



Attendance & Punctuality Policy

2021 - 2022

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Issued to	All staff and parents

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1. Introduction

Regular attendance at College is expected. The reasons for this are obvious: pupils learn best and receive most from College when they are actually there. This issue is highlighted in the Home/School Agreement which all parents are asked to sign at the beginning of each year and also within other regular communications between home and school. The importance of attendance is explained during the interviews of all pupils who wish to come to St Mary's.

Our policy applies to all children registered at this school and this policy is made available on our school website to all parents/carers of pupils who are registered at our school.

This policy has been written to adhere to the relevant Children Acts, Education Acts, Regulations and Guidance from the Department for Education in addition to guidance from Wirral Local Authority.

Although parents/carers have the legal responsibility for ensuring their child's good attendance, the Head teacher and Governors at our school are committed to working closely with parents, other professionals and agencies to ensure that all pupils are encouraged and supported to develop good attendance habits.

2. Legislation and Guidance

The 1996 Education Act (section 444) states that parents (including non-related adult carers in the child's house) have a **legal responsibility** to ensure that those of compulsory school age are educated, either by '**regular**' attendance at school or 'otherwise'. The 2008 Education and Skills Act (section 155) specifies the same requirement regarding regular attendance at alternative provision.

Regular and punctual attendance of pupils at school is both a legal requirement and essential for pupils to maximise their educational opportunities. Regular attendance has been defined by the Supreme Court (6th April 2017) to mean "in accordance with the rules prescribed by the school".

***Definition of parent: Section 576 of the Education Act 1996** - A parent in relation to any child or young person, includes any person:-

- All natural parents, whether they are married or not;
- who is not a parent but who has parental responsibility for him/her; or
- who has care of him/her;
- This also includes all parents who are absent. Parental partners can be included (whether or not they are married or the natural parent of the child as they have 'care' of the child. If a pupil lives with a grandparent or older sibling as their main carer, they can also be included as they are the main care provider.
- It is also important to note that even though a parent may not live in the same home as the pupil, that parent is still responsible for ensuring the child attends school every day.

Schools must enter pupils on the admission register and attendance register from the beginning of the first day on which the school has agreed, or been notified, that the pupil will attend the school.

For most pupils the expected first day of attendance is the first day of the school year. Every amendment made to the admission register and the attendance register must include: the original entry; the amended entry; the reason for the amendment; the date on which the amendment was made; and the name and position of the person who made the amendment.

For further information on 'School attendance; Guidance for maintained schools, academies, independent schools and local authorities ' visit:

file:///C:/Users/user/Documents/Attendance%202020/School_attendance_guidance_for_2020_to_2021_academic_year.pdf

3. Principles of the St Mary's CC Attendance and Punctuality Policy

The link between poor attendance and reduced GCSE outcomes is stark and as a result the College places a high priority on attendance, particularly for our most vulnerable students. The Governing Body places a high priority on achieving standards and feel that excellent pupil attendance and punctuality are essential.

They undertake this role by:

- Monitoring whole school attendance termly and take appropriate action should it affect standards.
- Nominate a named Governor for attendance.

The government expects:

- Schools and local authorities to:
 - Promote good attendance and reduce absence, including persistent absence;
 - Ensure every pupil has access to full-time education to which they are entitled; and,
 - Act early to address patterns of absence.
- Parents to perform their legal duty by ensuring their children of compulsory school age who are registered at school attend regularly.
- All pupils to be punctual to their lessons.

Any pupil whose absence falls below 96% should be noted by the Form Tutor/Head of Year and the pupil will be placed on the 'Attendance Stage process' which is a graduated intervention system. Part of this process will be to review the reasons for absence and ensure strategies used are appropriate. If a student falls below 96% early in the year this may require different strategies to a student who is at 96% later in the year. This is to encourage improved attendance and put support systems in place with Education Welfare Service, Attendance Officer and School Nurse, to address persistent absence issues. Other outside agencies may also be involved in cases which show persistently poor attendance and pupils may be discussed. In addition to, or instead of, the above enforcement options, and to ensure that we have explored all avenues of possible support, school may also seek advice from the Vulnerable Children's meeting, a multi-disciplinary panel who meet regularly to discuss such cases. The

panel includes health, social care and education colleagues so that we can look at any additional support that may benefit the family and enable your child to attend school on a more regular basis.

