

# St Mary's CE VC First School



## Attendance Policy

Adopted date:	<b>26th April 2018 (FGB)</b>
Signature of Headteacher:	<i>Suzanne Carter</i>
Next review date	<b>Summer 2021 (or when updated guidance is received from LA Attendance or National sources)</b>

## 1. Introduction

The attendance of children and young people at school is of vital importance. If children and young people do not attend school regularly their acquisition of skills and knowledge is interrupted and their educational achievements are potentially damaged.

This policy is designed to assist our school with the advice required whenever dealing with attendance issues and to assist us in dealing with low/poor attendance in the most effective and responsive way, thus contributing to keeping children safe and improving their outcomes, wellbeing and future prospects.

The policy is not exhaustive and recognises that attendance is a very complex and diverse issue and that each individual's circumstances will be different.

It incorporates the latest Government guidance, legislation and recommendations.

- Good attendance is secured when there is a strong culture of partnership between the Local Authority, DASP, School Governors, Head teachers, parents and other partners each with clearly expressed and understood roles and responsibilities. Parents/carers should be fully involved as key partners in securing regular school attendance.
- Early identification, communication and action on attendance problems are critical in achieving successful outcomes.

Below is a guideline of expectations of attendance:

<b>95%+</b>	Excellent -This will help all aspects of the child's progress and life in school. This will give them a good start in life and supports a positive work ethic.	No action required
<b>95-90%</b>	Average	Monitored half termly-look for patterns. Write to parents if there are concerns.
<b>Below 90%</b>	Poor - Absence is now affecting attainment and progress at school. The parents should work with the school urgently to improve the situation.	Six weeks monitoring period will begin in majority of cases. Parents will be notified by letter. Meeting with the school. LA Attendance officer involved. DASP Attendance panel.

90% attendance = one day's absence every two weeks =  $19\frac{1}{2}$  days a year = 4 weeks absence a year.  
Over 3 years that's equivalent to nearly the whole autumn term absent.

## 2. Statutory Framework

### Section 7 Education Act 1996

It is the duty of the parent of every child of compulsory school age\* to cause him or her to receive efficient full time education suitable:-

- To his/her age, ability and aptitude, and
- To any special educational needs he/she may have, either by **regular, attendance at school during term time or otherwise**

*\*Compulsory school age begins at the start of the term following the child's 5<sup>th</sup> birthday and ends on the last Friday in June of the school year when they reach 18.*

## 3. Roles and Responsibilities

### 3.1 Parents or carers

Parents or carers have a legal responsibility to ensure that their children attend school regularly, and stay in school for every lesson after they have registered. If a child is in the care of foster parents or in a residential home, it is important that the carers recognise their parenting role where attendance to school is concerned.

**What is expected of parents and carers with regard to attendance?**

- To keep requests for their child to be absent to a minimum
- To offer a reason for any period of absence, preferably before the absence or on the first day of absence and for ensuring that the absence is covered in writing by a note sent in on the child's return to school.
- To ensure that their child arrives at school on time, properly dressed, with the right equipment and in a condition to learn. A reason should be offered for any lateness.
- To work closely with the school to resolve any problems that may impede a child's attendance
- To take family holidays during school holiday periods.

## 3.2 Schools

Schools have a statutory responsibility to record and monitor the punctuality and attendance of pupils for both the morning and afternoon sessions.

### What is expected of the school with regard to attendance?

- To create a school ethos that pupils want to be part of
- To meet the legal requirements set out by Government
- To give a high priority to punctuality and attendance
- To develop procedures that enable the school to identify, follow up and record unauthorised absence, patterns of absence and parent condoned absence with effective monitoring and intervention
- To consistently record authorised and unauthorised absences within the guidance of the law
- To develop a range of effective strategies to follow up intermittent and long term absenteeism and promote good attendance
- To encourage open communication channels between home and school
- To develop procedures for the reintegration of long term absentees
- To work with DASP (Dorchester Area Schools Partnership) in procedures leading to a formal referral to the DASP attendance panel. This will be for circumstances of persistent absence when work in school (with the parent/guardian) has not improved attendance.
- To adequately provide for pupils with difficulties, within the bounds of resources available, and ensure the appropriate delivery of the curriculum
- To report **holiday absence** to the local authority.

## 3.3 DASP

- The Dorchester Area Schools Partnership (DASP) will support the attendance of all children in DASP schools.
- DASP will organise attendance panels for families of children with persistent absence where work in school (with the parent/guardian) has not improved attendance.
- To provide documentation to support monitoring of attendance.

## 3.4 The Local Authority:

Dorset Local Authority has a responsibility to provide education and promote regular attendance of all statutory school age children.

## 4. Policy implementation

### 4.1 Registers

Attendance registers are marked at the beginning of each morning and afternoon. Attendance is two sessions per day. As part of Safeguarding procedures, attendance is monitored daily with phone calls made to understand unreported absences.

Registers are closed at 9.00am

#### **4.2 Recording absences**

Parents are required to offer a reason for any period of absence, preferably before the absence or on the first day of absence. The school will then decide if it wishes to record the absence as authorised or unauthorised based on guidance set out in the Education (Pupil Registration) Regulations. These regulations state that headteachers may not grant any leave of absence during school time **unless there are exceptional circumstances.**

**The fundamental principles for defining 'exceptional' are where requests are rare, significant, unavoidable and short.**

#### **4.3 Recording lateness**

Registers are marked shortly after the start of the school day at 9:00am.

Any pupil arriving after 9am will be marked at 'late' in the school register.

All reasons for lateness will be recorded.

The school will consider persistent lateness alongside persistent absence and may send letters and issue penalty notices in line with LA policy.

