



St Mary's Catholic Primary School

Headteacher: Mrs Clare Tickel

Diocese of Plymouth

Updated - September 2024

At St Mary's Catholic Primary School, we value the efforts that all parents and children make to attend school promptly and regularly. Frequent absences can affect the continuity of learning and can lead to poor relationships and outcomes for children. Good attendance and punctuality (at least 96% attendance) are essential if pupils are to achieve their full potential, enjoy school and be well prepared for their future learning.

We understand that barriers to attendance are complex, and that some pupils find it harder than others to attend school; therefore, we will continue to prioritise cultivating a safe and supportive environment at school, as well as strong and trusting relationships with pupils and parents. Support is available via our pastoral team, Mrs Wright- Pastoral care worker, Mrs Watts-Senco and Miss Hammond-Forge - Education social worker. Mrs Clare Tickel is the Attendance Champion and has overall responsibility in regard to school attendance and improvement.

We do therefore urge all parents to ensure that their children do not take unnecessary time off from school.

By promoting good attendance and punctuality we aim to:

- Make good attendance and punctuality a priority for all those involved in the school community.
- Raise pupils' awareness of the importance of good attendance and punctuality
- Provide support, advice and guidance to families, pupils and staff.
- Work in partnership with parents, carers and external agencies including the local authority to promote positive engagement, attendance and punctuality.
- Celebrate good attendance and punctuality.

Registers:

School starts at 8.50 am and the registers will be kept open until 9.10 am. During that time children will be marked present. Children arriving after 8.50am will need to report to the office and will be recorded as an authorised late, children who arrive after 9.20am will have their lateness recorded as an unauthorised absence except for visits to the doctor or dentist,

“Inspiring each other to learn, in the light of Christ”

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or a similar authorised event. The register is taken again, for afternoon sessional marks at the start of the lesson (13:00 for EYFS and KS1 and 13:15 for KS2). School closes at 15:15.

We ask all parents to notify the school as soon as possible to report the reason for their child's absence so that this can be recorded electronically. Absences should be reported to the school office by calling the dedicated absence line (01202 676207). Please give as much information as possible and at the very least your child's name, class and nature of absence. Authorised absences include sickness, visit to the doctor, dentist or hospital, an agreed educational visit, and in other exceptional circumstances for which the Headteacher may give permission. Wherever possible we ask that appointments are made out of school time.

Following up Absences:

The school has a safeguarding duty to monitor children's absences. On the first day of absence contact is made, via phone call to the first emergency contact of the parent / carer of the child to find out why the child is absent. There is also a Health and Safety aspect to First Day Contact - a child who is missing from school may have come to harm, so please do not see this as intrusive.

Our Independent Education Social Worker works with the school to monitor attendance. In line with Local Authority guidelines, we operate a system of "warning" letters re persistent absence i.e., letters 1 and 2 followed by involvement with the ISW if efforts are not successful and concerns persist. Parents who have difficulties in getting their children to school should speak to the Headteacher about the matter. Particular focus and improvement plans are prioritised to pupils who attendance is 'persistently absent' - attendance below 90% and Severely absence, where attendance is below 50%.

Home visits may be completed, where pupils are absent, and school are unable to contact the family.

Frequent absences

Where medical absences become a frequent occurrence there may be a need to ask for additional information, such as copies of medical/dental appointments, particularly if the absences are prolonged. We may also ask, in partnership with parents for involvement from health professionals so there is a shared understanding of health needs and at times a health care plan may be put in place.

Leave of Absence is exceptional circumstances:

Headteachers may only grant leave of absence for exceptional circumstances, where the absence is unavoidable, the following examples of such exceptional circumstances as a guide for Headteachers when considering leave of absence requests. Please complete the leave of absence form to request, available from the office (appendix i)

Examples of any exceptional circumstances where leave may be granted during term time:

- Funeral of parent, grandparent or close relative - Headteachers should use their discretion having heard from parents about travel and funeral arrangements and taking into account the distance to be travelled
- Out of school programmes such as music, arts or sport operating at a high standard of achievement and agreed by the LA - as appropriate. BCP Performance licensing can advise schools on individual circumstances if required.
- Religious observance - The Education Act 1996 S444 (3) (c), states “on any day exclusively set apart for religious observance by the religious body to which his/her parent belongs”.
- Weddings of parents and siblings

Examples of circumstances NOT considered as exceptional

- Holidays abroad for the purpose of visiting a sick relative, excepting where that person is seriously ill. Medical evidence may be requested.
- Pilgrimages by parents (e.g., Hajj). These are rare but can result in children being away from school for significant periods of time.
- Holidays taken in term time due to lower cost/parental work commitments.

Fixed Penalty Notices:

- We, as all schools in BCP are signed to the Penalty Notice code of conduct and the National Framework. The Headteacher may decide to request a Fixed Penalty Notice for persistent unauthorised absence or unauthorised holidays taken during term time. Under existing legislation, parents/carers commit an offence if a child fails to attend regularly and the absences are categorised as unauthorised (the school viewing reasons provided as unacceptable; or no explanations received; or ‘truancy’).
- Depending on circumstances such cases may result in prosecution under Section 444 of the Education Act 1996. However, legislation allows the Local Authority to issue a Penalty Notice under Section 23 of the Anti-Social Behaviour Act 2003 to each parent/carers with responsibility for a child in respect of the offence.
- A Penalty Notice is seen as a simpler sanction to focus parents on their responsibilities and does not require an appearance in Court. Payment of a Penalty Notice offers a person the opportunity of discharging any liability to conviction of the offence under section 444(1) to which the notice relates.
- A fixed penalty notice will be issued in line with the LA’s code of conduct, the National Framework and the DfE’s ‘Working together to improve school attendance’ guidance. Penalty notices for unauthorised absences will be charged at £160, reduced to £80 if paid within 21 days.
- A penalty notice of £120 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 five days of a fixed period or permanent exclusion. This will be reduced to £60 if paid within 21 days.

