

St Mary's Catholic Primary Schools Trust



'Aspire not to have more but to be more.'

(St Oscar Romero)

Pupil Attendance and Punctuality Policy

Compliance statement

Every policy is reviewed at regular intervals and where applicable, as directed by law. Each policy is also available in additional formats in additional languages upon request, within reasonable timescales as stated by the school.

Reviewer/s:	Sarah Fizul and Vicky Mitchell
Last Reviewed on:	September 2026
Next Review due by:	September 2027
Approved by:	Governors September 2026

Aims

St Mary's Catholic Infant & Junior schools are commitment to meeting our obligations with regards to school attendance through culture & ethos that values good attendance, including;

- Setting high expectations for the attendance and punctuality of all pupils
- Promoting good attendance and the benefits of good attendance
- Reducing absence, including persistent and severe absence
- Ensuring every pupil has access to the full-time education to which they are entitled
- Acting early to address patterns of absence
- Building strong relationships with families to make sure pupils have the support in place to attend school
- We will also promote and support punctuality in attending lessons.

Legislation and Guidance

This policy is based on the DfE's statutory guidance on [Working together to improve school attendance](#) and [School attendance parental responsibility measures](#). The guidance is based on the following pieces of legislation, which set out the legal powers and duties that govern school attendance:

- Part 6 of the [Education Act 1996](#)
- Part 7 of the [Education and Inspections Act 2006](#)
- [The School Attendance \(Pupil Registration\) \(England\) Regulations 2024](#)
- [The Education \(Penalty Notices\) \(England\) \(Amendment\) Regulations 2013](#)
- The [Equality Act 2010](#)

It also refers to:

- [School census guidance](#)
- [Keeping Children Safe in Education](#)
- [Mental health issues affecting a pupil's attendance: guidance for schools](#)
- Ofsted's 2025 framework toolkit

The Local Governing Board

The governing board is responsible for:

- Setting high expectations of all school leaders, staff, pupils and parents/carers, but adapts processes and support to pupils' individual needs
- Making sure school leaders fulfil expectations, statutory duties and comply with the law on school attendance, including:
 - Ensuring the school records attendance accurately in the register, and shares the required information with the DfE and local authority
 - Making sure the school works effectively with local partners to help remove barriers to attendance, and keeps them informed regarding specific pupils, where appropriate
 - Working with school leaders to set goals or areas of focus for attendance and providing support and challenge

- Recognising and promoting the importance of school attendance across the school's policies and ethos
- Making sure the school's attendance management processes are delivered effectively, and that consistent support is provided for pupils who need it most by prioritising staff and resources
- Regularly reviewing and challenging attendance data and helping school leaders focus improvement efforts on individual pupils or cohorts who need it most
- Monitoring attendance figures for the whole school and repeatedly evaluating the effectiveness of the school's processes and improvement efforts to make sure they are meeting pupils' needs
- Where the school is struggling with attendance, working with school leaders to develop a comprehensive action plan to improve attendance
- Making sure all staff receive adequate training on attendance as part of the regular continued professional development offer, so that staff understand:
 - The importance of good attendance
 - That absence is almost always a symptom of wider issues
 - The school's legal requirements for keeping registers
 - The school's strategies and procedures for tracking, following up on and improving attendance, including working with partners and keeping them informed regarding specific pupils, where appropriate
- Holding the headteacher to account for the implementation of this policy

The Headteacher

The headteacher is responsible for:

- Implementation of this policy
- Monitoring school-level attendance data and reporting it to governors
- Supporting staff with monitoring the attendance of individual pupils
- Lead attendance strategy
- Offering a clear vision for attendance improvement
- Evaluating and monitoring expectations and processes
- Oversee data analysis
- Devising specific strategies to address areas of poor attendance identified through data.
- Building relationships with parents/carers to discuss and tackle attendance issues.
- Creating intervention and reintegration plans in partnership with pupils and their parents/carers
- Delivering targeted intervention and support to pupils and families.
- Working with education welfare officers to tackle persistent absence.
- Working with the parents/carers of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) to develop specific support approaches for attendance for pupils with SEND, including where school transport is regularly being missed, and where pupils with SEND face in-school barriers
 - Adjusted start times
 - Reduced timetables (time-limited)
 - Transport support

In line with the Equality Act 2010, the school will consider reasonable adjustments for child with SEND, including flexible start times, support with transport barriers, and time-limited reduced timetables where appropriate.

