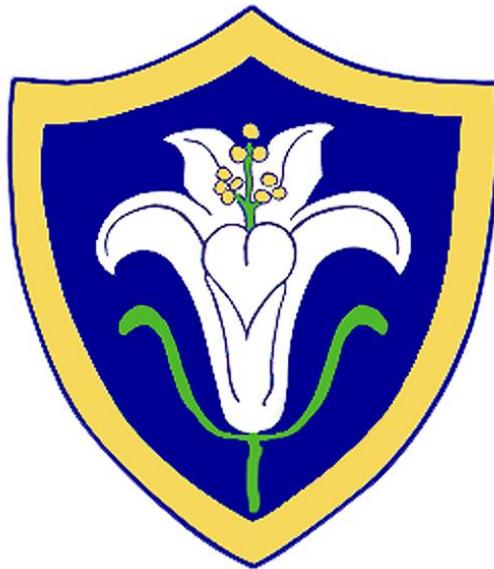


St Mary's Junior School
Baldock



School Attendance Policy Statement

Date: 4th February 2019

Review date: February 2020

Context:

At St Mary's C of E Junior School, we strongly believe that good attendance is essential if a child is going to receive the best education possible whilst at school. Children with good attendance come to school, even when they are slightly under the weather. They also arrive at school on time and line up with their classmates, so that they enter school every day in a calm and systematic way.

When children are extremely ill, for example, with a very high temperature, sickness or diarrhoea we would not expect them to attend school. However, if a child has, for example a cold, they can still attend school. If we feel that a child is struggling and appears too ill to be at school we will always telephone parents to let them know. Our "Supporting Children with Medical Needs at School" policy explains how we can assist with medical needs at school, such as with administering prescribed medications on behalf of parents. Parents are advised to contact the school office and request a MED 1 form, if a child required medication to be given whilst at school.

Evidence suggests that:

- Overall, children with the highest attendance will make the most academic progress
- Socially, children find it very difficult to settle at school if they are often late or absent.

For these reasons, we work very closely with parents to ensure that children are on time and attend well. On the rare occasion that a pupil's attendance drops below 95%, parents may receive a letter from the school to share their concerns or the School's Attendance Officer may intervene. The Attendance Office works closely with the school and parents to ensure that attendance improves. This is because attendance at school is a legal requirement.

In order to promote good attendance, school will:

- Send children home if they are too ill to stay at school
- Support parents if they are having difficulties at home and a child's school attendance suffers because of this.
- We will support pupils' medical needs at school

We expect that parents will:

- Book family holidays out of term time only.

Procedure for absence

Parents need to ensure that their children are ready for school and lined up with their class at 8.50am. A teacher will be out on duty from 8.45am, ready to blow the whistle. Before this time, children are the parent's responsibility. Children will be taken into school by their class teacher through the external doors to classrooms.

To report an absence, parents must telephone/ email or Dojo the school before 9.00am each day that their child is absent from school.

At 9am each day the members of staff will close the cloakroom doors to all classrooms. If parents arrive after 9.00am, their child/children will need to **enter via the office** and will be reported as late in the register for that day (L). The registers will close at **9.10am** and any child arriving after this time will be recorded as an unauthorised absence (U).

If school do not hear from parents as to why the child is absent by 9.30 am, school will phone, Dojo or email the parents and all other contacts listed on the school's database to see what is preventing the child from attending school that day.

If school do not still know the reason for non-attendance by 10am, as we have not heard from the family, this is a safeguarding concern. If we have a specific safeguarding concern about a particular child, a senior member of staff and another school colleague may visit the known address of the child to ascertain the child's whereabouts and well-being. If the child is well enough to return to school with the staff members, they will invite the parent to allow the child to return to school with them.

If no contact can be made following the earlier phone calls, Dojos/emails, or by visiting the home, then the school will then inform the police of a welfare concern at this point. School has a duty of care to do this if we do not know where a child is or how they are during school hours.

Authorising Absence

School can authorise absence for a number of reasons. These include:

Sickness

Medical/dental appointments

Approved educational activities or residential trips

Religious observations

Family bereavement

Interviews at another school- for example at secondary transfer

Holidays **will not** be authorised by the school, unless there are exceptional circumstances, such as terminal illness in the family. Requests for such circumstances will be considered by the Headteacher on an individual basis.

In cases of absence due to serious and prolonged illness, school will discuss with parents on an individual basis about possible phased return to school. School can plan with parents to provide education at home for pupils who are likely to be absent for a number of weeks due to health issues. School will contact the Educational Support For Medical Absences team (ESTMA) to see if home tutoring can be arranged.

Monitoring

Attendance and lateness are monitored internally each term. A minimum of 95% attendance is expected by the Local Authority.

Letters are sent to parents where lateness and/or absences are unsatisfactory. We will offer to meet with parents and offer them support- for example, referral to the school nursing team or our family worker. We will monitor the outcome of this offer of support and any agreed actions.

If this situation continues and the agreed actions and support do not result in improved attendance/ punctuality, the Headteacher will escalate the situation by contacting parents by letter/ phone call or email to log our concerns more formally. Parents are invited to discuss the situation.

School will discuss the absences/ lateness with the Local Authority's Attendance Improvement Officer (AIO.)

Persistent Absenteeism/Lateness

If absenteeism/ lateness continue, in agreement with the AIO, school will refer the child/ family to them. The AIO will request an 'Early Intervention Meeting' between the AIO and the parents to agree actions on how the situation can be improved.

Following the guidance of our Local Education Authority, school can request evidence of absences due to sickness, such as doctor's appointment cards, to be able to authorise these absences.

If all of the offers of support are not fruitful, school may issue a Penalty Notice, in line with the Hertfordshire County Council guidelines. School will consider if the child's needs are being met and if the child is being neglected, as a result of non-attendance at school, school will report this to Children's Services.

Penalty Notice

Parents have a legal duty to make sure their child, aged 5-16, if registered at a school, attends regularly. **Taking unauthorised term time holidays is grounds for issuing a penalty notice.**

The amount of the penalty is:

£60 if paid within 21 days of receipt of the notice

£120 if paid after 21 days but within 28 days of receipt of the notice

If the fine is not paid, this will result in the Attendance Improvement Officer (AIO) taking the family to court for non-attendance. Further information can be obtained from:

<https://www.gov.uk/school-attendance-absence/legal-action-to-enforce-school-attendance>

Part- time timetables

Rarely, it may be suggested that a child has a part-time timetable for a short time. This is where the hours a child spends at school each day are reduced for a period of time and work is set for the child to complete while they are at home. This is always done in conjunction with an outside agency such as the Education Support Centre and a Pastoral Support Plan will be in place.

School will report this to the Local Authority and our Governing Body for their records. This should only be a last resort and short-term intervention. The school will work to increase to time the child is in school to meet the needs of the child.

Holidays

Absences due to holidays are most likely to be un-authorised except in exceptional circumstances, and then this is only at the head teacher's discretion. **Taking unauthorised term time holidays is grounds for issuing a penalty notice.**