



# Pupil Attendance Policy

**Last reviewed:** September 2026  
**Owner:** Headteacher

**Due for review:** Summer 2027  
**Reviewed by:** Full Governing Body

This policy is based on the West Sussex County Council Model Attendance Policy, which is based on statutory guidance from the Department for Education [DfE] [Working together to improve school attendance - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/working-together-to-improve-school-attendance)

This policy is available on our school website and is available on request from the school office. We also inform parents about this policy when their children join our school and regularly thereafter through our school newsletter and other relevant opportunities.

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## 1. Introduction

At St Mary's CE Primary School, school attendance is a shared responsibility and a priority that underpins every child's right to learn, thrive and achieve. We value the attendance of all pupils. Missing out on lessons leaves children vulnerable to falling behind and can put them at risk of wider harm. As set out in this policy, we will work with families to identify the reasons for poor attendance and try to resolve any difficulties at the earliest opportunity possible.

Our attendance policy aims to give clear guidance to staff, parents and governors to:

- Promote a positive and welcoming environment in which pupils feel safe, secure, and valued.
- Promote strong attendance to support pupils' achievement by maintaining the highest possible standards of attendance and punctuality.
- Acknowledge the vital role all staff play in encouraging and sustaining good attendance.
- Establish a clear system for monitoring and responding to pupil absence, taking prompt action to address emerging patterns.
- Build and maintain positive relationships with families to ensure pupils receive the support they need to attend school regularly.
- Encourage effective support structures and champion multi-agency collaboration to improve attendance outcomes.
- Ensure parents understand their legal responsibilities and that all children can access the education to which they are entitled.

## 2. Legal Framework

This policy is based on the statutory guidance of the Working together to improve school attendance from the Department for Education (DfE).

It also reflects the following legislation:

- Education Act 1996
- Education and Inspections Act 2006
- School Attendance (Pupil Registration) Regulations 2024
- Equality Act 2010
- Keeping Children Safe in Education (KCSiE 2026)
- Providing remote education: Guidance for schools (August 2024)

**The government expects all schools to:**

- Have a clear school attendance policy on the school website which all staff, pupils and parents understand.
- Develop and maintain a whole school culture that promotes the benefits of good attendance.
- Accurately complete admission and attendance registers.
- Have robust daily processes to follow up absence. Regularly monitor data to identify patterns and trends and understand which pupils and pupil cohorts to focus on.

- Have a dedicated senior leader with overall responsibility for championing and improving attendance.

**The government expects all local authorities to:**

- Have a strategic approach to improving attendance for the whole area and make it a key focus of all frontline council services.
- Work with schools in their area to remove barriers to attendance.
- Provide each school with a named point of contact [Dedicated Schools Team link worker] to offer support to families who are experiencing attendance issues.
- Offer opportunities for all schools in the area to share effective practice.

**The government expects all parents [\*] to:**

- Ensure their child attends every day the school is open except when a statutory reason applies.
- Notify the school as soon as possible when their child has to be unexpectedly absent (e.g. sickness).
- Only request leave of absence in exceptional circumstances and do so with good notice.
- Book any medical appointments outside of the school day where possible.

**A 'parent' is defined Under Education Law (S.576 of the Education Act 1996) as:**

- Any natural parent, whether married or not.
- Any parent who, although not a natural parent, has parental responsibility as defined in the Children Act (1989) for a child or young person.
- Any person who, although not a natural parent, has care of a child or young person.
  - o *Having care of a child or young person means that a person with whom the child lives and who looks after a child, irrespective of what their relationship is with a child.*

In accordance with the Education Act 1996, we will work with parents and the Local Authority to ensure that they are supported to secure education for children of compulsory school age. Where required, we will formalise support and where necessary, work with the LA to use legal measures.

### **3. Roles and Responsibilities**

At St Mary's School, we believe that improving school attendance is everyone's business. It is a shared responsibility by governors, all school staff, parents, pupils, the wider school community and multi-agency partners. We aim to always work in partnership with our parents.

| Role                          | Name            | Contact details                   |
|-------------------------------|-----------------|-----------------------------------|
| Attendance Lead               | Emma McLaughlin | head@stmarysschoolhorsham.co.uk   |
| Attendance Officer            | Amanda Hipwell  | office@stmarysschoolhorsham.co.uk |
| Named Governor for Attendance | TBC             |                                   |

The governors recognise the importance of school attendance and promote it through the school's ethos and across its policies. They may take an active role in attendance improvement by:

- Supporting their school to prioritise attendance, and work together with leaders to set the whole school culture on attendance and belonging.

