



ST MARY'S CATHOLIC HIGH SCHOOL

a Catholic Voluntary Academy

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L3015/CN

The Importance of Attendance and School Attendance Policy

Dear Parents/Carers

I am writing to you to ensure you are fully aware of the importance of punctual regular attendance as well as your requirements as a parent/carer and the serious consequences you may face if our attendance policy is not followed.

At St Mary's we are committed to promoting and modelling good attendance and behaviour – which is essential for pupils to achieve their potential. Lack of attendance is directly correlated to a pupil's deteriorating success and development in their education. Statistically, it has been shown that pupils who miss more than 10 school days per year suffer academically. As a parent or carer, you have a legal requirement to ensure your child attends school on a regular basis. Therefore, you hold the responsibility to promote excellent attendance and punctuality.

We do understand there are times when children will need to be absent from school for a number of reasons. As a result, we will only consider authorising absences in the following instances:

- For sickness or ill health
- For medical or dental appointments which fall during school hours
- For a family emergency
- For a family funeral
- For Local Authority licenced approved activities
- For participation in elite sporting events
- For religious observance

We ask all parents and carers to follow our absence procedure in order to grant authorised absence in the above cases. **You are required to contact the school as soon as possible on the first day of absence, followed by a note providing a signed explanation upon the first day of your child's return.**

Any parent or carer who has not reported their child as absent will be contacted by the school by text message or phone call. Failure to follow this procedure may result in the child receiving an unauthorised absence and could lead to us informing the local attendance officer, should their attendance fall below 90 percent as they then will be categorised a persistent absentee.

The DfE has made it clear that headteachers are not to authorise absence for any holidays during term time, except under the most exceptional circumstances. If you need to apply for leave of absence during term time then complete the leave of absence form available from reception. This form must be completed and returned FAO Mrs Wilson, our Attendance Clerk. This form will be processed and returned home via the post.

Live, Love and Learn in the Light of Christ

We will not grant authorisation for absence in the following instances:

- Day trips and holidays in term time
- Leaving school unnecessarily during the school day
- Not attending school for an unnecessary reason such as shopping or birthdays
- Truancy before or during the school day
- Absences which have not been properly explained or have failed to follow the absence procedure

Penalty notices will be issued for unauthorised absences. Penalty notices begin with an initial fine of £60, rising to £120 if paid after 21 days but within 28 days. Following failure of these payments, the local attendance officer may decide to prosecute a parent. If so, parents can be fined up to £2,500 or imprisoned for failing to ensure that their child attends school regularly.

We must also state the importance of punctuality with regards to the beginning of the school day. You will be aware that the school day starts at **8.45 am** and all pupils are expected to be on school premises at this time. Registers are marked by **9.05 am** and close at **9.30 am**. Should your child arrive after the register closes, they will receive a mark to show that they are on-site, though this will still be recorded as an absence. Continuous lateness will, therefore, result in several unauthorised absences. Teachers are encouraged to identify and report any potentially at-risk pupils, should they notice any of the stated unauthorised absences as common occurrences, including lateness.

If your child has to leave school during the day for an appointment, he/she must get an **Absence Slip** from reception which must be signed by the Form Tutor and Head of Year or Head of Key Stage. This absence slip is then handed in to reception when your child signs the **Exit Book** and is collected from school.

There may be instances when a child, for a number of reasons, is reluctant to come to school. Please let the school know immediately so that we can work with parents/carers to resolve it quickly before it becomes an attendance problem. We can also call upon the guidance and support of our Attendance Officer, our Family Resource Worker and our School Counsellor. We also interview pupils and call them, with parents/carers, to panel meetings to improve attendance patterns and support learning.

Finally, we want you to know that our whole school attendance is consistently excellent, and that we have very few children whose development suffers through poor attendance. We know we can count on the full support of parents/carers to ensure that their child attends school, and in this way avoid the risk of underachievement.

If you have any questions or concerns, please do not hesitate to get in touch with Mrs Cain at school.

Yours sincerely



Mrs M Dengate
Head teacher



Mrs S Cain
Deputy Headteacher



Mrs R Kaunhoven
Attendance Welfare Officer