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 Attendance Policy

**St Mary’s Banbury**

Approval date: Novmber 2019

 Review date: November 2022

Signed Chair of Governors………………………..

Signed Headteacher………………………..

Date………………………..

St Mary’s Banbury

Southam Road

Banbury

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***Learning, Transforming, Growing.***

**Introduction:**

St Mary’s CE Primary is a successful school and your child plays their part in making it so. We aim for an environment which enables and encourages all members of the community to reach out for excellence. For our children to gain the greatest benefit from their education it is vital that they attend regularly, on time, every day the school is open unless the reason for the absence is unavoidable.

It is very important therefore that you make sure that your child attends regularly and this Policy sets out how together we will achieve this.

**Why Regular Attendance is so important:**

Any absence affects the pattern of a child’s schooling and regular absence will seriously affect their learning. Any pupil’s absence disrupts teaching routines so may affect the learning of others in the same class.

Ensuring your child’s regular attendance at school is your legal responsibility and permitting absence from school without a good reason creates an offence in law and may result in prosecution.

**Promoting Regular Attendance:**

Helping to create a pattern of regular attendance is everybody’s responsibility - parents, pupils and all members of school staff.

To help us all to focus on this we will:

● Give you details on attendance in our Newsletters;

● Report to you at least termly on how your child is performing in school, what their attendance and punctuality rate is and how this relates to their attainments;

● Celebrate good attendance;

● Reward good or improving attendance by offering incentive awards i.e. house points.

**Understanding types 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 the 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 which unavoidably fall in school time, emergencies or other unavoidable cause. If this occurs, school will require evidence of the appointment to be able to authorise the absence.

Unauthorised absences are those which the school does not consider reasonable and for which no “leave" has been given. This type of absence can lead to the Local Authority (County Attendance Team) using sanctions and/or legal proceedings.

This includes:

● Parents/carers keeping children off school unnecessarily

● Truancy before or during the school day

● Absences which have never been properly explained

● Children who arrive at school too late to get a mark

● Shopping, looking after other children or birthdays

● Day trips and holidays in term time which have not been agreed

● Excessive illness without medical evidence

Whilst any child may be off school because they are ill, sometimes they can be reluctant to attend school. Any problems with regular attendance are best sorted out between the school, the parents and the child. If your child is reluctant to attend, never cover up their absence or to give in to pressure to excuse them from attending. This gives the impression that attendance does not matter and usually make things worse.

**You can support your child by:**

● Ensuring regular and early bed times

● Helping with homework

● Having uniform and equipment prepared the night before

● Providing a healthy breakfast

● Reporting any academic or social concerns promptly

● Retaining open & honest communication with your child’s school

● Being positive about school (even if your own experience was less than positive)

● Encouraging your child to invite friends home for play dates

**Persistent Absenteeism (PA):**

A pupil becomes a ‘persistent absentee’ when they miss 10% or more schooling across the school year for any reason. Absence at this level is doing considerable damage to any child’s educational prospects and we need parent’s fullest support and co-operation to tackle this.

At St Mary’s we monitor all absence thoroughly. Any case that is seen to have reached the PA threshold or is at risk of moving towards that threshold is given priority and you will be informed of this immediately.

PA pupils are tracked and monitored carefully through our pastoral procedures.

All PA cases are also automatically made known to the County Attendance team. If your child becomes a PA pupil, we will seek your consent to complete an Early Help Assessment with you and consider convening a Team Around the Family.

**Absence Procedures:**

**If your child is absent you must:**

● Contact us as soon as possible on the first day of absence;

● or, you can call into school and report to reception.

**If your child is absent we will:**

● Telephone you on the first day of absence if we have not heard from you;

● Invite you in to discuss the situation with our Assistant Head teacher or Head teacher if absences persist;

● Refer the matter to the County Attendance Team if attendance moves below

90%.

**Telephone numbers:**

There are times when we need to contact parents about lots of things, including absence, so we need to have your current contact numbers at all times. So, help us to help you and your child by making sure we always have an up to date number – if we don’t then something important may be missed. There will be regular checks on telephone numbers throughout the year.