Attendance during one school year	equals this number of days absent	which is approximately this many weeks absent	which means this number of lessons missed
95%	9 days	2 weeks	50 lessons
90%	19 days	4 weeks	100 lessons
85%	29 days	6 weeks	150 lessons
80%	38 days	8 weeks	200 lessons

Having poor attendance can have an impact on pupil progress and result in underachievement.

4. Daily Registers

Under the 2006 Education Regulations the school is legally required to register pupils twice daily. Registers are marked in the morning between 08:40 and 09:00 and in the afternoon at 11:55am and 12:25pm (split Academic Review). It is essential that all pupils are registered on both occasions.

Year Group	PM Registration Time
7	12:25pm
8	11:55am
9	12:25pm
10	11:55am
11	12:25pm
12	11:55am
13	11:55am

Pupils should be on the school yard no later than 08:35 ready to go to their first lesson. The school gate will close at this time. Pupils who attend after this time will be expected to enter school through the main school entrance at reception. School starts at 08:35 when all pupils should be in their first lesson, in preparation for the register being taken at 08:40. **It is a legal requirement that a register is taken at the start of the day.** Not only does the process allow us to monitor attendance but also to act as a pupil checklist in respect of health and safety issues – e.g. fire drill.

Each year a school calendar is sent out and is also on the website which clearly indicates the days when your child is expected to be in school.

Pupils who arrive after the school gate closes will have to enter the school through the main entrance where they will be met by the school attendance officer to sign a late register at the reception desk. Pupils who arrive late to school will receive a late mark which will result in them receiving a consequence.

Parents will be alerted to this through Arbor. Further details on school discipline approaches can be found here. <https://www.gov.uk/school-discipline-exclusions>

Staff should take a register using Arbor every lesson, a student will be marked either; absent, late or present. Only key pastoral staff, the Attendance Officer/secretary should enter any other codes on registers. Registers must be taken every lesson and staff should inform SLT through the call out system if a pupil who had been marked in previously that day has not shown up to their lesson.

Clubs at lunchtime

It is the responsibility of the leader of the club during P&A time to ensure they mark the pupils with them as present. The form tutor should **NOT** mark the pupil in unless they are in front of them for the **entire period of P&A Time**.

Trips

Pupils going on trips should have their register taken by the trip leader. They should NOT be sent to get their mark from the classroom teacher. Trip leaders must also ensure that all pupils' names are given to the attendance officer on standard form lists before they leave.

Rehearsals/Music lessons

Rehearsals should always be marked in the rehearsal space/hall/drama studio – pupils should not be sent to class teachers to get their mark. The reason for this is simple – the pupil may get their mark and then truant. Safeguarding should always be our priority.

If a pupil is timetabled for a music lesson part way through a lesson, the teacher should mark them present and allow them to go to the music lesson. It is the responsibility of the music department to check with HOY/Classroom teachers if the pupil does not attend at the allocated time and yet appears to be in school. Pupils should always have a pass or something similar in their planners.

Absence / Lateness

Regular attendance at school is the responsibility of parents and carers. Under the Education Act 1996 parents commit an **offence** if the child does not attend school regularly. ***If your child cannot come to school because of illness you should advise the school on the first day of absence by telephone or email.***

If no message is received we will assume that your child is absent without your permission. We will then make every effort to contact you. The school requires where possible **two** emergency contact numbers. It is essential that the school is kept informed of changes of contact details such as phone numbers and addresses. Please inform us of any changes in writing through the pupil planner or letter to your child's Head of Year. This information can also be updated using the data checking via Arbor. Parents are encouraged to ensure that their child brings in a note confirming the reasons for the absence when the child returns to school. Once contact (verbal and/or written) has been made with the parent the school will determine if the absence is to be authorised or unauthorised.

