

St Mary's Catholic Primary



Attendance Policy

**Learning and Loving
Caring and Sharing
through
The message of Christ**



St Mary's Catholic Primary School is a happy community where we are loved and valued as individuals.

As Disciples of Jesus, we learn together, pray together and celebrate together as one in God's love.

Together with parents/carers, the parish and the wider community, we prepare our children to live and build God's kingdom on earth.

Introduction

1. St. Mary's Catholic Primary School is committed to providing an outstanding educational experience for all students. We believe that if students are to benefit from education, outstanding attendance is crucial. Poor attendance undermines progress and attainment and can lead to social disadvantage. As a school we do all that we can to ensure maximum attendance for all students. Any problems that prevent full attendance will be identified and addressed as speedily as possible.

It is the goal of our school to celebrate pupils' personal achievement in all areas of school life. Attendance is a critical factor to a productive and successful school career and establishes a good pattern for later life. Our school will actively promote and encourage 100% attendance for all our students. 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.

When a child attends school on a regular basis, they take an important step towards reaching their full potential, and are given the greatest opportunity to learn new things and develop their skills. Children who miss school frequently can fall behind with their work and do less well in exams.

The more time a child spends around other children, whether in the classroom or as a part of a school team or club, the more chance they have of making friends and feeling included, boosting social skills, confidence and self-esteem.

While the parent is primarily responsible for ensuring their child attends school regularly, where school attendance problems occur the key to successfully resolving these problems is engaging the child through collaborative working between the parent, the school and the local authority.

2. We expect all children on roll to attend every day, when the school is in session, as long as they are fit and healthy enough to do so. We do all we can to encourage the children to attend, and to put in place appropriate procedures.

Regular attendance and punctuality are crucial for achievement and behaviour. Recent figures show a child attending more than 96% in Year 11 (GCSE) of the annual 194 school days has a 77% chance of achieving five A* - C grades whereas pupils who missed between 20% & 30% of school in 2010 only had a 25.6% chance of hitting the same level. Positive attitudes to attendance must be fostered in the Primary School to ensure all families understand its significance.

Statistics show that even a small rise in attendance can make a significant difference to a child's prospects:

- Taking a child on holiday for two weeks during term-time means their attendance can be no higher than 94%.
- The outcome is simple – poor attendance and punctuality means bad grades and the effects of it can last a lifetime.

Governors understand that there are pressures on families in regards to holidays and those financial constraints are more evident than ever in the current climate however, children only get one opportunity to get a good education. Every day a child is absent from school is a day that they are potentially falling behind.

Any absences from school will naturally have an impact on that child's ability to reach his or her potential.

Statutory Duty of School and Parents

The 'Education Act 1996' requires parents/carers to ensure their children receive effective, full-time education, either by regular attendance at school or otherwise. Schools are responsible for recording student attendance twice a day; once at the start of the morning session and once during the afternoon session. At St Mary's Catholic Primary an electronic registration system is in place. Student attendance is recorded for every session.

Principles

Parents/carers are legally responsible for ensuring that their children attend school. This extends to ensuring that students arrive at school on time, properly attired, with correct equipment and in a condition to learn. The school will make every effort to promote good attendance, giving advice and support where needed.

The Education Social Worker Service (ESW)

The Education Social Work Service is a part of Wrexham County Borough Council. Its aim is to ensure that every child has the opportunity to benefit from a full time education by attending school regularly.

The ESW can help and advise parents and carers who may be experiencing difficulties that prevent this. It is the responsibility of parents and carers to ensure that their child attends school regularly and the ESW expects them to do all that is necessary to make sure this happens.

What happens if your child does not attend school regularly (and their absence is not authorised?)

It is a criminal offence for a child not to attend school regularly and, as the parent, this is your responsibility.

The Local Authority will have powers to issue Fixed Penalty Notices of £60 for unauthorised absence from school with effect from September 2014. These fixed Penalty Notices could be issued to address any unauthorised absences from school in excess of five school days in one term.

3. Statutory Attendance Responsibilities

There is a legal responsibility to have a morning and an afternoon registration.

The school will:

- Record and monitor attendance and absence. Legally we are required to do this twice a day.
- Use electronic registration system to record and monitor attendance of all lessons during the school day to ensure the safety and welfare of all students.
- Record and monitor the punctuality of all students and, where necessary, inform parents of persistent lateness and apply appropriate consequences.
- Only authorise student absence in very exceptional circumstances
- Maintain a strong home-school relationship to inform and support parents with their child's attendance. The school uses an automated system to follow up daily absences.
- Work closely with the school's Educational Social Worker and other appropriate agencies where there are concerns regarding attendance.
- Help to investigate, identify and resolve any issues with children and their families, which prevent full attendance at St Mary's

School and will do everything possible to help return students to full attendance.

- Promote the importance of attendance through weekly assemblies, registration time and subject lessons.
- The ESW and Headteacher meet regularly to look at attendance percentages and will contact families where it falls below 85%.
- Celebrate and reward students who achieve 100% attendance and punctuality.
- Inform parents of children's actual attendance using termly colour coded reports.

