



## Attendance Policy

### Introduction

St. Mary's C of E Primary School recognises that positive behaviour and good attendance are central to raising standards and pupil attainment. This policy is written with the above statement in mind and underpins our school ethos to:

- promote children's welfare and safeguarding
- ensure every pupil has access to the full time education to which they are entitled
- ensure that pupils succeed whilst at school
- ensure that pupils have access to the widest possible range of opportunities when they leave school.

For our children to gain the greatest benefit from their education, it is vital that they attend regularly and arrive at school, on time, every day the school is open unless the reason for the absence is unavoidable. Any absence affects the pattern of a child's schooling and regular absence will seriously impact on their learning. Any pupil's absence or late arrival disrupts teaching routines and so may affect the learning of others in the same class.

Ensuring a child's regular attendance at school is a parental 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 focus on this we will:

- give parents/carers details on attendance in our newsletters
- report to parents/carers annually on their child's attendance with the annual school report
- notify parents/carers should their child's attendance fall below 92%

### 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.

**Authorised absences** are mornings or afternoons away from school for a good reason like:

- illness
- medical/dental appointments which unavoidably fall in school time
- days of religious observance
- exceptional family circumstances such as bereavement

- approved sporting activity
- approved educational activity such as examinations, educational visits, visiting a new school.

**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 using sanctions and/or legal proceedings. This includes:

- parents/carers unnecessarily keeping children off school
- 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 (details provided later in this policy)
- shopping, looking after other children or birthdays
- day trips and holidays in term time which have not been agreed.

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 a parent thinks their child is reluctant to attend school then we will work with that family to understand the cause of the problem. We can make referrals to supportive agencies such as the School Nurse or to the Norton-Radstock Behaviour and Attendance Panel to request a Parent Support Advisor.

### **Persistent Absenteeism (PA)**

The DfE (2015) consider that a pupil becomes a 'persistent absentee' when they miss 10% or more schooling across the school year for whatever reason. Absence at this level is doing considerable damage to any child's education and we need the fullest support and cooperation of parents to tackle this.

We thoroughly monitor all absence and the reasons provided for these. Any case that is seen to have reached the PA mark or is at risk of moving towards this mark is given priority and we will formally advise the child's parents/carers of this, via letter.

PA pupils and their parents may be subject to an Action Plan which will include the allocation of additional support through the School Nurse or the Norton-Radstock Behaviour and Attendance Panel. We may also use Circle Time, individual incentive programmes, individual targets and participation in group activities around raising attendance.

### **Absence Procedures**

If a child is absent the parent/carer must follow the following procedures:

- contact the school office before 9.20 a.m. on each day of absence
- the school has an answer phone where you can leave a message if nobody is available to take the call
- parents can also email the school or visit the school office in person to provide a reason for the absence.

If your child is absent we will:

- telephone or text you if we have not heard from you
- invite you in to discuss the situation with the Headteacher if absences persist

If the absence is persistent, and/or if there are safeguarding concerns, we may also refer the matter to the Children Missing Education Service and B&NES Social Care Team.

Class teachers record absent children by marking the register with an "N" code. If the school administrator is aware of the reason for absence, the code can be changed to reflect the relevant reason. If the reason is not known, the code will remain as "N" for a maximum of ten days, during which time we will send home a reminder slip to ask you about the absence. If, after ten days, you have not provided this reason this code will be changed to an "O" (Unauthorised Absence).

### **The Children Missing Education Service (CMES)**

Parents are expected to contact the school at an early stage and to work with staff to resolve problems. This is nearly always successful. If difficulties cannot be sorted out in this way, the school will draw up a formal action plan, and may refer the child to the Norton-Radstock Behaviour and Attendance Panel to request support. If the action plan is not successful, then the school will refer to the Children Missing Education Service for intervention. CME officers can use sanctions such as Penalty Notices or prosecutions in the Magistrates Court. Full details of the options open to enforce attendance at school are available from the school or the Local Authority on 01225 394241.

Alternatively, parents or children may wish to contact the CMES themselves to ask for help or information. The CMES is independent of the school and will give impartial advice. Contact details for the CMES are available from the school office or by contacting the Local Authority.

### **Lateness**

Poor punctuality is not acceptable. If a 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. Pupils who arrive late also disrupt lessons. It can also be embarrassing for the child and can encourage absence. Good time keeping is a vital life skill which will help our children as they progress through their school life and out into the wider world.

### **How We Manage Lateness**

School doors open at 8.45am but the day officially starts at 8.55 a.m. and we expect our children to be in school before the bell rings. Registers are taken once in class and are all marked by 9a.m.

