



St Mark's West Essex Catholic School

Attendance Policy

Date Reviewed: November 2018

Next Review Date: November 2020

Committee: Curriculum, Pupils and Admissions

Attendance Mission Statement

Our Catholic School is one in which Gospel Values inform all aspects of community life. St Marks recognises that regular school attendance is crucial if pupils are to achieve their potential.

St Mark's also recognises that every child matters and will promote, through all its policies, an environment where pupils are healthy and safe. An environment where they enjoy coming to school, where they can make a positive contribution to St Mark's and community life and where they maximise their own achievements.

St Mark's will strive to provide a welcoming environment for all pupils, and staff will work with pupils and their families to ensure each pupil attends school regularly and punctually.

St Mark's will establish an effective system of incentives and rewards to acknowledge the efforts of pupils in maintaining their attendance and will challenge the behaviour of those pupils and parents who do not prioritise attendance and punctuality.

St Mark's will establish an effective and efficient system of communication with pupils, parents and appropriate agencies to provide information, advice and guidance.

Aims of the Attendance Policy

1. To raise awareness, and address concerns, of safeguarding issues relating to pupil absence, particularly in the case of persistent absence.
2. To improve the overall percentage attendance of pupils at St Mark's.
3. To reduce the number of persistent absence pupils at St Mark's
4. To make attendance and punctuality a priority for those associated with St Mark's including pupils, parents, teachers and governors.
5. To provide support, advice and guidance to parents and pupils.
6. To develop a systematic approach to collating and analysing attendance related data.
7. To further develop positive communication between home and St Mark's.
8. To maintain a system of rewards and sanctions.
9. To work effectively with the Education Welfare Team and other services and agencies.

Parent's Responsibilities

Section 444 of the 1996 Education Act states that: **'If a child of compulsory school age who is a registered pupil at a school fails to attend regularly at the school the parent is guilty of an offence'**

1. Parents/carers are primarily responsible for ensuring that children attend and stay at school.
2. Parents/carers should ensure that their children arrive at school on time, correctly dressed and prepared to learn.
3. Parents/carers should avoid, if possible, making non-emergency medical/dental appointments for their child during school hours.
4. Absences are classed as either authorised or unauthorised. Examples of authorised absences include: illness, emergency treatment during school hours. Unauthorised absences include: looking after siblings, birthdays, going shopping, general trips.
5. Lateness, without valid justification, 35 minutes after the register is taken is classed as **unauthorised absence**.

6. Within the context of the law **only the school, not the parent/carer, can approve or authorise absence**. Parents/carers must provide the school, via the pupils' tutor, with a written note in relation to each particular absence. The school will decide if this is a valid reason. Absence without a valid reason, or where no explanation is offered at all is recorded as **unauthorised absence**. Informing the school of a pupil's absence via the Parentmail absence app is encouraged; or by telephone, on the absence line, with a written note in to the school, provided by the parent/carer.
7. There is no entitlement for leave of absence from school during the school term. Leave of absence must be requested, in writing, for approval by the Senior Assistant Headteacher (Pastoral) in consultation with the Headteacher and will only be granted in exceptional circumstances.
8. **Family holidays, during the school term, will not be considered a reasonable request for leave of absence.**

Pupil Responsibilities

Pupils are responsible for making sure that their attendance and punctuality is maintained at the highest level.

- They should attend school and all of their lessons on time, equipped and ready to learn.
- Following an absence, pupils must bring in a written note from their parent/carer explaining the reason for each absence and give it to their tutor.
- Pupils must 'sign in' at the main office in Reception on their arrival at school when arriving late after the close of registers.
- Any problems with attendance should be discussed with their Form Tutor or Head of Year.

Staff Responsibilities

- Staff will ensure that registration is completed accurately and that they follow school attendance procedures.
- Staff will be mindful that pupils with poor attendance leave themselves vulnerable to behaviours which can become a safeguarding issue. Non-attenders, particularly persistent absentees, are at risk of becoming involved in anti-social behaviour and/or harmful behaviour. Staff will also need to be aware that some persistent absences may be related to home circumstances which can have implications for safeguarding. Staff involved in monitoring of attendance should alert the Designated Person for Child Protection, Mrs Samantha Long, if concerns arise.
- Staff will be proactive in providing a positive ethos which places a high value on attendance and punctuality.
- The Senior Leadership Team will review attendance on a regular basis.