- Ensuring school leaders fulfil expectations and statutory duties.
- Using data to understand patterns of attendance, compare with similar schools, identify areas of progress and where greater focus is needed.
- Ensuring all school staff receive adequate training on attendance and that relevant staff have access to opportunities to share and learn from good practice in other schools.
- Reviewing the school's Attendance Policy on at least an annual basis, ensuring that the required resources are available to fully implement the policy, which is published and publicised regularly so that it is easily accessible to pupils, parents and staff.

**The Headteacher will:**

- Actively promote the importance and value of good attendance to pupils and their families.
- Communicate attendance expectations to parents.
- Make sure all staff know the importance of good attendance and receive the training and professional development required.
- Monitor the implementation and effectiveness of the Attendance Policy and ensure that it is reviewed annually.
- Regularly monitor and analyse attendance and absence data to identify pupils or cohorts that require support with their attendance, implement effective strategies and review the impact.
- Share information and work collaboratively with the local authority and other local partners where a pupil's absence is at risk of becoming persistent or severe.

**The Attendance lead will:**

- Promote and maintain positive relationships with pupils and parents.
- Use data to analyse the attendance of different groups including young carers and implement early intervention strategies.
- Oversee the school's attendance management.

**All staff will:**

- Promote good attendance in interactions with pupils and parents.
- Work to foster a sense of belonging with all pupils.
- Build positive relationships with pupils and families.

**All teaching staff will:**

- Accurately record attendance.
- Monitor attendance within their class.
- Play a vital role in promoting good attendance by noticing patterns of absence, speaking with pupils and raising concerns early.

**All office staff will:**

- Record reasons for absence.
- Follow up unexplained absence.
- Maintain accurate attendance records.

At St Mary's, we treat school attendance as a vital safeguarding issue, not just a pastoral or administrative matter.

#### **We request that parents:**

- Ensure their child attends school every day and arrives on time.
- Report any instance of absence by emailing or telephoning the school office before 9:30am on the first day and every day thereafter, if applicable.
- Inform the school of the reason for absence and the expected date of return, following this with supporting evidence wherever possible, e.g. medical evidence.
- Avoid unnecessary absences; for example, by making medical and dental appointments outside of school hours.
- Ask the school for help if their child is experiencing difficulties with any aspect of their schoolwork or home and family life.
- Inform the school of any change in circumstances that may impact negatively on their child's attendance.
- Attend all meetings requested to discuss attendance issues.
- Work with the school to improve their child's attendance where necessary.
- Inform the school if their child walks themselves to school, so that non-arrival is followed up as a matter of urgency.

## **4. Categorising Absence and Attendance**

When marking our registers, we will apply the national codes as outlined and regulated by the Department for Education guidance to accurately record and report attendance [Appendix 4].

### **4.1 Leave of Absence**

We believe that children need to be in school for all sessions so that they can make the most progress possible. However, we do understand that there are times where a parent may legitimately request leave of absence for a child due to 'exceptional circumstances.'

At St Mary's, leave of absence is only granted at the discretion of the Headteacher and shall not be granted unless there are 'exceptional circumstances.' We will respond to all applications for leave of absence in writing within 5 working days.

The DfE does not consider a need or desire for a holiday or other absence for the purpose of leisure and recreation to be an exceptional circumstance. Leave of absence will **not** be granted for a pupil to take part in protest activity during school hours.

All absences associated with a holiday or other absence for the purpose of leisure and recreation during term time will be marked as unauthorised within the register. Any parents who remove their child from school for the sole purpose of a holiday or other absence for the purpose of leisure and recreation can be referred to the Local Authority and be issued with a fixed penalty notice fine or referred to the Local Authority to consider prosecution.

Parents wishing to apply for leave of absence during term time must apply in writing to the Headteacher at least a month before the planned leave (see Appendix 1). If a written request for leave of absence is not completed and the leave is taken without a request being submitted, the leave will not be considered by the Headteacher, and it will be marked as unauthorised. The school will treat each application individually and may require more information or

evidence before a decision is made. Retrospective requests will not be considered and therefore will result in the absence being categorised as unauthorised.

Where authorised exceptional circumstances require additional time off for travel, the Head Teacher will take into account travel time associated with the distance, to a maximum of one day there and one day back.

