present at the time it was taken, the register should only routinely be amended where the reason for absence cannot be established at the time it is taken and it is subsequently necessary to correct the entry. Where amendments are made, all schools must ensure the register shows the original entry, the amended entry, the reason for the amendment, the date on which the amendment was made, and the name of the person who made the amendment On each occasion the register is taken the appropriate national attendance and absence code must be entered for every pupil (of both compulsory and non- compulsory school age) whose name is listed in the admission register at the time.

The codes enable schools to record and monitor attendance and absence in a consistent way and are used to collect statistics. The data helps schools, local authorities, and the government gain a greater understanding of the delivery of education and the level of, and reason for, absence.

Reporting to parents

The school will regularly inform parents about their child's attendance and absence levels on a half-termly basis via email.

5.2 Late Arrival at School

At St Mark's CofE Primary School all pupils are expected to arrive on time for every day of the school year. The school day begins at 8:50am. We advise all parents to ensure their child is on site prior to this, starting at 8:30am. The school register will be taken at 8:50am. All pupils arriving after this time are required to report to the main office with their parents, who will be expected to sign in at the office provide a reason for their absence. If their arrival is before 9:20am it will be recorded as late - L code (Late before the close of register).

The school register will officially close at 9:20am. All pupils arriving on or after this time will be marked as having an unauthorised absence for the session - U code (Late after the close of register). This is categorised as an unauthorised absence for the session. Parents will be contacted to discuss any patterns of late arrival. Repeated arrival after the close of registration will result in appropriate interventions being instigated and may also result in a penalty notice being issued or prosecution.

Registers are legal records, and all schools must preserve every entry in the attendance or admission register for 6 years from the date the data was entered. As the attendance register is a record of the pupils present at the time it was taken, the register should only routinely be amended where the reason for absence cannot be established at the time it is taken and it is subsequently necessary to correct the entry. Where amendments are

made, all schools must ensure the register shows the original entry, the amended entry, the reason for the amendment, the date on which the amendment was made, and the name of the person who made the amendment.

5.3 Expected absence procedure for parents:

A parent has a legal responsibility to ensure that their child attends school regularly. If a child is unavoidably absent from school parents are expected to contact school by telephone call or email on the morning of the first day of absence and on each subsequent day, identifying the reason for absence and the expected date of return. If no contact is received, then absence protocols will be instigated.

If a child is absent, the following actions will be initiated by the school:

- The first day calling procedures will be activated for all pupils who are not in school after close of register at 9:20am and where no reason for absence is known. An email is also sent by the office.
- If there is still no contact made from the pupil's parents, a further telephone call home will be made again that morning. If no response can be gained, the child's named emergency contact will be telephoned.
- If school cannot contact a parent a home visit may be carried out. The senior leadership team will also be informed.
- School will telephone home if a pupil leaves the school without permission

In certain circumstances the School may also:

- Visit the home of the pupil.
- Write to the parents of a pupil to highlight attendance or punctuality issues.
- Invite parents to discuss how school can support the family to make improvement.
- Refer to Inclusion Support Service for support, guidance, and advice.
- Refer to the Local Authority for joint enquiries to be made to establish the whereabouts of the child through Inclusion Support Service (ISS) | Hampshire County Council (hants.gov.uk) and Behaviour and attendance resources for schools | Hampshire County Council (hants.gov.uk)
- Refer to the Local Authority to consider issuing a penalty notice or to consider prosecution when all other interventions have failed, or an unauthorised leave of absence has been taken.
- Refer the matter to an appropriate external agency for multi-agency support, such as implementing a Family Support Plan or consulting with the Children's Social Care or the police, where there are safeguarding concerns.

5.4 Attendance Rewards & Interventions

The school will promote a positive attitude to attendance amongst staff, pupils and

parents, and also ensure that it is actively monitoring and managing absence processes and poor attendance. This will be through a variety of means:

- Celebrating attendance each week in Friday Celebration Worship, with two classes being nominated for best attendance of the week. This will also be shared with parents on the newsletter.

