



St Mary's C E Primary School

Attendance & Punctuality Policy

"Live, Love and Learn together in the Light of the Life of Christ"

Rooted in Ephesians 5:8–11, 13–14

1. Introduction

At St Mary's C E Primary School, excellent attendance is fundamental to pupils' learning, wellbeing and long-term life chances. As a Church of England school, our Christian vision calls us to ensure every child can "live as a child of light", flourishing academically, socially, emotionally and spiritually.

Attendance is both an educational priority and a safeguarding responsibility. Regular attendance is strongly linked to positive outcomes, and absence, particularly persistent absence can be an indicator of unmet need, vulnerability or harm.

This policy is fully aligned with:

- DfE Working Together to Improve School Attendance (Statutory Guidance, July 2026)" Keeping Children Safe in Education (2026)
- Working Together to Safeguard Children (2023)
- Education Act 1996
- Education (Pupil Registration) Regulations 2006–2016
- Equality Act 2010
- Children and Families Act 2014
- Brent Local Authority Attendance Guidance
- Brent & Beckett Anti-Racist Award Standards

Our approach is relational, inclusive, antiracist and culturally competent, recognising the diverse lived experiences of our community and the structural inequalities that can affect attendance.

2. Principles

We commit to:

- Equity and antiracism — ensuring no group is disproportionately disadvantaged by our systems or decisions.

- **Family help** — identifying concerns early and offering support before difficulties escalate.
- **Cultural competence** — recognising the diversity of family structures, languages, faiths and cultural obligations.
- **Safeguarding first** — treating persistent or unexplained absence as a potential safeguarding concern.
- **Relational practice** — building trust with families and working collaboratively to remove barriers.
- **High expectations with high support** — promoting excellent attendance while understanding individual circumstances.
- **Data-driven action** — using attendance data to identify patterns, disproportionality and need.
- **Whole-school responsibility** — attendance is everyone's business.

3. Legal Framework

This policy is underpinned by:

- Education Act 1996
- Education (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2006, amended 2010, 2013, 2016
- Equality Act 2010
- Children and Families Act 2014
- DfE Working Together to Improve School Attendance (2022–2024)
- DfE School Attendance Guidance (2024 updates)
- Brent Local Authority Attendance Code of Practice

4. Definitions

4.1 Authorised Absence

Authorised absence may include:

- illness or medical needs
- medical, dental or specialist appointments
- religious or cultural observance
- family bereavement (including extended family, UK or abroad)
- caring responsibilities
- immigration, legal or housing appointments
- circumstances where the school agrees the absence is unavoidable

4.2 Unauthorised Absence

Absence is unauthorised when:

- the reason provided is not accepted by the school
- no reason is provided
- the child is absent without the knowledge or permission of the school

Only the school can determine whether an absence is authorised.

5. Communication of Absence

Families may notify the school via:

- telephone
- email
- text message
- in person
- agreed community languages

We aim to remove barriers to communication and ensure all families can contact us easily.

5.1 Attendance Registers

The school maintains attendance and admission registers in accordance with statutory requirements.

Attendance registers are taken at the start of the morning session and once during the afternoon session. Registers are completed at the same time for all pupils in each session.

Attendance data is monitored regularly to ensure accuracy and compliance with statutory guidance.

6. Safeguarding and First-Day Response

Attendance is monitored daily by the DSL and attendance team.

- **First-day calling** is completed for all pupils.
- **Same-day home visits** are carried out for pupils who are vulnerable, have a social worker, are on a CP/CIN plan, or where safeguarding concerns exist.
- **Unexplained or repeated absence** is treated as a safeguarding risk and may lead to referral to Family Help or MASH.
- Attendance concerns are recorded on CPOMS and monitored by the DSL.

