

Attendance Policy

Approved by FGB

Date: 08-02-2023

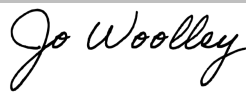
Last reviewed on: 08-02-2023

Next review due by:
February 2025

Signed:

Headteacher

Chair of Governors



1. Introduction

This attendance policy operates in conjunction with the following policies:

- Policy for behaviour and discipline
- Policy for SEND
- Single Equality Policy
- Child Protection and Safeguarding Policy

The attendance policy is based on the Department for Education's guidance 'Working together to improve school attendance' September 2022.

https://www.gloucestershire.gov.uk/media/2120543/working_together_to_improve_school_attendance.pdf

St Mary's Church of England Primary School aims to serve the families of Tetbury by providing an education of the highest quality within the context of Christian belief and practice. We encourage an understanding of the meaning and significance of faith and promote Christian values through the experience we offer all our pupils. Our vision is of a caring, loving community where we light a spark of curiosity, build on individual talents and give people the courage to live life in all its fullness.

2. Aims and Objectives

St. Mary's CE VA Primary School has high expectations of all its pupils. We recognise the clear link between good attendance and educational achievement. Improving attendance is everyone's business and we understand that the barriers to good attendance are wide and complex. We are committed to ensuring a calm, orderly, supportive and safe environment where all children want to be and are keen and ready to learn.

Through the implementation of this policy, we aim to:

- To develop and maintain a whole school culture that promotes the benefits of good attendance and reduce absences.

- Set high expectations for every pupil and communicate expectations regularly to parents and carers.
- Work with pupils, parents and carers to remove barriers to attendance by building strong and trusting relationships.
- Work together with families and partner agencies to ensure the right support is in place to improve attendance.
- Develop effective practices to ensure all factors are taken into consideration when working to improve attendance.
- Systematically analyse attendance data to identify patterns to target improvement efforts.

3. Roles and responsibilities

Promoting the benefits of good attendance is everyone's responsibility and everyone has a role to play in building a positive school culture.

Local Authority

It is the responsibility of the Local Authority to:

- Have a strategic approach to improving attendance and make it a priority for all frontline council services
- Have a school attendance support team working with school to remove barriers to attendance.
- Provide each school with a named point of contact in the School Attendance Support Team who can offer advice and support.
- Offer opportunities for schools in the County to share good practice.
- Hold a termly conversation with every school to identify, discuss and signpost or provide access to services for pupils who are persistently or severely absent or at risk of becoming so.
- Where there are out of school barriers, provide each identified pupil and their family with access to the services they need in the first instance.
- Facilitate early help assessments where appropriate and take an active role in the multi agency effort, providing lead practitioner where best placed to do so.
- Support schools by providing continued support for persistently absent pupils, providing formal support including parenting contracts and education supervision orders.
- Ensure joint working between partner agencies where there are safeguarding concerns for pupils who are persistently absent.
- Where support is not working, engage with legal intervention.
- Make severely absent pupils a top priority for support.

Academy Trust or The Governing Body

The school has a nominated governor for attendance. This is currently: David Greenwood

It is the responsibility of the Academy Trust/Governing Body to:

- Take an active role in attendance improvement and support the school in prioritising attendance and setting a whole school culture.
- Ensure school leaders fulfil their statutory duties.
- Ensure school staff are trained on improving attendance.
- Regularly review attendance data and help school leaders focus support on the pupils who most need it.

Headteacher and Senior Leader with responsibility for improving attendance

The designated senior leader with responsibility for attendance is Jo Woolley, Headteacher. She can be contacted on admin@st-marys-tetbury.gloucs.sch.uk and on 01666 502275

It is the responsibility of the senior leaders to:

- Have a clear school attendance policy available on the school website which all pupils, parents and staff understand.
- Develop and maintain a whole school culture that promotes the benefit of good attendance for all groups of pupils.
- Ensure procedures and systems are in place to enable the accurate completion of admission registers.
- Ensure robust processes are in place to follow up absence.
- Have a dedicated senior leader with overall responsibility for championing and improving attendance.
- Proactively use data to identify pupils and groups of pupils at risk of poor attendance and develop strategies to support them.
- Work with each identified pupil and their parents to understand and address the reasons for absence, including any in-school barriers to attendance.
- Signpost and support access to any required services where barriers to attendance have been identified.
- Work collaboratively with partner agencies and act as lead professional where appropriate to improve attendance.
- Put in additional targeted support where appropriate when absence is becoming persistent.
- Where there is lack of engagement hold more formal conversations with parents and carers, being clear about possible legal intervention in the future.
- Work with the Local Authority where necessary.
- Work with social care where there are safeguarding concerns.
- Liaise with previous settings and schools of any siblings to share information, effective strategies and support.
- Maintain the same ambition for attendance for pupils with SEND and medical conditions.
- Work with pastoral support to put in place additional support and adjustments where necessary to enable good attendance for pupils with SEND and medical needs.

