



# ATTENDANCE & PUNCTUALITY POLICY

## St Mary's

Reviewed by the Local Governing Body: **Spring 2023**

To be reviewed: **Annually**

Next review: **Spring 2024**

Date Approved by the Genesis Education Trust Board: **Spring 2023**

*\*Except in the case of dismissal the term 'Head Teacher' refers to the Executive Head and the Heads of School (Federation). The power to dismiss is vested in the Executive Head Teacher or Head Teachers of individual schools. Executive Head/ Head Teacher/Head of School/Associate Head (henceforth referred collectively as Head Teacher, unless specifically stated)*

*St. Mary's biblical vision is based on John 15 vs 12: 'Love each other as I have loved you.*

*We believe in 'Educating for Life' by encouraging the whole development of each and every child as a person made in God's image, unique, special and deeply loved by their Maker.*

## 1. Aims

Our Attendance and Punctuality Policy has been created to communicate to the school community our expectations and the manner in which we aim to move the school towards achieving our vision. All our policies are designed around this commitment; providing a set of priorities which enable us to live our lives according to this important Christian vision; giving purpose, a series of objectives and the boundaries in which we educate our pupils. At the heart of this lies our commitment to reconciliation and forgiveness. These are essential in our approach as they build bridges, create a peaceful common future and sustain peace.

***‘Love each other as I have loved you’- John 15***

Attendance and punctuality are important for Genesis Education Trust schools as we believe this plays a key role in raising overall pupil attainment. Good attendance and punctuality are clearly linked to children making good progress in their learning and getting the most out of their school experience, including their attainment, wellbeing, and wider life chances.

## 2. Legislation and guidance

This policy meets the requirements of the working together to improve school attendance from the Department for Education (DfE), and refers to the DfE’s statutory guidance on school attendance parental responsibility measures. These documents are drawn from the following legislation setting out the legal powers and duties that govern school attendance: Part 6 of The Education Act 1996, Part 3 of The Education Act 2002, Part 7 of The Education and Inspections Act 2006, The Education (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2006 (and 2010, 2011, 2013, 2016 amendments), The Education (Penalty Notices) (England) (Amendment) Regulations 2013

This policy also refers to the DfE’s guidance on the school census, which explains the persistent absence threshold.

## 3. Roles and responsibilities

### 3.1 The governing board

The governing board is responsible for:

- Promoting the importance of school attendance across the school’s policies and ethos
- Making sure school leaders fulfil expectations and statutory duties
- Regularly reviewing and challenging attendance data
- Monitoring attendance figures for the whole school
- Making sure staff receive adequate training on attendance
- Holding the head teacher to account for the implementation of this policy

### 3.2 The head teacher

The head teacher is responsible for:

- Implementation of this policy at the school
- Monitoring school-level absence data and reporting it to governors
- Supporting staff with monitoring the attendance of individual pupils
- Monitoring the impact of any implemented attendance strategies
- Issuing fixed-penalty notices, where necessary

### 3.3 The designated senior leader responsible for attendance

The designated senior leader is responsible for:

- Leading attendance across the school
- Offering a clear vision for attendance improvement

- Evaluating and monitoring expectations and processes
- Having an oversight of data analysis
- Devising strategies to address areas of poor attendance identified through data
- Arranging calls and meetings with parents to discuss attendance issues
- Delivering targeted intervention and support to pupils and families

The designated senior leader responsible for attendance is the Headteacher

### 3.4 Parents/carers

Parents/carers are expected to:

- ensure their child attends every day the school is open except when a statutory reason applies
- immediately notify the school when their child has to be unexpectedly absent (e.g. sickness)
- Provide the school with more than 1 emergency contact number for their child
- Ensure that, where possible, appointments for their child are made outside of the school day
- report to the main office when returning to school during the school day
- only request leave of absence in exceptional circumstances and do so in advance.
- not arrange family holidays during term time.
- talk to the school if they are concerned that their child may be reluctant to attend.
- be aware of letters from school which are emailed and which their child may bring home

### 3.5 Pupils

Pupils are expected to:

- Attend school every day on time

## 4. Recording attendance

### 4.1 Attendance register

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

Class Teachers will take the attendance register at the start of the first session of each school day and once during the second session.

We will keep every entry on the attendance register for 3 years after the date on which the entry was made.

### 4.2 Unplanned absence

The pupil's parent/carer must notify the school of the reason for the absence on the first day of an unplanned absence as soon as practically possible by calling the school office.

The parent/carer must clearly state the pupil's full name, class and provide a valid, detailed reason for absence – 'unwell' is not a sufficient reason and will not be authorised. If the school phone line is busy in the morning, a detailed voicemail message will be sufficient. Alternatively, parents/carers can report absence face-to-face at the school office or via email.

Absence from school may be authorised if it is for one of the following reasons:

Illness:

- Vomiting – *a child should stay at home for 48 hours after the last bout of sickness/diarrhea only if sickness and diarrhea are associated with a virus/bug;*
- Head lice – *children should come to school after treatment is begun;*
- Conjunctivitis – *children should come to school after treatment is begun;*
- Periods of absence of 5 days or more where medical evidence has been provided.

