

ST MARY MAGDALENE CATHOLIC PRIMARY SCHOOL

ATTENDANCE POLICY



‘Growing Together in Faith & Love’

Last reviewed on: 7th October 2024

Next review by: 7th October 2026

1.0 Introduction

St Mary Magdalene Catholic Primary School recognises the link between the attendance and attainment of pupils. The aim of this policy is to encourage the highest possible levels of attendance and punctuality for pupils to support learning and achievement at St Mary Magdalene Catholic Primary School.

The importance of attendance and punctuality is underpinned by an awareness of safeguarding. It is important to see our children every day and provide an educationally safe and secure environment.

To gain the greatest benefit from their education it is vital that all pupils attend regularly and on time. Pupils should attend every day that school is open. As a school we set a target for all pupils to aim for 100% attendance, with the expectation all pupils achieve at least 97%.

As a school we define regular attendance as 97% or above.

St Mary Magdalene Catholic Primary School recognises that attendance is a matter for the whole school community. Our Attendance Policy should not be viewed in isolation; it is a strand that runs through all aspects of school improvement, supported by our policies on admissions, safeguarding and behaviour and inclusion.

This policy demonstrates our commitment to meeting the requirements laid out in the Department for Education statutory guidance “Working Together to Improve School Attendance” (Statutory Guidance from August 19, 2024)

2.0 Aims

- Provide a framework to support building strong relationships with families to ensure pupils have the support in place to attend school.
- Raise the profile of attendance and punctuality amongst the school community
- Set high expectations for the attendance and punctuality of all pupils
- Reduce the number of pupils who are persistently absent (90% or below) or severely absent (50% or below)
- Ensure every pupil has access to a full-time education
- Have clear procedures for the maintenance of accurate registration for all pupils.
- Ensure a systematic approach to gathering, analysing and acting upon attendance data is in place
- Ensure there is a proactive whole school approach that embeds consistency of practice.
- Continue to promote effective partnerships with the Local Authority, Children’s Services, School Health and other partner agencies.

3.0 Legal Framework

This policy is based on the Department for Education statutory guidance ‘Working Together to Improve School Attendance’

The guidance is based on the following legislation

- The Education Act 1996
- The Education and Inspections Act 2006
- School Attendance Pupil (Pupil registration) Regulations 2023

4.0 Roles and Responsibilities

4.1 Governance:

The governing board is responsible for:

- Making sure leaders fulfil expectations and statutory duties
- Ensuring that the school has high aspirations
- Regularly analysing attendance data and reviewing the school's performance
- Ensuring all staff receive adequate training on their role in supporting pupil attendance and punctuality
- Holding the headteacher to account for the implementation of the attendance policy

4.2 The Headteacher

The headteacher is responsible for:

- Implementation of this policy
- Reporting school level performance data to governors
- Ensuring effective communication between school and the local authority
- Ensuring effective communication with *parents and carers for all pupils where there are barriers to attendance

* Section 576 of the Education Act 1996, the definition of a parent under education law defines "parent" as:

All natural (biological) parents, whether they are married or not;

Any person who, although not a natural parent, has parental responsibility for a child or young person;

Any person who, although not a natural parent, has care of a child or young person.

4.3 The role of the Designated Attendance Lead - Claire Bellis-Knox (Head Teacher) The designated attendance lead is responsible for:

Leading attendance across the school

Offering a clear vision for attendance and punctuality improvement

Ensuring all staff are aware of their role in supporting pupil attendance

Evaluating the effectiveness of the school's process and procedures for managing attendance and punctuality

Implementing specific strategies to address poor attendance and poor punctuality identified through the analysis of data

Coordinating targeted intervention and support to pupils and families

5.0 Promoting regular Attendance at St Mary Magdalene Catholic Primary School

This is everybody's responsibility, all members of staff, parents / carers and pupils. To help us all focus on this, St Mary Magdalene Catholic Primary School will ensure: There is a designated attendance lead (DAL) for championing and improving attendance and punctuality.