- Sharing with parents via email their child's attendance and absence data for each half-term.

- Communicating, typically via newsletter, the various ways we can support in improving attendance and helping parents where children may be struggling to attend. The class teachers, pastoral team and/or SENCo Team may be best placed to help here. The school will also sign-post and/or support access to external agencies.

- Where a child's individual attendance level is low, or is on a trajectory to be low based on historical absence levels, the school will work with parents and the child to put in place a plan to improve attendance levels.

- The school makes use of an attendance action plan to ensure it is following good practice.

At St Mark's CofE Primary School will:

- Monitor and analyse weekly attendance patterns and trends and deliver intervention and support in a targeted way to pupils and families. This should go beyond headline attendance percentages and should look at individual pupils, cohorts and year groups (including their punctuality) across the school.
- Use this analysis to provide regular attendance reports to class teachers or tutors to facilitate discussions with pupils and to leaders (including any special educational needs coordinators, designated safeguarding leads and pupil premium leads).
- Undertake frequent individual level analysis to identify the pupils who need support and focus staff efforts on developing targeted actions for those cases.
- Conduct thorough analysis of half-termly, termly, and full year data to identify patterns and trends. This should include analysis of pupils and cohorts and identifying patterns in uses of certain codes, days of poor attendance and where appropriate, subjects which have low lesson attendance.
- Benchmark attendance data (at whole school, year group and cohort level) against local, regional, and national levels to identify areas of focus for improvement.

- Devise specific strategies to address areas of poor attendance identified through data.
- Monitor in the data the impact of school wide attendance efforts, including any specific strategies implemented. The findings should then be used to evaluate approaches or inform future strategies.
- Provide data and reports to support the work of the board or governing body and local authority when appropriate.

At St Mark's CofE Primary School we will investigate any pupils who are on track to be persistently absent (PA) and will not wait until attendance is below 90%.

"Persistent absenteeism" (PA) as:

- Missing 10% or more of schooling across the year for any reason.

"Severe absence" (SA) as:

- Missing 50% or more of schooling across the year for any reason.

5.5 Support Systems

At St Mark's CofE Primary School we recognise that poor attendance can be an indication of difficulties in a family's life. This may be related to problems at home and or in school. Parents are encouraged to inform school of any difficulties or changes in circumstances that may affect their child's attendance and/or behaviour in school, for example: bereavement, divorce/separation, emerging health concerns. This will help the school identify any additional support that may be required.

We also recognise that some pupils are more likely to require additional support to attain good attendance. The school will implement a range of strategies to support improved attendance based on the individual needs and circumstances of the child.

Strategies we may use to support you include:

- Meeting with you to discuss your concerns around attendance.
- Meeting with you to discuss our concerns around attendance.
- Discussing support that our pastoral team or SENCo team may be able to provide, either to parents, children or both.
- Discussing support from external agencies, including support from Early Help Hub

To plan the correct support, we will always invite parents and pupils to attend a meeting to discuss the concerns and devise a plan to support the child's regular attendance. Support offered to families will be child-centred and planned in discussion and agreement with both parents and pupils.

5.6 Persistent Absence, Severe Absence and the use of legal interventions

A pupil becomes a 'persistent absentee' (PA) when their attendance drops to 90% and below for any reason. Over a full academic year this would be 38 sessions (19 days). Absence at this level could cause considerable damage to a child's educational outcomes.

A pupil becomes a 'severe absentee' (SA) when their attendance drops to 50% and below for any reason. Over a full academic year this would be 90 sessions (45 days). Absence at this level is causing considerable damage to a child's educational outcomes.