- Communicating with the local authority when a pupil with an education, health and care (EHC) plan has falling attendance, or where there are barriers to attendance that relate to the pupil's needs
- Communicating the school's high expectations for attendance and punctuality regularly to pupils and parents/carers through all available channels
- Communication will be delivered through newsletters, text messages, email, the school website and parent meetings to ensure consistent messaging
- Notify the LA of CME risks, prolonged absence, or register changes

- Providing the local authority with the details of pupils who the school believes will miss 15 days consecutively or cumulatively because of sickness

The Attendance Officer

The school attendance officer is responsible for:

- Monitoring and analysing attendance data
- Benchmarking attendance data to identify areas of focus for improvement
- Providing regular attendance reports to school staff and reporting concerns about attendance to the designated senior leader responsible for attendance, and the headteacher
- Working with education welfare officers to tackle attendance and punctuality concerns
- Hold meetings with parents/carers regarding concerns of attendance and punctuality
- Keep parents/carers up dated on their child's attendance and punctuality figures
- Advising the headteacher and Deputy Head Teacher (authorised by the headteacher) when to apply for a Penalty notice from the Local Authority
- Completing home visits with Head Teacher/ Education Welfare Officer, and referring to the CME department (children missing from education)

The school will follow Croydon Local Authority CME procedures and notify the LA immediately when a pupil is at risk of becoming missing from education.

The attendance officer is Mrs I Escrader in the Infant School and Mrs S Davies in the Junior school and can be contacted via telephone and email.

Infant school: 0208 688 2891 or email office@st-marys-inf.croydon.sch.uk

Junior school: 0208 688 4893 or email office@st-mary-jun.croydon.sch.uk

The Designated Senior Leader responsible for attendance

The designated senior leader is responsible for:

- Leading, championing and improving attendance across the school
- Setting a clear vision for improving and maintaining good attendance
- Evaluating and monitoring expectations and processes
- Having a strong grasp of absence data and oversight of absence data analysis
- Regularly monitoring and evaluating progress in attendance
- Establishing and maintaining effective systems for tackling absence, and making sure they are followed by all staff
- Liaising with pupils, parents/carers and external agencies, where needed
- Building close and productive relationships with parents/carers to discuss and tackle attendance issues
- Creating intervention or reintegration plans in partnership with pupils and their parents/carers
- Delivering targeted intervention and support to pupils and families

School admin staff

School Admin staff will:

- Take calls from parents/carers about absence on a day-to-day basis and record it on the school system
- Support school staff in monitoring, obtaining and recording reasons for absence.
- Request further information to be sent via email
- Transfer calls from parents/carers to the Headteacher or Deputy Headteacher where appropriate, in order to provide them with more detailed support on attendance

Class Teachers

Class teachers are responsible for recording attendance for both morning and afternoon sessions on a daily basis, using the correct codes and submitting this information to the school office by 9.10am in the Infant School and 9.10am in the Junior school

Parent / Carer Responsibilities

Parents / carers are expected to:

- Ensure that children of compulsory school age receive efficient full-time education
- Make sure their child attends every day on time.
- Brings their child at opening time 8:50am in Junior school, 8:55am in Infant school
- Collects their child at the end of the day on time, 3:30pm at the Junior school and 3:25pm at the Infant school
- Ensure child is present with correct uniform and ready to start the day at 09:00am
- Call the school to report their child's absence before 8:30am on the day of the absence and each subsequent day of absence and advise when they are expected to return
- Provide the school with medical evidence is requested
- Ensure that, where possible, appointments for their child are made outside of school day and inform the school as soon as they are aware of the appointment
- Provide the school with more than 1 emergency contact number for their child
- When moving school or home, informing the school as soon as possible with

St. Mary's Catholic Infant and Junior Schools ensures that parents / carers:

- are reminded of their statutory duties.
- are aware of our school's requirements as regards notification of absence
- have access to the school's Attendance and Punctuality Policy

Pupils Responsibilities

Pupils are expected to:

- Attend school every day, on time.

Absence

Registers are kept accurately as they are **legal documents that may be required in a court of law** where parents are being prosecuted for school attendance offences. They are also important for health and safety reasons.

We will keep an electronic attendance register, and place all pupils on this register.

