

*St Mary's R.C. School*  
*Ysgol Santes Fair*



*Attendance Policy*

## **Mission statement**

St Mary's School is committed to providing a full and efficient education to all pupils and embraces the concept of equal opportunities for all.

We will provide an environment where all pupils feel valued and welcomed and are committed to the fundamental principle that early intervention and partnership working is crucial in ensuring the attendance, protection and well-being of all children and young people.

The school will follow the All Wales Child Protection procedures and local protocols in relation to specific and identifiable welfare issues that prevent a child or young pupil from accessing education, or where there are safeguarding concerns.

For a pupil to reach their full educational achievement a high level of school attendance is essential. We will consistently work towards a goal of 95% attendance for all pupils. Every opportunity will be used to convey to pupils and their parents or carers the importance of regular and punctual attendance.

School attendance is subject to education law and guidance and this school attendance policy is written to reflect this legislation and the guidance produced by the Welsh Government (WG).

The legislation makes provision for a school day which is to be divided into two sessions with a lunch break in the middle and to be available for at least 190 days in any school year.

The school will review its systems for improving attendance on an annual basis to ensure that it is achieving its set goals and targets as identified by the Governors, Local Authority (LA), ERW and the WG.

This policy will contain the procedures that the school will use to work towards meeting its attendance targets.

## **Promoting attendance**

The foundation for good attendance is a strong partnership between the school, parents/carers and pupils. We will be proactive in encouraging good attendance, and we will ensure that our pupils are made aware of the importance of good attendance and how this will benefit them; we will use a variety of strategies to intervene at an early stage to encourage improved attendance of individual learners.

Regular contact with parents will emphasise the benefits of good attendance.

## **Leave of absence/holidays in term time**

Leave of absence during term time will be discouraged. Parents and carers do not have the automatic right to withdraw their children from school for an annual holiday and will be reminded of the effect that absence can have on a pupil's potential achievement.

The school will consider any application for leave of absence and will only agree to authorise the absence in exceptional circumstances; parents and carers must apply in advance for permission for their child to have leave of absence.

Parents and carers are advised that A Fixed Penalty Notice (FPN) may be issued by the LA when permission for a holiday or leave of absence has not been authorised by the school and exceeds 10 sessions. The Local Authorities Local Code of Conduct has more information on this.

## **School procedures**

Any pupil who is absent from school at the morning or afternoon registration period will have their absence recorded as being authorised, unauthorised or as an approved educational activity (attendance out of school). Only the Head Teacher or a member of staff acting on their behalf can authorise absence.

If there is no known reason for the absence at registration, then the absence will be recorded in the first instance as unexplained (code N) and promptly followed up by the school, as part of its early intervention and safeguarding strategies.

The coding for any absences will be in accordance with the guidance provided by the WG as in Appendix 1.

## **Lateness**

Morning registration will take place at the start of school at 9am. The registers will remain open for a maximum of 30 minutes, in accordance with WG guidance. Any pupil arriving after this time will be marked as having an unauthorised absence (code U). In cases for example, where the absence at registration was for attending an early morning medical appointment, the appropriate authorised absence code will be entered.

Pupils arriving after the start of school but before the end of the registration period will be coded as late (L).

Afternoon registration will be at 1.20pm and any pupil arriving after this time will be marked as having an unauthorised absence (code U) unless there is an acceptable explanation.

Pupils arriving after the start of afternoon registration period will be coded as late.

## **First day absence**

School will endeavour to ascertain the specific reason for non-attendance as soon as possible on the first day of absence, after both morning and afternoon registration, by telephone if no message has been received. Once the specific information is received, the register will be amended to reflect the appropriate absence code (Appendix 1).

Priority will be given to children who are deemed to be particularly vulnerable, eg. those known to child protection/safeguarding services or are looked after (LAC). The locality children services team will be notified of unexplained absences of more than two days of a pupil on the child protection register, or one day following the weekend.

## **Third day absence**

On the third day of absence and if school has not received an adequate explanation, a letter will be sent to the parent or carer requesting this information. The absences will remain unauthorised, until an adequate explanation is received.

## **Absence notes**

Notes received from parents explaining absence will be kept for an academic year. If there are attendance concerns about the pupil, that may require further investigation, then the notes should be retained in line with education retention schedule. Parents and carers are aware that only the Head Teacher or their representative can authorise an absence and that further information such as a letter from a GP or Consultant may be required to support reasons given for absence.

## **Continuing and frequent absence**

Within the school it is the responsibility of the class teacher or attendance officer to be aware of and bring attention to the Head teacher (or person to whom they have delegated responsibility for attendance), any emerging attendance concerns.

In cases where a pupil begins to develop a pattern of absences, the school will try to resolve the problem as soon as possible, before a referral is made to the Education Welfare Service (EWS). This may involve inviting the parents or carers and the pupil into school for a meeting.

## **Persistent absence**

Welsh Government defines persistent absence as pupils whose absence level is more than 20% (80% attendance). These pupils will be subject to an action plan to support their return to full attendance.

The action plan will include engagement with relevant agencies that can support the pupil's attendance and could include the schools Education Welfare Officer (EWO).

## **A welcome back**

The school will welcome back all pupils on return from an absence. This will include ensuring that the pupil is helped to catch up on missed work and brought up to date on any information that has been passed to the other pupils.

## **Attendance awards**

The school will use an awards system to reward pupils who have good or improving attendance.

Any reward system must be meaningful to the children. The timing of rewards needs to be taken into account to ensure that the children can make the link between their attendance and any rewards

## **Categorisation of absence**

All pupils who are on role but not present in the school must be recorded within one of these categories.

- Authorised Absence
- Unauthorised Absence
- Approved Educational Activity

### *Unauthorised absence*

This is for those pupils where no reason has been provided, or whose absence is deemed to be without valid reason.

### *Authorised absence*

This is for those pupils who are away from school for a reason that is deemed to be valid.

### *Approved educational activity*

This covers types of supervised educational activity undertaken off the school site but with the approval of the school and or the LA.

This would include:

- Field trips and educational visits
- Sporting activities
- Education arranged by the Child and Adolescent Mental Health Service (CAMHS)

### *Dual Registration*

Pupils who attend another school or establishment are dually registered at both venues. The enrolment status within the management information system (MIS) indicates the main place of education and which the subsidiary is.

An example would be a pupil who is registered at St Mary's but is attending PRU provision. This child is recorded as D in the register.

The school or provision where the child is expected to attend is responsible for accurately recording the pupil's attendance and chasing up non-attendance.

## **Retention of records**

Computer registers will be preserved as electronic back-ups through Teacher Centre.

## **Register checks**

The LA will formally check the registers on a regular basis to ensure there is compliance with legislation. It should be noted that registers are legal documents and it is an offence not to maintain accurate records.

## Attendance targets

Each year the school and Governing Body will set absence targets.

A system for analysing performance towards the targets will be established and the Head Teacher or senior school manager will be responsible for overseeing this work. The school and Governing body will make use of the attendance data available from ERW and the LA when setting its targets.

Our school targets are:

2015/2016: 95%

2016/2017: 95%

2017/2018: 95%

## Action Plan

The school will produce an action plan to show how the school will set about achieving its attendance targets.

This policy was agreed by the Governing Body of St Mary's School on:

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Signed: \_\_\_\_\_ (Chair of Governors)

Signed: \_\_\_\_\_ (Headteacher)