

# St Mary's CE High School

*"Everyone is equal: Everyone deserves the best"*

## Attendance Policy

Date of Review: Autumn 2021  
Date of next Review: Autumn 2023

*"Our vision, as a school with a Christian ethos, is founded on The Parable of the Sower, where*

***Through God's love, we are the rich soil where seeds flourish and roots grow,**  
based on the Parable of the Sower, Mark 4: 3-9*

*This underpins our motto, **We believe everyone is equal, everyone deserves the best,** and is key to what we do. We believe that we are all equal, irrespective of our background and beliefs. We provide a safe, nurturing environment in which we can all flourish. We have the very highest aspirations for our students, their families, our local community, and ourselves, and want nothing but the best. We challenge students by having a rich and exciting curriculum provision and by making learning practical, engaging and enjoyable. We enable students to succeed by providing the best possible personalised support."*

Nicholas Simms – Head Teacher

# St Mary's CE High School

## Attendance Policy

### 1. Introduction

At St Mary's CE High School, we value the opportunities a full-time education affords our students and the community we serve. The aim of this policy is to maintain the high levels of attendance we expect, ensuring the personal safety and academic success of our entire student body. It is of vital importance that the school, parents/carers and Local Authority work together to ensure high levels of student attendance and punctuality.

This policy should be read in conjunction with The Behaviour for Learning Policy and the relevant statutory guidance.

### 2. The Statutory Framework

This policy has due regard to all relevant legislation and statutory guidance including, but not limited to, the following:

- The Education Act 2011
- The Equality Act 2010
- The Education (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2006 (as amended)
- DfE (2020) 'School attendance'
- DfE (2016) 'Children Missing Education'
- DfE (latest version) 'Keeping children safe in education'

Parents/carers have a duty to ensure children of compulsory school age are receiving efficient full-time education suitable to the child's age, ability and aptitude and to any special needs the child may have.

Parents/carers have a legal duty to ensure their child's regular attendance at the school where they are registered (Section 7 of the Education Act 1996).

### 3. Roles and Responsibilities

#### ***I. Governing Body and School Staff***

The Governors are responsible for:

- Ensuring the Attendance Policy is applied effectively in the School.
- Evaluating the effectiveness of the Attendance Policy through annual reporting.

#### ***II. The Head Teacher is responsible for:***

- Ensuring the School promotes good attendance and punctuality.
- Monitoring data on attendance and punctuality.
- Monitoring interventions used to sustain and improve student attendance.
- Authorising any exceptional requests for student absence.
- Providing an annual report on Attendance and Punctuality to the Governors.

#### ***III. The Deputy Head Teacher is responsible for:***

- Monitoring data on attendance and punctuality on a weekly, half-termly, termly and annual basis and preparing reports, as required, for the Key Stage 3 and 4 Progress Teams, Senior Leadership Team, Head Teacher and Governors.
- Complying with Department for Education statutory guidance on Children Missing in Education (CME) by informing the Local Authority of children who are regularly absent, missing from school following a period of absence and prior to removing a child from the roll of the school.
- Liaising with the Local Authority to issue penalty notices to parents/carers where appropriate.
- Liaising with the Educational Welfare Officer to ensure that every student on roll is receiving a suitable, full-time education provision.
- Leading interventions to sustain and improve student attendance levels across the School.

- Initiating or leading attendance meetings with Year Leads, tutors, parents/carers and students.
- Managing the Attendance Officer to execute their duties effectively.
- Designing and delivering staff INSET and CPA to ensure the School's vision for high levels of attendance and punctuality are realised.

**IV. *The Attendance Officer is responsible for:***

- Monitoring attendance on a daily, weekly, half-termly, termly and annual basis, contacting parents/carers of students who have been identified as at-risk, to challenge absences and encourage a swift return to the School.
- Acting as the first point of contact for parents/carers and staff regarding student absence and appointments.
- Recording absences and first-day contact home to parents/carers.
- Monitoring the completion of the class registers on Sims and liaising with relevant staff where this is not done.
- Reporting the key statistics on attendance and punctuality on a weekly, half termly, termly and annual basis and preparing reports, as required, for the Deputy Head Teacher.
- Referring students who fall below threshold attendance standards, or have been removed from the School roll, to the Local Authority.
- Maintaining relevant attendance records.

