

St Michael's Catholic Primary School



Attendance Policy 2023-24

Attendance Policy

The aims of this policy are:

- To ensure every child attends school regularly
- To ensure children are on time for school
- To ensure each child has access to vital learning opportunities
- To ensure that every child has the best chance of success

Statement of Intent

School attendance is subject to various Education laws and this school attendance policy is written to reflect these laws and the guidance produced by the Department for Education. At St Michael's Catholic School we believe that good attendance and punctuality are important in helping students achieve the best that they can be. Students should be at school on time, dressed in accordance with the school uniform policy, and ready to learn, every day the school is open, unless the reason for absence is unavoidable.

Promoting excellent attendance is the responsibility of the whole school community including students, parents, governors and staff.

Arrival and Registration

By law, all schools (except those where all pupils are boarders) are required to keep an attendance register, and all pupils must be placed on this register. School doors are open to pupils from 8:40am and registration will commence at **8.50 a.m.** It is essential that all children arrive at school on time and do not miss the important start to the school day. Afternoon registration commences at 1:00pm.

Recording of Absences

Authorised Absence

An absence is classed as authorised when a child has been away for a legitimate reason such as illness, medical appointments, religious celebrations, exceptional circumstances which are beyond the parent's control. It is the decision of the Head Teacher whether to authorise an absence, parents do not have this authority, consequently, not all absence supported by parents will be classified as authorised.

Unauthorised absence

An absence is classified as unauthorised when a child is away from school without the permission of the Head Teacher or when the school has not been informed by the parent/carer why a child is absent.

If a child is absent

Parents/carers should contact the school on the first day of their child's absence. When parents/carers notify us of their child's absence it is important that they provide us with full and accurate details of the reason for their absence and expected date of return. This information is used to determine whether the absence is authorised or unauthorised. If a child is unexpectedly absent from school for reasons such as illness, parents/carers must report the absence using the Weduc app or contacting the office before 9.30am. When a child is absent, the class teacher will record the absence in the register. The school office will endeavour to contact the parent / carer of the child by 9.30 a.m. if no message has been received prior to this regarding the reason for the absence. If there is any doubt about the whereabouts of a child, the class teacher should take immediate action by notifying the school office. The school will then contact parent/carer straight away in order to check the safety of the child and ensure appropriate safeguarding action is taken where necessary.

Lateness

The importance of punctuality is also stressed as repeated lateness impacts not only on the learning of the individual but can affect the learning of the class as a whole. With this in mind, parents / carers of children who are identified as attaining frequent lateness will also be contacted by the school and targets for improvement set. As with attendance, punctuality is also monitored closely. Parents also need to inform the school if their child is going to be late for school. Arrival after the close of registration at 9:30 with no valid reason will be marked as unauthorised absence and coded "U" in the register.

Illness and Medical Appointments

Every effort should be made to arrange medical appointments outside school hours. If it is necessary for a child to be out of school for this reason, the child should return to school directly after the appointment should the school day not have ended. The school office should be informed before 9.30am on the morning of the first day of a child's absence through illness and then each morning, if appropriate, for the duration of the absence. Medical certificates may be required if an absence is greater than five days or overall attendance is unacceptable.

Absence due to illness will usually be authorised unless the school has a genuine concern about the authenticity of the illness. If the authenticity of the illness is in doubt, the school may ask parents to provide evidence which confirms the student is unable to attend school, such evidence may include appointment cards, prescriptions, or other appropriate forms of evidence. We will not ask for evidence unnecessarily. If the school is not satisfied about the authenticity of the illness, the absence will be recorded as unauthorised.

Procedures to Tackle Lateness and Non-Attendance

Non-attendance is an important issue that is treated seriously. However, we recognise that each case is individual, and the school acknowledges that no one standard response will be appropriate to all cases. Consideration is given to all factors affecting attendance before deciding what intervention strategies to apply. In every case, early intervention is essential to prevent the problem from worsening. It is essential that parents keep the school informed of any matters which may affect their child's attendance. Pupils' attendance and punctuality are monitored on a daily and weekly basis by the School Secretary and Head Teacher. If there are causes for concern i.e., where a child has 4 broken weeks in any term, particular patterns of absence, unauthorised absence, repeated lateness etc then the school will follow the 4-stage process with A Star Attendance. If a child does not attend school and is deemed as missing, Children Missing from Education Procedures will be initiated and a referral will be made to the Local Authority.

