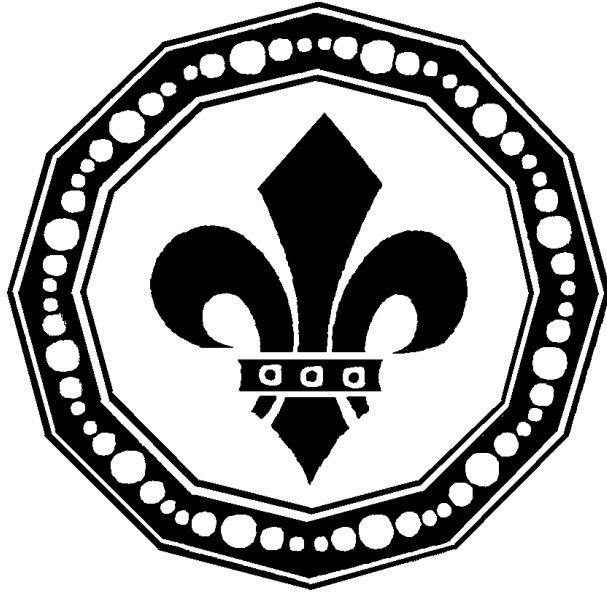


*"Flourish for the future"*



**ST. MARY'S  
CHURCH OF ENGLAND  
PRIMARY SCHOOL, WELHAM GREEN  
Attendance Policy**

Date: **January 2024**

Review: **January 2025**

Headteacher – Mr. A.D. Petty

Chair of Governors – Mrs S Hoile

**We are a welcoming Christian community where every child has the chance to flourish. We bring and share joy, inspire daily and creatively equip children for the future. We're thankful for all that God has provide; proud of where He has placed us; and excited about the potential to come.**

All the policies of St Mary's C of E Primary School reflect the Christian vision, aims and values of the school.

We have considered the impact this policy may have on our children with SEND.

This policy has been equality impact assessed to ensure that it does not have an adverse effect on race, gender, age or disability.

Our school aims to ensure that all personal data collected about staff, pupils, parents, governors, visitors and other individuals is collected, stored and processed in accordance with the [General Data Protection Regulation \(GDPR\)](#) and the relevant provisions of the Data Protection Act 2018 (DPA 2018).

This policy applies to all personal data, regardless of whether it is in paper or electronic format.

This policy has been written using the Local Authority Policy on School Attendance and DfE guidance. To best serve the children at St Mary's CofE (VA) Primary School the Governing and Staff Body are committed to achieving excellent levels of teaching, learning, behaviour and attendance in the context of our caring, Christian community. Our school vision: We are a welcoming Christian community where every child has the chance to flourish. We bring and share joy, inspire daily and creatively equip children for the future. We're thankful for all that God has provide; proud of where He has placed us; and excited about the potential to come.

Our school welcomes children of all faiths and none and they are admitted using our Admission policy criteria which can be found on our website. Not all children live in the Parish of North Mymms St Mary's; some travel from Potters Bar, Hatfield and St Albans.

St Mary's CofE (VA) Primary School, Welham Green aims to maximise attendance rates in order to ensure that all children are able to take the fullest advantage of the learning experiences available to them. Underpinning this commitment is the belief that if children attend school regularly and punctually they will reach their full potential.

### **Statutory Framework**

Under Section 199 of the 1993 Education Act, a pupil is required to attend regularly at the school where he/she is a registered pupil. The school is obliged by law to differentiate between authorised and unauthorised absence. A letter or telephone message from a parent does not, in itself, authorise an absence. Only if the school is satisfied with the explanation of absence will it be authorised.

### **Rights and Responsibilities**

Monitoring and sustaining good attendance at St Mary's CofE (VA) Primary School is the responsibility of the whole school community.

### **Children**

All children are expected to attend school and all of their lessons punctually and regularly. Children who do experience attendance difficulties will be offered prompt and sympathetic support from their class teacher, support staff and from the Headteacher.

### **Parents**

Parents are responsible in law for ensuring that their children of compulsory school age receive an efficient education suitable to their age, ability, aptitude and any special educational needs that they may have. Most parents fulfil this responsibility by registering their children at a school.

