



THE DIOCESE OF SHEFFIELD
ACADEMIES TRUST

ST MARY'S SCHOOL

ATTENDANCE POLICY

Policy Date: July 2024

1. AIMS

In order for our pupils to maximise all learning opportunities provided and to reach their full potential, consistently good attendance is vital. As a Trust, we are committed to meeting our obligations with regard to school attendance, including:

- Promoting good attendance
- Reducing absence, including persistent and severe absence
- Ensuring every pupil has access to the full-time education to which they are entitled
- Identifying and acting promptly to address patterns of absence
- Building strong relationships with families to ensure pupils have the right support in place to ensure they attend school.
- To recognise and reward pupils who achieve attendance and punctuality targets throughout the academic year
- Promoting and supporting punctuality in attending school.

2. LEGISLATION AND GUIDANCE

This policy meets the requirements of the DfE document 'Working Together to Improve School Attendance' (May 2022) and refers to the DfE statutory guidance on school attendance parental responsibility measures (January 2015). These documents are drawn from the following legislation setting out the legal powers and responsibilities that govern school attendance:

- Part 6 of The Education Act 1996
- Part 3 of The Education Act 2002
- Part 7 of The Education and Inspections Act 2006
- The Education (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2006 (and 2010, 2011, 2013, 2016 amendments)
- The Education (Penalty Notices) (England) (Amendment) Regulations 2013

It also refers to:

- School census guidance
- Keeping Children Safe in Education Sept 2024
- Working Together to Improve School Attendance Aug 2024
- Mental health issues affecting a pupil's attendance: guidance for schools (February 2023)
- Sheffield Guidance – Working Together to Improve School Attendance 2024

3. ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

3.1 Headteacher

- Have responsibility as School Attendance Champion, as per statutory guidance.
- Development, review and implementation of the attendance policy at the school
- Monitoring school-level absence data and sharing this information with the local school board in the Headteacher's Termly Report.
- Supporting all staff in monitoring the attendance of individual pupils
- Monitoring the impact of any implemented attendance strategies
- Having an oversight of data analysis regarding attendance

- Setting and monitoring targets for improving attendance within the school, and evaluating targets with the senior leadership team
- Liaising with other partner agencies and services towards improving and developing strategies to raise levels of attendance.
- Authorising the issue of fixed penalty notices where necessary
- Promoting good attendance across the school community through the weekly newsletter and assemblies, and creating a whole school ethos of 'every school day matters'.

3.2 Class teachers

- Complete registers accurately and promptly
- Have regular discussions with pupils about the importance of regular attendance and punctuality
- Liaise with other school staff and respond to attendance issues promptly.
- Support the Trust/whole school ethos of promoting good attendance.
- To know and understand absence data, and to identify those pupils who are at risk of persistent absence and work with the attendance lead to offer early intervention and support.
- Celebrate good or improved attendance within their classrooms as agreed by the school, e.g extra playtimes, rewards.

3.3 Attendance Leads/Admin staff

- Producing and distributing attendance information for parents/carers
- Supporting all school staff in their work related to attendance
- Collating attendance data as required for senior leadership team, DfE, LA and LSB
- Identifying individual pupils with known punctuality/attendance issues, and ensuring these pupils are monitored closely
- Referring pupils to the Trust Attendance Lead when attendance gives cause for concern, and liaising with them to develop strategies to support these pupils/families.

3.4 The Local School Board

- Will receive information from the Headteacher and/or EWO on attendance in the Headteacher's termly report.
- Will support the school in setting attendance targets
- Will support the school in planning a response where attendance is a cause for concern
- Will support the school in its efforts to raise attendance
- May support the school by attending strategic meetings or attendance panels as appropriate.

3.5 Trust Attendance Lead

The Trust has its own appointed Attendance Lead who will:

- Work with the CEO, Head of Business and Operations, Headteachers, School Business Managers, Learning Mentors and Attendance Leads to develop and evaluate processes, communication streams and efficient ways of working to support attendance.
- Have an up-to-date knowledge of legal proceedings and support schools in relation to statutory processes, and provide advice for schools and engage with pupils, parents and families to improve pupil attendance rates
- Arrange and carry out home visits or on-site visits, to explore and offer support to improve pupil attendance

- Work with other staff and agencies who support pupils, such as local authorities and multi agencies, including support for Early Help assessments and TAF meetings
- Take part in internal meetings to share information and provide guidance on Trust policy where necessary
- Where required participate in Child Protection procedures as appropriate, including making an education contribution at case conferences and multi-agency meetings

4 STATEMENT OF EXPECTATIONS

4.1 What our schools expects of pupils:

- To attend school every day, unless in exceptional circumstances.
- To arrive on time, appropriately prepared for the day
- To report to their class teacher for registration, or to the school office if late
- To tell a member of staff if there is any problem which may prevent them from attending school

4.2 What our schools expects of parents/carers

- To fulfil their statutory responsibility by ensuring their children attend school regularly and on time
- To ensure they contact the school as per reporting procedures if their child is unable to attend
- To ensure their child arrives on time, and is well prepared for the day (equipment, homework completed, PE kit etc)
- To contact the school admin staff in confidence whenever a problem arises that may keep their child from attending school
- To inform the admin staff of any forthcoming appointments and, where possible, make appointments outside of the school day. Evidence of an appointment **must** be shown to the school office staff – without evidence, the absence for a full session will be logged as unauthorised. Parents collecting children early will also be asked to show evidence of the appointment.
- Holidays should be taken in the school holiday period only.

