

ST MARY'S RC HIGH SCHOOL

ATTENDANCE POLICY

1. CURRENT CONTEXT

Pupils need to attend school regularly to benefit from their education. Missing out on lessons leaves children vulnerable to falling behind. Children with poor attendance tend to achieve less in both primary and secondary school.

The government expects schools to promote good attendance and reduce absence, including persistent absence, to ensure that every pupil has access to the full-time education to which they are entitled, and to act early to address patterns of absence.

Parents* are expected to perform their **legal duty** by ensuring their children of compulsory school age who are registered at school attend regularly and arrive to school on time.

*** Definition of Parents – DFE advice on school attendance**

A parent means:

- All natural parents;
- Any person who has parental responsibility for a child or young person; and
- Any person who has care of a child or young person i.e. lives with and looks after the child.

It is also important to note that, even though a parent may not live in the same home as the student that parent is still responsible for ensuring the child attends school every day.

2. PRINCIPLES

At St. Mary's RC High School (the school), we believe that good attendance and punctuality are important in helping pupils achieve the best that they can be. Pupils should therefore be at school, on time and ready to learn, every day the school is open, unless the reason for absence is unavoidable.

All research shows that pupils who attend well, achieve well.

- **6 out of 10 pupils with over 95% attendance (missing no more than 10 days a year) gain 5 GCSE A* - C grades;**
- **Only 1 in 10 pupils who are poor attendees gain 5 GCSE A* - C grades;**
- **2 in every 10 poor attendees leave school with no qualifications at all;**
- **Specifically, pupils with no absences are 1.5 times more likely to achieve 5+ GCSEs A*-C or equivalent and 2.8 times more likely to achieve 5+ GCSEs A*-C or equivalent including English and mathematics than pupils missing 15-20% of KS4 lessons.**

Descriptor	Attendance	Equals absent number of days	Learning hours lost	
EXCELLENT	100% 99%	0 2	0 10	Your child's attendance is above 98%. As well as being an excellent attender your child will almost certainly achieve the best grades for their ability and have real opportunity in further education or the world of work.
GOOD	98% 97% 96%	4 6 7.5	20 30 37.5	Your child's attendance is 96-97%. Your child is likely to achieve their grades that will give them real opportunities to continue their studies or in the world of work.
SATISFACTORY	95%	9.5	47.5	Your child's attendance is 95%.
UNSATISFACTORY	94% 93% 92% 91% 90%	12 14 16 18 20	60 70 80 90 100	Your child's attendance is 90-94%. They are below the national government threshold of 95%. Your child will miss up to 18 days each school year and this will make it difficult for them to achieve their best.
CONCERN	89% 88% 87% 86%	21 23 25 27	105 115 125 135	Your child's attendance is between 85-90%. Parents / Carers may face a fixed penalty fine as your child's attendance is below 90% and they are 'Persistent Absentees'. Your child is missing so much time from school that it will be difficult for them to keep in touch with lessons or work.
SERIOUS CONCERN	85% 84% 83% 82% 81%	28.5 30.5 32 34 36	142 152 160 170 180	Your child's attendance is below 85%. Take Action Now as you will face a fixed penalty fine or further legal prosecution if your child's attendance does not improve! Your child is missing so much time from school that it will be almost impossible for them to keep in touch with lessons or work!

The government has laid down guidelines which they expect pupils at secondary school to achieve in terms of attendance. The guidelines are set at **95%** attendance.

A pupil will fall below 95% if they miss as little as half a day over a 2-week period.

The school expects **all** pupils to achieve at least 95% attendance.

There are a variety of reasons for students missing school. Some are unavoidable but we would ask that you support us in ensuring that your child's attendance meets both the school and the government's expectations. Any problems with regular attendance, especially any concerns about possible bullying or learning difficulties are best sorted out by the school, the parents and the student at an early stage. We will closely monitor your child's attendance and alert you if we feel there is an issue.

The school undertakes a wide range of measures to support pupils where attendance at school is an issue. Where there is an issue and we fail to see an improvement, it may be necessary to make a referral to an appropriate external agency to ensure the pupil receives the support required to bring about an improvement.