The school will only authorise a medical absence if the circumstances are unavoidable. The school has the right to request medical evidence if a parent rings the school to confirm the pupil is unwell. This may include: a medical appointment card with one appointment entered, slip with date, pupils name and surgery stamp, signed by GP Receptionist, letter from a professional, doctor's note, medication prescribed by a doctor, copy of prescription, print screen of medical notes, as well as letters concerning hospital appointments or any other relevant evidence. .The HT is entitled to not authorise absence where appropriate medical evidence is not provided

Parents are asked to make routine medical and dental appointments outside school hours wherever possible. Where such appointments in school time are unavoidable, parents should inform the school in advance so a decision can be made whether to authorise the absence or not. If an appointment is authorised the pupil should be in school before the appointment and return following the appointment.

Each morning parents/carers of any pupils absent from College will receive a phone call/message through the Arbor system requesting them to provide a reason for the absence. Messages/emails may also be sent from the attendance officer.

If parents are unable to return a call for whatever reason, a written explanation for the absence is necessary upon a pupil's return to College.

If any absence, whether covered by a note or not, is considered as an unauthorised absence by the Attendance Officer and HOY, it can result in an Education Penalty Notice. Parents will also be informed by a HOY or Attendance Officer of our concern.

If a pupil is absent for more than two days and there has been no communication from the family regarding the child's absence after an Attendance Officer home visit then we may consider reporting our concerns for the safety of the child to Social Care. This should be managed by going through the appropriate safeguarding channels.

Where a pupil has truanted school or a lesson then a consequence will be issued to ensure the time missed is caught up.

The attendance Officer checks these timings daily and alerts the senior leadership team of any failure to close/take register/save register in the allocated time. Failure to complete a register will result in an SLT callout and possible further disciplinary action. Fire registers will be completed by the attendance secretary when registers close.

5. Absence from College

Unauthorised absence is where a school is not satisfied with the reasons given for the absence. This is an offence by any parent with parental responsibility, regardless of whether the student lives with this parent. Where pupil attendance, for both authorised and unauthorised absences drops below 96% a staged approach to attendance will be implemented in an attempt to improve the pupil's attendance and avoid parents facing an EPN or prosecution.

When a pupil's attendance falls below 96% and depending on the number of absences a parent will receive a stage 1 email. This letter identifies that their child's attendance is below the national expectation and is therefore a cause for concern and if there is no improvement they will be invited into school for a meeting to discuss the matter. The pupils form tutor will host a stage 1 meeting

When a pupil's attendance falls below 94% and depending on the number of absences a parent will receive a stage 2 email.

This email invites parents to a meeting with one of the following: Head of Year / P&A Coach. During this meeting an action plan in order to improve the child's attendance will be completed, shared with the parents and recorded on CPOMS. The action plan will be closely monitored by HOY and FT over the next week.

Where parents fail to attend their stage 2 meeting on two separate occasions or there is no improvement and the child's attendance drops below 90% without a valid reason, college will conduct a Stage 3 meeting (action short of EPN). This will be hosted by AHT/ Attendance Officer for the year group. Failure to improve after a stage 3 meeting may result in the school applying for an Education Penalty Notice (EPN)

The College will request penalty notices to address unauthorised absence. A minimum evidential requirement of ten (10) school sessions, lost to unauthorised absence by any pupil in the current term or two concurrent half terms will be required to trigger the process. Please note ten (10) school sessions equates to five (5) school days (each school day consisting of morning and afternoon sessions).

The Local Authority may:

- Issue a formal written warning to the parent/carer of the possibility of a penalty notice being issued.
- In the same letter, set a period of 15 school days within which the pupil must have no unauthorised absence.
- Issue a penalty notice through the post at the end of the 15 day period if the required level of improvement has not been achieved.

Wirral Code of Conduct for Education Penalty Notices set out the procedures for the issuing an EPN. Full information can be found at: www.wirral.gov.uk

Further information on the Wirral protocol for EPN and forms for an EPN application can be found at:

<https://www.wirral.gov.uk/sites/default/files/all/schools%20and%20learning/education%20social%20welfare%20strategy/Education%20Penalty%20Notice%20Code%20of%20Conduct%20July%202018.pdf>

Not attending in circumstances relating to coronavirus (COVID-19)

If a pupil is not attending school due to circumstances related to coronavirus (COVID-19), we expect to be able to **offer them access to remote education as soon as is reasonably practicable**. St Mary's will keep a record of, and monitor engagement with this activity, but this does not need to be tracked in the attendance register.