We will take our attendance register at the start of each morning session of each school day and once during each afternoon session. It will mark, using the appropriate national attendance and absence codes from the School Attendance (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2024, whether every pupil is:

- Present
- Attending a place other than school
- Absent
- Absent – unable to attend due to unavoidable causes

Absence is either authorised or unauthorised. Only the school can authorise absence, not the parents or carers.

- If a parent / carer fails to inform the school of a child's absence on the first day the school will contact the home via telephone/text or email by 10am.
- If no reason is given for absence this will be treated as unauthorised, and reported
- Where there are worrying levels of absence or emerging patterns of high or regular absence, even where absence is authorised, the school will make a referral to the Educational Welfare Service.

Authorised Absence

The headteacher will only grant a **leave of absence** to a pupil during term time if the request meets the specific circumstances set out in the [2024 school attendance regulations](#). These circumstances are:

- Taking part in a regulated performance, or regulated employment abroad
- Attending an interview for employment or for admission to another educational institution
- A temporary, time-limited part-time timetable
- Exceptional circumstances

A leave of absence is granted at the headteacher's discretion, including the length of time the pupil is authorised to be absent for.

We define 'exceptional circumstances' as

- Family emergencies (e.g. death of a mother, father, carer or sibling)
- Medical emergencies of the child

This list is not exhaustive. The headteacher will consider each request individually, taking into account the specific facts, context and needs of the child and family.

As a leave of absence will only be granted in exceptional circumstances, it is unlikely a leave of absence will be granted for the purposes of a family holiday.

The school considers each application for term-time absence individually, taking into account the specific facts, circumstances and relevant background context behind the request. The school will consider the full context of each request, including family circumstances, safeguarding considerations, and any existing support plans.

Any request should be submitted as soon as it is anticipated and, where possible, and in accordance with any leave of absence request form, accessible via the school office. The headteacher may require evidence to support any request for leave of absence.

Other reasons for Authorised Absence

Other valid reasons for **authorised absence** include (but are not limited to):

- Illness (including mental-health illness) and medical/dental appointments
- Where mental-health needs affect attendance, the school will work with families and external agencies to provide appropriate support and adjustments.
- Religious observance – where the day is exclusively set apart for religious observance by the religious body to which the pupil's parent(s) belong(s). If necessary, the school will seek advice from the parent's religious body to confirm

whether the day is set apart for religious observance. Pupils should attend school on the days surrounding those set apart for religious observance

- Parent(s) travelling for occupational purposes – a pupil is a mobile child if their parent is travelling in the course of their trade or business and the pupil is travelling with them. In these circumstances a pupil will be considered as a mobile child, provided they are of compulsory school age and have no fixed abode and whose parent is in a trade or business that requires them to travel from place to place
- If the pupil is currently suspended or excluded from school (and no alternative provision has been made)

Monitoring Attendance

The school will monitor attendance and absence data (including punctuality) weekly, half-termly, termly and yearly across the school and at an individual pupil, year group and cohort level.

Specific pupil information will be shared with the DfE on request.

Data will be collected each term and published at national and local authority level through the DfE's school absence national statistics releases. The underlying school-level absence data is published alongside the national statistics.

The school will benchmark its attendance data at whole school, year group and cohort level against local, regional, and national levels to identify areas of focus for improvement, and share this with the governing board.

The school will:

- Analyse attendance and absence data regularly to identify pupils, groups or cohorts that need additional support with their attendance, and
- Identify pupils whose absences may be a cause for concern, especially those who demonstrate patterns of persistent or severe absence
- Conduct thorough analysis of half-termly, termly, and full-year data to identify patterns and trends
- Look at historic and emerging patterns of attendance and absence, and then develop strategies to address these patterns

Improving Attendance

The school will:

- Develop targeted actions to address patterns of absence (of all severities) of individual pupils, groups or cohorts that it has identified via data analysis
- Provide targeted support to the pupils we have identified whose absences may be a cause for concern, especially those who demonstrate patterns of persistent or severe absence, and their families.

Support will follow a graduated approach, beginning with early help strategies and escalating only where necessary.

- Provide regular attendance reports to class teachers to facilitate discussions with pupils and families, and to the governing board and school leaders (including special educational needs co-ordinators, designated safeguarding leads and pupil premium leads)
- Use data to monitor and evaluate the impact of any interventions put in place in order to modify them and inform future strategies

- Share information and work collaboratively with other schools in the area, local authorities and other partners where a pupil's absence is at risk of becoming persistent or severe, including keeping them informed regarding specific pupils, where appropriate

The school will work proactively with Croydon LA, health services, and neighboring schools to ensure a joined-up approach to attendance improvement.