- Effective strategies are in place to support all pupils to arrive on time for school.
- An engaging curriculum is provided
- High quality teaching and learning is delivered throughout the school (2YO – Y6)
- Pupils are provided with appropriate support from school and partner agencies to ensure regular attendance at school
- Pupils who experience difficulties in attending school or being punctual are provided with effective support at the earliest opportunity; attendance and punctuality are monitored rigorously
- Effective partnerships with parents are encouraged through regular contact and communication
- Parents are kept informed of pupil attendance and punctuality through the school's attendance procedures, we share weekly attendance with the children and parents displayed in the hall and school website and through newsletters
- Good attendance and punctuality are rewarded through regular individual pupil incentives for improvement, termly individual and class incentives such as house points, certification, badges
- Attendance and punctuality are regularly discussed with children in assemblies
- Attendance roles and responsibilities are clearly defined and all staff maintain focused in order to ensure that these are followed

6.0 Safeguarding

A child not attending school, persistent lateness, or children missing from education may be considered a safeguarding issue if this places the child at risk of harm. Therefore, information about the cause of any absence from school is required.

To safeguard all the children in our care, it is important that parents provide the school with their current contact details and provide additional contact numbers in case of an emergency.

More information on safeguarding and the protection of children can be found in the schools Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy:

[Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy](#)

7.1 Expectations of Parents

Ensuring your child's regular attendance and consistent punctuality at school is a parent / carer's legal responsibility (Section 444 of the 1996 Education Act) and permitting absence from school that is not authorised by the school creates an offence in law.

- Ensure your child arrives for school on time – morning gate opens at 8.25am and learning starts at 8.40am.
- Telephone school if your child is going to be late – 01908 321746
- Routine non-emergency medical and dental appointments should be made whenever possible outside of school hours. Confirmation of the appointment should be provided. Where possible, children are encouraged to attend school before and return after appointments.
- Contact school via Studybugs.com by 8.00 am on the first day of on the day of the absence and each subsequent day of absence), and advise when they are expected to return.
- If a message is sent/voice message left or phone call is made by the school due to your child's absence, it is important that you respond to ensure your child is appropriately safeguarded.
- Contact a member of the Senior Leadership Team if the reason for absence requires a more personal discussion.
- In case of emergency, school must have up to date contact numbers. Please ensure you inform us of any changes especially to mobile telephone numbers. (As a school we request the details a minimum of two emergency contacts are provided)
- Requests for exceptional circumstances leave of absence must be in writing using our Leave of Absence Request form and can only be authorised by Mrs Rosemarie Jones (Headteacher). Reasons such as a close family bereavement or taking part in a significant religious event would be acceptable for short absences. Unacceptable reasons for missing school, include general holidays, weddings, shopping, concerts and birthdays.

7.2 If a pupil is absent, we will:

- Telephone parents/carers on the first day of absence immediately after registration.
- If no response is received, two members of school staff may conduct a home visit.
- School will continue to attempt to make contact throughout the school day via telephone calls and where appropriate additional home visits.
- If families are non-contactable and safeguarding concerns are prevalent school will submit a MARF to CASS
- If a pupil's absence continues, the parent will be invited to meet the headteacher and any barriers to the child attending school can be discussed allowing for timely and appropriate support to be put in place. This may include:
 - reintegration support packages
 - Early Help assessment or referral to appropriate support services
 - time limited reduced timetable
 - support tailored to the pupil's and / or family's personal circumstances

If the parent/carer does not attend the meeting or engage in any support the school has offered and the pupil has accrued 10 sessions of unauthorised absence in a 10-week rolling period, the parents may be issued with a Notice to Improve, in agreement with the Education Welfare Service.

If unauthorised absences persist the headteacher will discuss actions with the school's Education Welfare Officer.

8.0 Understanding types of Absence

St Mary Magdalene Catholic Primary School must legally record the reason for all individual pupil absence. Therefore, it is important for parents/carers to directly inform school of the reason for absence, on the first day of absence.

