St. Mark's Catholic School



ATTENDANCE POLICY

Effective Date:	Review Date:	Prepared by:	Designated SLT:	Governor's Committee:
Sept 2026	Sept 2027	SMG	SMG	Pastoral & Safeguarding

Our Mission:

St Mark's is a Catholic community inspired by Gospel values where relationships are rooted in love. At the heart of our mission is a commitment to live out our faith and a dedication to embrace excellence in all that we do. We believe in education that instils possibilities, transforms lives and enables all to fulfil their potential.

Principles

- Promoting excellent attendance and punctuality is the responsibility of the whole school community.
- Excellent attendance is crucial to maximising students' potential, progress and achievement.
- Excellent school attendance and behaviour reduces social exclusion
- The relationship between attendance and a student's attitude to learning and behaviour is understood by all staff.
- Excellent attendance is essential if students are to take full advantage of school and gain the appropriate skills, which will equip them for life.
- The staff of St Mark's School will work in partnership with parents and other professionals to improve attendance, to identify vulnerable students and to meet the needs of those whose attendance is poor.
- Excellent attendance will be seen as an achievement in its own right and explicitly recognised as such by St Mark's Catholic School. The attendance policy is based on the premise of equal opportunities for all and promotes inclusion for all students.
- St Mark's Catholic School aims to improve its annual attendance by creating a culture where excellent attendance is a "normality"

Legal duties

- The Education Act 1996
- The Education Act 2002
- The School Attendance (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2024
- *Working together to improve school attendance* (Department for Education, July 2026)
- *Keeping Children Safe in Education* (Department for Education, September 2026)
- *Children Missing Education: Statutory Guidance for Local Authorities and Schools*
- *Education for children with health needs who cannot attend school*
- The Equality Act 2010
- The Education (Penalty Notices) (England) Regulations 2007, as amended
- Relevant London Borough of Hounslow attendance procedures and the local authority code of conduct for penalty notices.

Attendance expectations

St Mark's Catholic School expects every pupil to attend school regularly and punctually. Our aim is to secure excellent attendance for all pupils while recognising that some pupils and families may experience barriers to attendance.

We will identify barriers at the earliest opportunity, work with pupils and their parents/carers to understand the individual circumstances affecting attendance, and provide appropriate support to remove or reduce these barriers.

St Mark's Catholic aims to achieve good attendance by operating a policy within which staff, students, parents, the local authority and others can work in partnership. The School will monitor attendance and ensure quick and early intervention if/when a problem is identified. The School promotes good attendance by:

- Developing a positive classroom climate in which a positive group identity produces welcoming lessons.
- Ensuring that the curriculum is engaging.
- Having high expectations of prompt attendance throughout the school day
- Collecting and analysing data to highlight trends with regard to cohort, gender, subject and to set targets where necessary.
- Collecting attendance data from Primary Schools as part of the Year 6/Year 7 transfer information.
- Regularly informing parents about their child's attendance
- Monitoring and sanctioning lateness.
- Improving communication with parents about the importance of regular and punctual school attendance
- Involving students in developing positive strategies to improve attendance
- Giving attendance a continuing high profile by frequently updating information within year groups.
- Reducing the number of pupils who are persistently absent and preventing pupils from becoming persistently absent.
- Publishing the Attendance Policy and times of the school day on the School website.

Responsibilities and Strategies

- The Deputy Headteacher responsible for attendance will monitor attendance throughout St Mark's Catholic School.
- The School's Management Information System is linked to the Department of Education. Attendance data is accessible through VYED for the London Borough Hounslow's information.
- The designated teacher for Looked After Children, the DSL, will monitor the attendance of these students.
- The Attendance Officer will submit attendance data to the DSL, Deputy Headteacher, PPLs, the Head of Sixth Form and School Attendance Support Service Officer (SASSO) on a regular basis.
- Form tutors will monitor attendance closely.
- Staff who take students out on organised visits will give a list of the students, with dates and times of the visit, to the Attendance Officer.
- Staff who take students out of normal lessons for small group work will register them on the SIMS system.
- Parents are informed of their responsibilities, the measures taken by St Mark's School and the Education Welfare Service to ensure good attendance and how to seek support or advice in relation to attendance issues.
- Vulnerable and "at risk" students will be closely monitored by the DSL, PPLs and form tutors.
- Those responsible for students' placements off-site will provide the Attendance Officer with a regular record of their attendance.
- The Governing Board will provide strategic oversight of attendance, regularly reviewing attendance data and challenging trends and patterns. Governors will ensure that attendance remains a strategic priority and that leaders are taking appropriate action to identify and remove barriers to attendance.