#### **4.4 Authorised and unauthorised absence**

The law requires that all schools must show the difference between authorised and unauthorised absence.

##### Authorised absence can be:

- Sickness
- Medical or dental appointments which cannot be arranged outside school hours
- Days of religious observance

The Headteacher should determine the number of school days a child can be away from school if the leave is granted. These may be Religious and cultural. Leave associated with the armed forces or emergency service will require evidence to confirm the exceptional nature of the request.

All requests are considered on a case by case basis.

Requests by parents requiring absence due to exceptional circumstances must do so using the school request for absence form **at least 2 weeks before the date requested.**

##### Unauthorised absence is:

- Truancy
- Staying at home to look after younger children or sick relatives
- Going shopping or having hair cut
- Any absence which the school has not been informed about, either by letter or telephone
- Any family holiday or leave of absence unauthorised by the headteacher

- Absence for reasons other than medical not agreed as exceptional circumstances.

## **5. Strategies for promoting good attendance and punctuality**

Our school use a variety of strategies to encourage attendance including:

- Class teacher will ensure that the curriculum is delivered within a culture of inclusion and in such a way that pupils feel that they have and can succeed.
- Individual pupils whose attendance has been a cause for concern will be encouraged to improve through correspondence from the school.
- Offering support from our Parent Support Adviser.
- Pupil attendance figures will be published with the annual academic reports.
- Pupil awareness of the importance of good attendance in helping them to access their right to education will be discussed regularly in class.
- Parents will be reminded regularly in newsletters about good attendance.

## **6. Actions in cases of poor attendance**

We will work with parents and the Family Partnership Zone to improve their child's attendance as well as working with the DASP attendance panel. Permitting absence from school without a good reason is an offence by the parent. Only the school can 'authorise' absence. The school will not assess all reasons as 'valid'.

Non-attendance is an important issue that is treated seriously. However each case is different and the school acknowledges that no one standard response will be appropriate in every case. Consideration is given to all factors affecting attendance before deciding what intervention strategies to apply.

Penalty notices for absence from school can be issued by the Local Authority, and the police. The following circumstances are considered as appropriate reasons for the issuing of Penalty Notices:

- Truancy, including truancy sweeps
- Parentally-condoned absences
- Holidays in term time
- Excessive delayed return from extended holidays
- Persistent lateness after the register has closed

A pupil has to be absent from school in one of these circumstances for at least 10 sessions (5 days) in any term before the issuing of a Penalty Notice can be considered.

Before issuing of a Penalty Notice per child per parent, a check is made by the Local Authority that the absence meets the conditions of the Code of Conduct. Where a Penalty Notice is issued, each parent is required to pay the Local Authority.

## 7. Fixed Penalty Notices

The law regarding school attendance was clarified recently when the Supreme Court ruled in favour of the Isle of Wight Council in prosecuting a father for taking his daughter out of school without permission. It ruled that parents must ensure their children attend school regularly, and that 'regularly' means 'in accordance with the rules prescribed by the school'.

**The expectation of attendance for all pupils attending St Mary's CE VC First School, Charminster is 100% attendance.**

Penalty notices may be issued by the Local Authority for:

- pupils with poor attendance where, in accordance with the law.
- unauthorised holidays of 10 sessions or more (5 days or more).

If the penalty notice is not paid, legal action may follow.

## 8. Children Missing in Education

The government has placed a duty on local authorities (Education and Inspections Act 2006) to make arrangements to establish (as far as it is possible to do so) the identities of children in their area who are of compulsory school age and not receiving a suitable education.

Children Missing Education (CME) refers to all children of compulsory school age who are neither on a school roll nor being educated other than at school or who have been out of any educational provision for a substantial period of time.

All children, regardless of their circumstances, are entitled to a full time education which is suitable to their age, ability, aptitude and any special educational needs they may have.

A child going missing from education is a potential indicator of abuse or neglect. School and college staff should follow the school's or college's procedures for dealing with children that go missing from education, particularly on repeat occasions, to help identify the risk of abuse and neglect, including sexual exploitation, and to help prevent the risks of their going missing in future.

It is essential that all staff are alert to signs to look out for and the individual triggers to be aware of when considering the risks of potential safeguarding concerns such as travelling to conflict zones, Female Genital Mutilation (FGM) and forced marriage.

A procedure for CME can be found in the Pan-Dorset Multi-Agency Safeguarding Policies and Procedures Manual.

[http://pandorsetscb.proceduresonline.com/chapters/p\\_ch\\_missing\\_care\\_hme\\_edu.html](http://pandorsetscb.proceduresonline.com/chapters/p_ch_missing_care_hme_edu.html)

Schools should put in place appropriate safeguarding policies, procedures and responses for children who go missing from education, particularly on repeat occasions.

### **School procedures to safeguard children at risk of being missing in education**

When a child has been taken out of the school by their parents to be educated in another setting, the school will;

- I. Inform the Local Authority Admissions
- II. Speak directly to the HT or person responsible for admissions at the new setting to confirm attendance and the start date.
- III. At the stated start date the school will contact the new setting to confirm attendance and remove the child's name from its attendance register
- IV. Where attendance is not confirmed the school will inform the Local Authority and Dorset Children's Services

Where a child does not attend school for 5 continuous school days without prior agreement from the school then the Local Authority Admissions Team would be informed alongside Dorset Children Services.

Where there is a specific concern the school may contact the Local Authority Admissions Team and Dorset Children Services before 5 days of continuous absence.

When a child is withdrawn from school for Elective Home Education, a letter must be received by the school **before** the child begins elective home education. If a letter is not received, the child will be considered as a child missing in education and the procedure for a child missing in education would be followed.