**V. *The Student Managers and Year Leads are responsible for:***

- The Year Leads should direct the tasks of the Student Managers where appropriate.
- Monitoring attendance on a daily, weekly, half-termly, termly and annual basis, contacting parents/carers of students who have been identified as at-risk, to challenge absences and encourage a swift return to the School.
- Visiting the home and/or referring students to the Local Authority's Education Welfare Service where appropriate.
- Issuing appropriate sanctions to students for whom attendance and punctuality is a concern.
- Managing the arrangements for students who are required to attend appointments during School hours.
- Leading pastoral review meetings and developing action plans involving the student, parents/carer and, where appropriate, any external agency, for students whose attendance and/or punctuality falls below the expected level.
- Coordinating the support for students returning to school after a prolonged absence.
- Coordinating the collation of any documentary evidence required by the Local Authority for issuing a penalty notice or prosecution by the Local Authority for unauthorised absence.

**VI. *Teachers and Form Tutors are responsible for:***

- Ensuring accurate registers are taken at the start of each period.
- Providing regular advice, encouragement and challenge to students about their attendance data.
- Alerting the Pastoral Team to any trends in, or signs of, disaffection which could result in poor attendance and/or punctuality for any student.

**VII. *The Educational Welfare Officer is expected to:***

- Make appointments for fortnightly meetings with the Pastoral Team and Attendance Officer at the School to review the school's attendance data, progress towards targets, and to identify any areas of difficulty.
- Help the school to self-evaluate and identify any actions that can be taken to improve performance. The EWO should bring to the fortnightly meeting school-based data, benchmarking information, and a list of all students whose attendance is below key thresholds for discussion.

**VIII. *Parents/Carers are responsible for:***

- Ensuring their child attends school on a regular basis and supporting the School in reaching (and exceeding) a 97% attendance target for all students.

- Informing the School before 08:25am if their child is unable to attend, including the reason for the absence and the expected date of return.
- Booking appointment times, where possible, outside of School hours.
- Avoiding the arrangement of holidays/ leave during term time except in exceptional circumstances.
- A letter addressed to the Head Teacher must be written for any holiday/leave taken during term time with the extenuating circumstances explained and then submitted at least one month prior to the period of absence

**IX. *Parents/Carers should be aware that:***

- It is a statutory offence for their child to be absent from the School without a valid reason.
- The School uses its discretion to authorise any period of absence.
- The Governors reserve the right to the apply to the Local Authority to issue a penalty notice fine or remove a student from the roll of the School.

**X. *Students are responsible for:***

- Aiming to achieve 100% attendance and punctuality by arriving to school on time every day.
- Arriving on time to each period.
- Ensuring they are registered for all periods and informing staff if they are not able to be registered for any reason.
- Ensuring all letters and information from parents/carers are passed to the relevant member of staff.

**4. Procedures**

**I. *Registration***

The School will ensure that an attendance register is taken at the beginning of each period. Teaching staff should mark students as either:

- Present (“/”)
- Absent (“N”)
- Late (“L”)

Registers will be marked using the Department for Education Attendance and Absence Codes. The Attendance Officer will pre-fill the register with the relevant codes for known absences in advance of lessons. Teaching staff should only overwrite the code if a student is physically present in their lesson.

**II. *Absence Authorisation***

On the first day of a student’s absence, parents/carers must phone the School before 8:25am to notify them of the reason for the absence.

If no information has been received by 9:00am on the first day of the absence, the Attendance Officer will make a phone call to the home number of the absent student to enquire as to the reasons for the absence.

For each day of a student’s absence, the parents/carers should call the School each morning before 8:25AM. If the absence is for a prescribed length of time, an agreed date should be agreed with the parents/carers to remove the need for daily phone calls.

Only the School can authorise any student absence. The decision is the responsibility of the Head Teacher and is made in accordance with government guidance.