Working Partnerships

- The SASSO fulfils the statutory duty of the London Borough of Hounslow in enforcing regular school attendance. In doing so it enables the School and parents/carers to meet their respective responsibilities.

- Parents are informed of the procedures and expectations when their child is first admitted to the St Mark's School. They will also be advised on the School's policy at New Intake Evening.
- St Mark's Catholic School works closely with the London Borough of Hounslow and other services to identify ways in which their work will support improved attendance.

Performance indicators

- Improvement in overall School attendance figure.
- Reduction in persistent absentees.
- Emerging attendance concerns are identified and appropriate action is taken at the earliest opportunity, with particular focus on pupils at risk of persistent or severe absence.
- To maintain accurate and timely completion of all morning, afternoon and lesson registers.
- All registers are taken within 10 minutes of the start of a lesson.

Recording Attendance

Pupils are expected to attend school for the full 190 days each year unless there is a good reason for absence. Where a student is absent from school the school must differentiate between authorised and unauthorised absence. **By law, only the school can approve absence, not parents.** Generally, school will accept an explanation as to why a student may be absent. However, in certain circumstances School may require further evidence to justify the explanation e.g. high level of absence for minor health reasons, unusual patterns of absence for instance the same day each week or frequent broken weeks or, where the School believes unauthorised leave of absence has been taken.

Parent

- Parents/Carers must ring in on the school's dedicated absence line on the first day of illness and then on all subsequent days. Messages can be left on the voicemail system.
- It is expected that parents will provide an explanation (rather than 'ill') if their child is absent.
- We will mark absence due to physical or mental illness as authorised unless the school has a genuine concern about the authenticity of the illness.
- Where there are genuine concerns about the frequency, duration or pattern of illness-related absence, the school may request reasonable supporting evidence. Requests for medical evidence will be considered on an individual basis and will be proportionate to the circumstances. The school will not routinely require medical evidence for every illness-related absence.
- If the school is not satisfied with the evidence, the absence will be marked as unauthorised and parents will be notified of this.
- If there is no contact from the parent and the student fails to attend school, the attendance office will contact home by telephone and email. This will be repeated and followed up by a telephone call or letter if no explanation is received. These contacts will be recorded.
- If a student has been absent for more than 3 days with continued unexplained absence, in the first instance the DSL will be informed and a referral made to the SASSO (School Attendance Support Service Officer).
- Pupils who fail to return to the St Mark's Catholic School on the agreed day after a fixed – term exclusion, with no explanation, will also be subject to first day contact by the Attendance Officer.
- Attending a medical or dental appointment will be counted as authorised as long as the pupil's parent notifies the school in advance of the appointment. However, we encourage parents 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.

Registration

The school must take the attendance register at the beginning of each morning session and once during each afternoon session. Accurate and timely registration is a legal requirement and is essential to safeguarding pupils and supporting effective attendance monitoring. The school will use the statutory attendance and absence codes set out in the *Working together to improve school attendance* guidance. Registers will be completed accurately and promptly, with the reason for absence recorded using the appropriate code where known. Where a pupil who has been present earlier in the day is subsequently absent without explanation, this will be followed up promptly by the relevant member of staff and the Attendance Officer.

- All staff must be vigilant when registering students for lessons, and report immediately any unexplained absence of a student who has attended lessons already during the day. This should be reported to the Attendance Officer and recorded.
- We will also record whether the absence is authorised or not
- The nature of the activity, where a pupil is attending an approved educational activity
- The nature of circumstances, where a pupil is unable to attend for exceptional circumstances

We will keep every entry on the attendance register for 6 years from the date on which the entry was made.

The school day starts at 8.35am and ends at 3.05pm.

Pupils must arrive in school by 8.30am on each school day.

Lateness

- All students are required to arrive at the St Mark's Catholic School, attend registration and attend all lessons on time.
- If a student arrives late, before the end of AM registration, they should report directly to their form tutor where they will be marked as late. If they arrive after AM registration, they should report to Student Services to sign in, the Attendance Officer will record the mark accordingly.
- Students will receive escalated sanctions for lateness.