If a child arrives in school after 8.55am they will need to enter school via the main entrance and should report directly to the school office. A late mark will be recorded for arrivals

between 9am and 9.05am but after that time registers will be closed. In accordance with the Regulations, if a child arrives after 9.05am they will need to be "signed in" at the office by the adult bringing them to school. School staff will record a mark (code U) in the electronic register that shows the child is on site, but this will not count as a present mark and it will mean they have an unauthorised absence. This may mean that the child's parent/s could face the possibility of a Penalty Notice if the problem persists.

If a child has a persistent late record the parent/s will be formally notified and may be asked to meet with the Headteacher to resolve the problem. However parents can approach us at any time if they are having problems getting their child to school on time.

### **Holidays In Term Time**

The DFE make it quite clear that Headteachers may not grant any leave of absence during term time, including for family holidays, unless there are exceptional circumstances. All twenty-three schools in Norton-Radstock have agreed to adopt a standard practice in authorising absence, and where requests for leave of absence applies to siblings in other schools, schools will liaise before making a final decision.

Exceptional circumstances could include:

- an immediate family member being seriously or terminally ill
- a death or significant trauma in the family
- a unique, one-off, never to be repeated occasion that is time limited.

Reasons of 'financial advantage' and 'family commitments' for a request for leave would not be sufficient under these criteria for permission.

If parents or carers wish to make a request for authorisation of a term time absence because they feel it is an exceptional circumstance, they are asked to complete and submit a **Leave of Absence Request Form** in advance, stating the reason why they need to take their child out of school. Even where exceptional circumstances do exist, the school may decide not to exercise its discretion to authorise leave where:

- a child's attendance record over the previous calendar year is under 95%, even if any previous absence was due to unavoidable illness
- the period of leave coincides with the start of a new academic year or is near to, or coincides with significant events in the school calendar
- a child is in Year 6 and the holiday dates fall immediately before, or during, statutory assessment periods for Year 6 pupils.

Should any request for absence be refused, the absence will be recorded as unauthorised in the school register. On returning from this absence, no matter what the length of that period of unauthorised leave, parents/carers will receive a standard notification letter outlining the circumstances under which they may be liable for a penalty notice.

Families who persistently take their children out of school for reasons that have not been authorised will be referred to the CMES.

## Penalty Notices

The Bath and North East Somerset Protocol states that penalty notices will usually be issued :

- when a child's attendance is below 95%
- where a pupil has 10 or more unauthorised absences (which is equivalent to 5 days).

In addition, parents should be aware that authorised officers have the discretion to issue a penalty notice for a first offence. This could be where the unauthorised absence was for an extended period and/or condoned by the parent. An example of this would be instances of unauthorised absence such as holidays taken during term time without the schools permission, where overall attendance is 95% or below for that academic year.

## Summary

Parents have a legal duty to make sure that their children attend school.

The school has a legal duty to publish its absence figures and to promote attendance. The school also has a legal duty to inform the local authority of any pupil who fails to attend school regularly, or has been absent without the school's permission for a continuous period of 10 school days or more.

School staff are committed to working with parents and pupils to ensure as high a level of attendance as possible. As educationalists, we cannot provide parent support advice, social care or give qualified medical advice; but we will, with consent, make referrals to the appropriate agencies to request support our families.

## Implementation, Monitoring And Review

The Headteacher is responsible for the day to day implementation of this policy. The review and monitoring of this policy is carried out by the Full Governing Body.

Signed: \_\_\_\_\_ Chair of Governors

Date adopted	14 <sup>th</sup> October 2015
First Review	12 <sup>th</sup> October 2016
Second Review	5 <sup>th</sup> July 2017
Third Review	10 <sup>th</sup> October 2018
Next Review Due	October 2020

*Note: In the event of DFE Statutory Legislation on Attendance changing before the review of this policy, the DFE guidance will take precedence.*



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**LEAVE OF ABSENCE REQUEST**

Headteachers may NOT grant any leave of absence during term time, including for family holidays, unless there are exceptional circumstances.

As all twenty-three schools in Norton-Radstock have agreed to adopt a standard practice in authorising absence, please indicate below if your request applies to siblings in other schools as we will liaise before making a final decision.

**To be completed by Parent/Carer:**

I request leave of absence for my child/children named below during the suggested dates:

Name of child/children .....Class.....

**Siblings in other schools**

Name: .....School: .....Year .....

Absence requested from: ..... until .....

Reason for request:

Signed: ..... Parent/Carer Date: .....

**To be completed by School Administrator:**

	Percentage Attendance this Academic Year
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**To be completed by Headteacher:**

	Leave of absence is approved due to <b>exceptional circumstances</b> .
	Leave of absence is <b>not</b> approved. Any absence from school between the dates requested will be marked as unauthorised. If your child's attendance is below 95%, this may also be referred to the Children Missing Education Service; and the Local Authority could decide to issue a Penalty Notice.

Signed ..... Headteacher Date: .....

This form will be copied for school records and for the parent to keep for future reference.