



## **Attendance policy**

For a child to reach their full educational achievement, a high level of school attendance is essential. St Mary's Primary & Nursery is committed to providing an education of the highest quality for all our pupils, and endeavours to provide an environment where all pupils feel valued and welcome.

It is our duty to strive to achieve a goal of 100% attendance for all children. To take full advantage of the educational opportunities offered, it is vital children are at school, on time, every day the school is open, unless the reason for the absence is unavoidable. High attainment, confidence and future aspirations depend on good attendance.

This is important as statistics show a direct link between under-achievement and absence. Regular attenders make better progress, both socially and academically. They find school routines, school work and friendships easier to cope with, and find learning more satisfying.

### **Guidelines**

#### **Lateness and punctuality**

Legally the register must be marked twice daily: once at the start of the school day and again for the afternoon session at 1.00pm.

It is important to be on time at the start of the day as it is used to give out instructions and organise work. If a child is late, they miss work time with their class getting information, cause disruption to the lesson for others, and it can be embarrassing, in turn leading to possible further absence.

Our doors open at **8.45am**, children are expected to arrive in class between **8.45 and 8.55am**, children arriving to class after this time will be recorded in the register with a 'Late Mark'. Our registers are closed at **9.15am**. Children who arrive after **9.15am** will be marked with an Unauthorised Absence for the morning session.

Parents are responsible for registering their child at the school office if they are late or are leaving the school site during school hours.

In the event of on-going and repeated lateness parents/carers will be contacted to discuss the importance of good time-keeping and how this might be achieved.

Children must be collected promptly at the end of the school day. Where late collection is persistent and / or significantly late, the school is obliged to take any uncollected pupil to a place of safety and share concerns, as necessary, with other agencies.

#### **What to do if your child is absent**

A child not attending school is considered a safeguarding matter. This is why information about the cause of any absence is always required.

If a child is absent, the parent / carer must:

- contact the school as soon as possible on the first day of absence
- send a note in on the first day they return with an explanation of the absence (even if you have phoned) or call into school and report to the office

If a child is absent, we will:

- phone parents / carers on the first day of absence if we have not heard from them - this is because we have a duty to ensure children's safety as well as their attendance
- if absence persists or causes concern, parents/carers will receive a letter notifying them and may become subject to an Attendance Action Plan if there is no improvement.

- ten days consecutive absence with no contact from parents/carers would trigger a referral to BANES on "child missing education" procedures. We will make all reasonable enquiries to establish contact with parents/carers, including making enquiries to known friends, wider family etc.

### **Request for leave of absence**

Headteachers may not grant any leave of absence during term time unless there are exceptional circumstance. The fundamental principles for defining "exceptional" are rare, significant, or unavoidable. There is no legal entitlement for time off in school term time to go on holiday. The parent/carer wishing to apply for leave of absence will need to fill in an application form two weeks in advance. If term-time leave is taken without prior permission from the school, it will be unauthorised, and in line with BANES Penalty Code of Conduct, parents may be liable for a penalty notice.

### **Understanding types of absence**

There are two main categories of absences:

- authorised - when the school has accepted the explanation offered or given advance approval
- unauthorised - when the school has not received a reason or has not approved a child's leave absence.

Attendance data is recorded daily, with a phone call to parents/carers if a reason for absence has not been given. The decision whether or not to authorise will always rest with the headteacher. Attendance is monitored regularly and may be followed up with the class teacher, headteacher, Children Missing Education Officer and/or the school nurse as necessary.

### **Penalty Notice for non-attendance and other legal measures**

In education law, parents/carers are committing an offence if they fail to ensure the regular attendance of their child of compulsory school age, unless the absence has been authorised by the school.

We follow BANES guidance and legal measures will only be considered when there is unauthorised absence. Parents/carers will be made aware of the likelihood of a Penalty Notice via a letter or through the leave of absence request form. A fine of £60 may be issued to each parent/carer who has responsibility for the child. If it is not paid within 21 days, the penalty is increased to £120. If the fine remains unpaid, the Council will consider prosecution for non-attendance. If you pay a Penalty Notice and your child has further unauthorised absences, additional legal action may be taken.

### **Absence through child participation in public performances; representative sport**

Parents must contact the headteacher to discuss the nature and frequency and whether education will be provided. It is down to the headteacher's discretion as to whether to authorise this, and they will wish to discuss the nature and frequency of the absence and how learning will continue if absence occurs.

For further information on school attendance and what to do if you think a child may be missing from education please contact The Children Missing Education Service on 01225 394241, email [cmes@bathnes.gov.uk](mailto:cmes@bathnes.gov.uk)

Other relevant policies include: Admissions; Behaviour; Child Safeguarding Protection; & SEND

*Policy drafted November 2021.*