If a child is absent from school through sickness for a period of 5 consecutive days or more, medical evidence must be produced to support the absence immediately upon their return. Failure to produce this evidence will result in the

child's absence being coded as unauthorised. Examples of evidence that will be acceptable are: -

- doctor's/dentist's appointment card;
- hospital admission/discharge letter;
- medication prescribed – please bring into school the prescription or empty packets/bottles which can then be photocopied.

### **4.3 Planned absence**

Attending a medical or dental appointment will be counted as authorised as long as the pupil's parent/carer notifies the school in advance of the appointment. However, we expect parents/carers to make medical and dental appointments out of school hours where possible. Where this is not possible, the pupil should be out of school for the minimum amount of time necessary.

The pupil's parent/carer must also apply for other types of term-time absence as far in advance as possible of the requested absence. Go to section 5 to find out which term-time absences the school can authorise.

### **4.4 Lateness and punctuality**

The school day starts at St. Mary's at 8.55am. Registers are completed promptly. If a child arrives late, they will receive a late mark.

- Persistent lateness and poor punctuality can also be interpreted as absence.
- The parent of a child who is persistently absent or persistently late after the registers have closed can be prosecuted under Section 444 of the 1996 Education Act and the register would act as the main source of evidence in court.
- Children who arrive at school after 8:55am will be recorded as late with an (L) code along with the time and valid reason provided by the parent/carer.
- Children arriving after 9:30am will be marked in the register with a (U) code which is an unauthorised late code and, following DfE guidance, will reflect as an absence for that session.

Good punctuality is essential for a child to achieve high attainment and to maintain/improve behaviour. The school will:

- Keep accurate records of lateness;
- After 10 days late, we will send a letter home regarding lateness and including a report stressing those days with a late code;
- Stress how much we care about children being punctual for school each day and how much their class is disrupted due to another child being late.

Continued Poor Punctuality:

- Parents/carers will be invited into school to discuss the issue;
- The Educational Welfare Office will be informed of children whose lateness is causing concern;
- Where necessary the Education Welfare Officer will contact parents/carers and may make a home visit

Children collected late from school at the end of the day:

Late collection can cause distress to children who are keen to see their parents and carers and should be avoided at all costs. Please inform the school immediately if you are running unavoidably late. Persistent late collection is deemed to be neglect and parents will be referred to Social Care.

### **4.5 Following up unexplained absence**

Where any pupil we expect to attend school does not attend, or stops attending, without reason, the school will:

- Call the pupil's parent/carer on the morning of the first day of unexplained absence to ascertain the reason. If the school cannot reach any of the pupil's emergency contacts, the school may make a home visit and call relevant agencies
- Identify whether the absence is approved or not
- Identify the correct attendance code to use and input it as soon as the reason for absence is ascertained – this will be no later than 5 working days after the session
- Call the parent/carer on each day that the absence continues without explanation to ensure proper safeguarding action is taken where necessary. If absence continues, the school will consider involving an education welfare officer

## 4.6 Reporting to parents/carers

The school will regularly inform parents about their child's attendance and absence levels

## 5. Authorised and unauthorised absence

### 5.1 Approval for term-time absence

Only exceptional circumstances warrant a leave of absence. Schools should consider each application individually taking into account the specific facts and circumstances and relevant background context behind the request.

If a leave of absence is granted, it is for the head teacher to determine the length of the time the pupil can be away from school. As head teachers should only grant leaves of absence in exceptional circumstances it is unlikely a leave of absence will be granted for the purposes of a family holiday.

Any request should be submitted as soon as it is anticipated. The headteacher may require evidence to support any request for leave of absence.

Valid reasons for **authorised absence** include:

- Illness and medical/dental appointments (see sections 4.2 and 4.3 for more detail)
- Religious observance – where the day is exclusively set apart for religious observance by the religious body to which the pupil's parents belong
- Traveller pupils travelling for occupational purposes – this covers Roma, English and Welsh gypsies, Irish and Scottish travellers, showmen (fairground people) and circus people, bargees (occupational boat dwellers) and new travellers. Absence may be authorised only when a traveller family is known to be travelling for occupational purposes and has agreed this with the school, but it is not known whether the pupil is attending educational provision
- Exceptional family circumstances such as a bereavement/birth of sibling;
- Weddings: in UK 1 day and abroad 3 days;
- Interview or entrance exams for new schools;
- Participation in a sporting event;

Absence from school will not be authorised for other circumstances, including but not limited to:

- going on holiday or travelling abroad in term time that has not been authorised;
- feeling tired;
- non-urgent appointment;
- parent unwell to bring them to school (if a parent is unwell and is not able to bring their child to school, the expectation is that an arrangement should be made by the parent for another responsible adult to bring and collect their child from school);
- birthday
- looking after brothers, sisters and/or unwell parents
- Appointments made for the parent/carer and not the child will not be authorised.
- Absences that have not been explained;
- Periods of absence of 5 days or more where medical evidence has not been provided.