Reducing Persistent Absence

Persistent absence is where a pupil misses 10% or more of school, and severe absence is where a pupil misses 50% or more of school. Reducing persistent and severe absence is central to the school's strategy for improving attendance. The school will:

- Use attendance data to find patterns and trends of persistent and severe absence
- Consider potential safeguarding issues and, where suspected or present, address them in line with Keeping Children Safe in Education
- Attendance concerns may indicate wider safeguarding issues. The school will follow KCSIE and Croydon safeguarding procedures when attendance patterns raise concerns.
- Hold regular meetings with the parents of pupils who the school (and/or local authority) considers to be vulnerable or at risk of persistent or severe absence, or who are persistently or severely absent, to:
 - Discuss attendance and engagement at school
 - Listen, and understand barriers to attendance
 - Explain the help that is available
 - Explain the potential consequences of, and sanctions for, persistent and severe absence
 - Review any existing actions or interventions
- Provide access to wider support services to remove the barriers to attendance, in conjunction with the local authority, where relevant
- Consider alternative support that could be put in place to remove any barriers to attendance and re-engage these pupils. In doing so, the school will sensitively consider some of the reasons for absence
- Implement sanctions, where necessary (see section 7, above)

The Educational Welfare Service

- LEAs are charged in law with enforcing attendance. Croydon LEA can apply to the Courts for an Educational Supervision Order, and where necessary, can prosecute parents / carers. This work is undertaken by the Educational Welfare Service.
- St. Mary's has an effective working relationship with our Educational Welfare Officer, who comes into school regularly.
- Any incidences of poor or regular pattern attendance, persistent lateness and unauthorised absence will always be referred to the Education Welfare Service.
- Meetings will be arranged between parents / carers and the Educational Welfare Officer when a school has concerns regarding punctuality or attendance that we cannot resolve.

Categorising Absence

Parents can be prosecuted for failing to ensure their child's attendance at school, with the following exceptions

- The child was absent with permission from an authorised person within the school.
- The pupil was ill or prevented from attending by unavoidable cause
- The absence occurred on a day exclusively set aside for religious observance by the religious group to which the family belongs

There are also some exceptions for the children of Travellers.

- **Notes from parents:** Only the school can approve absence, not parents / carers. The school does not have to accept the offered explanation as a valid reason for absence. If there are doubts about the explanation offered, or where there is no explanation, the absence will be treated as unauthorised.
- **Illness, Medical and Dental appointments:** Such absences are considered authorised provided that the school is satisfied that the illness or appointment is genuine, and that the appointment could not be made after school.
- **Lateness – morning:** School begins at 8.55a.m Infants, 9.00a.m Juniors. Any child who arrives later than this should be taken **by a responsible adult** to the main office so that he or she can go to his / her classroom. The adult will be asked to complete the school's Inventory system, giving a reason. If an adequate reason is not given the child will be given an unauthorised mark for that session. Late children **MUST NOT** be sent into school unaccompanied. Pupils who are late are disrupting not only their own education but also that of others. Where persistent lateness gives cause for concern further action will be taken, and parents may be issued with an FPN. Late mark (L) is from 9:00am to 9:15am at the Junior School, with (U) code used after 9:16am when registration is closed.

Unauthorised absence includes absence without justified cause, including medical evidence not been provided when requested / no communication with school regarding absence / term time absence / lates recorded after registration has closed

