



Care, Grow and Flourish in
God's Loving Hands.

St. Mary's C of E Primary School
Headteacher: Mrs M. Constantinou BEd
Littlegrove, East Barnet, Herts EN4 8SR
t: 020 8449 5856
e: office@stmarysen4.barnetmail.net
www.stmarysen4-barnet.co.uk

Attendance Policy - 2024

VISION

Care, Grow and Flourish in God's Loving Hands

The theological underpinning of our school vision is the Parable of the Mustard Seed—Matthew 13:31-32
Jesus told them another parable: "The Kingdom of Heaven is like this. A man takes a mustard seed and sows it in his field. It is the smallest of all seeds, but when it grows up, it is the biggest of all plants. It becomes a tree, so that birds come and make their nests in its branches.

Mission:

- We will recognise every child as precious and unique
- We will 'live' Christian values in our daily lives within a caring Christian environment
- We will enable every child to make the very best progress and growth through excellent teaching and we will deliver an inspirational curriculum to encourage them to flourish.
- We will work in partnership with children and families to promote growth, confidence and self esteem
- We will prepare children to confidently face the challenges of growing up in the 21st Century
- We will provide children with an understanding of local, national and global communities and faiths.
- With St Mary's Church, Brookside Methodist, and other local churches, we will further develop understanding of Christian values in action through worship.

Our [Safeguarding Statement of Intent](#) is available on our website.

Attendance Policy Context:

Living by our vision, we work to enable each child in our care to grow and flourish in order to fulfil their God-given potential, whether academic, social, physical, moral or spiritual. We are committed to providing high quality inclusive learning opportunities for all children. Our vision is to develop happy children, successful learners and confident individuals. To achieve this, we believe that all children need to attend school regularly and punctually in order to take equal, fair and full advantage of the educational opportunities available to them.

Just as Jesus cared for all people equally, we want to ensure that all children attending St. Mary's School are given the same opportunities as each other. This can only happen when all children are in school for the same amount of time. It is our responsibility to work with all families and support them to ensure that no child misses out on the education which is legally due to them and is their right as a child of God.

Approved by:	Full Governing Body	Date: 20.11.24
Last reviewed on:	28.6.23	Next review:

1. Aims:

- We work to enable each child in our care to fulfil their God-given potential, whether academic, social, physical, moral or spiritual. We are committed to providing high quality inclusive learning opportunities for all children. Our vision is to develop happy children, successful learners and confident individuals. To achieve this, we believe that children need to attend school regularly and punctually in order to take full advantage of the educational opportunities available to them.
- We believe that if children are to reach their full potential, then excellent attendance is crucial. Any problems that impede full attendance will be identified and addressed as speedily as possible. We also realise that children who enter a class late or leave early i.e. after the class have settled, often feel very self-conscious and uncomfortable. These feelings impact on their capacity to learn.
- We aim to have a fair and clear policy which is in line with other schools in the authority. It is the policy of our school to celebrate achievement. Full attendance is a critical factor in ensuring positive educational outcomes for our pupils. Our school will actively promote and encourage 100 per cent attendance for all our children.
- Our school will give a high priority to emphasising to parents and children 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 challenges which affect a pupil’s attendance we will investigate, identify and strive in partnership with parents, pupils, advisors and Attendance Support team 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.

2. Legislation and guidance

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](#). These documents are drawn from the following legislation setting out the legal powers and duties that govern school attendance:

- Part 6 of [The Education Act 1996](#)
- Part 3 of [The Education Act 2002](#)
- Part 7 of [The Education and Inspections Act 2006](#)
- [The Education \(Pupil Registration\) \(England\) Regulations 2006 \(and 2010, 2011, 2013, 2016 amendments\)](#)
- [The Education \(Penalty Notices\) \(England\) \(Amendment\) Regulations 2013](#)

This policy also refers to the DfE’s guidance on the school census, which explains the persistent absence threshold.

3. School procedures

Any pupil who is absent from school at the morning or afternoon registration period will have their absence recorded as being authorised, unauthorised or as an approved educational activity (attendance out of school). Only the head teacher, or a member of staff acting on their behalf, can authorise absence.

If there is no known reason for the absence at registration, then the absence will be recorded in the first instance as unexplained (N code) and promptly followed up by the school as part of its early intervention and safeguarding strategies. This will be in the form of a text message, telephone call or letter to the parent

or carer to enquire about the whereabouts of the pupil. If no reason is given by the end of 5 school days or the reason given is not reasonable, the pupil will be recorded as an unauthorised absence (O code).