Teaching staff

It is the responsibility of the teaching staff to:

- Work with the senior leaders and governors in promoting a whole school culture of good attendance for all.
- Emphasise the benefits of good attendance through praise and celebration of good attendance.
- Provide an accurate record of attendance by taking the class register promptly at 08.55 and marking any child who arrives between 9.05 and 09.15 as late.
- Respond promptly to any issues raised about attendance and work with the senior leaders with responsibility for attendance to improve attendance.
- Log any discussions with parents about attendance.
- Organise remote learning for any pupil who is likely to be absent for long periods through sickness.
- Report attendance to parents at parents' meetings and through written reports.

Administrative Staff

It is the responsibility of the office to:

- Record the names of all absent pupils by 09.30 daily.
- Call the parents/carers of any child who is absent from school on the first day of absence if a satisfactory reason has not already been given and record the reason, reinforcing the school's attendance policy where necessary.
- Provide the senior leaders with responsibility for attendance with the necessary information to enable them to fulfil their responsibilities.
- Ensure data is accurately submitted into SIMS so that it provides accurate data on pupil attendance.
- Update other pupil tracking systems with attendance data where required.
- Record any child who arrives after 09.05 as late.
- Record any child who arrives after 09.15 as absent for the morning session.
- Record pupils leaving early
- Monitor lateness and where the register shows 4 separate late marks over a two week period, inform the senior leaders with responsibility for attendance.

Pastoral Lead

It is the responsibility of the pastoral lead to:

- Work with the families of persistently and severely absent children to remove barriers to attendance and improve attendance.
- Communicate with the families of children whose attendance has dropped below 95% to offer support in improving attendance.
- Support families where children are persistently late for school so children arrive punctually and ready to learn each day.
- Communicate concerns about attendance with the Senior Leader responsible for attendance.
- Collate attendance data and support the senior leaders in producing reports on attendance for governors, Local Authority and inspectors.

Parents and Carers

It is the responsibility of parents and carers to:

- Ensure that their child attends school regularly. By regularly we mean every day that the school is open unless a reason acceptable to the school is given.
- Ensure that children arrive on time, with correct school uniform, equipped and ready to learn.
- Communicate with the school if they are having difficulty in getting their child into school so that appropriate support can be offered.
- Let the school office know by 9am of the first day of absence if their child will be absent that day and give a reason why.
- Seek permission for an absence prior to any absence that is not an illness.
- Understand that there is no entitlement for parents to take pupils on holiday during term time and that holidays in term time will not be authorized unless circumstances are deemed to be exceptional by the Headteacher.
- Notify the school in writing if they intend to remove their child permanently from the school for any reason.

Pupils

It is the responsibility of pupils to:

- Be at school on time each day.
- Have a positive attitude to attending school.
- Wear the correct uniform.
- Have everything they need to start the day.

4. **Expectations for attendance.**

At St. Mary’s CE VA Primary School we recognise our responsibility to proactively manage and improve attendance across the school community. As a school we consistently promote the benefits of good attendance at school and set high expectations for every pupil.

This policy will be applied fairly and consistently however the individual needs of pupils and their families who have specific barriers to attendance will always be taken into consideration and the school will consider its obligations under the Equality Act 2010 and the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child.

We expect all children to attend school every day that the school is open unless a reason acceptable to the school is given and we are able to authorise the absence.

Children are expected to be on the school playground ready to line up at 08.45. Children are met by the class teacher and brought into school at 08.50. the register is taken at 08.55 and registers close at 09.05.

Children who arrive after the school doors have been locked must report to the school office. **Pupils will be recorded as late if they arrive between 09.05 and 09.15.** Children arriving after 09.15 will be recorded as absent for the morning session.

The school office will phone parents/carers before 09.30 if a reason for absence has not been provided.

The end of the school day is currently 15.10 for children in Reception, Year 1 and Year 2 and 15.15 for children in Years 3 – 6.

Changes in September 2023

The government white paper 2022, advises that all maintained schools should provide a 32.5 hour week.