Children Missing Education (CME)

The school recognises that children who are absent from education for prolonged periods may be at increased risk of harm, including neglect, exploitation, radicalisation, forced marriage and other safeguarding concerns. Attendance concerns will be considered alongside the school's safeguarding procedures and Children Missing Education duties. Where a pupil's whereabouts are unknown, the school will work with the Local Authority and other agencies as required.

7. Working in Partnership with Families

We work collaboratively with families to understand the reasons for absence. Our approach includes:

- supportive, non-judgemental conversations
- reasonable adjustments
- attendance support plans
- referrals to Early Help
- multi-agency meetings
- translation or interpretation where needed
- culturally sensitive approaches

Attendance concerns are not viewed as parental failure but as an indicator that support may be needed.

8. Requests for Leave of Absence

We expect pupils to attend school for all 190 days of the academic year.

Requests for leave must be made in advance. The Headteacher may authorise leave in exceptional circumstances, considering:

- cultural or religious obligations
- family bereavement
- significant family events
- travel related to immigration or legal processes
- circumstances where not granting leave would disproportionately disadvantage the child or family

8.1 Penalty Notices

The school follows the National Framework for Penalty Notices introduced in August 2024.

Where a pupil accumulates 10 sessions of unauthorised absence within a rolling 10-school-week period, the school may request that the Local Authority considers issuing a Penalty Notice.

Unauthorised term-time leave may also result in a Penalty Notice being issued.

Penalty Notices are issued in accordance with current legislation and Brent Local Authority procedures.

Term-time holidays are unlikely to be authorised unless exceptional circumstances apply.

9. Long-Term or Recurrent Absence

Where absence is long-term or recurrent, the school will:

- maintain regular contact with the family
- provide work or remote learning where appropriate
- liaise with health professionals
- consider reasonable adjustments
- involve the LA Inclusion/Attendance Service
- ensure safeguarding oversight

10. Persistent Absence (Below 90%)

For pupils at risk of persistent absence, we will:

- meet with parents/carers
- create an Attendance Support Plan
- identify barriers and co-design solutions
- consider formal attendance interventions and referral to the Local Authority where support has not secured improvement
- involve Family Help where appropriate
- monitor progress regularly

Legal intervention is considered only when supportive measures have been exhausted.

11. Severe Absence (Below 50%)

In line with DfE expectations, severe absence is treated as a high-risk safeguarding concern.

The school will:

- escalate to multi-agency support
- involve social care where appropriate
- ensure senior leadership oversight
- review all safeguarding and contextual factors
- consider intensive support packages

12. Anti-Racist Data Monitoring

We analyse attendance data by:

- ethnicity
- EAL
- SEND
- gender
- socioeconomic indicators
- vulnerable groups

Where disproportionality is identified, we take action to address systemic causes, not individual blame.

13. Rewards and Recognition

We celebrate:

- improved attendance
- effort
- resilience
- overcoming barriers

We avoid practices that disadvantage pupils with medical needs or disabilities.

14. Roles and Responsibilities

Governing Body

- monitors attendance trends
- ensures the policy is equitable, antiracist and compliant
- holds leaders to account for attendance outcomes

Headteacher

- ensures systems are robust, inclusive and safeguarding-led
- oversees strategic attendance work

Designated Safeguarding Lead

- oversees attendance as a safeguarding priority
- monitors vulnerable pupils

Attendance Lead

- acts as the school's strategic attendance champion
- monitors attendance data and trends
- co-ordinates attendance support and intervention
- liaises with external agencies and the Local Authority
- reports attendance information to governors

Class Teachers

- build strong relationships
- notice patterns early
- communicate concerns promptly

Parents/Carers

- ensure children attend regularly
- communicate absence promptly
- work with the school to remove barriers

15. Review

This policy is reviewed annually, or sooner if guidance changes.

The review includes analysis of equity, disproportionality and impact on minorities/groups.

Approved by Governing Body:

Date: September 2026

Review cycle: Annual (sooner if guidance changes)

Next review due: September 2027