The coding for any absences will be in accordance with the guidance provided by the Department of Education as in Appendix 1.

4. Punctuality

Morning registration will take place at the start of school at 8.55am. The registers will remain open for a maximum of 20 minutes from this start time. Any pupil arriving after this time will be marked as having an unauthorised absence (U code) unless there is an acceptable explanation i.e. school transport was delayed. In addition, where the absence at registration was for attending an early morning medical appointment, the appropriate authorised absence code will be entered (M code in this instance).

Pupils arriving after the start of school but before the end of the 20 minute registration period will be coded as late (L code).

Afternoon registration will be at the start of the afternoon (12.45 for YR and Y1 and 1.15 for Y2-Y6).

In the event of three late arrivals, the school will contact the parent by letter to inform them of the impact on their child's attendance and subsequent attainment. Should the pupil continue to arrive late for registration after being issued with this letter, the school will issue a second letter inviting the parent or carer to a meeting to discuss the barriers that are preventing punctual arrival and offer support where appropriate. Following this meeting, if the pupil is late again, parents and carers will be invited to a meeting with the head teacher or attendance lead together to discuss the matter and possibly take further action.

Parents and carers are reminded that the local authority may issue a fixed penalty notice for unauthorised lateness after the close of the register in accordance with the local authority's Code of Conduct for the Issuing of Fixed Penalty Notice for Non-School Attendance, if the number of unauthorised absences or lates (O or U codes) is 10 sessions or greater in 10 weeks.

5. First day absence

Parents and carers are reminded that they should contact the school by 9:00am if their child is not able to attend school on that day. A message can be left on the dedicated phone voicemail or an email can be sent to absence@stmarysen4.barnetmail.net

Parents and carers must state the full reason for the child's non-attendance (not just "feeling unwell") and indicate the likely date they will return to school. Parents/carers should be prepared for members of the school staff to ask questions about the pupil's condition, the patterns or trends in their absences and any treatment they may be receiving.

If a parent or carer does not contact the school, staff will endeavour to ascertain the specific reason for non-attendance as soon as possible on the first day of absence, after registration. This may include a telephone call, texting service, a home visit from a member of school staff or an Education Welfare Officer. Once the specific information is received, the register will be amended to reflect the appropriate absence code (see Appendix 1 for the types of code).

Priority will be given to children who are deemed to be particularly vulnerable, e.g. those known to Children's Services or are Looked After (LAC). The local authority's Education Welfare Service will be notified of unexplained absences of five days or more, which will be reduced to only 24 hours if the pupil is on the child protection register, who may conduct an unscheduled home visit to determine if the pupil is safe and well.

Any learner may be subject to a visit from the Education Welfare Service where the school has any concern around attendance, or lack of contact from parents. These visits are intended to offer the right support to overcome any barriers to attending schools.

6. Medical and illness absences

The school appreciates that there are times a pupil has to attend a medical appointment during the school day. In these instances, a copy of the hospital appointment letter should be provided to the school prior to appointment date to inform the school of the set scheduled time. This, however, does not apply to routine GP or dental appointments, which can and should be arranged for times outside of the school day.

If a pupil is repeatedly absent due to illness, the school may request supporting evidence that the pupil is receiving the necessary medical treatment. An appointment card, consultant letter, photograph of prescription medication, would all suffice as medical evidence. Without the necessary evidence, the school may notify the parent or carer that all future absences will be unauthorised until the necessary medical evidence has been provided, and a referral to the Education Welfare Service may be made.

7. Continuing and frequent absence

Within the school it is the responsibility of the class teacher to be aware of and bring attention to the head teacher (or person to whom they have delegated responsibility for attendance), any emerging attendance concerns.

In cases where a pupil begins to develop a pattern of absences, the school will try to resolve the problem as soon as possible. This may involve inviting the parents/ carers and the pupil into school for a meeting. However, should this absence persist a referral will be made to the Education Welfare Service when the attendance drops below 90% for the preceding six school weeks.

For unauthorised absences of 10 sessions or more in a 10-week period (there are two sessions in a day, morning and afternoon), you may issue a fixed penalty notice in accordance.

8. Persistent absence

The Department of Education defines persistent absence as pupils whose absence level is more than 10% (less than 90% attendance). These pupils will be subject to an action plan to support their return to full attendance. This plan may include a referral to the Education Welfare Service for additional support for the pupil and their family.