A fixed penalty notice [FPN] request or a referral for prosecution may be submitted to the Local Authority should:

- The parent fails to submit a leave of absence request in advance of taking the leave.
- An application for a leave of absence is not agreed by the Headteacher but is still taken.
- A longer period is taken more than the agreed number of days.

When absence is granted by the Headteacher, the parents will need to agree a date of return. If a pupil fails to return on the expected date and contact is not received from, or made with, the parents, school will seek advice from the Local Authority. This could result in possible children missing from education procedures being instigated.

#### **4.2 Medical Appointments and absence due to illness**

Parents should try to make appointments outside of school hours wherever possible. Where appointments during school time are unavoidable, we ask that parents notify the school in advance of the appointment and provide evidence wherever possible. The pupil should only be out of school for the minimum amount of time necessary for the appointment. In most circumstances, a child should not miss a whole day at school for an appointment. If a pupil must attend a medical appointment during the school day, they must ensure they are signed out on the school system by the collecting adult, and the reason is provided. No pupil will be allowed to leave the school site without parental confirmation.

Medical evidence may be requested where there is frequent absence due to regular illness. This is to fulfil our duty of care to all pupils by ensuring potential health concerns are followed up and with relevant medical professionals.

In line with Department for Education guidance, if the school has a genuine concern about the authenticity of the illness, we may ask the parent to provide medical evidence, such as a prescription, appointment card, or other appropriate form of evidence. If the school is not satisfied with the authenticity of the illness/evidence provided, the absence will be recorded as unauthorised.

Where a pupil has a verified and chronic health condition, we will aim to work with parents to ensure children have access to education and provide appropriate support in line with Supporting pupils at school with medical conditions and West Sussex's policies regarding supporting children with health issues, Supporting children with ongoing health needs. We will also consider whether an Individual Healthcare Plan is required.

#### **4.3 Pupil Absence for the purposes of Religious Observance**

St Mary's School acknowledges the multi-faith nature of British society and recognises that, on some occasions, religious festivals may fall outside school holiday periods or weekends and is recognised as such by a relevant religious authority. Where this occurs, the school will consider either authorising the pupil absence or granting special leave for religious observance. Parents are requested to give advance notice of 1 month to the school.

For religious observance, if a religious body sets apart a single day for a religious observance and the parent applies for more than one day, the school will only record one day using this code. Working together to improve school attendance - GOV.UK (www.gov.uk)

#### **4.4 Parent travelling for occupational purposes**

A mobile child is a child of compulsory school age who has no fixed abode and whose parent(s) is engaged in a trade or business of such a nature as to require them to travel from place to place, and the pupil must travel with them.

To ensure we can effectively support all our pupils, we ask that parents:

- Advise the school of their forthcoming travelling patterns as soon as these are known and before they happen; and
- Inform the school regarding proposed return dates.

#### **4.5 Other exceptional circumstances**

- Funerals of close family members are authorised for children wishing to attend.

#### **4.6 Unauthorised Absence**

The decision to authorise absences is at the discretion of the Headteacher, in line with the principles of this policy and relevant national guidance. Absence will not be authorised unless parents have provided a satisfactory explanation which is accepted as such by the school, and any requested evidence.

Examples of unsatisfactory explanations include but are not restricted to:

- Holidays taken during term time, not deemed 'for exceptional purposes' by the headteacher, including any arranged by other family members or friends.
- Shopping trips or day trips.
- The pupil's or a family member's birthday, anniversary or wedding celebration.
- A refusal to attend school on health grounds but where the pupil is considered well enough to attend [see Appendix 3 for NHS guidance]
- Children who arrive at school after the close of registration are marked using a 'U' code. This indicates that they are in school for safeguarding purposes, however, is counted as an absence for the session.
- Looking after other children or children accompanying siblings or parents to medical appointments.
- Visits to relatives or family reunions in term time.
- Other leave of absence in term time which has not been agreed.

### **5. Our Procedures**

#### **5.1 Register Keeping and Recording**

The Education (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2006, as amended in 2024 regulations, require schools to take an attendance register twice a day, once at the start of the morning session and then again during the afternoon session. For the purpose of this policy, the school defines:

'Absence' as:

- Arrival at school after the register has closed.
- Not attending school for any reason.

'Regular' attendance as:

- Attendance at every session the school is open to pupils unless their absence has been authorised by the headteacher.

Attendance is based on the following:

- The school day begins at 8:45 am.

- Pupils are expected to arrive between 8:30 am and 8:45 am.
- The morning register is taken at 8:45 am and closes at 9:00 am.
- The afternoon register is taken at 1:00 pm.
- The afternoon register will close at 1:10 pm.

