



St Mary's R.C. High School

PER MARIAM

ATTENDANCE POLICY

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ATTENDANCE POLICY

1. Aims

Working together to improve attendance

Successfully treating the root causes of absence and removing barriers to attendance, at home, in school or more broadly requires schools and local partners to work collaboratively with, not against families.

All partners should work together to:

EXPECT

Aspire to high standards of attendance from all pupils and parents and build a culture where all can, and want to, be in school and ready to learn by prioritising attendance improvement across the school.

MONITOR

Rigorously use attendance data to identify patterns of poor attendance (at individual and cohort level) as soon as possible so all parties can work together to resolve them before they become entrenched.

LISTEN AND UNDERSTAND

When a pattern is spotted, discuss with pupils and parents to listen to understand barriers to attendance and agree how all partners can work together to resolve them.

FACILITATE SUPPORT

Remove barriers in school and help pupils and parents to access the support they need to overcome the barriers outside of school. This might include an early help or whole family plan where absence is a symptom of wider issues.

FORMALISE SUPPORT

Where absence persists and voluntary support is not working or not being engaged with, partners should work together to explain the consequences clearly and ensure support is also in place to enable families to respond. Depending on the circumstances this may include formalising support through a parenting contract or education supervision order.

ENFORCE

Where all other avenues have been exhausted and support is not working or not being engaged with, enforce attendance through statutory intervention or prosecution to protect the pupil's right to an education.

2. Current and national 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.

The 1996 Education Act (section 444) states that parents* have a **legal responsibility** to ensure that those of compulsory school age are educated, either by **'regular'** attendance at school or 'otherwise'.

* 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 child, that parent is still responsible for ensuring the child attends school every day.

3. 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 grades above grade 4**
- **Only 1 in 10 pupils who are poor attendees gain 5 GCSE grades above grade 4**
- **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 grades above 4 or equivalent and 2.8 times more likely to achieve 5+ GCSEs above 4 or equivalent including English and mathematics than pupils missing 15-20% of KS4 lessons.**

DESCRIPTOR	ATTENDANCE %	No. OF DAYS MISSED	HOURS OF LOST LEARNING	COMMENTS
EXCELLENT	100%	0	0	Your child's attendance is above 98%. As well as excellent attendance your child will almost certainly achieve the best grades for their ability and have real opportunity in further education or the world of work.
	99%	2	10	
GOOD	98%	4	20	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.
	97%	6	30	
	96%	7.5	37.5	
SATISFACTORY	95%	9.5	47.5	Your child's attendance is 95%. They meet government expectations and national average. Your child may achieve their grades that will give them real opportunities to continue their studies or in the world of work.
UNSATISFACTORY	94%	12	60	Your child's attendance is 90-94%. They are below the national government threshold of 95%. Attendance at this level will make it difficult for them to achieve their best.
	93%	14	70	
	92%	16	80	
	91%	18	90	
	90%	20	100	
SERIOUS CONCERN	89%	21	105	Your child's attendance is between 85-90%. Your child is recorded as a "persistent absentee" in national data. Your child is missing so much time from school that it will be difficult for them to keep in touch with lessons or work. Schools have a duty to seek medical evidence and consider legal sanctions at this level.
	88%	23	115	
	87%	25	125	
	86%	27	135	
CRITICAL CONCERN	85%	28.5	142	Your child's attendance is below 85%. Take Action Now 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! Medical evidence will be required. Unauthorised absences will be referred to the Local Authority to impose legal sanctions.
	84%	30.5	152	
	83%	32	160	
	82%	34	170	
	81%	36	180	

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 every fortnight.

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

There are a variety of reasons for pupils 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 factors affecting regular attendance, especially any concerns about possible bullying or learning difficulties are best sorted out by the school, the parents and the pupil at an early stage. We will closely monitor your child's attendance and alert you if we feel there is an issue. This is monitored on a weekly basis at both pastoral and SLT meetings where attendance is a focus

The school undertakes a wide range of measures to support pupils where attendance at school is an issue. This is always done on an individual basis and takes into account personal circumstances. Where there is no 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.

The school promotes good attendance with the use of attendance rewards, certificates, house points and attendance cup. This is celebrated in year assemblies at the end of each half term.

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 1.15 and 1.25pm. During the AM session, the registers are open for 30 minutes. It is essential that all pupils are registered on both occasions (AM and PM).

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. During registration, they will be made aware of any changes or amendments for the day ahead.

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 – e.g. fire evacuation.

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 them and for others. The teacher must 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 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 outside the register period will be marked with a letter 'U' in the register; an unauthorised absence for the session.

Unauthorised sessions could result in a £160 Fixed Penalty Notice, or other legal sanctions, being issued to 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, email or preferably Parentmail.

Telephone: 01432 850416

Email: attendance@st-maryshigh.hereford.sch.uk

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 sanction pupils 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, email or Parentmail.

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 must provide a written explanation for absence (detailing the type of illness etc.) either in the form of a note, an email or via Parentmail on the pupil's return to school. On receipt of this, **the school will determine if the absence is to be authorised or unauthorised.**

Where there are regular absences for illness, 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.