4.3 What parents can expect of their school

- The encouragement and promotion of good attendance
- Regular, efficient and accurate recording of attendance
- First day contact with parents when a pupil fails to attend school without providing prior notification
- Prompt action and support when attendance drops below the Trust target of 96%, or has 10 recorded absences in a 10 week period as per DfE guidance.
- Close liaison with the Trust Education Welfare Officer and LA Inclusion and Attendance Team to assist and support parents and pupils
- Notification to parents/carers of their child's attendance record through annual reports sent home (drawn from Arbor)

5 ATTENDANCE PROCEDURES

5.1 Registration procedures

At St Mary's registration procedures are as follows:

8:30am - gates are opened and children can arrive on the playground with parents.

8:40am – staff will supervise and class teachers will collect their children.

8:50am – registers open

8:55am – any children arriving after this time will be marked as late and asked to sign in at the inventory in the school office.

9:25am – registers close. Any child arriving after this time will be marked as 'U' – unauthorised absence.

5.2 Responding to lateness (punctuality)

Pupils who are regularly late for school will miss out on valuable learning time. Late arrival in school can not only disrupt the individual child's learning, but also that of their peers. Our schools will take active steps to address persistent lateness

- Staff will monitor lateness, and note persistent offenders. Arbor registers will be annotated with the number of minutes late.
- Where a pattern of repeated lateness is seen, the school will send the relevant 'Late' letter 1 to remind parents of the importance of good timekeeping.
- Where the problem persists, the school can ask the DSAT EWO to speak to parents by telephone to discuss their child's lateness and try to identify causes/seek remedies to the problem.
- If there is no subsequent improvement, school will send 'Late' letter 2, and parents will be invited to a meeting with the headteacher and Trust Attendance Lead.

5.3 The school's response to unexplained absence

Parents are expected to inform the school if their child is to be absent due to illness or other unexpected reasons. This should be done by contacting the school office and speaking to a member of staff, or leaving a message on our answerphone service.

There will be instances where this does not happen. In such cases, admin staff will follow a 'first day call' procedure as outlined below:

1. Call the pupil's parent/carer on the morning of the first day of unexplained absence to ascertain reason for absence.
 - Identify whether the absence is approved or not.
 - Identify the correct attendance code and input on register as soon as the reason is ascertained.
 - The school office may also send a text message to the primary contact to check on the absence.
 - If no contact has been received by 9:25am, the office staff will start to ring the secondary contacts on the pupil's file.
 - If no contact can be made with the family, a home visit will be undertaken by school staff or the Trust Attendance Lead.

- The school may choose to contact the Sheffield Safeguarding Hub if in person contact cannot be made with the family and there are concerns around the safety of the child(ren). This decision would be made following careful discussion between DSLs and SLT.

5.4 The school's response to attendance issues/following attendance pathways

- The school will identify and monitor pupils whose attendance gives cause for concern. The Trust will set a target for attendance, to be reviewed each academic year. The school will follow the latest DfE guidance re absences (taking action when there are 10 sessions of absence in a 10 week period.)
- The Trust target for the academic year 2024-25 is 96%.
- Pupils falling below this will be identified as in need of some support. The attendance lead in school should review the attendance certificates and make initial contact with the parent/carer to express their concerns and offer relevant support. School may ask the Trust Attendance Lead to become involved at this stage.
- If further absences take place or their attendance drops to 90% or below to become a persistent absentee, then a meeting will take place to put a support plan in place. This will involve the Headteacher and Trust Attendance Lead.
- If attendance does not improve over the next 3-4 weeks, a support plan will be created for the family, and further professional help accessed if not already in place. Regular review meetings will be held in school to monitor progress. The school will take advice from the LA Inclusion and Attendance Team should a more formal parenting contract be deemed necessary.
- Children whose attendance falls to 50% or below are deemed to be Severely Absent (SA) and will need a specific targeted plan. This should be created in liaison with support from the Local Authority Inclusion and Attendance Team.
- If absences persist, support has not worked or has not been engaged with, then as a last resort, enforcement options may be explored with the LA Attendance and Inclusion Team. This could result in legal action being taken, including but not limited to receiving a Fixed Penalty Notice.

