



Attendance Policy

Statutory Guidance: Working Together to Improve School Attendance (DfE, July 2026)

Policy Review Date: September 2027

Next Review Date: September 2028

1. Statement of Intent

At St Mary's Catholic Primary School, we believe that every child has the right to receive a full-time education and that regular school attendance is fundamental to achieving positive educational outcomes, wellbeing, personal development and future life chances.

We are committed to providing a safe, welcoming and inclusive environment where every pupil feels valued, supported and encouraged to attend school every day.

Improving attendance is everyone's responsibility. We will work in partnership with pupils, parents, governors, the local authority and other agencies to promote excellent attendance and remove barriers to participation.

2. Aims

We aim to:

- Promote excellent attendance and punctuality for all pupils.
 - Develop a whole-school culture where attendance is valued and expected.
 - Ensure pupils attend school regularly and arrive ready to learn.
 - Identify attendance concerns early and intervene promptly.
 - Work collaboratively with families to understand and remove barriers to attendance.
 - Provide support for pupils whose attendance is affected by health, SEND, emotional wellbeing or family circumstances.
 - Fulfil our statutory responsibilities regarding attendance monitoring and enforcement.
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3. Legal Framework

Parents have a legal duty to ensure that children of compulsory school age receive an appropriate full-time education and attend regularly at the school where they are registered.

Regular attendance means every day the school is open unless a statutory reason for absence applies.

Only the Headteacher or a designated member of staff can authorise an absence.

The school operates in accordance with:

- Education Act 1996.
 - Children Act 1989.
 - Working Together to Improve School Attendance (DfE, July 2026).
 - School Attendance (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations.
 - Keeping Children Safe in Education.
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4. School Attendance Expectations

School Day

School gates open: 8:30am

Classroom doors open: 8:45am

Registration closes: 9:00am

Registers remain open until: 9:15am

Arrival Times

Time	Attendance Code
Before 9:00am	Present
9:00am – 9:15am	Late (L)
After 9:15am	Late after registers close (U)

Pupils arriving after 9:15am will receive a "U" code which counts as an unauthorised absence for that session.

We expect all pupils to attend school every day and aim for attendance of at least 96% wherever possible.

5. Promoting Attendance

The school will implement the DfE's five foundations of effective attendance practice:

Expect

We will:

- Promote a culture where attendance matters.
- Clearly communicate attendance expectations.
- Foster strong relationships with families.
- Celebrate and recognise good attendance and improved attendance.

Monitor

We will:

- Maintain accurate attendance records.
- Analyse attendance data regularly.
- Identify attendance concerns at the earliest opportunity.
- Monitor individuals, cohorts and vulnerable groups.

Listen and Understand

We will:

- Meet with pupils and families where concerns arise.
- Seek to understand barriers to attendance.
- Work collaboratively and respectfully with parents.
- Consider the voice of the child when planning support.

Facilitate Support

Support may include:

- Pastoral support.
- SEND support.
- Early Help referrals.
- Mental health and wellbeing support.
- Family support services.
- Medical needs support.
- Multi-agency involvement where appropriate.

Formalise Support

Where attendance does not improve despite support:

- Attendance Action Plans may be implemented.
- Attendance Contracts may be agreed.
- Early Help assessments may be considered.
- Local Authority attendance support may be requested.

Enforce

Legal intervention will only be considered when support has not secured sufficient improvement and attendance remains a significant concern.

6. Responsibilities

Governing Body

Governors will:

- Promote the importance of attendance.
- Review attendance data and trends.
- Hold leaders to account for attendance outcomes.
- Ensure the school fulfils statutory attendance duties.

Headteacher

The Headteacher will:

- Lead on attendance strategy.
- Ensure compliance with attendance legislation.
- Review attendance data regularly.
- Oversee interventions and support plans.
- Liaise with external agencies where necessary.
- Attend termly Attendance Lead meetings with West Northamptonshire Council.

Attendance Lead

The Attendance Lead will:

- Monitor attendance daily.
- Conduct first-day response procedures.
- Analyse attendance patterns.
- Meet with families where concerns arise.
- Coordinate support and referrals.
- Maintain accurate attendance records.

Teachers

Teachers will:

- Complete registers accurately and promptly.
- Promote the importance of attendance.
- Report attendance concerns.
- Support pupils returning after periods of absence.

Parents and Carers

Parents and carers must:

- Ensure their child attends school regularly and punctually.
- Notify the school before 8:30am on each day of absence.
- Provide reasons for absence.
- Attend meetings where attendance concerns are identified.
- Work in partnership with the school.
- Avoid booking holidays during term time.

7. Reporting Absence

Parents should notify the school using the absence reporting form on the school website before the start of the school day.

Where no contact is received:

- The school will contact parents on the first day of absence.
- Additional emergency contacts may be used.
- Home visits may be carried out where appropriate.
- Safeguarding procedures will be followed where concerns exist.

The school may request medical evidence where there are concerns regarding frequent or repeated absences.

8. Authorised and Unauthorised Absence

Authorised Absence

Authorised absences may include:

- Genuine illness.
- Medical or dental appointments.
- Religious observance.
- Exceptional circumstances approved by the Headteacher.
- Statutory reasons defined within attendance regulations.

Unauthorised Absence

Unauthorised absences include:

- Holidays during term time without approval.
 - Shopping trips.
 - Birthday celebrations.
 - Looking after siblings.
 - Oversleeping.
 - Persistent lateness after registration closes.
 - Absence without satisfactory explanation.
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9. Leave of Absence During Term Time

The Government's expectation is that holidays should not be taken during term time.