If the pupil and family do not engage with the action plan, court action may be taken against the main parent(s) or carer(s) via the Education Welfare Service.

9. Leave of absence/holidays in term time

Leave of absence during term time is actively discouraged as it negatively impacts on the pupil's ability to engage with the full curriculum. Parents and carers do not have the automatic right to withdraw their children from school for a family holiday and will be reminded of the effect that absence can have on a pupil's potential achievement.

The school will consider any application for leave of absence for exceptional circumstance; parents and carers must apply in advance for permission for their child to have leave of absence. Forms to request a leave of absence can be obtained from the school, either in paper copy from the school office or from the school website. The head teacher will consider the request and respond in writing within 5 school days to inform the parent or carer whether the request has been authorised. Subsequently, a parent or carer can make an informed decision whether they wish to pursue the absence in the knowledge of any potential consequences.

Parents and carers are advised that a fixed penalty notice may be issued when permission for leave of absence has not been authorised by the school.

10. Fixed Penalty Notices for Non-Attendance at School

The school may issue a fixed penalty notice where a parent/carer has failed to secure their child's regular attendance at school. A penalty notice can be issued against one of the following criteria:

1. Where there is a minimum of 10 unauthorised sessions (5 school days) in a 10-week period (these do not need to be consecutive) which includes pupils who are persistently arriving after the close of the registration period.
2. Where a parent(s)/carer(s) refuses to engage with a school in the interest of improving their child's school attendance levels;
3. Where a holiday in term time has been requested but has been unauthorised.

The Local Authority can issue a fixed penalty notice if:

Parents are intentionally and deliberately, taking leave at the same time every academic year or purposefully taking under the threshold of 10 sessions to avoid a fixed penalty notice.

Each pupil's absence will be considered on its own merits and if appropriate, a fixed penalty notice may be requested to encourage improved future attendance. If a pupil's attendance is significantly low, a referral to the Education Welfare Service may be considered as an alternative to requesting a penalty notice.

11. Reintegration

The school will welcome back all pupils on return from an absence. This will include ensuring that the pupil is helped to catch up on missed work and brought up to date on any information that has been passed to the other pupils, where reasonable.

If the pupil has been absent for a considerable period of time, a reintegration plan will be introduced tailored to the needs of the individual.

12. Roles and responsibilities

At St. Mary's we are aware that ensuring regular school attendance is a demanding area of work that depends on establishing and utilising close working relationships between parents/carers, pupils, schools, the local authority and other professionals who work with children.

A key part of any successful working relationship is a clear understanding of each person's role and responsibilities, and as such the following sets out to clarify the roles and responsibilities for those people engaged with tackling absence issues.

The Parent/Carer:

Under section 7 of the Education Act 1996, the parent/carer is responsible for ensuring that their child of compulsory school age receives efficient full-time education that is suitable to their child's age, ability and aptitude and to any special educational needs the child may have. This can be by regular attendance at school, alternative provision or by elective home education (the parent can choose to provide education for their child).

A pupil's punctuality is also a legal requirement and parents/carers of a pupil who is persistently late (after the close of the register) can also face legal proceedings. Sometimes, there are situations at home that may make it difficult for a pupil to arrive on time and as such due consideration is given to any help or assistance a family may need in these circumstances.

The School:

Schools are required under the Education (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2024 to take an attendance register twice a day; at the start of the morning session and once during the afternoon session. The accuracy of the register is important in order to support any statutory interventions that may be required. It should be noted that it is an offence not to maintain accurate registers.

The school has the responsibility to monitor individual attendance rates at least weekly and use their own intervention methods to tackle individual pupil attendance issues where the pupil's attendance rate is 91% and above. A referral to the Education Welfare Service should be made by the school when an individual's attendance falls to 90% or below over a six-week period and there is no exceptional reason for this (i.e. the majority of the absence is unauthorised).

Head Teachers will be responsible for the strategic management of attendance across the school. They will scrutinise the data on a weekly basis, monitor trends and patterns across cohort of pupils, and evaluate interventions for their impact and effectiveness and direct resources for the best possible outcome. The Head Teacher will present the data to the Governing Body on a termly basis for scrutiny.

Class Teachers will be responsible for completing the session registers fully and accurately during every registration. This practice ensures good safeguarding processes, enabling the school to know where every pupil is at the start of all sessions and for school office staff to commence the 'first day response' process if the pupil is not present.