- **Lateness / Evening:** School finishes at 3.25p.m Infants, 3.30p.m. Juniors, and all children must be collected promptly from their class. It is very important that the school knows who is to collect each child. If you need to change your usual arrangement due to unforeseen circumstances, please notify the school immediately by phone of the name and relationship to you of the person who will be collecting your child, and for how long this arrangement will continue. If you are unavoidably detained and will not reach school by the times above. please inform the school by phone of the reason and the approximate time you expect to arrive. This is very important, as young children can become easily distressed if they are not collected promptly and have no understanding of why you are not there for them. When a child is collected late the adult will be asked to complete the school's Record of Lateness. Where persistent late collection gives cause for concern further action will be taken by the school, and the Educational Welfare Officer will request to meet with the parents / carers. If a child has not been collected by 5 p.m. the school will contact Social Services. The Educational Welfare Officer conducts gate checks at various times during the year.
- **Family bereavements:** The school responds sensitively to requests for leave of absence to attend funerals or associated events (up to 3 days). Such absences are usually authorised. Where a pupil is absent for more than the agreed period, early contact is made with the family and the additional time will be unauthorised.
- **Family holidays and extended trips overseas:** **No-one** has a right to take their child out of school for a holiday and holidays will not be authorised by the school. According to legislation, if you decide to take your child away without consent of the school, you may receive a penalty notice of £160 per child per parent/ carer paid within 28 days. Reduced to £80.00 per child per parent/carers if paid within 21 days for the first offence. Second offence is £160 per child per parent/carer paid within 28 days (within 3 years). A third offence made within 3 years the case will be presented straight to the magistrate's court from the Education Welfare Service. Should you be asked to pay the Penalty, you will be notified in writing of the procedures you should follow. Please do not make any payments, unless you have received a Fixed Penalty Notice from the Education Welfare Service instructing you to do so.

- **Traveller children:** Travellers are protected from prosecution if they can show that the nature of their trade requires travel from place to place, that the child has attended school as regularly as possible, and where the child is six or older, has made at least 200 attendances during the past twelve months.
- **Public performances:** Leave of absence may be granted to participate in an approved public performance. If a pupil is absent from this performance this will constitute unauthorised absence.
- **Off-site activities:** These fall into two categories: school directed, e.g. educational visits, and individual activities such as music examinations. School activities will normally be registered as absent and classed as authorised. Where the activity is of a more individual nature the school will usually authorise absence.
- **Excluded pupils:** Where a pupil has been temporarily excluded, he or she will remain on the school roll. This will be treated as authorised absence. If a pupil has been permanently excluded his or her absence should be authorised until after review. If the exclusion is confirmed the pupil will be struck off the school roll.

Penalty

The headteacher (or a deputy or assistant headteacher, authorised by the headteacher), local authority or the police can fine parents for the unauthorised absence of their child from school, where the child is of compulsory school age, by issuing a penalty notice.

If the school issues a penalty notice, we will check with the local authority before doing so, and send the local authority a copy of any penalty notice issued.

Before issuing a penalty notice, the school will consider the individual case, including:

- Whether the national threshold for considering a penalty notice has been met (10 sessions of unauthorised absence in a rolling period of 10 school weeks)
- Whether a penalty notice is the best available tool to improve attendance for that pupil
- Whether further support, a notice to improve or another legal intervention would be a more appropriate solution
- Whether any obligations that the school has under the Equality Act 2010 make issuing a penalty notice inappropriate

Each parent who is liable for the pupil's offence(s) can be issued with a penalty notice, but this will usually only be the parent/parents who allowed the absence.

The payment must be made directly to the local authority, regardless of who issues the notice. If the payment has not been made after 28 days, the local authority can decide whether to prosecute or withdraw the notice.

If issued with a **first** penalty notice, the parent must pay £80 within 21 days, or £160 within 28 days.

If a **second** penalty notice is issued to the same parent in respect of the same pupil, the parent must pay £160 if paid within 28 days.

A **third** penalty notice cannot be issued to the same parent in respect of the same child within 3 years of the date of the issue of the first penalty notice. In a case where the national threshold is met for a third time within those 3 years, alternative action will be taken instead.

A penalty notice may also be issued where parents allow their child to be present in a public place during school hours without reasonable justification, during the first 5 days of a suspension or exclusion (where the school has notified the parents that the pupil must not be present in a public place on that day). These penalty notices are not included in the National Framework, not subject to the same considerations about support being provided, and do not count towards the limit as part of the escalation process.

In these cases, the parent must pay £60 within 21 days, or £120.

Named Staff

The following are responsible for attendance and punctuality matters in the school:

Juniors: Mrs S. Davies, Miss S Fizul

Email: office@st-mary-jun.croydon.sch.uk

Phone: 0208 688 4893

Infants: Mrs. I. Escrader, Miss V. Mitchell

Email: office@st-mary-inf.croydon.sch.uk

Phone: 0208 688 2891

Summary

Achievement in school is affected by the level of attendance. At St. Mary's we have high expectations of our pupils' work, behaviour, attendance and punctuality. The school expects all pupils to aim for at least 96% attendance, in line with national expectations. We appreciate the co-operation of parents in ensuring these standards are met.