Failure to provide an explanation for any student absence within 5 days of the start of the absence period will result in the absence being treated as an Unauthorised Absence.

An Authorised Absence is recorded when the School has either given approval in advance for a student of compulsory school age to be away or has accepted an explanation offered afterwards as satisfactory justification for said absence. All other absences will be recorded as unauthorised.

**III. *Persistent Absence***

A student is categorised as a persistent absentee if their attendance falls below 90%. Any student who meets, or is at risk of meeting, this threshold is placed on the Attendance Concern List and will receive an attendance intervention from the School or Local Authority. The Attendance Concern List is monitored weekly and distributed to relevant staff in the School from the Attendance Officer via Sims. The school will inform the LA, of the details of students who fail to attend regularly, or who have missed 10 school days or more without permission. Where a student has not returned to school for 10 days after an authorised absence, or is absent from the school without authorisation for 20 consecutive school days, the school will remove the student from the admission register if the school and the Local Authority have failed to establish the whereabouts of the child after making reasonable enquiries.

**IV. *Lateness***

Students should aim to arrive at the School at 8:15am to avoid any unplanned lateness due to transport etc. Any student who arrives after 8:25am is marked late in the register and receives a 30-minutes same day detention. Any student who arrives after 8:40am, needs to sign in at the student entrance office, is marked late in the register, and receives a 60-minutes same day detention.

Students who arrive after the close of register at 8:55am will be classed as absent for the morning session and this will be unauthorised. Parents/carers will be notified of this detention via a text message.

**V. *Appointments***

All appointments should, where possible, be arranged for a time outside of normal School operating hours. Where appointments during the School day are unavoidable, parents/carers should provide advance notice to the Attendance Officer by way of a medical card or appointment letter. Such unavoidable appointments should not disrupt the entire school day. Students should not be absent for the entire school day/ morning/ afternoon where applicable. The Attendance Officer will keep the School reception team and the Pastoral team informed of any student appointments. Appointments deemed reasonable by the School will be recorded as authorised absence.

**VI. *Religious Observance***

Students who require a leave of absence for a religious observance should notify the School of the request in advance via the Attendance Officer. The Head Teacher will only authorise one day of authorised absence for religious observance per School year. Any additional requests of leave for religious observance will only be granted in exceptional circumstances.

**VII. *Unauthorised Absence***

Any absences which the School does not consider reasonable are declared as Unauthorised Absence. This includes, but is not limited to:

- Students being kept away from the School unnecessarily.
- Truancy before or during the School day.
- Absences not explained to the satisfaction of the Attendance Officer.

**5. Term Time Holidays**

A leave of absence may only be granted to a student during term time with advance application and under exceptional circumstances.

The request for a leave of absence must be made 1 month in advance by writing a letter to the Head Teacher which details:

- The dates of the absence
- The exceptional circumstances relating to the application

Each request is reviewed by the Head Teacher, the Deputy Head Teacher for Behaviour and Attendance and the Attendance Officer.

The Head Teacher will only authorise the absence in exceptional circumstances which, by definition, are those which are rare, significant, unavoidable and short.

The Head Teacher will consider the following factors when considering a request for a leave of absence:

- Whether the leave of absence could be taken in a School holiday period
- Levels of historic student attendance
- Any leave of absence taken previously
- Whether the leave of absence falls in examination periods or results in missed deadlines
- The age and year group of the student

For clarity, the following are not exceptional circumstances regarding requests for a leave of absence:

- The availability and cost of holidays
- The overlap of the beginning or end of the school term

When a leave of absence is agreed by the Head Teacher, a confirmation letter will be sent to the parents/carers which details the number of school days for which a student can be absent as well as the agreed date of return to the School. Where the request for a leave of absence is not granted, or where a student fails to return to the School on the agreed date, the Head Teacher will pass on the details to the Local Authority for the purposes of reporting a Child Missing in Education. The Head Teacher may request the Local Authority to issue both parents/carers with a penalty notice for each student for unauthorised absence from the School. The Head Teacher may, after notifying the Local Authority, remove the student from the School roll.