3. NATIONAL CONTEXT

The 1996 Education Act (section 444) states that parents (including non-related adult carers in the child's household) have a **legal responsibility** to ensure that those of compulsory school age are educated, either by '**regular**' attendance at school or 'otherwise'.

The duty on parents is to ensure that their children are educated.

4. DAILY PROCEDURES - REGISTRATION

Under the 2006 Education Regulations the school is **legally** required to register pupils twice daily. Registers are marked in the morning between 8.55 and 9.15am, and in the afternoon between 1.25 and 1.30pm. It is essential that all pupils are registered on both occasions.

School starts at 8.50am when all pupils should be in their form base in preparation for the register being taken. By this time, they should have collected items for the day and, during registration, they should make sure that they are aware of any changes/arrangements to the day's activities.

Not only does the registration process allow us to monitor attendance but also to act as a pupil checklist in respect of health and safety issues – eg Fire Drill.

Each year a school calendar is sent out and is also available on the school website: the calendar clearly indicates the days when your child is expected to be in school. If your child tells you that school is to be closed on a day not indicated on the school calendar, please seek clarification by telephoning the school.

5. PUNCTUALITY

The 1996 Education Act requires that every pupil should attend school and be on time. It is better to be late than not to be in school at all, **BUT** when pupils arrive late it makes it difficult for others. The teacher has to stop and wait for the latecomer to settle down, the rest of the class is disrupted and the latecomer misses the, often vital, first part of the lesson and will receive a consequence. Arriving late can also be stressful for the pupil.

Pupils who arrive after registration **must** sign in at reception. Failure to sign in can also lead to an unauthorised absence being recorded for the session.

It is important to note that any pupil who arrives to school after 9.15am will be marked with a letter 'U' in the register; an unauthorised absence for the session.

Unauthorised sessions could result in a £60-120 Fixed Penalty Notice being issued to both parents/carers.

If you are aware your child will be arriving late, please send them with a note explaining the circumstances or contact the school by telephone (for example, an unplanned appointment at the doctors).

Young people form habits very readily and the habit of regular and punctual attendance at school will stand them in good stead in the future. It will certainly impress college lecturers and prospective employers.

When pupils are applying for jobs/further education or other placements their attendance and punctuality will form part of the reference. This will have a direct impact upon their success, or otherwise.

School will provide consequences for persistent lateness.

6. ABSENCE FROM SCHOOL

Regular attendance at school is the responsibility of parents and carers. Under the 1996 Education Act 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 each day of absence by telephone or email.

If no message is received we will assume that your child is absent without your permission. The school will then make every effort to contact you. It is essential that the school is kept informed of changes of contact details, such as phone numbers and addresses. In cases where we continue to be concerned we may make a 'home visit' or request the police to undertake a 'Safe and Well' visit.

Parents are expected to provide a written explanation for absence (detailing the type of illness etc) either in the form of a note or an email on the pupil's return to school. On receipt of this, **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. Where absence for illness is high, the school may request medical evidence in order to authorise absences. For example, medical appointment card with appointment entered, letter from a professional, doctor's note, medication prescribed by a doctor, copy of prescription, print screen of medical notes or letters concerning hospital appointments or any other relevant evidence. The headteacher may not authorise medical absence without this evidence.

7. SICKNESS DURING THE SCHOOL DAY

If your child becomes ill during the school day, they must inform their class teacher and go to the main school office. They will be checked by a first aider who will make a decision about next steps. The school will contact home if they feel the child is too unwell to stay in school. **Pupils should not contact home directly to be picked up or the absence will be recorded as unauthorised.**

8. UNAUTHORISED ABSENCE FROM SCHOOL

Unauthorised absence is where a school is not satisfied with the reasons given for the absence or where no explanation for absence has been provided. This is an **offence** by the parent.

The following codes are to be used for **authorised** absences on the register:

Code I: Illness

Schools can request medical evidence from parents/carers if they feel the authenticity of an illness is in doubt.

Code M: Medical or dental appointments

Parents/carers are encouraged to arrange appointments out of school hours but the school will authorise if confirmation of the appointment is provided.

Code C: Other circumstances

This code will be used for any authorised non-medical reasons for a child's absence from school, eg – family funeral.