The attendance of all pupils at our school are monitored to identify children who are PA, or are on track to becoming PA. Where emerging concerns are identified we will instigate appropriate and timely interventions as outlined in the section above.
Referrals may also be made to external agencies for targeted support. Inclusion Support Service (ISS) | Hampshire County Council (hants.gov.uk)

If parents fail to engage with support and their child continues to have unsatisfactory attendance/ punctuality, a request may be made to the Local Authority to pursue legal proceedings either through a penalty notice, consideration of an Education Supervision Order or prosecution via the Magistrates' Court.

Parents found guilty of failing to secure their child's regular attendance at school under the provisions of the Education Act 1996, will receive a criminal record and a maximum penalty of a £1000 fine under a Section 444 (1) offence or a £2500 fine or up to a 3-month prison sentence, under a Section 444 (1a) offence.

In line with Hampshire County Council guidance, we will notify the Inclusion Support Service of all reduced timetables as soon as a plan has been agreed.

5.7 Steps that the school will take to improve irregular attendance before a penalty notice is issued

This process concerns absence that is not based purely on unauthorised holiday absence.

The school will do all it can to support attendance, but ultimately attendance is the responsibility of the parent/carers. Where the school is concerned about a child's attendance, we will:

1. Send a letter or email to inform parents/carers of child's current attendance and concern of it, and also offer support. If this takes place verbally, school will keep a record of the conversation.
2. Invite parents/carers to attend a meeting. This is a supportive meeting, which parents/carers choose to agree to. The purpose is to discuss the needs of a pupil and family and find ways to support the family so that the child can attend school.
3. If attendance does not improve and there are further absences, or if the parents/carers do not work with the support even when the school asks them to, then a "Notice to Improve" letter must be sent to each parent/guardian allowing a period of three weeks for attendance to improve before issuing a Penalty Notice. It is a final try to improve attendance before using fines and prosecutions. It is used when parents/carers do not engage with school to support the child.

If there are safeguarding concerns, then the school will refer according to it's normal processes.

4. If attendance does not get better 3 weeks after using a "Notice To Improve" letter, school will refer to the Local Authority for a penalty notice/fine or prosecution.

6. Further information regarding Penalty Notices

This policy clearly states the need for excellent attendance at school, and the possible consequences for poor attendance. Further information, which is all part of the school's policy, can be found on Hampshire's Behaviour and Attendance webpage here. In particular, it states that:

- If you receive two Penalty Notices in a rolling three-year period and your child has further unauthorised absences, legal action may be taken such as prosecution or an Education Supervision Order.
- It is no longer possible for the same parent to receive a third Penalty Notice for the same child in a three-year rolling period. If a third holiday is taken in this period, the school will refer to the Legal Intervention Team for consideration of a prosecution.
- If your child has an ongoing pattern of unauthorised absence then parents/carers will normally receive a written warning of the possibility of a Penalty Notice being issued or a Notice to Improve letter. This warning or Notice to Improve letter will advise parents/carers about the extent of their child's absence and warn them that if their child's attendance does not show a significant improvement and if this improvement is not maintained thereafter, a Penalty Notice may be issued without further warning.
- There is no statutory right of appeal. Once a Penalty Notice has been issued, it can only be withdrawn if it can be shown that it ought not to have been issued or was issued in error.
- When calculating the number of absences in a 100-session period, unauthorised absences do not need to be consecutive and can span different school terms and years.
- Penalty Notices are also intended to be used in tackling parentally condoned absence, where it is reasonable to expect that the parent can ensure the child's regular attendance, but s/he is not willing to take responsibility for doing so, e.g. where a parent is not co-operating with advice or support offered to help improve his or her child's attendance.

7. Related Policies

To underpin the values and ethos of our school and our intent to ensure that pupils at our school attend school regularly and reach their full potential, the following policies are integral to this approach:

- Safeguarding and Child Protection Policies
- First Aid and Medicines Policy
- Admissions Policy
- Anti-bullying Policy
- Mental Health and Wellbeing Policy
- Special Educational Needs and Disability Policy
- Learning and Teaching Policy
- Relationships and Behaviour Policy

8. Statutory Framework

This policy has been devised in accordance with the following legislation and guidance:

- Working together to improve school attendance, DfE, (August 2024)
- School attendance parental responsibility measures, DfE (January 2015)
- Children missing education, DfE (September 2016)
- Keeping children safe in education, DfE (September 2024)
- Working together to safeguard children, DfE (July 2023)

9. Appendices

The following pages contain appendices relevant to this policy.