In order to meet these requirements we will be changing the start and end times of the school day to the following times from **September 2023**:

	EYFS & KS1		KS2	
	Current	September 2023	Current	September 2023
Start (Register opens)	08.50	08.45	08.50	08.50
Finish	15.10	15.15	15.15	15.20
Total day	6hrs 20 minutes	6.5 hours	6 hours 25 minutes	6.5 hours
Total week	31 hrs 40 mins	32.5 hours	32 hrs 5 mins	32.5 hours

5. Authorised Absence

Absences are authorised for the following reasons:

- A child is too unwell to attend school
- A child has a medical appointment.
- A leave of absence has been granted by the school. (Only exceptional circumstances warrant granting a leave of absence – see below)
- A child is subject to a temporary part-time timetable. (See below)
- A child is excluded but no alternative provision has been made.
- A child is absent for reasons of religious observance
- A child is absent because they are considered to be a traveller. (See below)

Leave of absence granted by the school and holidays in term time.

Only exceptional circumstances warrant granting a leave of absence. A leave of absence will not be granted unless it has been applied for in advance by the parent who the pupil normally lives with and the Headteacher considers the circumstances to be exceptional. The school will consider each application for a leave of absence individually taking into account the specific facts and circumstances and relevant background context behind each request. Where a leave of absence is granted the school will determine how many days a pupil can be absent from school. A leave of absence is entirely granted at the Headteacher's discretion.

Specific leaves of absence can be granted for:

- A pupil participating in a performance
- A pupil subject to a part-time timetable
- The purposes of a family holiday where the Headteacher considers the circumstances to be exceptional. (This would not normally include affordability of holidays).

Part time timetable

All pupils of compulsory school age are entitled to a full-time education. In very exceptional circumstances, where it is in the pupil's best interests, there may be a need for a temporary part-time timetable to meet their individual needs, for example where a medical condition prevents a pupil from attending full-time education.

Where a part-time table is introduced it will be in place for the shortest time necessary and not be treated as a long-term solution. Formal arrangements will be in place for regularly reviewing arrangements with parents and carers.

Traveller absence

A number of different groups are covered by the generic term traveller – Roma English and Welsh Gypsies, Irish and Scottish Travellers, Showmen (fairground people) and Circus people, Bargees (occupational boat dwellers) and New Travellers.

Traveller absence will only be authorised when the pupil's parent is travelling for occupational purposes. Pupils from these groups whose parent(s) do not travel for occupational purposes are expected to attend school as normal. They are subject to the same rules as other pupils in terms of the requirements to attend school regularly once registered at a school.

Where a child has no fixed abode because their parent(s) is engaged in a business or trade that requires them to travel, there is an expectation that the child attends at least 200 sessions per year.

To help ensure continuity of education for pupils, when their parent(s) is travelling for occupational purposes, it is expected that the pupil should attend the school elsewhere when their parent(s) is travelling and be dual registered at that school and their main school.

Attending approved educational activities, visits and residentials

An approved educational activity is where a pupil is attending another educational setting or taking part in an off-site activity such as a field trip, residential visit or alternative provision. These activities must be approved by the school, be of an educational nature and be supervised by someone authorised by the school. The school is responsible for the safety and welfare of pupils attending approved off site activities.

Dual registration at another school

Pupils can be registered at more than one school, for example a pupil referral unit, hospital education or a special school on a temporary basis. Agreement must be made with the Headteacher.

Participating in a supervised sporting activity

Pupils taking part in sporting activities approved by the school can have authorised absence from school however the decision on the appropriateness of the activity rests with the school and the final decision on whether to authorise the absence remains with the Headteacher. The sporting activity must take place during the sessions for which it was recorded.

Exceptional circumstances

Absences will be authorised where a pupil is unable to attend due to exceptional circumstances for example:

- Where the school site or part of it is closed due to an unavoidable cause.
- Where school transport is not available and the pupil cannot walk to school.
- A local or national emergency has resulted in widespread disruption.

Children of non-compulsory school age

Children under the age of 5 can attend school on a part-time basis until they are of compulsory school age. This must be by prior agreement with the headteacher.

6. Unauthorised Absence

Unauthorised absence is where a pupil's absence is not authorised or where the reason for a pupil's absence has not been provided and cannot be established.

Holiday not granted by the school

If parents take a child out of school for the purposes of a holiday and the school has not granted a leave of absence, this will be recorded as an unauthorised absence. This includes pupils of non-compulsory school age (4 year olds). The school will not grant a leave of absence retrospectively. Permission to take a child out of school for the purposes of a holiday must be sought at least one month in advance of the planned holiday.