1+ late in a week	Break time detention
2+	Year Leader detention
3+	Deputy Headteacher detention
4+	Headteacher detention

Following up on unexplained absence

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

- Call the pupil's parents on the first day of absence to ascertain the reason.
- Identify whether the absence is approved or not.
- Identify the correct attendance code to use and input it as soon as the reason for the absence is ascertained – this will be no later than 5 working days after the session for which the pupil was absent.

- Call the parent on each day the absence continues without explanation, to make sure proper safeguarding action is taken where necessary. If absence continues, the school will consider involving a School Attendance Support Service Officer (SASSO).
- Where relevant, report the absence to the pupil's social worker or youth offending team officer.
- Where appropriate, offer support to the pupil and/or their parents to improve attendance.
- Identify whether the pupil needs support from wider partners, as quickly as possible, and make the necessary referrals.

Unexplained absence will be treated as a potential safeguarding concern where appropriate. The school will consider the individual circumstances of the pupil, including their previous attendance pattern, vulnerability, known safeguarding concerns and whether there are concerns about their whereabouts or welfare. Where a pupil cannot be located or there are concerns that they may be at risk of harm, the school will follow its safeguarding procedures and make appropriate referrals without delay.

Where support is not appropriate, not successful, or not engaged with, a notice to improve, penalty notice or other legal intervention may follow.

Granular Risk Register

St Mark's Catholic School uses a graduated attendance monitoring and intervention framework to identify concerns at the earliest opportunity and ensure that pupils and families receive appropriate support. Attendance is monitored regularly at individual pupil, year group and whole-school level, with clear lines of responsibility for action and review. The framework uses attendance percentages as indicators of the level of concern and the appropriate stage of intervention. These thresholds support consistent monitoring and escalation but do not replace professional judgement. Where there are emerging patterns of absence, repeated lateness or other concerns, the school may intervene earlier than the percentage thresholds indicate. At each stage, the school will seek to understand the reasons for absence and identify any barriers affecting attendance.

Step	%	Risk	Who	Possible Actions / Responsibilities
1	99-95%	Low	Tutor	Accurate registers Weekly monitoring Informal conversations . mentoring Raise concerns with PPL (CPOMs)
2	94-90%	Moderate	PPL (SLT)	Contact parents Targets set and reviewed Parental meeting
3	Below 90%	High	SLT	Stage 1 letter Stage 2 letter Hounslow SASS referral
4	80%	High	Hounslow SASS (School Attendance Support Service	Persistent / severe / unauthorised abse policy actions

Interventions

Attendance will be monitored proactively so that emerging patterns of absence, persistent or severe absence, repeated lateness and other barriers can be identified at the earliest opportunity. Support will be offered, where there are emerging concerns or where a pupil's individual circumstances indicate that additional support may be required.

The school recognises that barriers to attendance are individual and may change over time. When attendance concerns emerge, the school will seek to understand the underlying reasons for absence rather than focusing solely on attendance figures.

This may include consideration of:

- SEND and additional learning needs
- Physical or mental health needs
- Young caring responsibilities
- Social, emotional or wellbeing needs
- Family circumstances
- Transport or travel difficulties
- Financial hardship or access to food
- Access to technology or other essential resources
- Bullying, discrimination or concerns about safety
- Difficulties with relationships, belonging or engagement
- Other circumstances affecting the pupil's ability to attend regularly.

Where barriers are identified, the school will work with the pupil, parents/carers and relevant partners to identify appropriate support and monitor its impact.

Interventions will be proportionate to the individual circumstances of the pupil and will include performance indicators. Interventions may include:

1. Early contact with parents/carers and the pupil.
2. Identification of barriers to attendance.
3. Targeted support and agreed actions.
4. Attendance meetings and/or an attendance support plan.
5. Referral to wider services where appropriate.
6. Escalation to formal attendance procedures where support is unsuccessful, inappropriate or not engaged with.

All interventions are documented and records kept by the Attendance officer.

Monitoring Attendance

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

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.

Reasonable adjustments and individualised support

Where appropriate, the school will consider reasonable adjustments and adaptations to attendance support and intervention for pupils with SEND, disabilities, medical needs or other circumstances that create barriers to attendance.

Attendance strategies will be proportionate and individualised. The school will work with pupils, parents/carers and relevant professionals to ensure that support is accessible and that expectations remain ambitious while recognising individual circumstances.