Appendix 1: Example of a fixed penalty notice whole school warning letter

Dear Parent

Attendance at school and legal intervention

Where parents decide to have their child registered at school, they have an additional legal duty to ensure their child attends that school regularly.

Research commissioned by the Department for Education shows missing school for even a day can mean a child is less likely to achieve good grades, which can have a damaging effect on their life chances. At St Mark's CofE Primary School our aim is to work with parents to ensure that all our pupils receive the most from their education and reach their full potential.

This letter is to remind all parents about the law that requires them to ensure that their child attends school regularly. The Government is very clear that no child should miss school apart from in exceptional circumstances and schools must take steps to reduce absence to support children's attainment.

The DfE policy document entitled, 'Working together to improve school attendance' states:

All schools are able to grant a leave of absence at their discretion. A leave of absence from school maintained by a local authority or a special school not maintained by a local authority, must not be granted unless there are exceptional circumstances. Generally, a need or desire for a holiday or other absence for the purpose of leisure and recreation would not constitute an exceptional circumstance.

If the school does not receive a request for leave, the head teacher will be unable to

consider your individual circumstances and the absence will be recorded as unauthorised. There will be no obligation on the head teacher to reconsider authorising the leave if an application has not been made in advance.

The Local Authority operates a system where any pupil will meet the criteria for legal intervention if they have **at least 10 sessions (5 school days) lost to unauthorised absence by the pupil during 10 school weeks**. The intervention could be in the form of a fixed penalty notice. Any pupil at St Mark's CofE Primary School who meets the criteria, will be referred to the Local Authority for action to be considered.

If a fixed penalty notice is issued, the arrangement for the payment will be detailed on the notice. The first penalty notice issued to a parent in respect of a particular pupil will be charged at £160 if paid within 28 days. This will be reduced to £80 if paid within 21 days. A second penalty notice issued to the same parent in respect of the same pupil is charged at a flat rate of £160 if paid within 28 days. A parent may receive more than one separate penalty notice resulting from unauthorised absence. When penalty notices are issued each parent will receive one per child. Therefore, each parent could receive multiple notices if they have more than 1 child who has been absent. You should be aware that failure to pay the total amount within the timescale will result in legal action being taken. In some circumstances, the Inclusion Support Service may choose not to issue a further penalty notice in the same academic year and may instead choose to prosecute a parent under the Education Act 1996 S444. There is no right of appeal by parents against a fixed penalty notice.

I hope we can count on your support in this matter, please do not hesitate to contact me if you have any questions.

Yours sincerely,

Headteacher

Appendix 2: Example Notice to Improve Letter for Non Attendance

Notice To Improve Letter for Non Attendance

Dear parent/carer,

School attendance is hugely important. For your child to gain the full benefit from their education, for their learning, wellbeing, and wider development, they need to attend school on time, every day possible.

If a child of compulsory school age who is a registered pupil at a school fails to attend regularly at the

school or fails to attend regularly the child's parent may be guilty of an offence under s.444 Education Act 1996. If your child is a registered pupil at an alternative provision in the circumstances set out in section 444ZA of the Education Act 1996, the child's parent may be guilty of an offence.

You, «FORENAME» «SURNAME» are a parent/carer of «Students_Name», (called in this notice "the pupil") who is a registered pupil at «School_Name».