8.1 Authorised Absence

Authorised absence - the school accepts the explanation offered as satisfactory. If no explanation is received, absences cannot be authorised. It is the headteacher, not parents who make the decision to authorise absence from school.

8.2 Unauthorised Absence

Unauthorised absence - when the school has not received a reason for absence or has not approved a child's leave of absence following a parental request.

This includes but is not exclusive to:

Parents/carers giving their children permission to be off school unnecessarily, such as for shopping, birthdays, to look after siblings.

Truancy before or during the school day.

Absences which have not been explained.

Pupils who arrive late after the close of registration – morning registration closes at 8.50am

This type of absence may lead to the use of penalty notices or other legal interventions from the Local Authority. St Mary Magdalene Catholic Primary School, in agreement with the Education Welfare Service, may issue a Notice to Improve to parents (in accordance with the National Framework for Penalty Notices and the Local Authority Code of Conduct) where their child has accrued 10 sessions of unauthorised absence in a 10-week rolling period.

The Notice to Improve period will cover 20 school days. If the child has any unauthorised absence during this time, the school will refer the case to the Local Authority requesting a penalty notice be issued.

8.3 Persistent Absence

Pupils are defined as persistent absentees by the Department for Education (DfE) if their attendance falls below 90%. This is for any absence whether authorised or unauthorised. The DfE expects schools to intervene early to prevent pupils becoming a persistent absentee (PA)

Whilst we understand that pupils can be absent from school because they are ill, sometimes they may be reluctant to attend. If a pupil is reluctant to attend or a parent has concerns, it is important that contact is made with the school at the earliest opportunity in order to gain support and to work together to gain a resolution.

Parents/carers are asked to contact the school office in the first instance.

8.4 Severe Absence

Pupils who miss 50% or more of school are classified as being severely absent by the Department for Education (DfE). This cohort of pupils are a priority group for St Mary Magdalene Catholic Primary School and additional support may be required from the Local Authority and partner agencies to support your child and improve their attendance. It is essential that parents/carers work in partnership with school and its partners, to ensure their child receives the support they require to overcome any barriers that are preventing them from attending school.

9.0 Why regular attendance is important

Any absence affects education and regular absence will seriously affect pupils' learning. Pupils who have regular time off often find it difficult to catch up and do well.

90% attendance is equivalent to a pupil missing one half day per week or approximately 118 lessons per year

Ensuring your child's regular attendance at school is your legal responsibility and permitting your child to have any absence without a good reason from school is an offence in law (The Education Act 1996) and may result in legal action.

10.0 The Education Welfare Officer (EWO)

The Education Welfare Officer (EWO) – will work with parents/carers to support their child in overcoming any barriers in attending school. The EWO will always try to resolve any issues by working in partnership with the school and family. If a resolution cannot be achieved to improve the pupil's attendance and where unauthorised absence persists and the parent/carer has refused or not engaged with support that has been offered, the local authority will be required to consider the instigation of legal proceedings.

Penalty Notices:

Milton Keynes City Council (LA) on receipt of a request from St. Mary Magdalene Catholic Primary School will issue a Penalty Notice to parents for the unauthorised absence of their child.

Before issuing a penalty notice the LA will consider:

- If the national threshold for considering a penalty notice has been met, 10 sessions of unauthorised absence in a rolling 10-week period
- If issuing a penalty notice is the best available tool to improve the attendance of the pupil
- If appropriate support has been put in place
- Consideration of the obligations that the school has under the Equality Act 2010 that would make issuing a penalty notice inappropriate
- Each parent/carer who is liable can be issued with a penalty notice, but this will usually be the parent/carer who allowed the absence
- The first penalty notice issued to a parent/carer in respect of a particular pupil will be charged at £160 if paid within 28 days. This will be reduced to £80 if paid within 21 days.

