

St. Mark's Catholic School



ATTENDANCE POLICY

Effective Date:	Review Date:	Prepared by:	Designated SLT:	Governor's Committee:
November 2023	November 2024	LOC	LOC	Pastoral

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 good attendance is the responsibility of the whole school community.
- Good attendance is crucial to maximising students' potential, progress and achievement.
- Good 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.
- Good 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.
- Good 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 good attendance is a "normality"

Legal duties

This policy takes account of the statutory duties as set out in:

- The Education Act 1996 The Education (Pupil Registration) (England) regulations 2006 as amended
- The Education Act 2002
- The Education (School Day and School year) (England) Regulations 1999
- The Change of School Session Times (England) (Revocation) Regulations 2011
- Crime and Disorder Act 1998
- The Anti-Social Behaviour Act 2003
- The Education Act 2002 and 2005

- The Education and Inspection Act 2006 The Education (Parenting Contracts and Parenting Orders) 2007
- The Education (Penalty Notices) (England) Regulations 2007 as amended The Education and Skills Act 2008
- Keeping Children Safe in Education (Dept of Education) 2023

Aims

St Mark's Catholic aims to achieve good attendance by operating a policy within which staff, students, parents, the Education Welfare Service 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.
- Ensuring that attendance is a feature of assessment data sent to parents/carers.
- Monitoring 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 persistent absentees (students with an attendance below 95%)
- Publishing the Attendance Policy and times of the school day on the School website.

Responsibilities and Strategies

- The Director of Pastoral Care will monitor attendance throughout St Mark's Catholic School.
- The School is required to submit overall levels of absence and school attendance to the London Borough of Hounslow each half term. Attendance information is submitted to the DfE via the School Census.
- The designated teacher for Looked After Children, the Director of Pastoral Care, will monitor the attendance of these students.
- The Attendance Officer will submit attendance data to the Director of Pastoral Care, PPLs and Education Welfare Officer (EWO) 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 Director of Pastoral Care, PPLs and form tutors.
- Those responsible for students' placements off-site will provide the Attendance Officer with a regular record of their attendance.

Working Partnerships

- The EWO 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.

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.
- 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 EWO (Educational Welfare 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.

Registration

- The twice-daily registration of students (AM and PM) is a legal requirement. The accuracy of registration is essential and registers may be required in a court of law for example as evidence in prosecutions for non-attendance at school. Copies of these registers are kept as a legal requirement.
- 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.

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 attend a late detention at break time of the same day.

Leave of absence during term time

In accordance with Government and LA guidelines the school will not authorise any absence for holidays. Government legislation from September 1st 2013 states Schools can only grant requests for leave of absence due to exceptional circumstances. Examples of exceptional circumstances would be:

- Military Staff returning from active service
- Marriage/bereavement of an immediate relative i.e. parent/sibling
- Funeral of extended family members

Requests for leave of absence during term time should be made in writing to the Headteacher as far in advance as possible. Parents who take their children out of school during term time and the absence has **not** been authorised are at risk of being issued with a Penalty Notice. If the St Mark's Catholic School believes that an explanation for an absence is incorrect, after investigation, the absence will be unauthorised and a Penalty Notice may be issued to each Parent/ Guardian.

Monitoring

- Form tutors will ensure that good attendance is maintained by regularly reminding students of the importance of attendance.
- The attendance officer in Student Service will monitor and record all attendance data.
- Improved attendance will be acknowledged and rewarded.
- The Attendance officer will liaise with the Director of Pastoral Care on a weekly basis regarding attendance.

Interventions

If attendance for a student falls below 95%, a number of intervention measures are triggered. These are discussed at the weekly meeting between the Attendance Officer and the Director of Pastoral Care.

1. **Letter 1** - sent to parents/carers explaining that attendance has dropped below 95% and offering help from the St Mark's to improve this figure.
2. **Letter 2** - sent to parents/carers if there is no improvement in attendance after letter 1. This details the most up to date attendance figure and gives a 4-week target for improvement.
3. **Meeting** with the Director of Pastoral Care - If there is no improvement after letter 2, the Director of Pastoral Care will meet with the parents and the student in school. Discussions will centre around the reasons for the poor attendance figure and how the school can help improve this. We will also explore if further help is needed from other organisations (ie: CAMHS, GPs, EWO, etc). A Home School Agreement form is signed by the student, parents and the Director of Pastoral Care.
4. **EWO referral** - if there is no improvement this referral is made and the school will work with the parents and EWO to improve attendance.

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

Performance indicators

- Improvement in overall School attendance figure.
- Reduction in persistent absentees.
- Action is taken on students whose attendance is below 95%.
- To have 100% registration (am/pm registration and every lesson)
- All registers are taken within 10 minutes of the start of a lesson.

All students below 95% attendance (authorised or unauthorised absence) will be tracked and monitored for improvement and where necessary, action will be taken.

Covid 19 impact on attendance

The school continues to promote full attendance, reinforce our high expectations and closely monitor attendance. Students should attend school unless they have symptoms or have tested positive for Covid 19. There is no longer a requirement for students to self-isolate as close contacts under the age of 18. This is an exceptional time, and we recognise that absence may be unavoidable.