The school have offered support to you and your family to try and help improve «Students_Name»'s attendance, including:

1. **Telephone calls.** The school contacted you every day your child was absent to understand why your child was absent and to offer their support with any issues your child may be having.
2. **An Attendance Overview Letter**. The school wrote to you, letting you know about «Students_Name»'s attendance, the impact of their continued absence, and inviting you to contact the school to discuss the situation further.
3. **An Attendance Support Meeting.** The school invited you to a meeting to discuss your child's unauthorised absences and to offer support to ensure that their attendance improved. At the meeting you were notified of the consequences should your child continue to have unauthorised absence and you did not effectively engage with the support offered as follows:

   Any other adaptations can also be listed here.

   Support is still available as well as the option to access previously provided support, please contact…….

   OR

   An Attendance Support Meeting Invite. The school invited you to a meeting to discuss your child's unauthorised absences and to offer support to ensure their attendance improved. You were notified of the consequences should your child continue to have unauthorised absences but you declined the meeting.

Unfortunately, despite the support that was offered to your family, attendance remains a cause for concern. Between **«WARNING_START_DATE»** and **«WARNING_END_DATE»** (MUST BE 10 WEEK PERIOD) the pupil failed to attend regularly at **«School_Name»**, which resulted in 10 sessions (half days) or more of unauthorised absences being recorded. Please see the attached registration certificate for details.

You now have fifteen school days (3 weeks) in which to improve your child's attendance. During this time your child must show significant improvements in attendance and avoid having any unauthorised absences from school during this period. Should we not see sufficient improvement and further unauthorised absences take place during this period, a Penalty Notice may be issued. A Penalty Notice is charged at £160 if paid within 28 days of deemed service (the second working day following posting). There is usually the opportunity to pay a reduced amount of £80 if paid within 21 days of deemed service of the Penalty Notice.

NB – A Penalty Notice may be issued as soon as an unauthorised absence is recorded.

More information regarding this notice can be found in the attached document – advice and information to parent(s)/carer(s). If you wish to discuss this notice, or discuss what further support is available, please contact our team as soon as possible.

Appendix 3: Leave of absence request form

The leave of absence form is available online at https://www.stmarksprimary.net/absence/

Appendix 4: Example reply to leave of absence request

Dear Parent's name,

RE: Absence during term time – Child Name (Child DOB)

Thank you for your application for absence in term time for Child's name. Whilst we appreciate your circumstances, St Mark's CofE Primary School do not approve any absences during term time unless they are due to exceptional circumstances as per the guidance from the Department of Education.

The rationale behind this decision is that the Government has provided evidence that satisfactory progress at school is highly dependent on attendance.

St Mark's CofE Primary School works closely with the Inclusion Support Service and if you choose to take your child out of school for the above unauthorised leave, we will notify the local authority and further action including legal action may be considered.

Please note that such a Penalty is issued to each parent for each child taken out of school. A Penalty Notice is a fine of £80 which increases to £160 if not paid within the first 21 days. Thereafter if the Penalty remains unpaid after 28 days this may result in legal action be taken against you. Parents have a duty to ensure their child's regular attendance at school and failure to do so is an offence under Section 444(1) of the Education Act 1996.

I have noted the dates that Child Name will be absent from St Mark's CofE Primary School. Dates of leave and the registers will be marked with the G code (unauthorised family holiday) for this period.

If you would like to discuss the matter further, please contact the school.