Code D: Dual Registered

This code will be used if a pupil is registered at two schools.

Code J: Interview

This code will be used **when it has been agreed** that the pupil can miss school to attend an interview or entrance exam.

Code P: Approved sporting activity

This code will be used in times of approved sporting activities in school times, eg – training sessions, trials and sporting events.

Code R: Religious Observation

This code is used to cover major religious festivals during term-time. The school will only authorise one day absence for religious events.

Code V: Educational visits and trips

Code W: Work Experience (school organised only)

The following codes are used for **unauthorised** absences on the register:

Code G: Family holiday not authorised by the school or in excess of agreed period

If the school does not authorise a leave of absence and the parents still take the child on holiday, or the child is kept away for longer than was agreed, the absence is unauthorised. The regulations do not allow schools to give retrospective approval. If the parents did not apply for the leave of absence in advance the absence must be recorded as unauthorised.

Code N: Reason for absence not yet provided

Schools should follow up all unexplained and unexpected absences in a timely manner. Every effort should be made to establish the reason for a pupil's absence. Where there

has been no explanation offered within two weeks of the absence, the absence will be recorded as O, unauthorised absence.

Code O: Absent from school without authorisation

If the school is **not satisfied** with the reason, **or no reason is given**, for absence they should record it as unauthorised.

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.

School will work with families where there are concerns about attendance.

9. SAFEGUARDING

The school may invite parents into school to discuss any attendance issues that raise potential safeguarding concerns. Where there are risks to a child's safety and wellbeing the school will make referrals to the appropriate external agencies, ie social care, police.

10. CHILDREN MISSING FROM EDUCATION

The school will contact relevant agencies to seek advice if any child is absent from school for more than five days without confirmation from parents.

Every attempt will be made to communicate with parents to ensure the child is safe and well, including home visits.

The school may contact relevant agencies when absence occurs without confirmation from parents/carers if the child is subject to a 'Child in Need' or Child Protection plan or considered vulnerable in other ways.

When a pupil returns from a period of extended absence, appropriate daily attendance checks will be carried out and their attendance, behaviour, emotional and physical well-being will be monitored closely by the appropriate school staff, including Tutors, Head of Year etc. The school will work with parents/carers/pupil to ensure relevant support will be offered to the pupil/family as necessary.

11. RELUCTANCE TO GO TO SCHOOL

Sometimes pupils 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 what they say; for example that they do not want to do particular subjects or they feel that they have no friends or that they are being bullied. If this is the case please contact the school as soon as possible to speak to the relevant member of staff (Form Tutor/Head of Year).

12. LEAVE OF ABSENCE IN TERM TIME

During the autumn and spring terms of 2013/14, 35.7 million days were lost in the UK as a result of parents taking their child out of school during term time.

Under the DFE 'Advice on school attendance' parents can **no longer** expect schools to authorise leave of absence for the purpose of a family holiday. The headteacher will not grant leave of absence during term time unless there are '**exceptional circumstances**'.

The headteacher will also determine the number of school days a child can be away from school if the leave is granted.

Leave of absence in term time is no longer a parental right and will only be authorised at the headteacher's discretion in exceptional circumstances.

Under DFE guidelines the school may consider taking legal action against a parent who takes their child on leave of absence without the headteacher's permission and may apply for a Penalty Notice Fine (£60-£120) per parent per child to be issued by Herefordshire Local Authority. The £60 Penalty Notice will need to be paid in full within 21 days or will rise to £120 if paid between 22 and 28 days. Failure to pay this penalty notice may result in prosecution.

If parents wish to take their child out of school during term time, they must send a letter into school at least 6 weeks before the desired absence outlining the reasons for and the dates of the desired absence.

It is also important for parents to note that the pupil may also be removed from the school register if the parent decides to remove the pupil from the country for an extended period of time (more than six weeks).

13. PERSISTENT ABSENTEEISM

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% may fall into the 'Persistent Absentee' category.

School will work alongside Parents/Carers and pupils to help them improve their attendance. This is done on an individual basis.

When a pupil's attendance falls below 90% (at any stage of the year), the staff will track their attendance on a weekly basis. They will contact parents to discuss the attendance concerns and an **Attendance Action Plan** may be formalised to secure an improvement in attendance.