A second penalty notice issued to the same parent in respect of the same pupil in the rolling 3 year period is charged at £160 if paid within 28 days. There is no opportunity to pay a reduced amount.

A third penalty notice cannot be issued to the same parent in respect of the same child within 3 years of the date of issue of the first. In a case where the national threshold is met for a third time (or subsequent times) within those 3 years, alternative action will be taken. This will often include considering prosecution, but may include other tools such as one of the other attendance legal interventions

The Local Penalty Notice Code of Conduct is published on Milton Keynes City Council website.

11.0 Leave of absence in Term Time

The Law does not give any entitlement to parents/carers to take their child on holiday during term time.

Parents/carers can receive a penalty notice for taking unauthorised leave in term time without prior consent from school. Consent cannot be given retrospectively.

Any application for leave in term time must be in exceptional circumstances only and the headteacher must be satisfied that the circumstances warrant the granting of leave. The headteacher will determine the number of school days a child can be away from school if the leave is granted.

12.0 Lateness

Poor punctuality is not acceptable. If a pupil misses the start of the day, they can miss work and late arriving pupils disrupt lessons. It can be embarrassing for the pupil arriving late and can encourage future absence.

12.1 How we manage lateness

St Mary Magdalene Catholic Primary School

The school day starts at 8.40am when registers are taken by the class teacher and registration closes at 8.45am. Pupils will receive a late mark if they are not in their class by that time. School recommends that pupils arrive by 8.35 am.

If a pupil arrives late to school on a regular basis parents will receive a message informing them that their child's punctuality is being monitored. If there is no improvement parents/carers will be requested to attend a supportive meeting in school.

Late arrival to school following the close of registers is classified as an absence. If pupils arrive half an hour after the register closes, attendance will be coded as U (Code U is an unauthorised absence code). If a pupil is persistently late after the official close of the register and there are no barriers preventing the child from arriving on time, the school may request

the local authority issue a penalty notice. 10 U codes will automatically result in a penalty notice (an £80 fine which will increase to £160 if not paid within 28 days).

The official close of registration for St Mary Magdalene Catholic Primary School is 8.50am

If a parent has any problem getting their child to attend school on time they should contact the headteacher or school office who will offer support to resolve the problem.

13.0 People Responsible for Attendance at St Mary Magdalene Catholic Primary School

All governors, school staff, parents/carers and pupils need to work as a team to support the attendance, punctuality, safeguarding and achievement of pupils. This continued support therefore is vital in making every pupil's journey through school a success.

See attached appendices

14.0 Removal from Roll

From the 1st of September 2016 changes were introduced to the Pupil Registration Regulations 2016. These amendments affect all non-standard transitions; this is whenever a child of compulsory school age leaves a school before completing the school's final year.

As a school we are now required to: Inform the LA in every circumstance when deleting a pupil's name from the admission register. Inform the LA of the pupil's destination school and home address if the pupil is moving to a new school.

All schools must complete an Exit form and submit to Milton Keynes City Council.

All schools must provide information to the LA when registering new pupils, including the pupil's address and previous school.

If your child is leaving our school parents/carers are asked to:

Provide the attendance officer with comprehensive information about their plans, including, any date of a move, new address and telephone numbers, your child's new school and the start date when known. This should be submitted to school in writing.

If a pupil leaves and we do not have the above information, then your child may be considered to be a child missing in education. This requires schools and local authorities to carry out investigations to try to locate your child, which may include liaising with Children's Services, the Police and other agencies. By giving us the above information, these investigations can be avoided.