Parents whose children are registered at a school are responsible for ensuring that their children attend and stay at school.

To achieve this parents should:-

- ensure that they are aware of this Attendance Policy;
- ensure that their children arrive at school on time, properly dressed and ready to learn;

- instil in their children an appreciation of the importance of the education received at St Mary's CofE (VA) Primary School;
- instil in their children an appreciation of the importance of attending school regularly;
- take an active interest in their children's school career, praising and encouraging good work and behaviour and attending parents' evenings and other relevant meetings;
- impress upon their children the need to observe the school's code of conduct;
- work in partnership with their children's school to resolve issues which may lead to nonattendance;
- notify their child's school if he/she is absent. This should be done as soon as possible on the first day of absence. They should also provide an explanation for the absence;
- avoid arranging medical/dental appointments during school hours;
- avoid booking holidays during term time.

### **School**

Schools are responsible for supporting the attendance of their children and for dealing with problems that may lead to non-attendance. Schools are required to call attendance registers at the start of the morning session and once during the afternoon session and to record whether children are present, absent or on an approved educational activity.

To achieve this at St Mary's we will:-

- promote good attendance and work actively to maximise attendance rates - both in relation to individual children and for the pupil body as a whole;
- support parents in ensuring the regular and punctual attendance of children and promptly;
- respond to any issue which may lead to non-attendance;
- be sensitive to the needs of individual parents and this should be reflected in the way in which attendance issues are addressed;
- apply this policy for school attendance consistently;
- clearly communicate this policy to all parents, children and staff.

### **Local Authority**

- The Attendance and Pupil Support Service fulfils the statutory duty of the County Council in enforcing regular school attendance. In doing so it enables schools and parents to meet their respective responsibilities.
- Each maintained school in Hertfordshire will be allocated an Attendance Improvement Officer who will work in close partnership with the school.
- In working closely with schools the Attendance Improvement Officer will offer the following services:
  - ✓ Consultation Visits
  - ✓ Casework
  - ✓ In-Service training for school staff
  - ✓ Legal Action - If a parent fails to register a child of compulsory school age at a school (and he/she does not intend to educate the child otherwise than at school), the LA will serve a School Attendance Order under Sections 437 - 439 of the Education Act 1996. If a pupil who is registered at a school, fails to

attend that school regularly without a legitimate reason and attempts by the Attendance Improvement Officer and the school fail to secure that pupil's return to regular attendance, the County Council will take legal action.

### **Promoting Good attendance**

To maintain high levels of attendance at St Mary's CofE (VA) Primary School we have taken a positive approach in rewarding good and outstanding attendance.

- At St Mary's CofE (VA) Primary School will offer an environment in which children feel valued and welcomed. The school's ethos must demonstrate that children feel that their presence in school is important, that they will be missed when they are absent/late and that follow up action will be taken.
- The children who achieve a very good attendance or who have dramatically improved attendance under difficult circumstances will be given recognition along with children who maintain very high attendance and 100% attendance each term and throughout the year.
- Children who are absent through sickness for any extended period of time will (when appropriate) have work sent home to them and will be supported back into school upon their return to good health through a reintegration programme.
- The Headteacher will make a termly report to the governing body on attendance matters.
- Parents will be regularly reminded (via newsletters, the school brochure, parents' evenings, etc.) of the importance of good attendance.

### **Registration**

School has a soft start from 8.40am. Doors close at 8.50 am. This allows registers to be taken at 8.50am and again at 1 pm. The registers remain open until 9.10am and 1:15pm respectively. After this time, unless there is a satisfactory explanation, is recorded as an unauthorised absence (late after registers close).

Children arriving after 8:50 am, "after doors have closed" should make their way to the school office where the child's lateness will be logged and the child escorted to their classroom. Children arriving after 8:50 am but before 9am are recorded as "late".