Persistent Absence (PA)

In order to improve the attendance of each persistent absentee and to reduce the number of pupils on the final persistent absentee register at the end of the academic year, the school will employ the following additional strategies:

- At the end of every term, information will be sent out to parents/carers detailing their current percentage of attendance and informing their child has been placed on the PA register.
- At the end of every term, information will be sent out to parents/carers of students who are deemed to be at risk of falling into the PA category.
- At the end of every half term, a Weduc alert will be sent to parents/carers of students who fall into the PA category.
- At the end of every half term, a Weduc alert will be sent to parents/carers of students who are deemed to be at risk of falling into the PA category.
- Make referrals to external agencies to support environmental factors that may be causing barriers to attending school.

At St Michael's Catholic Primary School, we follow the A Star Attendance traffic light system, the purpose of colour coding helps staff, Parents and Pupils have a clear understanding of our expectations.

• Red Zone: Under 91% (Danger Zone)

90% attendance equates to 19 days absence in a school year. The Government classes pupils in this group as 'Persistent Absentees' and it will be almost impossible for them to keep up with work. Parents of pupils in this group could also face the possibility of legal action being taken by the Local Authority.

• Amber Zone: 92% - 96% (Amber Zone)

An attendance level of 92% equates to 15 days absence in a year. Pupils in this group are missing three weeks of the school year; it will be difficult for them to achieve their best. The school may consider referring pupils with this level of attendance to the Local Authority. An attendance level of 95% equates to 10 days absence in a year. Pupils who take a two-week holiday during term time can only ever achieve a maximum of 95% attendance in a year.

• Green Zone: 97% - 100% (Safety Zone)

Attendance above 97% equates to less than 6 days absence in a year. Pupils in this group will almost certainly get the best grades they can, leading to better prospects for the future. Pupils will also get into the habit of attending school which will help in the future.

Taking Holidays / Leave of Absence Requests

The Law

The law says that parents do not have the right to take their child out of school for holidays during school time. If you take a holiday without the school's permission or if the child fails to return on the agreed date, the absence will be recorded as an unauthorised absence (truancy), noted on the child's records and the Head Teacher may apply for a Penalty Notice.

From the 1st September 2013 the Government (DFE) amended the regulations surrounding holidays in term time. The DFE removed references to family holidays and extended leave as well as the statutory threshold of ten school days. These new amendments make clear that **Headteachers** may **not** grant any **leave of absence** during **term time** unless there are **exceptional circumstances** and gives no entitlement to parents to take their child on holiday during term time. Applications for leave must be in exceptional circumstances and the Headteacher must be satisfied that the circumstances are exceptional and warrant the granting of leave.

The Government and the Local Authority has made the importance of attending school very clear and there is **no automatic right** to any holiday in term time. Low-cost travel or arrangements made by a family member or friends are not deemed to be exceptional circumstances. Headteachers will determine the number of school days a child can be away from school if the leave is granted in accordance with arrangements made by the school's governing body. Parents who fail to ensure their child's attendance at school face a **penalty of £60.00** if paid within 21 days or **£120.00** within 28 days. This brings attendance penalty notices into line with other types of penalty notices and allow local authorities to act faster on prosecutions.

The School's Decision

When deciding whether to grant a term-time leave, the school will consider each request individually and will take into account the following factors when making a decision:

- whether there are exceptional circumstances
- the time and duration of the leave
- the child's record of attendance
- previous term-time absences

Parent/Carer Decision

It is important that parents consider the implications of requesting to take their child out of school during term time. Problems could be:

- disadvantage if close to exams for example SATs in Years 2 & 6 (in May each year). Holidays during May **will not** be authorised.
- settling in problems when starting school or in the first weeks in a new class.
- children who need help in certain areas need to access all the educational support that is offered.
- your child may miss out on valuable group work with classmates that cannot be repeated.
- Please consider the unspoken message you are giving your child, by letting them think it is acceptable to miss school.

We recognise that it is often expensive to take a holiday during school breaks and that is why some parents may ask for term-time leave for their child. However, it is important that parents consider the implications of taking their child out of school during term time. Ten days holiday is the equivalent of a child missing 50 hours of schooling. There are only 190 statutory school days in one year. There are 175 days (weekends and school holidays) available for use for holidays, which would not have a negative effect on your child's education.