## **6. Managing Absence and Punctuality**

### **Daily Activities**

#### ***The Attendance Officer will:***

- I. Ensure accurate details are noted of parents/carers contacting the School about their child's absence – including the reason for the absence and the likely length of absence
- II. Update student records (electronic) to reflect the appropriate Department for Education code.
- III. Contact parents/carers by telephone who fail to notify the School of their child's absence by 9.00am on the 1st day of absence, ensuring that any follow up action required as a result of the contact with the parents/carer is flagged up to the Student Manager/Year Lead and Senior Leader responsible for attendance.
- IV. Send a text to all parents/carers of students arriving late to school, informing them of their child's failure to arrive on time and notifying them of the appropriate sanction.
- V. Ensure no student can leave school for an appointment without the prior confirmation from a parents/carer.
- VI. Send a daily email to the Deputy Head Teacher providing the % level of attendance and punctuality each day and the cumulative attendance for the term.

#### ***The Student Managers/ Year Leads will:***

- VII. Ensure that any student who arrives after the register has been taken is directed through the late gate and has their details recorded.
- VIII. Ensure electronic records are updated with details of students who arrive late.
- IX. Ensure details of students and the reasons for the late arrival are recorded electronically and inform the student of the appropriate detention sanction.
- X. Make follow-up phone calls to parents/carers of absent students who have been identified as at-risk, to challenge absences and encourage early return to school.

- XI. Escalate any absences causing concern to the Deputy Head Teacher responsible for attendance.

### **Weekly Activities**

#### ***The Attendance Officer will:***

- Produce weekly attendance and punctuality data for Student Managers/ Form Tutors/ Class Teachers/Year Leads and the Deputy Head Teacher responsible for attendance.

#### ***The Student Managers will:***

- Contact parents/carers by telephone to inform them of the School's concern regarding attendance or punctuality, particularly if there are patterns to absences or lateness.
- Contact parents/carers by telephone if their child's aggregate attendance for the year to-date falls below 97% for the first time. This excludes students who have an attendance below 97% for an authorised reason.

Meet with the Education Welfare Officer (EWO) to discuss all students who have an attendance below 95%.

#### ***Deputy Head Teacher responsible for attendance will:***

- Monitor weekly attendance across the School.
- Agree appropriate intervention strategies with the Attendance Officer/Student Manager/ Year Lead.
- Provide an update to the SENCo for Inclusion.

### **Half-termly**

#### ***The Attendance Officer will:***

- Produce half-termly attendance and punctuality data for Student Managers/ Form Tutors/ Class Teachers/Year Lead and the Deputy Head Teacher responsible for attendance.

#### ***The Student Managers/Year Leads will:***

- Arrange meetings with parents/carers if their child's aggregate attendance for the year to-date falls below 94%, to inform them of the School's concern regarding attendance or punctuality, particularly if there are patterns to absences or lateness.
- Set an action plan with achievable and realistic attendance and punctuality targets and monitor the implementation of them.

#### ***The Deputy Head Teacher responsible for attendance will:***

- Provide challenge and support to improve attendance and punctuality by the Student Managers/Year Leads, parents/carers, student and, where appropriate, other external agencies.
- Agree appropriate intervention strategies with the Attendance Officer/Year Leads.
- Agree list of students requiring Pastoral Review Meetings.
- Publish the Persistent Absence list and present to SLT on relevant students.
- Manage the issuance of rewards/ sanctions to students as appropriate.

### **Annual Activities**

#### ***The Attendance Officer will:***

- Produce annual attendance and punctuality data for Student Managers/ Form Tutors/ Class Teachers/Year Leads and the Deputy Head Teacher responsible for attendance.

#### ***The Deputy Head Teacher will:***

- Review individual, class and year group attendance with relevant staff in the School.
- Conduct annual review meetings with students who are regarded as Persistent Absentees.

#### ***The Head Teacher will:***



- Review whole school attendance and evaluate the intervention strategies used with the Deputy Head Teacher.
- Report on whole school attendance to the Governors.

**7. Monitoring, evaluation and review**

The Governing Body will review this Policy at least every two years and assess its implementation and effectiveness. The Policy will be promoted and implemented throughout the School.