St Mary’s Church of England Primary School & Nursery

*Inspiring Learning Together*

**

**Attendance policy**

**Rationale / purposes / aims**

*Schools should:*

1. *Promote good attendance and reduce absence, including persistent absence*
2. *Ensure every child has access to full-time education*
3. *Act early to address patterns of absence*

*Parents must perform their legal duty by ensuring children of compulsory school age who are registered to a school attend regularly.*

*All pupils must be punctual to their lessons.*

*[School Attendance. DfE 2014]*

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 below 95%. 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**, and our registers are closed at **9.00am**. Children arriving to class after this time will be recorded in the register with a Late mark. 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.

On-going and repeated lateness is considered as unauthorised absence, may be referred to the Children Missing Education Service, and is therefore subject to legal action. 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 and falls below 90%, parents/carers will receive a letter notifying them. These children may be termed “persistent absentees” and, with their parents, 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 in 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**

The Education (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations of September 2013 state that 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 and in the majority of cases holiday will not be authorised. The parent/carer (that the child normally resides with) wishing to apply for leave of absence will need to fill in an application form in advance(there is no restriction on *who* the absence is taken with - this is a matter for the parents, not the school).

A leave of absence will not be authorised for any pupil with less than 90% attendance.

If term-time leave is taken without prior permission from the school, it will be unauthorised.

**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. This includes parents giving permission to be off school unnecessarily, such as for birthdays, shopping etc.

Attendance data is recorded onto the school computer system daily, with a phone call to parents/carers if the reason for an absence has not been input. A note or explanation does not necessarily mean an absence becomes authorised. 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. Our school nurse can be contacted for further advice at Paulton Hospital on 01761 408 111.

Teachers ensure that all pupils are registered accurately, and communicate any concerns or underlying problems that may account for an absence. They also support pupils to engage with their learning once they are back in school.

**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 and:

* The family does not require support from any agency to improve the attendance
* The child has 10 or more sessions of unauthorised absence

The school may involve parenting contracts, BANES Penalty Notices and/or prosecution. Unless it would conflict with any other intervention strategies / sanctions, a Penalty Notice will be issued for any unauthorised absence where the pupil has been:

* Absent for 10 or more half-day sessions (five school days) during any 100 possible school sessions (these do not have to be consecutive)
* Persistently late (code U) for up to 10 sessions
* Persistently late (code L) for up to 10 sessions, but the school has met with parents and communicated any further lateness will be unauthorised
* Absent for any SATs

Parents/carers are warned of the likelihood of a Penalty Notice via a letter, through the leave of absence request form, or this Attendance policy on the school website. It is a fine of £60 issued to each parent/carer who was responsible for the child during the period of unauthorised absence. If it is not paid within 21 days, the penalty is increased to £120 if paid within 28 days. 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 will 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.

**What can I do to encourage my child to attend school?**

Children may sometimes be reluctant to attend school. Any problems with regular attendance are best sorted out between the school, the parents/carers and the child. It is never better to cover up absence or to give in to pressure to excuse them from attending – we will work together to tackle any problem. Ensuring children get enough sleep and get up in plenty of time each morning, leaving home in the correct clothes and properly equipped all show that parents / carers value their education.

**Record preservation**

School registers are legal documents. We ensure compliance with regulations by keeping attendance records for at least three years. Computer registers will be preserved as electronic back-ups.

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

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

*Policy drafted January 2018. SJ*