Office staff will be responsible for the daily operational attendance duties. They will ensure that all registers have been completed by the classroom teachers on a daily basis and if not will escalate this to the Head Teacher for action. They will undertake the 'first day response' on each morning for those pupils whose families have not made contact. They will collate the supporting evidence, and chase any outstanding forms, absence notes, holiday request forms etc. The officers will compile the data in preparation for analysis by the Head Teacher and support to make referrals to the Education Welfare Service.

In order to request a fixed penalty notice, the school will monitor the individual attendance patterns of their pupils. If trends are identified that match the criteria stated in the local authority's Code of Conduct, a school has the opportunity to make a formal request to the local authority to issue a penalty notice.

The Education Welfare Service (EWS)

The principal function of the Education Welfare Service is to improve attendance in all schools and alternative education provisions across the local authority by supporting pupils and their families to overcome their barriers to engagement.

The service provides support to schools, pupils and their families to ensure regular attendance and address any difficulties relating to absenteeism. The Education Welfare Service works collaboratively with a range of support services and agencies and provides an essential link between home and school to ensure that pupils benefit from the educational opportunities available to them.

The service acts on behalf of the authority in its statutory enforcement capacity and is responsible for a number of related duties that include:

- the regulating and issuing of child employment and performance licenses for school age children and young people, and their chaperones;
- to investigate, locate and track children who are referred as "Children Missing from Education and Children Missing from School";
- to oversee the education needs of vulnerable pupils
- to work in partnership with the Police in the arrangement and coordination of formal truancy operations in accordance with Crime and Disorder legislation.

13. Categorisation of absence

All pupils who are on role but not present in the school must be recorded within one of these categories.

- Authorised Absence
- Unauthorised Absence
- Approved Educational Activity

Unauthorised absence:

These codes are for those sessions where pupils were absent and no reason has been provided, or whose absence is deemed to be without valid reason.

Authorised absence:

These codes are for those sessions where pupils are away from school for a reason that is deemed to be valid. Evidence may be requested to support the reason given (e.g. medical evidence, appointment cards, etc.)

Approved educational activity:

These codes cover types of supervised educational activity undertaken off the school site but with the approval of the school and/or the LA, where the session has been supervised by an approved tutor.

This would include:

- Work experience placements
- Field trips and educational visits
- Sporting activities
- Link courses or approved education at another venue
- Education arranged by the Child and Adolescent Mental Health Service (CAMHS)

14. Retention of records

Computer registers are preserved as electronic back-up copies. Attendance regulations stipulate that attendance records should be retained for at least three years; however it is good practice to extend this period in line with the education record retention schedule.

15. Register checks

The local authority will formally check the school registers on a termly basis to ensure there is compliance with the national legislation. It should be noted that registers are legal documents, and it is an offence not to maintain accurate records.

The registration system

The following national codes will be used to record attendance information.

Attending the school	
/ \	Present at the school / = morning session \ = afternoon session
L	Late arrival before the register is closed
K	Attending education provision arranged by the local authority
V	Attending an educational visit or trip
P	Participating in a sporting activity
W	Attending work experience
B	Attending any other approved educational activity
D	Dual registered at another school
Absent – Leave of absence	
C1	Leave of absence for the purpose of participating in a regulated performance or undertaking regulated employment abroad.
M	Leave of absence for the purpose of attending a medical or dental appointment
J1	Leave of absence for the purpose of attending an interview for employment or for admission to another educational institution
S	Leave of absence for the purpose of studying for a public examination
X	Non-compulsory school age pupil not required to attend school
C2	Leave of absence for a compulsory school age pupil subject to a part-time timetable
C	Leave of absence for exceptional circumstance
Absent – other authorised reasons	
T	Parent travelling for occupational purposes
R	Religious observance
I	Illness (not medical or dental appointment)
E	Suspended or permanently excluded and no alternative provision made
Absent – unable to attend school because of unavoidable causes	
Q	Unable to attend the school because of a lack of access arrangements
Y1	Unable to attend due to transport normally provided not being 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
Y5	Unable to attend as pupil is in criminal justice detention
Y6	Unable to attend in accordance with public health guidance or law
Y7	Unable to attend because of any other unavoidable cause
Absent – unauthorised absence	
G	Holiday not granted by the school
N	Reason for absence not yet established
O	Absent in other or unknown circumstances
U	Arrived in school after registration closed
Administrative Codes	
Z	Prospective pupil not on admission register
#	Planned whole school closure