Parents are asked to make medical and dental appointments outside school hours wherever possible. Where such appointments in school time are unavoidable, parents should inform the school in advance. The pupil should only be absent for the duration of the appointment and should attend before the appointment and return after the appointment where time allows. Only one session (1/2 a day) will be authorised per medical appointment unless you inform us of exceptional circumstances regarding the appointment.

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 decide 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. 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 are concerned about friendships or bullying. 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).

9. 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.

Where a pupil has unauthorised absences, a referral may be made to Herefordshire Local Authority for consideration of a PENALTY NOTICE FINE or other legal sanctions under Education Act 1996 section 444 (1(A)).

A Notice to Improve is a final opportunity for a parent to engage in support and improve attendance before a penalty notice is issued. If the national threshold has been met and support is appropriate but offers of support have not been engaged with by the parent or have not worked, a Notice to Improve should usually be sent to give parents a final chance to engage in support.

- **A penalty notice is a fine of £160 which is charged per parent per child, payable within 28 days. If paid within 21 days it is reduced to £80.**
- **If a second penalty notice is issued to the same parent of the same child, the charge is automatically a flat rate of £160 if paid within 28 days.**
- **If a third penalty notice is issued to the same parent in respect of the same child within any 3 year rolling period, it may be dealt with via prosecution.**

The penalty notice fine may also be issued if support is not appropriate (e.g. unauthorised holiday), not successful or not engaged with.

10. Planned leave in term time

Under the DFE guidance, the headteacher cannot 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 leave is granted.

Leave of 10 sessions or more, taken without the headteacher's authorisation, will be referred to Herefordshire Local Authority who may issue a **Penalty Notice Fine** or impose other legal sanctions. A Penalty Notice is a fine of £80 per parent, per child if paid within 21 days or £160 per

parent, per child if paid within 28 days. A second penalty notice issued to the same parent in respect of the same child, is charged at a flat rate of £160 if paid within 28 days. If a third penalty notice is issued to the same parent, in respect of the same child within any 3 year rolling period, it may be dealt with via prosecution.

If parents wish to take their child out of school during term time, they must apply in writing to school, at least 6 weeks before the desired absence outlining the reasons for and the dates of the proposed absence.

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

11. 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% fall into the 'Persistent Absentee' category and this is very likely to be detrimental to their learning and wellbeing.

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), their attendance will be tracked on a weekly basis. Parents will be contacted to discuss the attendance concerns and an **Attendance Action Plan** may be formalised to secure an improvement in attendance.

12. 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, i.e. social care, police.

13. Children missing from education (CME)

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, and School Attendance Advisor etc. The school will work with parents/carers/pupil to ensure relevant support will be offered to the pupil/family as necessary.

14. School closure / adverse weather

The school will only close in the event of adverse weather 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 Parentmail as soon as it is possible. Local radio stations will also be contacted by the school also. On these occasions the attendance register is not taken, instead every pupil listed will be marked by a code to record the school was closed.

15. Communication with parents

Parents are regularly informed of both their child's attendance and punctuality via 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. The school's Admin Assistant – Attendance is Mrs Justine Altin.
- e. Take holidays outside term time.
- f. Encourage your child to come to school even if he/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 particularly 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. This is monitored weekly, trends and anomalies are identified and targeted interventions are put in place.
- d. Authorises absence in accordance with the government guidelines. Please note that **only** the school can authorise absence.
- e. Contact parents/carers when the attendance falls below acceptable levels and/or when patterns of absence are causing concerns.
- f. Provides access to staff with whom attendance related issues can be discussed.

g. School assemblies and reward certificates.

18. Improving persistent and severe absence – what school does

- a. 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.
- b. Provides re-integration support for pupils returning from prolonged absence.
- c. Maintains a range of strategies to encourage good attendance by means of rewards.
- d. Staff are familiar with emotionally based school avoidance and have developed strategies to support the pupils back into school.
- e. Works with relevant external agencies if a pupil's attendance becomes a concern, for example Social Care, CAMHS, Herefordshire Pupil Referral Service, Police, YOT, CMIE team.
- f. School will issue notice to improve, penalty notices or other legal interventions if strategies are not appropriate (e.g. taking holiday in term time), not successful or not engage with.

19. Key people at the school

- Attendance Clerks – Mrs J Altin and Mrs G Donaldson: attendance@st-maryshigh.hereford.sch.uk
- Heads of Year: Mrs V Avery, Mr D Coyne, Miss E Deegan, Mrs L Peruffo and Mrs M Walton.
- School attendance advisor – Mrs J Ellis: jellis@st-maryshigh.hereford.sch.uk
- Designated Safeguarding lead/SLT in charge of attendance- Mrs A Leslie: aleslie@st-maryshigh.hereford.sch.uk
- SENDco – Mrs V Rouse: vrouse@st-maryshigh.hereford.sch.uk
- Student support services – Mrs J Hayden: jhayden@st-maryshigh.hereford.sch.uk
- Pastoral support – Mrs T Peake: tpeake@stmaryshigh.hereford.sch.uk

20. Who to contact – in the first instance

- Form tutor
- Admin via Parentmail
- School office by telephone or email
- Head of year

The school has a legal responsibility to promote good attendance.

Equally, parents have a legal responsibility 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.