No reason for absence provided or absent without authorisation

Every effort will be made to establish the reason for a pupil's absence. Where no reason has been given for a child's absence the absence will be unauthorised. If an acceptable reason is subsequently given, the absence code can be changed however this will not be done after 5 working days. Where

no reason for absence is established or the school is not satisfied with the reason given, the absence will be recorded as unauthorised.

Late arrival at school.

St. Mary's actively discourages late arrival at school and regularly monitors late arrivals seeking an explanation from the parent.

If a pupil arrives in school after the register has closed (09.05), they will be recorded as late unless the reasons for being late is authorized, such as a medical appointment.

7. How to request a leave of absence and inform school of an unexpected absence

All attendance concerns and requests should be addressed to:

Mrs Sarah Howe, School Administrator.

Email: admin@st-marys-tetbury.gloucs.sch.uk

Telephone: 01666 502275.

Unexpected absence and absence due to illness.

Parents and Carers should email or telephone the school office before 09.00 on the first day of the child's absence from school giving a reason why the child will be unable to attend school and on each subsequent day of absence.

If a child is absent due to sickness and diarrhea, the school will assume that the child will be absent for the required period of 48 hours since the last episode of sickness or diarrhea so no further phone call is required.

If a child is taken out of school to attend a medical appointment during the school day, adults must sign the child out at the school office and sign them back in again on return.

In most cases, absences for illness which are reported following the school's absence reporting procedures will be authorised without the need for parents to supply medical evidence unnecessarily. In line with Department for Education guidance, if we do have a genuine concern about the authenticity of the illness, we may ask the parent to provide medical evidence, such as a prescription, appointment card, or other appropriate form of evidence. If the school is not satisfied about the authenticity of the illness, the absence will be recorded as unauthorised.

Where a pupil has a verified and chronic health condition we will aim to work with parents to ensure that children have access to education and provide appropriate support in line with government and local guidance.

Medical and dental appointments

Wherever possible, medical and dental appointments should be arranged outside of school hours however we recognise that such appointments during school hours are often necessary. A pupil should only be out of school for the minimum amount of time necessary to attend the appointment. In most circumstances a child should not miss a whole day of school for a medical appointment. Parents must email or speak to the school office in advance of the appointment stating the reason for the appointment and how long the child will be absent from school. In some circumstances, for example where a pupil is persistently or severely absent from school, evidence will need to be provided. This could be a letter or an appointment card.

Holidays or other absences

A request for authorised absence (yellow form) must be completed for all other absences including holidays in term time. These forms can be collected from the school office and must be completed at least one month before the planned leave. Forms must be completed and signed by both parents with parental responsibility for the child, where possible, and returned to the school office.

The vast majority of requests for holidays during term time will be refused. If the holiday is taken without authorisation, it will be recorded as an unauthorised absence which may result in the issue of a penalty notice to each parent in respect of each absent child. The school will follow Gloucestershire's Penalty Notice Code of Conduct when issuing penalty notices.

8. School procedures for managing attendance, punctuality and absences

Recording attendance

The Education (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2006, as amended by 2016 regulations, require schools to take an attendance register twice a day, once at the start of the morning session and then again during the afternoon session. The register must record whether the pupil was:

- Present;
- Absent;
- Present at approved educational activity; or
- Unable to attend due to exceptional circumstances

Pupil attendance is recorded on the school's information management software. Class teachers have access to this software and complete the electronic register twice daily.

Use of attendance and absence data

The school will regularly monitor and analyse attendance data and deliver intervention and support in a targeted way to pupils and families.

The Pastoral Lead will monitor weekly attendance data, identifying patterns in attendance within cohorts, groups and at an individual pupil level. Where attendance is causing concern, the Pastoral Lead will contact families to work with them to improve attendance.

The Senior leader with responsibility for attendance will meet regularly with the Pastoral Lead and analyse attendance data, taking appropriate action where pupils' attendance is a concern. The Senior Leader with responsibility for attendance will also produce a half termly report for governors including overall attendance for the half term, including analysis for groups of pupils and highlighting where attendance is a cause for concern, what actions have been taken and the impact of those actions. Comparisons will also be made with national data where this data is available.

Attendance reports will also be discussed with class teachers at pupil progress meetings and at parents' evenings to celebrate excellent attendance as well as raising awareness of concerns around attendance.