**The County Attendance Team:**

Parents are expected to contact school at an early stage and to work with the staff in resolving any problems together. This is nearly always successful. If difficulties cannot be sorted out in this way, the school may refer the child to the County Attendance Team at the Local Authority. At the school’s request, they may issue a Penalty Notice per parent/carer, per child (currently £60 rising to £120 if unpaid after 21 days. If unpaid after 28 days a summons to Court will be issued for each unpaid Penalty Notice for prosecutions in the Magistrates Court. This can result in a criminal record and a fine of up £2,500, a Community Order, Parenting Order or ultimately a custodial sentence). The legislation is the Education Act 1996 sec. 444(1) and 444(1A).

Parents that have previously been issued with Penalty Notices for their children's unauthorised absences, in the event of further unauthorised absences may receive summonses to Court.

*“If any child of compulsory school age who is a registered pupil at a school fails to* *attend regularly at the school, his/her parent is guilty of an offence.’’*

Alternatively, parents or children may wish to contact the County Attendance Team themselves to ask for help or information. They are independent of the school and will give impartial advice. Their telephone number is 01865 323513 attendance@oxfordshire.gov.uk

**Lateness:**

Poor punctuality is not acceptable. If your child misses the start of the day they can miss work and do not spend time with their class teacher getting vital information and news for the day. Late arriving pupils also disrupt lessons, it can be embarrassing for the child and can also encourage absence.

**How we manage lateness at St Mary’s:**

Morning registration takes place at the start of the school day at 8.50 am. The registers will remain open for 20 minutes until 9.10am and then they will close. The afternoon registration will be at 12.50pm and the register will close at 1.10pm.

Any pupil arriving after 9.10am will be marked as having an unauthorised absence (U) unless there is an acceptable explanation i.e. school transport was delayed. In cases for example, where he absence at registration was for attending an early morning medical appointment, the appropriate absence code will be entered.

In accordance with County Regulations, pupils arriving in the school grounds after the bell has sounded at 8.50am, but before the end of the registration period will be treated for statistical purposes, as present, but will be coded as late ‘L’ before the registers close.

If your child has a persistent late record you will be asked to meet with the Assistant Head teacher and/or Attendance Officer to resolve the problem, but you can approach us at any time if you are having problems getting your child to school on time.

**Exceptional Leave:**

Taking holidays in term time will affect your child’s schooling as much as any other absence and we expect parents to help us by not taking children away in school time. Remember that any savings you think you may make by taking a holiday in school time are offset by the cost to your child’s education.

There is no automatic entitlement in law to time off in school time to go on holiday.

1. It is widely known that the link between a student’s attendance and attainment is irrefutable.

2. Early poor attendance habits follow through into secondary school, further education and employment.

3. Graduates earn, on average, double that of young people that leave school with no qualifications.

4. All schools in Oxfordshire are encouraged to adopt a policy of not authorising

**Exceptional Leave.**

5. The Head Teacher will meet personally with every family applying for Exceptional Leave to stress the importance of good school attendance habits and links between attendance & attainment.

6. Exceptional Leave is most unlikely to be authorised in Years 2 & 6.

7. Exceptional leave is most unlikely to be authorised when a pupil’s attendance is less than 95%.

8. Exceptional leave should always be refused when requests are regular (annual) or when patterns become identifiable.

9. Reasons for Exceptional Leave will be logged on the pupil’s record and shared as part of transfer/transition processes.

The County Attendance Team can issue Penalty Notices for any unauthorised 'Exceptional Leave'. Penalty Notices can be issued to each parent/carer concerned. Please note that it will be per parent per child. Payment within 21 days of receipt of notice is £60 and £120 if paid after this period but within 28 days. If the Penalty Notice remains unpaid after 28 days you will each receive a summons to Oxford Magistrates Court. If unauthorised leave is repeated the County Attendance Team may summons each parent to Court without a Penalty Notice being issued.

The school has targets to improve attendance and your child has an important part to play in meeting these targets.

The minimum level of attendance for this school is 96% attendance and we will keep you updated regularly about progress to this level and how your child’s attendance compares.

Our target is to achieve better than this however because we know that good attendance is the key to successful schooling and we believe our pupils here at St Mary’s can be amongst the best in Oxfordshire.

Through the school year we monitor absences and punctuality to show us where improvements need to be made.

**Summary:**

St Mary’s school has a legal duty to publish absence figures & it’s attendance policy to parents and to promote attendance. School attendance data must be available to the Local Authority & the Department for Education. Equally, parents have a duty to make sure that their children attend.

All school staff are committed to working with parents and pupils as the best way to ensure as high a level of attendance as possible. Regular attendance supports optimising your child’s attainment.