Early collections will not be authorised for reasons such as:

- seeing off or collecting someone from the airport;
- going on holiday, birthday, wedding or other celebrations early

## **5.2 Legal sanctions**

The school or local authority can fine parents for the unauthorised absence of their child from school, where the child is of compulsory school age. We will refer all cases of unauthorised holidays, of more than 3 days, to the London Borough of Waltham Forest for Penalty Notices to be issued.

If issued with a fine, or penalty notice, each parent must pay £60 within 21 days or £120 within 28 days. The payment must be made directly to the local authority.

Penalty notices can be issued by a headteacher, local authority officer or the police.

The decision on whether or not to issue a penalty notice may take into account:

- The number of unauthorised absences occurring within a rolling academic year
- One-off instances of irregular attendance, such as holidays taken in term time without permission
- Where an excluded pupil is found in a public place during school hours without a justifiable reason

If the payment has not been made after 28 days, the local authority can decide whether to prosecute or withdraw the notice.

## **6. Strategies for promoting attendance**

We celebrate attendance achievements in assemblies and our end of term celebrations.

## **7. Attendance monitoring**

### **7.1 Monitoring attendance**

The school will:

- Monitor attendance and absence data half-termly, termly and yearly across the school and at an individual pupil level
- Identify whether or not there are particular groups of children whose absences may be a cause for concern

Pupil-level absence 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 compare attendance data to the national average, and share this with the governing board.

### **7.2 Analysing and using attendance data**

The school will:

- Analyse attendance and absence data regularly
- Look at historic and emerging patterns of attendance and absence, and then develop strategies to address these patterns
- Use data to monitor and evaluate the impact of any interventions put in place in order to modify them and inform future strategies

### **7.3 Reducing persistent and severe 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. Should a child's attendance percentage fall to below 90%, a letter will be sent home to request a meeting with the head or deputy head of school. If a parent/carer fails to attend a meeting, the case may be referred to the Educational Welfare Service and a letter of parental responsibility may be issued by the Local Authority.

Any pupil who has reached the Persistent Absentee mark or who is at risk of doing so will be carefully monitored by both the school and the Education Welfare Officer. Where attendance has fallen to 90% and below, the member of the Senior Leadership Team (SLT) can request that medical proof is provided so that the absence can be authorised. Parents will meet with the assigned SLT member beforehand to discuss this. Failure to provide medical proof will result in the absence being unauthorised. Minor ailments such as a slight cold should not lead to a failure to attend school.

If significant improvements are not made within the agreed period, parents/carers will be issued with a Notice of Parental Responsibility, after which the child's attendance will be closely monitored and if not improved will be followed by a School Attendance Panel meeting, which may result in the case proceeding to court.

Level of Attendance	Action
<95%	<p>A standard letter to parents/carers will be issued to address the deterioration in attendance levels – including a reminder of the school's target levels for attendance and the negative effect of irregular attendance on learning. Attendance will be monitored closely.</p> <p>Parents/carers will be required to provide an explanation and comments where necessary (e.g, where the school has not been informed of reasons for absence).</p>
<90% (PA)	<p>This is referred, as Persistent Absence (PA), to the SLT.</p> <p>A letter to ask parents/carers to attend a school-based meeting with the Headteacher. The meeting will investigate why the pupil has not attended regularly, discuss detrimental effects on learning, and reach agreements for rapid improvements over the next half term.</p> <p>Parents/carers will be reminded that full attendance is the aim and that anything less than 97.0% will cause concern. A parenting contract between school and parents/carers may be put in place.</p> <p>Attendance will be monitored very closely and the school will be in regular contact with parents/carers, either to praise attendance levels or to show ongoing concern.</p>
≤85%	<p>Pupils deteriorating to ≤85%</p> <p>If a pupil has not been referred to the Education Welfare Officer, this should be done and a meeting will take place to create a plan of action.</p>

## 8. Children Missing Education

The schools follow and implement: *Children Missing in Education Statutory guidance for local authorities September 2016*

- The school will notify the Local Authority if it is about to remove a pupil's name from the school admission register under any of the 15 grounds listed in regulation 8, Annex A;
- Notification will include: (a) the full name of the pupil, (b) the full name and address of any parent/carer with whom the pupil normally resides, (c) at least one telephone number of the parent/carer, (d) the pupil's future address and destination school, if applicable, and (e) the ground under which the pupil's name is to be removed from the admission register;
- The school will make reasonable enquiries to establish the whereabouts of the child jointly with the Local Authority, before deleting the pupil's name from the register if the deletion is under regulation 8(1), sub-paragraphs (f)(iii) and (h)(iii) (*Annex A*);
- The school will notify the Local Authority **within five days** of adding a pupil's name to the admission register at a non-standard transition point.

## **9. Monitoring arrangements**

This policy will be reviewed as guidance from the local authority or DfE is updated, and annually by the full governing board.

## **10. Links with other policies**

This policy links to the following policies:

- Safeguarding policy
- Behaviour policy