St. Mark's Catholic School

SIXTH FORM ATTENDANCE POLICY

Effective Date:	Review Date:	Prepared by:	Designated SLT:	Governor's Committee:
Sept 2026	Sept 2028	JWI	JWI	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.

1. Introduction

This section of the attendance policy applies specifically to students in the sixth form (ages 16-18). While students in the sixth form are not of compulsory school age, they are subject to the participation age requirement (must be in education, employment or training until age 18).

Regular attendance is essential for sixth form students to:

- Access sufficient teaching and learning to succeed in their qualifications
- Develop the independent study skills required for higher education or employment
- Meet the expectations of universities and employers
- Maintain eligibility for 16-19 Bursary funding (where applicable)

Students who choose to study at St Mark's Catholic School sixth form are expected to demonstrate commitment through excellent attendance and punctuality.

2. Attendance Expectations

Registration Requirements

- All sixth form students must register twice daily (AM- 8:35 and PM- 13:20 registration)
- Students must register even if they have study periods
- Students must attend all timetabled lessons, including study sessions, unless they have permission for off-site study (see section 4)
- Attendance is monitored weekly by the whole school attendance officer, the Sixth Form Heads of Year and the Head of Sixth Form

Attendance Threshold

Students are expected to maintain attendance of **at least 95%**

- Attendance below 95% will trigger early intervention
- Attendance below 90% is classified as **persistent absence** and represents a major cause for concern
- Attendance below 85% indicates the student has missed too much content to realistically succeed

Authorised Absence

Acceptable reasons for authorised absence include:

- Illness (students or parents should contact the school on the first day and each subsequent day)
- Medical or dental appointments (students should provide evidence and attend only for the minimum time necessary)
- University open days (maximum of 2 per year, with evidence of confirmation from the university)
- Driving tests (with evidence of appointment)
- Interviews for employment, apprenticeships or further education (with evidence)
- Religious observance (where the day is exclusively set apart for religious observance)
- Bereavement
- Other exceptional circumstances (to be agreed with the Head of Sixth Form)

Appointment related absences should be pre-agreed by contacting the Head of Year or Head of Sixth form to request leave at least one week before the appointment date. Students should provide evidence of appointments where possible (appointment cards, confirmation emails, etc.).

On the day absences should be reported by calling the St Mark's absence line. Messages can be left on the voicemail system.

Unauthorised Absence

Absence will be recorded as unauthorised if:

- No explanation is provided
- The explanation is not accepted as valid
- The absence is for a reason that does not fall within the authorised categories above
- The student is absent without permission

Examples of unauthorised absence include:

- Family holidays during term time
- Shopping trips
- Birthday celebrations
- Part-time work commitments
- Driving lessons
- Work experience or university days which have not been pre-agreed in advance
- Transport issues (except in exceptional circumstances)

3. Study Privileges

Students with good attendance (95% or above) may be granted the following study privileges:

- Home study on Wednesday afternoons when not in timetabled lessons
- Permission to take break (10:40-11:00) and lunch (12:40-13:15) off site, provided punctuality for the next registered session is maintained
- Extended study leave during mock exam and public exam periods

Students with attendance below 90% will lose these privileges and will be required to attend school for supervised study during these times until their attendance improves to above 92% for a sustained period of 4 weeks.

4. Punctuality

Expectations

- Students must arrive at school by 8:30am for 8:35am registration
- Students must arrive on time for all lessons throughout the day
- Students arriving after 8:35am but before the end of registration will be marked as late
- Students arriving after the end of registration must sign in at Student Services and will be marked as late

Consequences for Lateness

- Late arrival to morning registration will incur same-day lunchtime detention
    - Non-attendance at a detention is treated as serious misbehaviour and will escalate to a Head of Sixth Form detention on the following Friday afternoon (15:05-16:15)
- Late arrival to lessons will be subject to appropriate teacher sanction (e.g., same-day detention)
- Weekly persistent lateness (2+ lates in a week) will incur a Tuesday afternoon (15:05-16:15) detention with a PPL
- Continued persistent lateness (5+ lates in a half term) will result in escalation to Head of Sixth Form and formal attendance contract

Punctuality is monitored weekly and patterns of lateness will be addressed promptly.