Incentives and Rewards

The school will promote attendance through use of assemblies and class incentives. At the end of the school year, awards are also given to all children who have enjoyed 100% attendance.

Statutory Framework

Under Section 444 of the 1996 Education Act a student is required to attend regularly at school should a student fail to attend regularly legal action may be taken. A ***parent(s)*** may receive a Fixed Penalty Notice or could be fined up to £2,500 face three months in prison and receive a parenting order. An Education Supervision Order could be sought.

- The school is required to complete a register twice during the school day. This is once at the start of the school day, 8.50am, and again for the afternoon session at 1:00pm.
- The school is obliged by law to differentiate between authorised and unauthorised absence. A letter, telephone or electronic message from a parent does not itself authorise an absence. It is for the school to determine if an absence is to be authorised (The Education (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2006).

Education Law defines a *parent* as:

- All natural parents, whether they are married or not.
- 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 on a daily basis.

It is 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.

Rights And Responsibilities

Promoting positive behaviour and excellent attendance is the responsibility of the whole school community including students, parents, governors and staff.

School will:

- promote good attendance and reduce absence, including persistent absence, ensure every pupil has access to full-time education to which they are entitled and differentiate between authorised and unauthorised absence in order to act early to address patterns of absence.
- use A-Star attendance system monitor and track individual and group attendance.
- keep parents fully informed of their child's attendance/punctuality record and follow up unexplained absences by calls and letters as necessary.
- contact parents on the first day when a student fails to attend school without providing good reason, via the School's electronic messaging system
- take timely action on any problem notified to us and involve appropriate outside agencies in order to support students and their families. This may include a 'home visit' or a request to the police to undertake a 'Safe and Well' welfare visit.
- Promote school attendance with the use of Parents bulletin and school letters/certificates.
- Refer and liaise with external agencies/professionals if appropriate.

Students will:

- will aim to achieve 100% attendance each academic year.
- attend school daily.
- will arrive on time and be appropriately prepared for the day.
- will tell a member of staff about any problem or reason that may prevent them from attending school.
- will go to registration / class on time.
- will take responsibility for registering at the school office if they are late or are leaving the school site during school hours.

Parents will:

- support the school and their child in aiming for 100% attendance each academic year.
- ensure their child attends school daily and on time (i.e., by 8.50am each morning).
- ensure that their child attends school regularly, punctually, dressed in accordance with the school uniform policy, fully equipped, with a positive attitude to learn.
- notify the school before 9.30am of any absence.
- avoid taking their child out of school for non-urgent medical or dental appointments.
- only request leave of absence if it is for an exceptional circumstance.
- ensure the school has updated contact numbers.
- will actively work with the school staff and relevant multi-agency staff, to solve any attendance issues as and when they occur.

What does good attendance look like?

Each child's attendance can be summarised as:

97%+ Excellent attendance. A level which will help all aspects of a child's progress and life in school.

95 – 96% Average attendance. A level in-line with national averages.

90 – 94% Poor attendance. Absence is now affecting attainment and progress.

Below 90% This results in a Persistent Absence and is unacceptable. Absence is causing serious concern and is affecting attainment and progress.

Attendance Targets

The Education (School Attendance Targets) Regulations 2007 requires governing bodies to set overall attendance targets. Under Section 538 of the Education Act 2006, governing bodies are also required to provide information requested by The Secretary of State, including absence data that will be collected every term through the school census. The school is set a challenging attendance target each year. The Head Teacher and the Governing Body agree these targets. The Head Teacher will report on attendance percentages in the termly report to the Governing Body. Whilst children at St Michael's should aim to be in school for 100% of the time, the school expects all children to maintain a minimum level of 96% attendance.

Targeted Groups

The school closely monitors specific groups of pupils, some of whom may need closer monitoring due to individual circumstances. Any concerns and trends to do with attendance will be picked up early and appropriate support given to these pupils. Such groups include.

- Pupils who have English as an additional language.
- Pupils eligible for free school meals.
- Looked after children.
- Pupils eligible for Pupil Premium funding.
- Pupils on Special Educational Needs and Disability register.
- Pupils with medical conditions.
- Pupils who are deemed to be vulnerable for any other reason.

The Senior Lead responsible for attendance is Miss Foster. You can contact her on 01915840542 or email smi@smi.bwcet.com.