Analysing attendance

- Attendance analysis will consider patterns for individual pupils, year groups and relevant pupil groups, including pupils with SEND, disadvantaged pupils, pupils known to social care, young carers, pupils with medical needs and other groups identified through school data or professional knowledge.
- The school will consider attendance, persistent absence, severe absence, authorised and unauthorised absence, punctuality and patterns of absence. Where disproportionate patterns are identified, leaders will investigate the underlying causes and take appropriate action to remove barriers and improve attendance.

Using data to improve 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 it has identified whose absences may be a cause for concern, especially those who demonstrate patterns of persistent or severed absence, and their families (see section 8.4 below)
- Provide regular attendance reports to (class teachers/form tutors) 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

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. Preventing pupils from becoming persistently or severely absent, as well as reducing existing persistent and severe absence, is central to the school's attendance strategy.

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
- 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

Supporting pupils to return to school

Where a pupil has experienced prolonged or significant absence, the school will work with the pupil, parents/carers and relevant professionals to develop an appropriate plan for successful reintegration.

The approach will consider the pupil's individual circumstances, barriers to attendance, safeguarding and wellbeing needs, curriculum access and any reasonable adjustments required. The school will monitor attendance and engagement following reintegration and review support where necessary.

Leave of absence during term time

The headteacher will allow pupils to be absent from the school site for certain educational activities, or to attend other schools and settings. The headteacher will only grant a leave of absence to a pupil during term time if the request meets 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
- Study leave
- 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. Leave of absence will not be granted for a pupil to take part in protest activity during school hours. The fact that a circumstance may be considered an exceptional circumstance does not mean that leave of absence will automatically be granted. The Headteacher will consider the individual circumstances, the likely impact on the pupil's education and attendance, and the length and timing of the requested absence. 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.

Requests for leave of absence during term time should be made in writing to the Headteacher as far in advance as possible. The headteacher may require evidence to support any request for leave of absence. If a pupil is over compulsory school age (e.g. sixth form), leave can be requested or agreed by the pupil or a parent they normally live with.

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

- Illness (including mental-health illness)
- Medical and dental appointments will normally be recorded as authorised where the pupil needs to attend the appointment during school hours. Parents/carers should make appointments outside school hours wherever reasonably possible. Where an appointment during school hours is unavoidable, the pupil should attend school before and/or after the appointment wherever possible and be absent for the minimum amount of time necessary.
- 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
- Parent(s) 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
- If the pupil is currently suspended or excluded from school (and no alternative provision has been made)

Other reasons the school may allow a pupil to be absent from the school site, which are not classified as absences, include (but are not limited to):

- Attending an offsite approved educational activity, sporting activity or visit or trip arranged by the school
- Attending another school at which the pupil is also registered (dual registration)
- Attending provision arranged by the local authority
- Attending work experience
- If there is any other unavoidable cause for the pupil not to attend school, such as disruption to travel caused by an emergency, a lack of access arrangements, or because the school premises are closed

Our school will make use of the full range of potential sanctions – including, but not limited to, those listed below – to tackle poor attendance. Decisions will be made on an individual, case-by-case basis.

Penalty notices

The headteacher (or someone authorised by them), 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. The school will work in accordance with the current London Borough of Hounslow Code of Conduct when considering and issuing penalty notices. The issuing of a penalty notice is not automatic when the national threshold is met. The school will consider the individual circumstances, whether support has been provided or offered, whether a penalty notice is appropriate and proportionate, and whether any equality duties or other relevant considerations apply.

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 FramSASSOrk, 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.

Notices to improve

If the national threshold has been met and support is appropriate, but parents do not engage with offers of support, the school may offer a notice to improve to give parents a final chance to engage with support.

Notices to improve will be issued in line with processes set out in the local code of conduct for the local authority area in which the pupil attends school.
They will include:

- Details of the pupil's attendance record and of the offences
- The benefits of regular attendance and the duty of parents under section 7 of the Education Act 1996
- Details of the support provided so far
- Opportunities for further support, or to access previously provided support that was not engaged with
- A clear warning that a penalty notice may be issued if attendance doesn't improve within the improvement period, along with details of what sufficient improvement looks like, which will be decided on a case-by-case basis
- A clear timeframe of between 3 and 6 weeks for the improvement period
- The grounds on which a penalty notice may be issued before the end of the improvement period.