5. Monitoring and Intervention

Half-Termly Reporting

- All students and parents/carers receive a half-termly attendance report
- This includes overall attendance percentage and breakdown by subject
- Students below 95% will receive additional information about support available

6. Intervention Process for Poor Attendance

Stage 1: Attendance Falls Below 95% (Early Intervention)

Actions:

- PPL discusses concerns with student in a one-to-one meeting
- Letter sent to student and parents/carers explaining:
    - Current attendance percentage
    - Why this is a concern
    - Support available
    - Expectation to improve to above 95%
- Barriers to attendance are identified
- Support is offered (e.g., academic support, timetable adjustments, referral to school counsellor)

Timeframe: Student has 2 weeks to show improvement

Stage 2: Attendance Falls Below 92% or No Improvement After 2 Weeks

Actions:

- Meeting with PPL, student and parents/carers
- Discussion includes:
    - Reasons for continued poor attendance
    - Any additional barriers or support needs
    - Impact on learning and progress
    - Potential consequences if attendance doesn't improve
- Formal attendance contract signed by student, parents/carers and Head of Sixth Form, including:
    - Target attendance
    - Timeframe for improvement (typically 4 weeks)
    - Support to be provided
    - Consequences if targets not met
- Letter sent to confirm meeting and contract
- **Loss of study privileges** (Wednesday afternoon home study)
- **Warning** that UCAS reference will factually reflect attendance concerns if no improvement

Timeframe: Student has 4 weeks to meet targets in attendance contract

---

Stage 3: Attendance Falls Below 90% (Persistent Absence)

At this stage, the student is classified as a persistent absentee and has missed approximately 1 day per week.

Actions:

- Designated Safeguarding Lead informed to ensure no underlying welfare concerns
- Formal attendance panel meeting with PPL, Head of Sixth Form, student and parents/carers
- Discussion includes:
    - Full exploration of reasons for persistent absence

    - Any safeguarding concerns
    - Whether sixth form is the right setting for the student
    - Alternative options (reduced timetable, alternative courses, different pathways)
- New attendance contract with more intensive support:
    - Daily sign-in requirement
    - Weekly check-ins with Head of Year
    - Possible referral to external agencies
    - Clear warning about potential removal from courses or sixth form
- Letter sent confirming formal warning, including:
    - Current attendance percentage
    - Impact on learning and realistic chances of success
    - Warning that UCAS reference will factually reflect attendance concerns and may comment on readiness for higher education
    - Warning that continued poor attendance may result in withdrawal from examination entries or removal from sixth form
    - Final opportunity to improve over specified period (typically 4 weeks)

Consequences:

- **Daily sign-in requirement**
- **All study privileges removed**
- **UCAS reference will factually reflect attendance concerns** and may include comments about readiness for the independent study demands of higher education
- **Student warned** that they may be withdrawn from examination entries or removed from sixth form

Timeframe: Student has 4 weeks to demonstrate sustained improvement

---

Stage 4: Attendance Falls Below 85% or Remains Below 90% With No Improvement

At this stage, the student has missed approximately 15% of lessons (roughly 30+ lessons per subject over a year).

Actions:

- Final formal review meeting with Deputy Headteacher, Head of Sixth Form, student and parents/carers
- Assessment of whether student has missed too much content to realistically succeed in examinations
- Decision made on one or more of the following:

Option 1: Withdrawal from Specific Examination Entries

Where a student has attendance below 85% in specific subjects, they may be withdrawn from examination entries in those subjects if they have missed too much content to realistically succeed.

This decision will be made on an individual basis, taking into account:

- The reasons for absence (including any disability-related absence or other protected characteristics)
- The student's progress and engagement when they do attend
- Whether reasonable adjustments can be made
- Whether the student can realistically catch up the missed content
- The student's overall best interests and future pathways

Before any decision is made:

- The student and parent/carer will be consulted
- Alternative options will be discussed (e.g., reducing number of subjects, different qualifications)
- The student will be given a final opportunity to improve attendance over a specified period

If the decision is made to withdraw from examination entries:

- The student and parents/carers will be informed in writing with clear reasons
- The student will have the right to appeal to [specify - e.g., the Governing Body]
- The school will work with the student to adjust their timetable and identify alternative pathways

Option 2: Removal from Sixth Form

Regular attendance is a requirement for remaining on the sixth form roll. Students whose attendance remains persistently poor (below 90%) despite interventions and support may be removed from sixth form.