Registers are legal records, and all schools must preserve every entry in the attendance or admission register for 6 years from the date the data was entered. As the attendance register is a record of the pupils present at the time it was taken, the register should only routinely be amended where the reason for absence cannot be established at the time it is taken and it is subsequently necessary to correct the entry. Where amendments are made, all schools will ensure the register shows:

- The original entry
- The amended entry
- The reason for the amendment
- The date on which the amendment was made
- The name of the person who made the amendment

On each occasion when the register is taken, the appropriate national attendance and absence code must be entered for every pupil (of both compulsory and non-compulsory school age) whose name is listed in the admission register at the time. The codes enable schools to record and monitor attendance and absence in a consistent way and are used to collect statistics. The data helps schools, local authorities, and the government gain a greater understanding of the delivery of education and the level of, and reason for, absence.

The Attendance Officer ensures the consistent use of the attendance register and codes, including dual registration, flexi-schooling, no fixed abode, access arrangements, and when specific codes (e.g. Q, D, Y6, U) should be applied.

If a parent / carer believes the wrong code has been applied, they should contact the Attendance Officer.

### **Reporting to parents**

The school will regularly inform parents about their child's attendance and absence levels. This is done at parents' evenings and in the child's end of year report.

We understand that attendance may be more complex for some families and barriers to attendance go beyond the school gate. As such, we aim to communicate with parents about school attendance in a supportive manner by:

- Setting clear expectations of good attendance.
- Building positive relationships with families.
- Using supportive language and working collaboratively with families.
- Sharing clear and relevant facts about the impact of missed lessons on pupil outcomes.
- Outlining the benefits of regular school attendance.
- Recognising efforts and improvements with attendance.
- Supporting families to access further advice and guidance when required.

### **5.2 Late Arrival at School**

The school day begins at 8:45am and all pupils are expected to arrive on time every day. We advise all parents to ensure their child is on site prior to this time to assist with a smooth transition to lessons/first lesson of the day/tutor time.

All pupils arriving after registration are required to report to the main office [with their parent(s), if accompanied by parent(s) to school] to give a reason for lateness. If their arrival is before 9:00 am it will be recorded as late - L code (Late before the close of register). If a pupil arrives late without a parent, the parent will be contacted - both to inform them and to verify the reason for lateness.

The school register will officially close at 9:00 am. Pupils arriving on or after this time will be marked as having an unauthorised absence for the session - U code otherwise referred to as 'Late after the close of register'. This is classified as an *unauthorised* absence for the session. The school will work with parents to address any patterns or repeated instances of late arrival.

If children walk to school alone, parents should advise the school of this so that these children will be followed up as a matter of priority if they do not arrive at school at the expected time.

### **5.3 Expected absence procedure for parents:**

A parent has a legal responsibility to ensure that their child attends school regularly. If a child is unavoidably absent from school, parents are expected to contact school by telephone call on the morning of the **first** day of absence and on **each subsequent day**, identifying the reason for absence and the expected date of return. If no contact is received, then the school's absence protocols will be initiated.

If a child is absent, the following actions will be initiated by the school:

- The first day calling procedures will be activated for all pupils who are not in school after close of register at 9:00 am and where no reason for absence is known. This involves a phone call home by 9:30 am to establish the reason for absence and correct attendance code.
- If there is no contact made from the pupil's parents and no response to an initial phone call, a further telephone call home will be made again that morning. If no response is received by 10:00 am, the child's named emergency contacts will be telephoned.
- For safeguarding purposes, a home visit may be conducted if school is unable to get hold of a parent due to their child's absence. The DSL will decide whether a home visit is required.
- School will contact the parent if a pupil leaves the school without permission, in line with the school's Absconding Policy.

In certain circumstances the school may also:

- Write to the parents of a pupil to highlight attendance or punctuality issues and suggest ways to improve attendance.
- Invite parents to discuss how school can support the family to make improvement.
- Investigate barriers to school attendance and work collaboratively with families on this issue.
- Refer to Dedicated Schools Team [DST] link worker for support, guidance, and advice.
- Refer to the Local Authority for joint enquiries to be made to establish the whereabouts of the child through West Sussex - Integrated Front Door [IFD]
- Refer to the Local Authority to consider issuing a penalty notice or to consider prosecution when all other interventions have failed, or an unauthorised leave of absence has been taken.
- Refer the matter to an appropriate external agency for multi-agency support, such as implementing a Family Support Plan or consulting with the Children's Social Care or the police, where there are safeguarding concerns.
- In line with DfE's guidance on ('Providing remote education') remote education should only be used as a last resort and as part of a reintegration plan.