Where unauthorised absence persists, those with parental responsibility may be subject to a PENALTY FINE NOTICE or prosecution under Education Act 1996 section 444 (1(A)).

This may initially result in a **Penalty Notice Fine** being issued to parents/carers. Failure to pay the Penalty Notice Fine or further unauthorised absences will result in further legal action being taken by Herefordshire Council, with the **maximum fine currently £2,500 or 3 months in prison.**

14. SNOW CLOSURE

The school will only close in the event of snow if we feel it to be necessary to ensure the safety of all members of our school community. If we do close, then messages will be posted on the school website and through parent mail as soon as it is possible. Local radio stations will also be contacted by the school in the event of closure and they will broadcast information on air and through their websites.

15. COMMUNICATION WITH PARENTS

Parents are regularly informed of both their child's attendance and punctuality. Parents are also informed about their child's attendance in the annual full report, at annual Parent's Evenings and in Progress Review meetings

16. IMPROVING ATTENDANCE – WHAT PARENTS CAN DO

a. Try to make all medical appointments (doctors, dentist and hospital) out of school time. This is not always possible but 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 s/he can complete most of her timetable before leaving.

b. Encourage your child to take responsibility for being on time for school. Try to make sure s/he has an alarm clock that is reliable. Make sure that s/he has a realistic bedtime and will not be too tired to get up in the morning for school. Bags, books and other equipment should be prepared the night before. Regularly checking your child's planner can help you to do this.

c. Discourage your child from staying overnight with friends during the week. This can lead to them both being late (or not attending at all) the next day.

d. Check with the school if you have any concerns about whether your child is present in school. Our Admin Assistant – Attendance is Mrs Justine Altin.

e. Take holidays outside of term time.

f. Encourage your child to come to school even if she is feeling slightly unwell. Many aches and pains are forgotten when they are with friends. The school will contact you if it becomes necessary to do so.

g. Talk positively about going to school – "What was good about school today?" or "Did anything funny happen?"

h. Take any worries seriously but do not show that you are unduly concerned. Contact your child's tutor before the concerns escalate.

17. IMPROVING ATTENDANCE – WHAT SCHOOL DOES

a. Marks the registers in accordance with the law twice a day.

b. Informs any parents/carers who have not contacted the school, of the absence of their child on a particular day.

- c. Maintains records and monitors attendance of pupils on a regular basis.
- d. Authorises absence in accordance with the government guidelines. Please note that **only** the school can authorise absence.
- e. Contacts parents/carers when the attendance falls below acceptable levels and/or when particular patterns of absence are causing concerns.
- f. Provides access to staff with whom attendance related issues can be discussed.
- g. 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.
- h. Provides re-integration support for pupils returning from prolonged absence.
- i. Maintains a range of strategies to encourage good attendance by means of rewards.
- j. Works with relevant external agencies if a pupil's attendance becomes a concern, for example Social Care, CAMHS, Pupil Support Service, Police, YOT.

18. KEY PEOPLE

- Attendance Clerk – Mrs Justine Altin
- Head of Year (2018/19 school year):
 - Mrs F Richards – Year 11;
 - Mr G Thomas – Year 10;
 - Mr Mike Kennedy and Mr Anthony Giampalma – Year 9;
 - Mr J Griggs – Year 8;
 - Miss F Roberts – Year 7.
- School attendance advisor – Mrs J Ellis.
- Designated Safeguarding lead – Mrs A Leslie.

The school has a legal responsibility to promote good attendance.

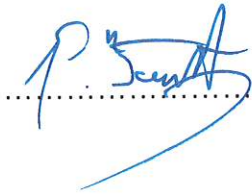
Equally, parents have a duty to make sure that their children attend school regularly. Our staff are committed to working closely with parents as the best way to ensure as high a level of attendance as possible.

Your continued support in this matter is essential.

Please work with us.

This policy was approved by the Safeguarding Committee of the governing body at their meeting on: 8 May 2019

It is subject to 2-yearly review.



..... Mr Pete Fawcett, Chair of Safeguarding Committee..... May 2019