Yours sincerely

Headteacher

Appendix 5: Attendance Policy Quick Guide for Parents

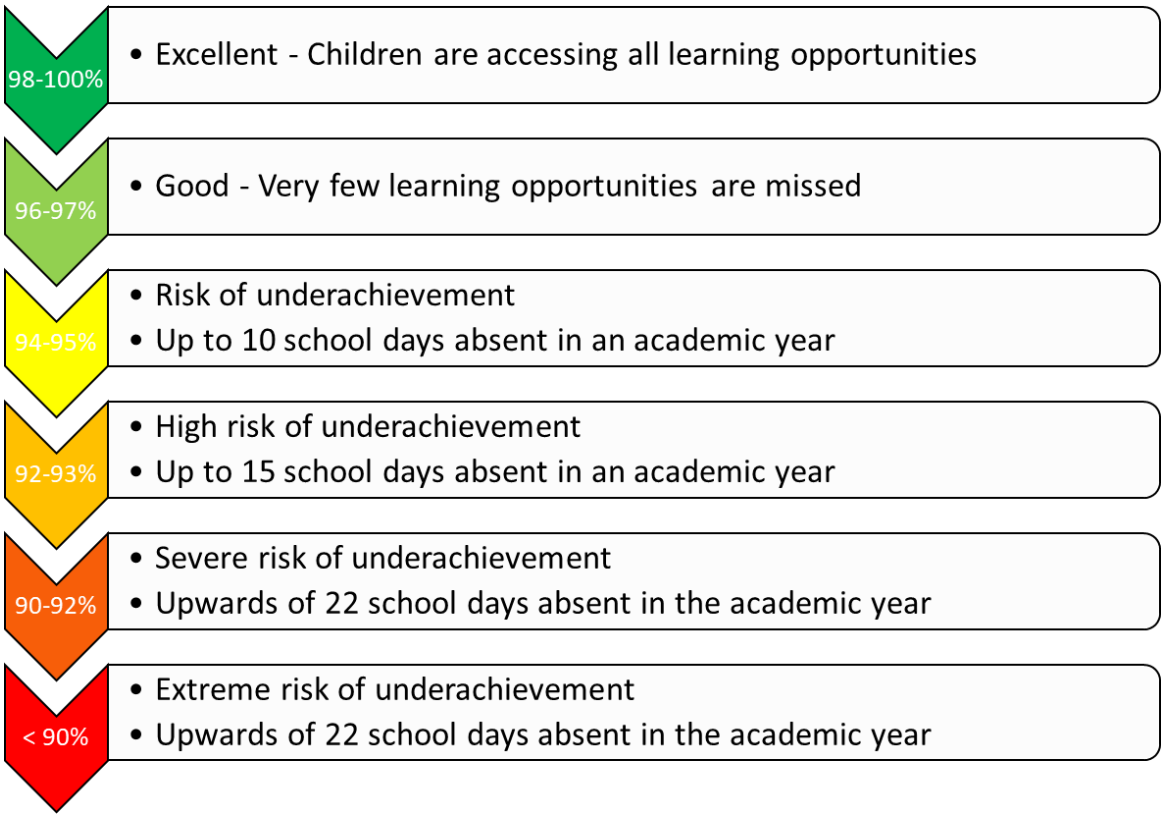
Attendance Policy Quick Guide for Parents

We expect pupils to attend school for 100% of the academic year.

You can support your child to have excellent attendance by taking these steps:

- Ensure your child arrives on time for school every day and is ready to learn. Arriving after registration is recorded as an unauthorised absence. Pupils must be in school by 8:50am.
- If your child appears to be only slightly ill, send them in to school. We have staff who will contact you if their condition deteriorates.
- Book any medical appointments outside of school hours. If this is unavoidable, please book for as late in the afternoon as possible and inform the school of appointments in advance.
- Supply a copy of the appointment card or hospital letter if your child has an appointment during school hours.

If your child becomes reluctant to go to school or you need help, please contact the school immediately; we are more likely to be able to work together to solve any problems if we act early.



New attendance rules!

There are new rules for unauthorised absences, whether this is due to holiday, irregular attendance, or otherwise. Don't get caught out!

1 I'm a single parent of one child and we want to go on holiday for 5 days.

Make sure you use the absence request form before you book anything. Your holiday will not be authorised. As your child will miss 5 school days, you'll be given a penalty notice fine. See section 2, too!

1 parent & 1 child = £160
Reduced to £80 if paid in 21 days

For each child a penalty is given...

+ £160 + £160 + £160 + £160

1 parent & 4 children = £640
Reduced to £320 if paid in 21 days

For a family of 2 parents & 4 children

+£160 +£160 +£160 +£160

£1280
Reduced to £640 if paid in 21 days

What happens if school suspects children are actually on holiday?