Parents will:

- Ensure their children arrive on time to school with the correct equipment and full uniform.
- Be aware that any person who has the care of a child or who has parental responsibility is responsible for ensuring good attendance.
- Ensure that they are fully aware of school attendance procedures.
- It is the responsibility of the parents/carers to inform the school of the reason for a student's absence by 8.30am on the day of absence and each subsequent day.
- The school will operate the CallParent System and the parents/carers of every absent student will be contacted.
- An Absence Request Form (Exceptional circumstances only) must be completed in advance of any planned absence.

Understanding Classification of Absence

Every half-day absence from school has to be classified by the school (not by the parents), as either **AUTHORISED** or **UNAUTHORISED**. This is why information about cause of any absence is always required, preferably in writing.

Authorised absences are mornings or afternoons away from school for a good reason like illness, medical/dental appointments (backed up with an appointment card) which unavoidably fall in school time, emergencies or other unavoidable causes

If a child is absent

When a child is absent from the school, we request that families notify the school by telephone or email the same day by 8.30am. Where this is not possible, we require a written note explaining the absence on the first day of the pupil's return to school. Where this does not occur the absence will have to be recorded as unauthorised.

When a child is absent unexpectedly and no message from home has reached the school, the class teacher will record the absence in the register online. The school secretary will contact the family to ascertain the reason for absence.

A note may be sent to the school prior to the day of absence, e.g. if a child has a medical appointment. We must have a sight of the appointment card.

If there is any doubt about the whereabouts of a child, the class teacher will take immediate action by notifying the school office. The school will then be in contact straight away with the parent or guardian, in order to check on the safety of the child.

Definitions

Authorised absence

An absence is classified as authorised when a child has been away from school for a legitimate reason and the school has received notification from a parent or guardian. For example, if a child has been unwell, the parent writes a note, emails or telephones the school to explain the absence. If the child has attended a medical appointment school requests sight of the appointment card/letter.

Only the school can make an absence authorised. Parents and carers do not have this authority. Consequently, not all absences supported by parents and carers will be classified as authorised. For example, if

a parent takes a child out of school to go shopping during school hours, this will not mean it is an authorised absence.

Unauthorised absence

An absence is classified as unauthorised when a child is away from school without the permission of either the school or a parent. Therefore, the absence is unauthorised if a child is away from school without good reason, even with the support of a parent.

Methods of reporting Absences

In any case of absence, parents/carers should contact the school by one of the following methods:

1. By phone to the school – There is a dedicated absence line option through 01978 352406.
2. Email from an agreed account (i.e. the registered home email address)
3. Personal contact at the School Office where a note will be passed to the Teacher.

Authorised Absence

Be aware that absence from school will only be authorised if it is for the following reasons:

- Genuine illness
- Unavoidable medical/dental appointments (but try to make these after school if at all possible).
- Days of religious observance.
- Exceptional circumstances, such as bereavement or marriage of immediate family member (2 days only)
- Seeing a parent who is on leave from the armed forces.
- External examinations.

- When Traveller children go on the road with their parents.

Holidays in term time

St Mary's School does not support holidays taken during term time. Holidays in term time are not a universal entitlement. They are only granted at the discretion of the Headteacher and only in exceptional circumstances.

Parents who take their child out of school for a holiday without authorisation could receive a Penalty Notice.

Exceptional circumstances would include:

- When a parent in the armed forces returns from deployment.
- When the holiday is related to bereavement or serious/terminal illness of a family member.

Truancy

It is the legal responsibility of parents /carers to ensure their child attends all lessons as required. The school will inform parents/carers if their child has been identified as truanting.

Students who truant will be issued with a sanction and will be expected to make up the lost time. Persistent cases may be referred to the ESW who may consider issuing a Penalty Notice.

Punctuality

It is the responsibility of parents/carers to ensure their child attends full time education and arrives at school on time.

The school monitors punctuality and parents will be contacted if their child is not arriving on time. Persistent cases may be referred to the ESW for further investigation.

For Health and Safety reasons it is important that the school knows who is in the building. Pupils arriving late should therefore report to the Office. **It is important that all pupils arriving late follow this procedure.**

For the same reason it is important that pupils leaving the premises legitimately (eg for a medical appointment), or returning to school later in the day, are collected from/returned to the Office area.

Parents/Carers do not go to the classrooms.