Since the 2020 to 2021 school year, a new category has been added to record instances when a pupil is 'not attending in circumstances relating to coronavirus (COVID-19)'.

Code X: not attending in circumstances relating to coronavirus (COVID-19) (This code is not counted as an absence in the school census)

This code is used to record sessions where the pupils travel to or presence at school would conflict with:

- guidance relating to the incidence or transmission of coronavirus (COVID-19) from Public Health England or the Department of Health and Social Care¹² or
- any legislation (or instruments such as statutory directions) relating to the incidence or transmission of coronavirus (COVID-19).

Pupils who are required to self-isolate as they have symptoms or confirmed coronavirus (COVID-19) will be marked as I on the register.

6. School attendance, safeguarding and children missing education.

A child going missing from education is a potential indicator of abuse or neglect. School staff will follow the school's procedures for dealing with children that go missing from education, particularly on repeat occasions, to help identify the risk of abuse and neglect, including sexual exploitation, serious crime and to help prevent the risks of their going missing in future (Keeping Children Safe in Education (updated September 2021) and Children Missing in Education Nov 2013, updated Sept 2016). Absence concerns of this nature should also be passed to the College DSL.

Notifying the Local Authority

The College notify the Local Authority of any pupil who fails to attend school regularly after making reasonable enquiries, or has been absent without the school's permission for a continuous period of 10 days or more. (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2006 regulation 12. The College must also notify the Local Authority of any pupil who is to be deleted from the admission register.

Our College will demonstrate that we have taken reasonable enquiries to ascertain the whereabouts of children that would be considered 'missing'.

Where a child leaves our school without a destination or another school is not identified we will follow Wirral Council Children Missing Education Procedures by completing form CME01 and returning it to the LA.

The school will liaise with Karen Barry, Children Missing Education Officer Tel: 0151 666 4966 / 0151 666 3433 / Email: karenbarry@wirral.gov.uk

7. Reluctance to attend school

Sometimes a pupil may seem anxious about leaving home to go to school. They may tell you that they feel unwell or give another reason to not attend. You may notice that they are worried from things that they say e.g. that they do not want to do particular subjects, feel that they have no friends or are being bullied. If this is the case please contact the school as soon as possible to speak to your child's Head of Year.

8. Leave of absence in term time

Current regulations from the Department for Education provide that: "Head Teachers may not grant any leave of absence during term time unless there are exceptional circumstances". This means that leave of absence in term time is no longer a parental right and will only be authorised at the Head Teacher's discretion. Under DFE guidelines the school will notify the Local Authority if a parent takes leave of absence without the Head Teacher's permission. [In these cases, the G code will be used on the register to show this absence is unauthorised.]

Please note that 'exceptional circumstances' do NOT include a situation where parents choose to take pupils out of school to fit in with their work-related holiday dates. Pupils attending SMCC will not be allowed absence for holidays. Parents who take pupils on an unauthorised holiday in term time will trigger the Education Penalty Notice procedure (see further below).

If parents believe that their circumstances meet the 'exceptional' criteria, they must complete an 'Application for Leave of Absence of Child from School in Exceptional Circumstances' stating why they are seeking permission to remove their child during term time. This is passed to the Head Teacher for approval. Only exceptional circumstances will be authorised. It is important for parents / carers to note that the school will not authorise ANY leave of absence unless the school feels the circumstances are unavoidable.

If an 'Application for Leave of Absence of Child from School in Exceptional Circumstances' is granted, the Head Teacher will determine the number of school days the child can be away from school.

If an 'Application for Leave of Absence of Child from School in Exceptional Circumstances' is rejected but the parent still proceeds with the removal of their child during term time, this will be an unauthorised absence and will be dealt with under the Wirral 'Code of Conduct Education Penalty Notices for Unauthorised Absence and Exclusions'.