### **Hertfordshire policy on attendance states:**

- *When a pupil arrives late and the register is still open he/she should be marked as 'late' but counted as present for that session.*
- *When a pupil arrives after the register has closed and provides a satisfactory explanation, he/she should be marked as 'authorised absent' for that session.*
- *When a pupil arrives after the register has closed and fails to provide a satisfactory explanation, he/she should be marked as 'unauthorised absent' for that session.*
- *When a pupil arrives late having missed registration, his/her presence on site should be noted in a book in the school office for purposes of emergency evacuation, etc.*

*(Punctuality p5)*

**Please ensure your child arrives at school by 8.50am.**

If lateness persists, the Headteacher will contact the parents to discuss the matter. The Headteacher will inspect registers weekly and will discuss any concerns with the Attendance Improvement Officer (AIO) during termly visits.

#### **Procedures for following up absence**

- If by 9.30am the school has not heard from a parent stating a reason why their child is absent, the school secretary will contact a parent for an explanation – First Day Response.
- The school secretary will pass on messages about absence to the class teacher who indicates on the register the reason why a child is absent.
- If a child returns to school after an absence without an explanation the parents will be contacted.
- If a child is absent for more than three consecutive days without an explanation, the Headteacher or the school secretary will telephone the parents.
- If a child is persistently absent the Headteacher will either have a phone call with the parents or invite the parents to the school for a meeting.
- The County will provide an Attendance Improvement Officer to examine patterns in attendance and absence on a termly basis. He/she may also contact the parents, if the school's initiated meetings or letters have had little impact.

#### **AUTHORISED/UNAUTHORISED ABSENCE**

Only the school can authorise an absence. The fact that a parent has provided a note or other explanation (telephone call or personal contact) in relation to a particular absence does not, of itself, oblige the school to accept it if the school does not accept the explanation offered as a valid reason for absence. If, after further investigation doubt remains about the explanation offered – or when no explanation is forthcoming at all - the absence should be treated as unauthorised.

Absence should be authorised if:

- the child is absent with leave granted by the Governing Body or Headteacher of the school;
- the child is ill or prevented from attending by any unavoidable cause. If the child's attendance rate is 85% or below medical evidence may be required in order to authorise;
- there is a family bereavement;
- the absence occurs on a day exclusively set aside for religious observance by the religious body to which the child's parent belongs;
- the child is the child of Traveller parents who temporarily leave the area giving reasonable indication of their intention to return;
- the school at which the child is a registered child is not within walking distance of the child's home; and no suitable arrangements have been made by the LA for any of the following:
  - i) the child's transport to and from school;
  - ii) boarding accommodation for the child at or near the school;
  - iii) enabling the child to become a registered pupil at a school nearer to his/her home.

### **Activities approved for leave**

Children who are engaged in off-site educational activities should be recorded as approved educational activity. For statistical purposes such children are counted as present even though they are physically absent. A child should be recorded as approved educational activity if he/she is on:

- . an approved work experience placement;
- . a field trip or educational visit;
- . an approved sporting activity;
- . a link course;
- . the child is attending an interview for a place at another school;
- . receiving special tuition at another school (or at an ESC).

Absence will be unauthorised if:

- no explanation is forthcoming from the parents,
- if the school is dissatisfied with the explanation,
- if the child is away from school on a family holiday during term time,
- parents have not sought approval for a known absence in advance.

### **Family Holiday**

The amended the Education (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2006 no longer allows Headteachers to grant discretionary leave of absence for the purpose of a family holiday during term. The legislation makes it clear that Headteachers may not grant any leave of absence during term time unless there are **exceptional** circumstances.

If you believe that your request will have exceptional circumstances, please put your request in writing to the Headteacher and this will be considered by the Headteacher and may be discussed with a representative from the Governing Body.

### **Fixed Penalty Notices**

We expect parents/carers to work with us to address attendance problems, but St Mary's School follows the Hertfordshire County Council's Penalty Notice for Unauthorised Absence procedures and if a pupil has at least 15 sessions (half day = 1 session) unauthorised absence in the current and/or previous term (including unauthorised holidays), the Headteacher may ask the Local Authority to issue a Penalty Notice. The Fixed Penalty Notice may also be used if the school considers that issuing a penalty notice could stop further absences.

The penalty is £60 if paid within 21 days of receipt of the notice, rising to £120 if paid between 21 days and 28 days. If the penalty is not paid, the Local Authority may prosecute parents/carers for their child's irregular attendance.