Appendices – Working Towards Best Practice

Attendance and Punctuality Roles and Responsibilities Guidance

When	Whom	Actions Expected
DAILY	Pupils	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Arrive on school site by 8.35 am • Be in class on time for registration at 8.40 am
	Class Teacher	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Registers are completed on the MIS system each day on time • Ensure attendance and punctuality have a high profile in class • Discuss absence and lateness with parents/carers upon arriving / returning to school • Welcome late arrivals into class sympathetically • Welcoming long-term absentees back into class
	Pastoral Staff	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ensuring staff have completed AM/PM registers • Ensuring input of accurate attendance marks in the register via MIS • Identify pupils who are absent from school without reason (before 10am) Log on MIS, parental voicemails and emails regarding student absences and lateness • Ensure the parents/carers of arriving pupils are spoken to ensure that their attendance is entered on to MIS • First day absence phone contact with parents/carers, following up unexplained absences where no message/phone call have been returned • Liaison with SLT and class teachers with regards to specific attendance and punctuality queries when action is required • Supporting staff with registration queries, support the interventions of the class teachers • Logging attendance of all pupils going out for / returning to school for medical, dental or visits • Daily liaison with other settings for pupils educated off site if appropriate to ensure AM and PM registers are provided within set time parameters and pupils who fail to attend with reasons unknown are followed up through the first day contact systems • Daily late process, log and send actions for relevant staff • Daily attendance googledoc (including reason for absence, vulnerabilities and historic attendance concerns) is accessible to SLT and Teachers and can be updated by all. • Reports shared with Governors
	Designated Attendance Lead	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Monitoring and tracking of staff not completing registers in line with Safeguarding requirements • Liaison with EWO and Pastoral staff regarding support strategies and interventions needed for identified pupils and families.

	EWO/HT/SLT	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Safeguarding home visits as required • Focused casework interventions with persistent absence pupils and families • Phone call contact with pupils/parent/carers • Home visits • Instigation of legal proceedings (EWO) • Tracking of actions and interventions and feedback to pastoral staff •
When	Whom	•
WEEKLY	Class teacher	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ensure all members of the class know the school target and their current attendance • Update information on attendance displays • Support pupils to catch up on missed work due to prolonged absence
When	PastoralStaff	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Informing SLT and EWO of pupil patterns of absence and lateness • Provide weekly pupil attendance and punctuality figures including PA and minutes late report • DAL to share attendance via newsletter, parent noticeboard, pupil noticeboard • Discuss punctuality concerns with the parents/carers of identified pupils • Pupil rewards – Golden Attendance Stars/house points/Termly Class Rewards/Individual Awards
	Designated Attendance Lead	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Monitoring and tracking of staff not completing registers in line with Safeguarding requirements • Liaison with EWO and pastoral staff regarding supportive interventions implemented to support the families of identified pupils Determine priority actions for the following week

When	Whom	Actions Expected
HALF TERM	Designated Attendance Lead	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Maintain a high profile of attendance and punctuality as a significant contributor to pupil achievement • Use attendance and punctuality data to identify and act to improve the attendance and punctuality of vulnerable pupils • Ensure that all teaching staff focus on attendance and punctuality in planning and pedagogy • Determine priority actions for the next half term
	Pastoral Staff	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Monitor and track attendance • Produce termly reports of vulnerable groups for action and information Liaise with EWO to share information and agree joint actions re action plans and pupils causing concern • Host Meetings - meet with parents/carers face to face for all PA pupils or pupils whose attendance is a concern to offer support • Meet with parents/carers face to face for all pupils who have a punctuality concern to offer support

TERM	Designated Attendance Lead	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The importance of attendance and punctuality is underpinned by awareness of safeguarding issues for all pupils both in school and those attending off site provision • School attendance review alongside the EWO • Ensure attendance and punctuality is given a high profile as a key driver of school improvement and provide support and guidance to SLT, for plans to raise attendance and punctuality • Ensure that the attendance policy is implemented across the school and systems are operating effectively • Report to SLT on attendance and punctuality matters • Ensure school welcome booklets, website, Dojo class story, X (formerly Twitter) and school newsletters promote attendance and punctuality • Ensure attendance and punctuality feature at ALL parent/carers evenings & meetings • Determine priority actions for the next term
	Headteacher	Ensure that attendance and punctuality maintain a high profile as a key driver of school improvement through close monitoring and scrutiny of attendance and punctuality data in conjunction with SLT and Governors