REGISTER CODES

CODE	DESCRIPTION	MEANING
/	Present (AM)	Present
\	Present (PM)	Present

B	Educated off site (NOT Dual registration)	Approved Education Activity
C	Other Authorised Circumstances (not covered by another appropriate code/description)	Authorised absence
D	Dual registration (i.e. pupil attending other establishment)	Approved Education Activity
E	Excluded (no alternative provision made)	Authorised absence
F	Extended family holiday (agreed)	Authorised absence
G	Family holiday (NOT agreed or days in excess of agreement)	Unauthorised absence
H	Family holiday (agreed)	Authorised absence
I	Illness (NOT medical or dental etc. appointments)	Authorised absence
J	Interview	Approved Education Activity
L	Late (before registers closed)	Present
M	Medical/Dental appointments	Authorised absence
N	No reason yet provided for absence	Unauthorised absence
O	Unauthorised absence (not covered by any other code/description)	Unauthorised absence
P	Approved sporting activity	Approved Education
R	Religious Observance	Authorised absence
S	Study leave	Authorised absence
T	Traveller absence	Authorised absence
U	Late (after registers closed)	Unauthorised absence
V	Educational visit or trip	Approved Education Activity
W	Work experience	Approved Education Activity
X	Non-compulsory school age absence	Not counted in possible attendances
Y	Enforced closure	Not counted in possible attendances
Z	Pupil not yet on roll	Not counted in possible attendances
#	School closed to pupils	Not counted in possible attendances

A GUIDE FOR PARENTS

1. When does my child need to be in School?

Your child should be at school in good time for registration. The bell is rung at 8.55am and the morning register will be called

promptly once the pupils are in class and the afternoon register at **1pm** Foundation Phase and **1.30pm** Key Stage 2.

2. What happens if my child is late?

If your child arrives after **9am** he/she will be marked late.

Pupils who arrive after registration should report to the school office. **Pupils who are late must not be sent into school unaccompanied.** If a pupil is regularly late arriving at school (**or when being collected at 3.15pm**) a meeting will be arranged with a member of staff to discuss reasons/difficulties for lateness. In the case of persistent lateness, the ESW will offer advice.

Unacceptable reasons for lateness include:- getting fuel for car, overslept, clock wrong, running late, disorganised, children's behaviour.

3. Does the School need letters explaining my child's absence or will a phone call do?

We would expect a parent to telephone the school on the first day of absence, preferably by 8.30am. If you do not phone us, we will text you. If we do not receive an explanation, or if the explanation is unsatisfactory, we will not authorise the absence, and this will be shown on your child's end of year report. A follow-up letter is required.

Messages related to absence or other matters must not be replayed via other pupil.

4. What reasons will the school accept for absences?

- Illness
- Emergency dental/medical appointment (**please make routine appointments after school or during the holidays**)

- Day of religious observance
- Family Bereavement

Except in the case of illness and other unexpected events, you should ask for permission for your child to miss school well in advance, giving full details. In cases of recurring absences through illness, you may be asked to produce a medical certificate.

5. What is unacceptable?

The school will not authorise absence for day trips, additional days to extend holiday, visiting relatives, shopping, birthday or looking after brothers or sisters, etc.

6. Will the school contact me if my child is absent?

The school operates a first day response to absences: we will phone you if we have not heard from you. This is because we believe it is our responsibility to ensure your child's safety as well as their regular school attendance.

If we are concerned about aspects of your child's attendance or punctuality we will contact you to discuss the best way forward.

7. What can I do to encourage my child to attend school?

Make sure your child gets enough sleep and gets up in plenty of time each morning. Ensure that he/she leaves home in the correct clothes and properly equipped. Show your child, by your interest, that you value his/her education.

8. My child is trying to avoid coming to school. What should I do?

Contact your child's class teacher or Headteacher immediately and openly discuss your worries. Your child could be avoiding school for a number of reasons – difficulties with school work, bullying, friendship problems, family difficulties. It is important that we

identify the reason for your child's reluctance to attend school and work together to tackle the problem.

In some cases you may find it helpful to discuss the circumstances of your child's difficulties with an Education Social Worker. The school may also refer you to an Education Social Worker who works with staff and families if difficulties with attendance arise. The Education Attendance Service is based at:

Wrexham County Borough Council,
Rhosnesni High School,
Rhosnesni Lane,
Wrexham,
LL13 9ET



St Mary's Catholic Primary
Wrexham

Absence Request Form (Exceptional circumstances only)

Child's name..... Class

Date from date to (please only include dates your child will be absent)

Please fully explain the exceptional circumstances that you would like the school to consider. This section must be completed. Please continue on a separate sheet if needed.

Signature of Parent/Carer Date

Office use only		
Date form received	No. School days absence requested	% Attendance
<input type="checkbox"/> Absence authorised No. days ____ <input type="checkbox"/> Absence unauthorised No. days ____ Headteacher initial _____		

✂.....

This portion to be returned to parents/carers

Please note that even if this absence request is authorised you may still receive letters of concern from either the school or Educational Social Worker if your child's attendance drops below a level that the school deems acceptable (85%).

Pupil name(s).....Class/Year

Absence authorised from to (inclusive)

Absence unauthorised Current attendance% as of/...../20.....

Signed (Headteacher)

Date

Notes to Parents/Carers

The law does not grant parents/carers an automatic right to take their children out of school during term time. If the request is for an absence is term time you must have parental responsibility and be the parent/carer with whom the child normally lives. Permission **must** be sought in **advance**.

The Local Education Authority can issue a fixed penalty notice for unauthorised absence. A fixed penalty notice can be issued where a student has accrued 10 unauthorised absences in term time (AM and PM count as separate absences) or for late registrations (more than 10 occasions in one term) or for truancy.