Under these circumstances, the school will apply to the Local Authority for an Education Penalty Notice (EPN) to be issued by the Local Authority. These are typically issued to each parent, and each parent is liable to pay their own EPN. The amount due under an EPN is £60 if paid within 21 days and rises to £120 if paid between 22 and 28 days. If the EPN is not paid within 28 days, parents can be prosecuted under section 444 of the Education Act 1996.

Any absence, other than for illness or emergency medical attention, will be coded as Unauthorised, (G) – Family holiday not agreed or (O) Unauthorised absence.

The College reserves the right to either contact the parents / carers directly or make an immediate referral to Social Care or the police if the school feels a pupil is potentially at risk while being taken out of school during term time.

Please refer to the DfE "Amendments to school attendance regulations" for further details.

9. Persistent Absence

The school has a responsibility to reduce the number of pupils whose attendance is below 90% over the school year. **Pupils with attendance below 90% fall into the 'Persistent Absentee' category.**

According to the DfE guidance 'If a child of compulsory school age fails to attend regularly at a school at which they are registered or at a place where alternative provision is provided for them the parents may be guilty of an offence and can be prosecuted by the Local Authority'. In addition, 'Local Authorities have the power to prosecute parents who fail to comply with a school attendance order (section 443 of the Education Act 1996) or fail to ensure their child's regular attendance at a school (section 444 of the Education Act 1996).

In order to avoid a pupil falling into this category, a staged approach will be used where possible to ensure that attendance below 96% improves. This includes emails to parents, staged meetings and action plans to ensure that attendance improves. These meetings will also help to identify any concerns which may be causing the pupils absence and allow staff and parents to identify strategies to improve this.

This will contain improvement targets with set timescales and an overview of the support provided by the school to support the child and their family. Parental failure to comply with the staged approach may be used as evidence if the Local Authority decides to issue an EPN or prosecute parents.

Where an attendance meeting is called, the reasons for absence will be identified and different strategies to improve attendance will be considered

- A supportive action plan will be agreed.
- An attendance target date for improvement will be set.
- The pupil's attendance will then be closely monitored for a period of no more than 2 school weeks.

If the parent fails to attend this meeting without reasonable justification this could result in an EPN being issued to parents/carers or court proceedings under the 'Single Justice' process. Under section 444, an EPN will be **issued for £60 to both parents**. Each parent will have 21 days to make payment. This will rise to £120 if the initial fine is paid between 22 and 28 days. The payment must be made directly to the Local Authority. Failure to pay the Penalty Charge Notice Fine will result in further legal action being taken by the courts, with the maximum fine currently £2,500 or three months in prison.

What happens next?

Whilst the intention of the School Attendance meeting is that attendance will improve, if the attendance deteriorates by the target review date the Local Authority may recommend legal action is taken. This could include prosecution in the Magistrates' Court, Education Supervision Orders or Parenting Orders.

Issuing Penalty Charge Notices: Each parent receives a penalty charge notice for each child who has unauthorised absence. The penalty is £60 or £120 depending on how soon payment is made. Failure to pay the penalty notices may result in prosecution.

Taking parents to court for unauthorised absence: Education Act 1996 Section 444 - court can fine each parent up to £1000 per child, order payment of prosecution costs and/or impose a Parenting Order.

10. Punctuality

As you may be aware, the law treats some persistent lateness in the same way as irregular attendance and parents may be prosecuted by the Local Authority if late arrival is not resolved.

Poor punctuality can lead to your child:

- Feeling embarrassed in front of their friends.
- Missing the beginning of vital lessons.
- Missing important instructions for the rest of the school day.
- Learning bad habits which could affect their employability in the future.

Minutes late per day during the school year	Equal days' worth of teaching lost in a year
5 minutes	3.4 days
10 minutes	6.9 days
15 minutes	10.3 days
20 minutes	13.8 days
30 minutes	20.7 days

Late Procedures

Pupils who arrive after the school gate closes will have to enter the school through the main

entrance where they will be met by the College attendance team at the reception desk. Pupils who arrive late twice in a week will receive a late mark which will result in them receiving a detention from their head of learning. Persistent lateness will result in a further consequence from the year team.