- Parents will only get up to two fines for the same child in a three-year period. Once this limit has been reached, other action such as a parenting order or prosecution will be considered. Where attendance still does not improve following a fixed penalty notice, the school will work with the LA to take forward attendance prosecution as a last resort. Parents who are prosecuted and attend court because their child has not been attending school may be fined up to £2,500.
- Section 444 of the Education Act 1996 allows the Authority to issue a Penalty Notice under Section 23 of the Anti-Social Behaviour Act 2003 to each parent/carer with responsibility in respect of the offence. A penalty notice is a notice offering a person the opportunity of discharging any liability to conviction for the offence under section 444(1) to which the notice relates by payment of a penalty in accordance with the notice. Where a person is given a penalty notice he/she cannot be convicted of the offence to which the notice relates if he/she pays the penalty notice in accordance with the notice.

Formal interventions and Prosecution

In cases where there is persistent failure to secure good attendance and offers of support have been unsuccessful in creating change, we may issue a formal 'notice to improve' which provided set periods for attendance to improve with support. Where this isn't successful, we may then refer to the use of legal prosecution under section 444 of The Education Act 1996 and refer to BCP council to progress to prosecution. Wherever possible, we hope to avoid such action.

Education Supervision Orders (ESOs) Where interventions have not been successful will also be considered, an ESO can be an alternative to provide formal legal intervention without criminal prosecution. ESOs are made through the Family or High Court and give the LA a formal role in supporting the pupil and parents to improve their attendance. LAs will issue parents with a notice of the intention to consider an ESO, set up a meeting to discuss with the parent and pupil, and decide whether the case will be taken forward. Once an ESO is secured, a supervisor from the local authority will decide any actions going forward.

Reporting Attendance and Absence:

Attendance and absence will be recorded in the Headteacher's reports to the Governing body each half term. All parents will be given their child's record of attendance in the school report which they will receive each summer. Additionally, attendance will be reported to all school age children at the beginning of each term.

Transferring school / Leaving the country and Children Missing Education (CME):

If families move away from the area, or wish to transfer their child to another school, the Headteacher must be informed in writing and this must include the child's forwarding address details and school information (including those that move out of the UK)- there is a leavers form (available from the office) that must be completed fully prior to a leaving date.

Children cannot be removed from the school roll until we have been notified by another school that a place has been offered and accepted. Children who stop attending and who cannot be traced cannot be removed from the school roll, they are referred as CME to the local authority where further checks are undertaken in line with their CME policy.

SEND and health-related absences

The school recognises that pupils with SEND and/or health conditions, including mental health issues, may face greater barriers to attendance than their peers, and will incorporate robust procedures to support pupils who find attending school difficult. The school will ensure that reasonable adjustments are made for disabled pupils to reduce barriers to attendance, in line with any EHC plans or IHPs that have been implemented. The school will secure additional support from external partners to help bolster attendance where appropriate.

Working in partnership with the local authority and other agencies

Data sharing with the local authority takes place regularly as explained in 'Working together to improve school attendance'. Targeting Support meetings are held with the School Inclusion Team within BCP to agree joint approaches for 'persistent (attendance below 90%) and severely absent (attendance below 50%) pupils'. Attendance information is appropriately shared with other partner agencies, such as children services, health and the special education needs department.

Attendance Codes

= planned whole school closure

/ = Present in the morning

\ = Present in the afternoon

L = Late arrival before the register has closed

C = Leave of absence granted by the school for exceptional circumstances

S = Study leave

C1 = Leave of absence for participating in a regulated performance or employment abroad

C2 = Leave of absence for part-time pupils

E = Suspended or permanently excluded but no alternative provision made

J1 = Leave of absence for job or education interviews

I = Illness

M = Medical or dental appointments

K = Attending provision arranged by the LA

R = Religious observance

B = Off-site education activity

G = Unauthorised holiday

O = Unauthorised absence

U = Arrived after registration closed

N = Reason not yet provided

X = Not required to be in school

T = Traveller absence

Q = Absent due to a lack of access arrangements or due to the pupil having to attend a school that does not qualify for travel arrangements and is more than walking distance from where they live.

V = Educational visit or trip ·

P = Participating in a supervised sporting activity, with supervision being physically provided by an appropriately trained and knowledgeable person ·

D= Dual registered - at another educational establishment ·

W = Attending work experience ·

Y1 = Absent due to their regular transport not being available ·

Y2 = Absent due to travel disruption ·

Y3 = Absent due to part of the school premises being closed ·

Y4 = Absent due to the school site being closed ·

Y5 = Absent due to being in criminal justice detention ·

Y6 = Absent due to public health guidance or law, despite the pupil being well enough to attend

Y7 = Absent due to any other unavoidable cause, the nature of which must be documented by the school.

Z = Pupil not on admission register

Contact details

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Independent Social Worker: Alyson Hammond-Forge

Administrator: Amanda Hazell