Requests for leave of absence must:

- Be made in writing in advance.
- Clearly explain the exceptional circumstances.
- Be submitted before any travel arrangements are booked.

The Headteacher will determine each request on an individual basis.

Parents should not assume leave will be authorised and should not make travel arrangements until written confirmation has been received.

Unauthorised leave may result in a Penalty Notice being requested.

10. Attendance Monitoring

Attendance will be monitored:

- Daily.
- Weekly.
- Termly.
- Annually.

Particular attention will be given to pupils whose attendance is declining.

Persistent Absence

A pupil is classified as persistently absent when attendance falls below 90%.

Severe Absence

A pupil is classified as severely absent when attendance falls below 50%.

Where pupils approach these thresholds, support and intervention will be implemented without delay.

10a. Irregular Attendance

The school expects all pupils to attend whenever the school is open unless there is a valid reason for absence.

A pupil may be identified as having irregular attendance where they accumulate 10 sessions (equivalent to 5 school days) of unauthorised absence within a rolling 10-school-week period.

Where irregular attendance is identified, the school will:

- Contact parents to discuss concerns.
- Seek to understand barriers to attendance.
- Offer support and intervention.
- Implement attendance monitoring.
- Consider referral to the Local Authority where appropriate.

Parents should be aware that irregular attendance may result in a Penalty Notice or other legal intervention in accordance with the National Framework for Penalty Notices.

11. Pupils Requiring Additional Support

The school recognises that some pupils face greater barriers to attendance than others.

Additional support may be considered for:

- Pupils with SEND.
- Pupils with mental health needs.
- Children in Need.
- Children who have a social worker.
- Looked After Children.
- Previously Looked After Children.
- Young carers.
- Pupils experiencing medical difficulties.
- Pupils at risk of persistent or severe absence.

Support will be tailored to individual circumstances and developed in partnership with families and relevant agencies.

12. National Framework for Penalty Notices and Legal Intervention

The school follows the National Framework for Penalty Notices.

There is a single national threshold for when a Penalty Notice must be considered by schools in England. This threshold is 10 sessions of unauthorised absence within a rolling 10-school-week period.

A school day consists of two sessions, morning and afternoon. The 10 sessions do not have to be consecutive and may consist of a combination of different types of unauthorised absence. The 10-school-week period may span different terms or academic years.

First Offence

The first time a Penalty Notice is issued for unauthorised absence, the amount will be:

- £80 per parent, per child if paid within 21 days.
- Increasing to £160 per parent, per child if paid within 28 days.

Any non-payment of the Penalty Notice may be referred to the Magistrates' Court.

Second Offence (Within Three Years)

The second time a Penalty Notice is issued for unauthorised absence, the amount will be:

- £160 per parent, per child.
- Payable within 28 days.

Any non-payment of the Penalty Notice may be referred to the Magistrates' Court.

Third Offence and Any Further Offences (Within Three Years)

The third time an offence is committed, a Penalty Notice will not normally be issued and the case may be presented directly

to the Magistrates' Court.

This may result in:

- Prosecution under Section 444(1) of the Education Act 1996, where if convicted a parent may be fined up to £1,000.
- Prosecution under Section 444(1A) of the Education Act 1996, where if convicted a parent may be fined up to £2,500 and/or receive a custodial sentence of up to three months.

Other Legal Interventions

Where attendance concerns persist despite support and intervention, the Local Authority may also consider:

- Attendance Contracts.
- Education Supervision Orders.
- Formal legal proceedings under the Education Act 1996.

Support will always be considered before legal action is pursued. However, where attendance does not improve and unauthorised absence reaches the national threshold, the school may request that the Local Authority considers legal intervention.

13. Monitoring and Review

This policy will be reviewed annually or sooner if legislation, statutory guidance or local procedures change.

The Governing Body will receive attendance information at least termly and will monitor the effectiveness of this policy.

Attendance: What Do You Want for Your Child?

Above 96%

Excellent attendance gives children the very best opportunity to succeed at school. Pupils are more likely to achieve well, develop positive relationships and reach their full potential.

90% – 95%

An attendance level of 95% means a child may miss approximately 60 lessons over the course of a school year.

A pupil with 90% attendance will miss around four weeks of education across the academic year.

Parents should monitor attendance carefully and seek support where needed.

Below 90%

An attendance level of 85% represents approximately six weeks of lost education during a school year.

Pupils with attendance below 90% are identified as persistently absent and are at significant risk of falling behind both academically and socially.

Improving attendance is one of the most effective ways to improve educational outcomes and ensure every child reaches their full potential.

ATTENDANCE – WHAT DO YOU WANT FOR YOUR CHILD?

Above 96%	Excellent! A pupil with attendance of 96%+ is more likely to be successful in school and reach their full potential. You are giving your child the very best opportunity to succeed in school.
90-95%	Even with an attendance level of 95%, up to 60 lessons could have been missed. A pupil with an attendance of 90% at the end of the school year will have missed 4 weeks' worth of school. Please monitor your child's attendance carefully.

Below 90%	An attendance of 85% is 6 weeks of education missed over the year. Pupils are at serious risk of falling behind. Pupils below 85% are missing a substantial amount of school, more than a half term of absence, having a serious impact on their ability to reach their full potential. Individual pupils will be identified by the Department of Education as a persistent absentee. Attendance will be monitored.
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