Parents will be alerted to this through via Arbor.

Children who have to leave for any reason throughout the day should be signed out at the main office by their parent/carer or appropriate adult. This is strongly discouraged. Parents are requested to make dental or medical appointments outside of school hours.

11. Roles and Responsibilities

IMPROVING ATTENDANCE – WHAT PARENTS CAN DO:

- Provide where possible **two** emergency contacts to the school.
- Notify the school on the first day of absence.
- Try to make all medical appointments (doctors, dentist and hospital) out of school time. Obviously, this is not always possible but, in such cases, try to minimise the disruption to the day by getting an early morning appointment so that your child can attend afterwards OR a late afternoon appointment so that she can complete most of their timetable before leaving.
- A child should attend school before and after their appointment.
- Encourage your child to take responsibility for being on time for school ensuring they have a realistic bedtime and will not be too tired to get up in the morning for school. Equipment should be prepared the night before. Regularly checking your child's planner can help you to do this.
- Discourage your child from staying overnight with friends during the week. This sometimes leads to them both being late (or not attending at all) the next day.
- Leave of absence during term time is not a parental right. If there are exceptional circumstances please follow the college leave of absence process and a decision will be made if the absence can be authorised or not.
- Talk positively about going to school.
- Monitor your child's Internet and social media use to ensure they are not experiencing any difficulties that may prevent them from wanting to attend school.
- Take any worries seriously but do not show that you are unduly concerned. Believe that they will be sorted out. Contact school before the concerns escalate.

IMPROVING ATTENDANCE – WHAT SCHOOL DOES:

- Registers are taken every lesson each day. This includes roll call registers at the start and middle of the day.
- Informs any parents / carers who have not contacted the school of the absence of their child on a particular day.
- Maintains records and monitors attendance of pupils on a regular basis.
- Authorises absences in accordance with the Government guidelines. Please note that **only** the school can authorise absence.
- Contacts parents / carers when the attendance falls below acceptable levels and / or when particular patterns of absence are causing concerns.
- Undertake an Early Help Assessment where it is deemed appropriate.
- Monitor pupils who are supported by the In Year Fair Access Panel and those who attend alternative provision.
- Works with external agencies to maintain good attendance and to support the pupil / family with any issues that may affect attendance and punctuality to school.
- Provides re – integration support for pupils returning from absence.

- Maintains a range of strategies to encourage good attendance by means of rewards.
- Inform parents of individual pupils' attendance record each term at Parents' Evening.
- Works with relevant external agencies if a pupils' attendance becomes a concern, ie – Social Care, Early Help Services, Police, YOT, SEND.
- Make referrals to the School Nurse team where appropriate to seek advice to support the pupil.
- Works in partnership with the Local Authority to improve school attendance and reduce persistent absenteeism sometimes utilising legal interventions.
- Hold stage meetings to support and improve attendance.
- Recognition for excellent attendance and positive competition across year groups.

12. Communication with parents

The college uses Arbor to inform parents of absence where there has been no reason provided. Parents should contact the school 0151 645 5049 and select option 1. Please ensure you leave your child's name, year DOB and reason for the absence. Further phone communication through phone calls, text and parental meetings will also be used to address attendance concerns.

13. Recognition and incentives

Attendance recognition activities provide an opportunity for form tutors to work with their forms on having excellent attendance, coming together to achieve success and improving attendance. Positive attendance will be celebrated by both Form Tutor and Head of Year on a regular basis. Pupils with good attendance will also be celebrated at termly achievement assemblies and at the College awards ceremonies.

14. Attendance Additional Intervention Meeting (AIM)

Attendance AIM meetings take place as scheduled every half term as per the College calendar. AIM meetings may be called as needed to address concerns identified in particular year groups. In these meetings action plans will be agreed and cohorts and strategies identified to improve pupil attendance.

Staff Member with Responsibility: Mr J Wilson

Head Teacher Reviewed by: Mr K Maddocks

Approved by: Governors

Reviewed Date: May 2022

Next Review Due: September 2022