This decision will be made taking into account:

- All previous interventions and support offered
- The reasons for poor attendance
- Whether the student is engaging with support
- Whether sixth form is in the student's best interests
- The student's future plans and alternative options

Before any decision is made:

- The student and parent/carer will be invited to a formal meeting with the Head of Sixth Form
- The reasons for poor attendance will be fully explored
- Any support needs will be identified and addressed
- Alternative options will be discussed (part-time timetable, alternative courses, college, apprenticeships, employment with training)
- The student will be given a final opportunity to improve attendance over a specified period

If the decision is made to remove the student from sixth form:

- The decision will be confirmed in writing with clear reasons
- The student and parents will be informed of their right to appeal
- The school will refer the student to Hounslow Local Authority's participation team
- The school will support the student to find suitable alternative education, employment or training
- The school will continue to track the student's participation until they turn 18 or are settled in alternative provision

This process will be applied fairly and consistently, taking into account individual circumstances and the school's duties under the Equality Act 2010.

---

7. Safeguarding and Attendance

The school recognises that persistent poor attendance can be an indicator of safeguarding concerns, including:

- Mental health difficulties
- Anxiety or school-based anxiety
- Bullying or peer relationship issues
- Domestic abuse
- Child criminal exploitation or child sexual exploitation
- Substance misuse
- Caring responsibilities
- Neglect

Where attendance falls below 90%, the Designated Safeguarding Lead will be informed and appropriate safeguarding checks will be carried out. The school will work with external agencies where necessary to support the student and their family.

8. Support Available

The school is committed to supporting students to achieve good attendance. Support available includes:

Academic Support:

- Catch-up sessions with subject teachers
- Access to online learning resources
- Adjusted deadlines (where appropriate)

Pastoral Support:

- One-to-one meetings with Head of Year or Head of Sixth Form

- Referral to CAMHS or other mental health services
- Support with organisation and time management

Practical Support:

- Adjusted timetable (in exceptional circumstances)
- Part-time timetable (temporary, with clear end point and plan for return to full-time)
- Support with transport issues
- 16-19 Bursary funding for students facing financial hardship

External Agency Support:

- Education Welfare Officer (EWO)
- CAMHS (Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services)
- Social care (where appropriate)
- Hounslow Local Authority participation team

Students or parents/carers who need support should speak to the form tutor or Head of Sixth Form as early as possible.

9. UCAS References and Attendance

The school has a duty to provide honest and accurate UCAS references for students applying to university.

Students with good attendance (95%+):

- References will reflect strong commitment and readiness for higher education
- Attendance will be mentioned positively as evidence of reliability and dedication

Students with attendance below 90%:

- References will factually reflect attendance record
- References may include comments about concerns regarding readiness for the independent study and self-management demands of higher education
- References will take into account the reasons for absence and overall engagement

Students with attendance below 85%:

- References will factually reflect significant attendance concerns
- References are likely to comment on concerns about readiness for higher education
- Universities will be able to see that attendance has been a significant issue

References will be honest and fair, taking into account the reasons for absence and the student's overall achievement and engagement. However, the school cannot provide a positive reference that misrepresents a student's attendance record.

Students should be aware that many universities and employers ask about attendance, and poor attendance may affect their applications.

10. Study Leave

Year 13 students may be granted study leave during the summer examination period. This is at the discretion of the Head of Sixth Form and is subject to:

- Satisfactory attendance (typically 90% or above)
- Satisfactory progress and engagement
- No significant behaviour concerns

Students with attendance below 90% will not normally be granted study leave and will be required to attend school for supervised study during the examination period.

Study leave arrangements will be communicated to Year 13 students and parents in the spring term.