Photos on Facebook?
Foreign mobile dial tone?
Other children talking about your holiday?
Amazing sun tan?
Home visit shows no-one at home?

Please don't be offended if we ask for evidence or mention these questions to you. We're required to do this to ensure a fair system!

2 What about subsequent absences? Is it still the same penalty amount?

No, not anymore. If in any period of not more than 3 years, your child has a 2nd and 3rd leave of absence OR pattern of irregular attendance, which is unauthorised, then...

2nd TIME
e.g. 2 parents and...
1 child = £320
2 children = £640
3 children = £960
4 children = £1280
NO DISCOUNT FOR EARLY PAYMENT

3rd TIME
A penalty notice fine **will not** be given. Instead, your case will be taken to court. A magistrate can fine each parent £2,500 for each child.
1 parent & 4 children = £10,000
2 parents and 4 children = £20,000

3 What about irregular attendance? Could I get a penalty notice?

If your child is absent for 10 or more sessions in 10 weeks, and their absences are unauthorised, then the school is required to consider penalty notices / prosecution.

So, half a day here and day there could all add up to 10 sessions in 10 weeks. If unauthorised, then it would be a penalty notice. Remember, 1 day is 2 sessions (morning and afternoon).

4 What are typical reasons given that <u>won't</u> be authorised?

Examples of unauthorised absences

A family member's birthday
Shopping for uniforms
Inadequate clothing for school
Child being used as a carer
Problems with transport
Sickness of parent or sibling
Sibling's school closed
Refusing to attend, but able to
Poor family organisation
Family holidays
No absence request completed

Where attendance is irregular, or historically poor, sickness absences may be unauthorised unless medical confirmation by a GP surgery is given.

EVERY DAY COUNTS – ATTEND TODAY, ACHIEVE TOMORROW

‘On the day’ absences: what should I do if my child is not ‘fit’ to go into school?

On each day your child is unfit to come to school, please report this absence by phoning or emailing the school to let us know. In the message you must leave your child’s full name, year and class and give the specific reason for absence. The information you give will be recorded on our official register. Please do so before 8:30am.

Leave of Absence

There may be exceptional circumstances where you need to request a leave of absence for your child. Please use our ‘Leave of absence request’ form to make these types of requests. The online form, available on our website, should be submitted in advance of the leave of absence. You will receive a letter or email in response, to advise if the request has been granted or declined.

Punctuality

Pupils are expected to arrive on time for school in the morning. Your child is late to school if they are not in class 8:50am.

The Government remains very clear that no child should miss school apart from in exceptional circumstances and schools must continue to take steps to reduce absence to support children’s attainment. I hope we can count on your support in this matter.

Please contact the school if you require any support with ensuring your child’s regular school attendance.

Appendix 6: Attendance Policy Quick Guide for Students

Attendance Policy Quick Guide for Students

Roles and responsibilities:

All members of the school community at St Mark's CofE Primary School have roles and responsibilities in promoting and ensuring good attendance and punctuality.

Role of the pupils:

Pupils have a responsibility to themselves and others to play a positive role in the life of the school and to make the most of the education opportunities available.

All pupils will:

- Ensure that they attend school regularly and on time.
- Be aware of their current attendance record and targets, if appropriate.
- Be aware of the consequences of poor attendance or truancy, where appropriate.
- Not leave school without permission.
- Inform a trusted adult if they feel that they are being bullied or feel unhappy in school.