A whole school culture for encouraging good attendance

Good attendance is everyone's business. At St. Mary's we encourage children to develop good attendance patterns through a whole school approach. Children are celebrated for good attendance by class teachers and senior leaders. Children are welcomed into school at the start of the school day and children know that we value their presence in school and miss them when they are not there. The class with the highest weekly attendance is celebrated in Friday collective worship and children who achieve 100% attendance over the term/year are rewarded.

Unexplained absences

Unexplained absences are followed up by a member of the office staff by 09.30 each day. If no contact can be made with parents or carers, office staff will continue to telephone and will telephone other contacts listed for the child. Every child is required to have more than one named adult contact on the management information software. If school cannot contact a parent/carer and are concerned about a pupil, a home visit may be carried out.

Lateness

Parents will be contacted to discuss any patterns of late arrival to school. Repeated arrival after the close of registration will result in appropriate interventions being instigated and may also result in a penalty notice being issued or prosecution.

Prior to requesting a penalty notice in respect of unauthorised absence for lateness, the school will issue a letter to the parent(s) warning that if there is further unauthorised absences within the next 15 school days then a penalty notice will be requested for each parent.

Persistently absent and severely absent pupils

At St. Mary's CE Primary school, we will investigate any pupils who are on track to be persistently absent and will not wait until attendance falls below 90%. Parents initially receive a gentle 'nudge' by text or email to let them know that their child's attendance is falling. At this stage parents are offered an opportunity to share any changes or difficulties they may be having so that the school can offer support.

Persistent absence is where a pupil misses 10% or more of school. This equates to missing one day or more a fortnight across a school year. Where a child's attendance is considered to be persistently absent, the school will work with the family and additional targeted support will be put in place to remove any barriers to attendance and re-engage the pupil. St. Mary's staff will sensitively consider the reasons why attendance has fallen and consider how we can ensure that school provides a safe place where children facing difficulties can feel supported.

Children who are absent for more than 50% of the time are considered to be severely absent and particular focus will be given to these pupils. We recognise that these children will need more intensive support and the school will work with partner agencies to ensure that they are prioritised. This may include a family plan or consideration for an education, health and care plan or an alternative form of educational provision to overcome barriers to being in school.

Use of legal interventions

Prior to legal interventions the school will have taken the following actions:

- Investigated the reasons for absence and confirmed that absences are unauthorised.
- Met with the parent/carer to discuss the absences. This meeting can happen off-site if necessary.
- Warned parents in writing at the outset of the possibility of prosecution.
- Implemented strategies to remove any barriers to regular attendance and provided evidence of this.
- Considered and followed the graduated pathway as an integral part of identifying barriers to regular attendance.

- Held a formal documented Attendance Improvement Meeting (AIM) with those who have parental responsibility for a child, as well as the child (where appropriate) in order to draw up a plan, setting agreed targets.
- Undertaken AIM reviews with all stakeholders, assessing whether or not the targets have been met and considering additional interventions that could be implemented if required.

Legal Proceedings will be initiated once the case has been discussed with Gloucestershire Local Authority Inclusion Officers and agreed as meeting the criteria for possible prosecution.

Penalty Notices

The school will follow Gloucestershire's Code of Conduct for issuing penalty notices.

Penalty Notices may be issued by the Local Authority under the following circumstances:

- An excluded pupil found in a public place, without justifiable reason for being there, during school hours on a school day during the first five days of a suspension period or a permanent exclusion. Parents must have been notified in writing by the school at the time of the exclusion, of their duty to ensure the child is not found in a public place during school hours and the days to which this applies.
- A minimum of ten sessions (equivalent to 5 days) of unauthorised absence from school during term-time in order to take a holiday (G code), within the immediately preceding ten week period.
- Persistent lateness of a pupil arriving at school after the registers have closed and where there have been 10 sessions of unauthorised lateness within the immediate ten week period (U Code).

Further information on GCC guidance for legal interventions can be found here:

<https://www.gloucestershire.gov.uk/media/2120523/gcc-attendance-guidance-for-schools-november-2020.pdf>

Children at risk of missing education (including children missing education)

A child who has been absent without the school's permission for a continuous period of 10 days or more is considered to be missing education. The school will inform the Inclusion Team at the Local Authority where a child is at risk of missing education or is missing their education.

Where a pupil on roll at the school fails to attend for 10 days or more without explanation and is not at their last known address and has not taken up a place at another school, the school will contact the Inclusion Team at the Local Authority to report the child as missing.

GCC Education Inclusion: 01452 427800