The Senior Leader with specific responsibility for attendance and punctuality is:
Mrs Samantha Long – Senior Assistant Headteacher

School Attendance and the Law

Under the 1996 Education Act, parents and carers are responsible for ensuring their children attend school regularly and punctually. Failure to do so could result in legal action being taken against them.

Under the Education (Pupil Registration) Regulations 2006, only the school (and not parents/carers) can authorise an absence. Where the reason for a pupil's absence cannot

be established at the time the register is taken, that absence shall be recorded as unauthorised. If a reason for absence is provided by the parent/carer, the school may decide to grant leave of absence which must be recorded as authorised using the appropriate national code.

The Education (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2013 have removed all references to family holidays and leave of absence shall not be granted unless an application had been made in advance and the Headteacher considers that leave of absence should be granted due to exceptional circumstances. Headteachers no longer have the discretion to authorise up to ten days of absence. This has been removed by the 2013 regulations. Whilst the Headteacher will consider all requests on a case-by-case basis, parents must be aware that requests will normally be refused.

If leave of absence is taken without the request having been agreed, the absence will be recorded as unauthorised. This may result in the Local Authority issuing a Penalty Notice, in accordance with the Essex Code of Conduct (£120 per parent, per child / £60 if paid within 21 days). If this penalty is not paid the Local Authority will instigate legal proceedings against the parent/carer in the Magistrates Court

Where a family chooses to take a holiday during term time, the absence will be coded as unauthorised (G code) and a Penalty Notice may be issued to each parent for each child (where 5 or more days of unauthorised absence are recorded as a result)

In compliance with the Education Act 436A (Chapter 2 Part 6) the school will, after making appropriate checks, report all Children Missing from Education to the Local Authority, Education Welfare Service, who has a duty to investigate the whereabouts of such children and negotiate their prompt return to suitable education.

A copy of the Essex Code of Conduct regarding Penalty Notices for parents relating to unauthorised absence from school (Revised June 2016) can be found on the Essex County Council website under the heading 'Legal action to enforce penalties' or by requesting a copy from St Mark's.

The Education Welfare Service (EWS)

The Education Welfare Service is responsible for discharging the Local Education Authorities legal duty to ensure that all registered pupils of compulsory school age attend school regularly and punctually.

The EWS works in partnership with the school, pupils, parents, staff and other agencies to deal with cases of non-attendance or persistent lateness. Strategies used before contacting the EWS about concerns re: persistent non-attendance are raised include:

- Telephoning and/or writing to parents/carers.
- Arranging meetings between school and parents.
- Visiting pupils' homes
- Liaising with Social Services and other agencies in conjunction with the school.

If a pupil fails to attend regularly and attempts by the school have failed to ensure a return to regular attendance, then the Education Welfare Service, on behalf of the school and the Local Education Authority, may take legal action against

parents/carers which could include a Penalty Notice, Education Supervision Order or Prosecution.

Attendance Targets

Attendance Targets are set annually and St Mark's will ensure that absence and punctuality is monitored regularly to reinforce the commitment of the school to promote as high a level of attendance as possible.

Persistent Absence applies to a pupil whose percentage attendance, as of 1st September 2015, is 90% or less.

Sources of information

Relevant legislation on www.legislation.gov.uk

- School attendance - Guidance for maintained schools, academies, independent schools and local authorities September 2018

The Education (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2006

- The Education (Pupil Registration) (England) (Amendment) Regulations 2010
- The Education (Pupil Registration) (England) (Amendment) Regulations 2011
- The Education (Pupil Registration) (England) (Amendment) Regulations 2013
- The Education (Pupil Registration) (England) (Amendment) Regulations 2016
- The Education Act 2002
- The Education (School Day and School Year) (England) Regulations 1999
- The Changing of School Session Times (England) (Revocation) Regulations 2011
- The Education and Inspections Act 2006

Other DfE guidance

- Parental responsibility measures for school attendance and behaviour
- Children missing education
- Keeping children safe in education