Appendix 7: Attendance codes

The following codes are taken from Working Together to Improve School Attendance

Code	Definition	Scenario
/	Present (am)	Pupil is present at morning registration
****	Present (pm)	Pupil is present at afternoon registration
L	Late arrival	Pupil arrives late before register has closed
B	Off-site educational activity approved by the school. Schools must also record the nature of the approved educational activity.	Examples of nature of activity • 1) Attending taster days at college • 2) Attending courses at college • 3) Attending unregistered alternative provision arranged by the school
D	Dual registered	Pupil is attending a session at another setting where they are also registered
K	Attending education provision arranged by the Local Authority Schools must also record the nature of the provision	• Attending courses at college • Attending unregistered alternative provision such as, home tutoring
P	Sporting activity	The pupil is attending a place for an approved educational activity that is a sporting activity
V	Educational visit or trip	An educational visit or trip arranged by or on behalf of the school and supervised by a member of school staff
W	Attending work experience	The pupil is attending a place for an approved educational activity that is work experience provided under arrangements made by a local authority or the school as part of the pupil's education

Code	Definition	Scenario
Absent – leave of absence		
C	Leave of absence for exceptional circumstances Generally, a need or desire for a holiday or other absence for the purpose of leisure and recreation would not constitute an exceptional circumstance	Schools must judge each application individually considering the specific facts and circumstances and relevant background context behind each request. Where a leave of absence is granted, the school will determine the number of days a pupil can be absent from school
C1	Leave of absence for the purpose of participating in a regulated performance or undertaking regulated employment abroad	All schools can grant leaves of absence for pupils to undertake employment (paid or unpaid) during school hours
C2	Leave of absence for a compulsory school age pupil subject to a part-time timetable	All pupils of compulsory school age are entitled to a full-time education. In very exceptional circumstances, where it is in a pupil's best interests, there may be a need for a temporary part-time timetable to meet their individual needs
E	Excluded	Suspended or permanently excluded and no alternative provision made
I	Illness (not medical or dental appointment)	The pupil is unable to attend due to illness (both physical and mental health related). Schools should advise parents to notify them on the first day the child is unable to attend due to illness
J1	Interview	Attending an interview for employment or for admission to another educational institution

M	Medical appointment	Attending a medical or dental appointment
R	Religious observance	The pupil is absent on a day that is exclusively set apart for religious observance by the religious body the parent(s) belong to
S	Study leave	Studying for a public examination. Must be used sparingly with revision opportunities in school
T	Parent travelling for occupational purposes	The pupil is a mobile child and their parent(s) is travelling in the course of their trade or business and the pupil is travelling with them
X	Non-compulsory school age pupil not required to attend school	

Code	Definition	Scenario
Absent - unable to attend school because of unavoidable cause		
Q	Unable to attend the school because of a lack of access arrangements	This is linked to transport not other access arrangements
Y1	Unable to attend due to transport normally provided not being available	The school is not within walking distance of the pupil's home and the transport to and from the school that is normally provided for the pupil by the school or local authority is not available
Y2	Unable to attend due to widespread disruption to travel	
Y3	Unable to attend due to part of the school premises being closed	

Y4	Unable to attend due to the whole school site being unexpectedly closed	Adverse weather
Y5	Unable to attend as pupil is in criminal justice detention	In police detention, remanded to youth detention, awaiting trial or sentencing, or detained under a sentence of detention.
Y6	Unable to attend in accordance with public health guidance or law	
Y7	Unable to attend because of any other unavoidable cause	An emergency has prevented the pupil from attending. The unavoidable cause must be something that affects the pupil, not just the parent.

Code	Definition	Scenario
Unauthorised absence		
G	Unauthorised holiday	Holiday not granted by the school
N	Reason for absence not yet established	Pupil is absent for an unknown reason (this code should be amended when the reason emerges, or replaced with code O if no reason for absence has been provided after a reasonable amount of time)
O	Absent in other or unknown circumstances	Where no reason for absence is established or the school is not satisfied that the reason given
U	Arrival after registration	A pupil has arrived late after the register has closed but before the end of session.

Code	Definition	Scenario
Administrative Codes		
Z	Prospective pupil not on admission register	To enable schools to set up registers in advance of pupils joining the school to ease administration burdens.
#	Planned whole school closure	Whole school closure due to half-term/bank holiday/INSET day/use of whole school as polling station