



### **Philosophy**

St Mary's Catholic Primary School is committed to providing a full and efficient educational experience for all pupils. We believe that if pupils are to benefit from education, good attendance is crucial. As a school we do all that we can to ensure maximum attendance for all pupils. Any problems that prevent full attendance will be identified and addressed as speedily as possible.

It is the policy of our school/college to celebrate achievement. Attendance is a critical factor to a productive and successful school career. Our school will actively promote and encourage 100 per cent attendance for all our pupils.

St Mary's School will give a high priority to conveying to parents and pupils the importance of regular and punctual attendance. We recognise that parents have a vital role to play and that there is a need to establish strong home-school links and communication systems that can be utilised whenever there is concern about attendance. If there are problems which affect a pupil's attendance we will investigate, identify and strive in partnership with parents and pupils to resolve those problems as quickly and efficiently as possible. We will adopt a clearly focused approach aimed at returning the pupil to full attendance at all times.

### **Objectives**

- to encourage full attendance and punctuality
- to record and monitor attendance and absenteeism and apply appropriate strategies to minimise its occurrence
- to acknowledge and reward a successful record of attendance
- to ensure a consistent approach throughout the school

### **Principles**

Parents are legally responsible for ensuring that a child of compulsory school age attends school regularly. We will work towards ensuring that all pupils feel supported and valued. We will send a clear message that if a pupil is absent, she/he will be missed. We will consult with all members of the school/college community and the Education Welfare Service in developing and maintaining the whole school attendance policy.

We will encourage parents/carers to be actively involved in promoting their child's attendance. We will ensure that all staff are aware of the requirements of the registration process and that they receive training on Registration Regulations and the Law relating to attendance.

Regular information will be sent to parents and pupils informing them of attendance rates and related issues. The school promote positive staff attitudes to pupils returning after absence will ensure regular evaluation of attendance policy and procedures by Senior Managers and the school governors.

Attendance will be an important feature of the School Improvement Plan.

Consistent and vigorous monitoring and evaluation procedures will be in place.

### **As a school we aim to:**

- Maintain an attendance rate of a *minimum* of 95%
- Maintain parents' and pupils' awareness of the importance of regular attendance.

### **Good attendance is important because:**

- Statistics show a direct link between under-achievement and poor attendance
- Regular attenders make better progress, both socially and academically
- Regular attenders find school routines and school work easier to cope with
- Regular attenders find learning more satisfying
- Regular attenders have an easier transfer to secondary school

## Information for Parents

*"Attendance matters..."*

### As a parent you can help us by:

- Ringing on the first morning of all absences with the reason and saying when the child will return
- Arranging dental and doctor's appointments out of school hours or during school breaks
- Keeping us updated by telephone or letter if your child has an extended period of absence due to illness

### We shall:

- Follow up unexplained absences by phone calls and letters as soon as possible
- Remind parents of the importance of regular attendance and punctuality in newsletters, the school prospectus and the Home-School agreement
- Publish our attendance rate in the school prospectus and the newsletters.
- Acknowledge and reward good attendance
- Publish your child's attendance rate on her/his annual school report
- Let you know if we have concerns regarding your child's attendance
- If we continue to have concerns make a referral to the Education Welfare Officer, who visits the school regularly to review and support attendance matters,

### Authorised Absence

Some absences are allowed by law and are known as "authorised absences". For example: if a child is ill, family bereavement, religious observance.

We realise that there are *rare* occasions when there might be a particular problem that causes your child to be absent. Please let us know and we shall try to deal with it sympathetically.

### Unauthorised Absence

There are times when children are absent for reasons, which are *not* permitted by law. These are known as "unauthorised absences". Examples of unauthorised absence are:

- Waiting on a delivery
- Going for a family day out
- Sleeping in after a late night
- Where there is no explanation for the absence or where the explanation or reason for the absence is considered unsatisfactory.
- Going shopping or for a hair cut
- Because it is your child's birthday
- Unapproved Holidays

Unauthorised Absences have to be reported to the Local Authority. The Education Welfare Service may contact you and consider taking legal action against you if your child has unauthorised absences.

### Punctuality

- Morning registration is at 9.00 am. This is the time your child must be in class, so you need to ensure your child is coming through the school gate by 8.55 am.
- It is important to be on time as the first few minutes of the school day are often used to give out instructions, take part in a school assembly or organise schoolwork for the rest of the day.
- If your child misses this short but vital session, their work for the whole day may be affected. Late arrivals are disruptive to the whole class and often embarrassing for your child. We take the view there are no late children, only late parents.
- Arrival after the close of registration at 9.20 may be marked as unauthorised absence in line with the DfES guidance. Between 9.00 am and 9.20 am your child will be marked as "late before registration has closed".
- We will let you know if we have concerns about your child's punctuality.
- Children who remain uncollected at the end of school time will be taken to the School Office if not collected or the school contacted by school closing time.

**Term Time Leave of Absence**

We are always concerned about the amount of school time pupils' miss as a result of family holidays. There is no entitlement to time off in term time. Leave of absence is only allowed at the discretion of the head teacher in accordance with the school policy as agreed by the board of governors

As from 1st September 2013, all schools are unable to authorise any requests for absence relating to holidays in term time. This has been brought about by an amendment to the Education (Pupil Registration)(England) Regulations 2006 which has removed reference to holidays and the ten day period. These changes reinforce the government's view that every minute of every school day is vital and pupils should only be granted in exceptional circumstances e.g. illness, exclusions, or due to other unavoidable causes.

Please remember that the more time your child misses from school, the more difficult it is for them to catch up with their work. Valuable learning time is lost. A *good* understanding of the work can only take place when the pupil is in the classroom.

**Leavers**

If your child is leaving other than at the end of Year 6 to go to Secondary School, parents are asked to:

- Give the school full information about their plans including date of move, new address or at least the town you will be moving to, new school and start date when known, and reasons for moving.
- Confirm the school has your current contact phone number
- Take our school's compliments slip so the new school can easily contact us and records be transferred
- Let us know when you move

**Children Missing Education**

When pupils leave and you have not given us the above information, and we cannot contact you, then your child is considered to be a **Child Missing Education**. This means that the Local Authority has a legal duty to carry out investigations, which will include liaising with Children and Young People's Services, the Police and other agencies, to try to track and locate your child. By giving us the above information, unnecessary investigations can be avoided.

**Legal Note**

Parents have a legal duty to ensure the regular and full time attendance at school of registered pupils (Education Act 1996). This policy is based on the law and on Best Practice guidance produced by the Department for Education and Skills and the Local Authority. The Education Welfare Service aims to work with schools and families to promote good attendance and avoid legal action. However in some cases, parents are prosecuted (taken to court) or have to pay a Fixed Penalty (fine) if unauthorised absences continue.

We value your support in helping us to maintain high standards.

*"Every day counts..."*