11. Examination Entry Fees

First Exam Attempts: Students will not be charged for their first attempt at any examination for courses they are studying at St Mark's Catholic School.

Important Note: Students will not be charged for exam entries based on their attendance levels during the course. If a decision is taken not to enter a student for an examination, this is an educational decision based on their realistic chances of success, not a financial penalty.

Students may be required to pay for exam entries in the following circumstances:

1. **Examination Resits** - Students who wish to resit an examination (whether they passed or failed their first attempt) may be required to pay the exam entry fee. The approximate cost is [£X per exam]. Students will be informed of the exact cost before committing to a resit. This is in accordance with The Education (Charges for Examination Entries) (England) Regulations 2024.
2. **Non-Attendance at Examinations** - Students who fail to attend an examination without good reason may be required to reimburse the school for the exam entry fee. Good reasons for non-attendance include:
    - Illness supported by medical evidence
    - Bereavement
    - Other exceptional circumstances beyond the student's control
3. Students must inform the school immediately if they cannot attend an exam. Each case will be considered individually.

4. **Failure to Meet Examination Requirements** - Students who fail without good reason to meet examination requirements (such as submitting coursework or attending required assessments) may be required to pay the exam entry fee.
5. **External Candidates** - Students who have not been prepared for an examination at St Mark's Catholic School will be required to pay the full exam entry fee and any associated costs.

Financial Hardship: Students who would face financial hardship in paying exam fees should speak to the Head of Sixth Form in confidence. The school will consider each case individually and may waive or reduce fees where appropriate. Students in receipt of free school meals or 16-19 Bursary funding will not normally be charged.

Full details of the school's charging policy can be found in our Charging and Remissions Policy.

12. 16-19 Bursary and Attendance

Students in receipt of 16-19 Bursary funding should note that continued receipt of payments is conditional on maintaining satisfactory attendance.

Full details of attendance requirements for bursary recipients can be found in the school's 16-19 Bursary Policy. In summary:

- Students must maintain attendance of at least 95% to continue receiving bursary payments
- Payments may be suspended if attendance falls below 95%
- Payments will be reinstated when attendance improves
- Each case will be considered individually, taking into account reasons for absence

Students with concerns about bursary payments should speak to their Head of Year or Head of Sixth Form.

13. Appeals Process

Students and parents/carers have the right to appeal decisions made under this policy, including:

- Withdrawal from examination entries
- Loss of study privileges (in exceptional circumstances)

Appeals should be made in writing to the Head of Sixth Form within 5 working days of the decision being communicated. The appeal will be passed on to and heard by a Deputy Headteacher within 10 working days.

The appeals process will be fair, transparent and will take into account all relevant information and circumstances.

15. Equality Act 2010

The school is committed to meeting its duties under the Equality Act 2010. This policy will be applied fairly and consistently, taking into account:

- Disability-related absence
- Other protected characteristics that may affect attendance
- Individual circumstances and needs
- Reasonable adjustments that can be made

Students or parents/carers who believe that absence is related to a disability or other protected characteristic should inform the Head of Sixth Form as soon as possible so that appropriate adjustments can be considered.

16. Monitoring and Review

This policy will be:

- Monitored by the Head of Sixth Form and Deputy Headteacher
- Reviewed biennially by the Senior Leadership Team
- Approved by the Governing Body's Pastoral & Safeguarding Committee

---

Appendix: Sixth Form Attendance Letter Templates

Letter 1: Attendance Below 95% (Early Intervention)

[Template to be developed - should include: current attendance %, concern, support available, expectation to improve]

Letter 2: Attendance Below 92% (Formal Contract)

[Template to be developed - should include: confirmation of meeting, attendance contract, loss of privileges, warning about consequences]

Letter 3: Attendance Below 90% (Formal Warning)

[Template to be developed - should include: formal warning, impact on UCAS reference, warning about withdrawal from exams/sixth form, final opportunity]

Letter 4: Withdrawal from Examination Entries

[Template to be developed - should include: decision, reasons, right to appeal, support for alternative pathways]

Letter 5: Removal from Sixth Form

[Template to be developed - should include: decision, reasons, right to appeal, referral to LA participation team, support for alternative provision]