5.5 Leave of absence (including holidays in term time)

The Trust will not authorise holidays in term time. Our schools will refer any cases of unauthorised holiday absence that meet Local Authority thresholds for the issuing of a Fixed Penalty Notice, currently £160 per parent/per child for any leave of absence of 5 days or more. This FPN will be reduced to £80 per parent/per child if paid within 21 days.

If parents do decide to take their child out of school during term time, applications for leave of absence should be made to the school at least 20 days prior to the date of absence. Leave of absence request forms must be collected in person from the school office, and not given out by class teachers.

Families requesting leave of absence for the purposes of Religious Observance should speak to their Headteacher for guidance.

6. CHILDREN MISSING FROM EDUCATION/ABSENT FROM EDUCATION

Children/students who cannot be located, or their families contacted, will be considered missing from education. The LA Children Missing from Education Team will be informed and will pursue the matter

in accordance with specific Local Authority procedures. If the family/ child is still deemed missing after 20 school days they may lose their school place and be removed from the school roll.

Similarly, schools will pay particular attention to those pupils whose persistent absence is impacting severely upon their education, and classed as 'absent from education'.

These cases will be discussed with SLT/Safeguarding leads and Trust EWO to ensure that appropriate and robust action is taken to address concerns.

SEE FOLLOWING APPENDIXES – Attendance Codes and Letters

APPENDIX 1 - ATTENDANCE CODES 2024-25

Code	Meaning	Type
/ \	Present at the school / morning \ afternoon	Present Mark
B	Attending any other approved educational activity - Alternative Provision not arranged through the approved framework	Present Mark
C	Authorised Circumstance (see next page for breakdown)	Authorised Absence
D	Dual registered at another school - Attending Sheffield Inclusion Centre - Attending Alternative Provision at another school site - Chapel House / Becton Outreach / CAMHS Lodges - Hospital education - Education at a secure / residential site - Off-site direction / managed move	Present Mark
E	Suspended or permanently excluded and no alternative provision made	Authorised Absence
G	Holiday not granted by the school or Term Time Leave not granted by the school	Unauthorised Absence
I	Illness (not medical or dental appointment)	Authorised Absence
J1	Leave of absence for the purpose of attending an interview for employment or for admission to another educational institution	Authorised Absence
K	Attending education provision arranged by the Local Authority - Home Tutoring - Approved Framework for Alternative Provision - Blended Learning	Present Mark
L	Late arrival before the registers have closed	Present Mark
M	Attended a medical appointment	Authorised Absence
N	Reason for absence not yet established	Unauthorised Mark
O	Absent in other or unknown circumstances	Unauthorised Absence
P	Participating in a sporting activity	Present Mark
Q	Unable to attend the school because of a lack of access arrangements	Not expected to attend
R	Religious Observance	Authorised Absence
S	Leave of absence for the purpose of studying for a public examination. Must be used sparingly with revision opportunities in school.	Authorised Absence
T	Parent travelling for occupational purposes, and the pupil has attended for at least 200 sessions in preceding 12 months.	Authorised Absence
U	Arrived in school after registration closed	Unauthorised Absence
V	Attending an Educational Trip or Visit	Present Mark
W	Attending Work Experience	Present Mark
X	Non-compulsory school age pupil not required to attend school	Not expected to attend
Y	Unable to attend school because of unavoidable cause (see next page for breakdown)	Not expected to attend
Z	Prospective or previous pupil not on admission register	Not expected to attend

Code	Meaning	Type
The Y code: Unable to attend school because of unavoidable cause, is broken down into the following sub codes to provide better differentiation of the reason:		
Y1	Unable to attend due to transport normally provided not being available	Not expected to attend
Y2	Unable to attend due to widespread disruption to travel	Not expected to attend
Y3	Unable to attend due to part of the school premises being closed. For example, this may be due to damage or teacher strikes.	Not expected to attend
Y4	Unable to attend due to the whole school site being unexpectedly closed. For example, extreme weather, damage, no hot water, or heating.	Not expected to attend
Y5	Unable to attend as pupil is in criminal justice detention. For example, in police detention, remanded to youth detention, awaiting trial or sentencing, or detained under a sentence of detention.	Not expected to attend
Y6	Unable to attend in accordance with public health guidance or law. contrary to or prohibited by any guidance relating to the incidence or transmission of infection or disease.	Not expected to attend
Y7	Unable to attend because of any other unavoidable cause. For example, an emergency has prevented the pupil from attending. The unavoidable cause must be something that affects the pupil, not just the parent.	Not expected to attend
The C code: Authorised Absence is broken down into the following sub codes to provide better differentiation of the reason:		
C	Leave of absence for exceptional circumstances. Where a leave of absence is granted, the school will determine the number of days a pupil can be absent from school. A leave of absence is granted entirely at the school's discretion.	Authorised Absence
C1	Leave of absence for the purpose of participating in a regulated performance or undertaking regulated employment abroad.	Authorised Absence
C2	Leave of absence for a compulsory school age pupil subject to a part-time timetable.	Authorised Absence