## Monitor and Analyse attendance

The school will:

- Monitor and analyse attendance patterns and trends and use this data to deliver intervention and support in a targeted way to pupils and families.
- Use this analysis to further explore attendance patterns, provide regular attendance reports to class teachers to facilitate discussions with pupils and their families.
- Compare attendance data (at whole school, year group/cohort level) against similar schools [DfE reports] and national levels to identify areas of focus for improvement.
- Devise specific strategies to address areas of poor attendance identified through data.
- Monitor the impact of school-wide attendance initiatives and use the findings to evaluate approaches or inform future strategies.
- Provide data and reports to support the monitoring work of the governing body and local authority when appropriate.
- Work collaboratively with the Local Authority and external agencies to evaluate reasons for absence and implement strategies to support families to minimise instances of their child's absence.

## 5.4 Support Systems

Where a child has an emerging pattern of non-attendance, we will discuss the reasons for absence with the child's parent(s). We may invite parent(s) to attend a support meeting as an appropriate early intervention strategy. As part of this support, we may invite our Dedicated Schools Team link worker to work with the family.

We recognise that poor attendance can be an indication of difficulties in a family's life. This may be related to problems at home and or in school. Parents are encouraged to inform school of any difficulties or changes in circumstances that may affect their child's attendance and/or behaviour in school, for example: bereavement, divorce/separation, emerging health concerns, housing issues, mental health concerns etc. This will help the school to identify any additional support that may be required.

We also recognise that some pupils are more likely to require additional support to achieve good attendance. The school will implement a range of strategies to support improved attendance based on the individual needs and circumstances of the child.

Strategies we may use to support you include:

- **Holistic Support** - We will work with families to understand and remove or overcome barriers to attendance (e.g., minor ailments, medical conditions, SEND, or bullying).
- **Early Intervention** - Rather than waiting for absence to become severe, we will use data to monitor patterns, conduct regular reviews, and implement joint action plans with parents.
- **Clear Communication** - We will use positive, clear, and consistent messaging to set expectations and celebrate attendance improvements.
- **Collaboration** - If a child is struggling to attend, parents should contact the school's senior leader responsible for attendance to establish what help and adjustments can be put in place.

To plan the correct support, we will always invite parents to attend a meeting to discuss the concerns and devise a plan to support the child's regular attendance. Support offered to families will be child-centred and planned in discussion and agreement with both parents and, where appropriate, pupils.

## 5.6 Persistent Absence, Severe Absence and the use of legal interventions

At St Mary's School, we will investigate any pupils whose data suggests that they are becoming persistently absent (PA) and will not wait until attendance is below 90%.

- Persistent absence (PA) is when a child misses 10% or more of schooling across the year for any reason.
- Severe absence (SA) is when a child misses 50% or more of schooling across the year for any reason.

A pupil becomes a 'persistent absentee' (PA) when their attendance drops to 90% and below for any reason.

Over a full academic year this would be 38 sessions (19 days). Absence at this level could affect a child's educational outcomes.

A pupil becomes a 'severe absentee' (SA) when their attendance drops to 50% and below for any reason. Over a full academic year this would be 190 sessions (95 days). Absence at this level is causing considerable damage to a child's educational outcomes.

The attendance of all pupils at our school are monitored to identify children who are PA, or are on track to becoming PA. Where emerging concerns are identified we will initiate appropriate and timely interventions as outlined in the section above. Referrals may also be made to external agencies for targeted support. West Sussex - Integrated Front Door [IFD]

If parents fail to engage with support and their child continues to have unsatisfactory attendance/ punctuality, a request may be made to the Local Authority to pursue legal proceedings through a fixed penalty notice [FPN].

## 5.7. Fixed Penalty Notice (FPNs)

The school reports attendance data to the Local Authority. The Local Authority can issue a Fixed Penalty Notice (FPN) to fine parents for the unauthorised absence of their child from school, where the child is of compulsory school age. The fine is paid to the Local Authority, not to the school.

The National Framework has stipulated that the following codes should be considered unauthorised absence:

- 'G' – unauthorised holiday in term time.
- 'U' – arrival after the register has closed.
- 'O' – unauthorised absence.
- 'N' – no reason yet offered for the absence.

The LA will issue an FPN when the pupil accrues **10 sessions with the above codes** (in any combination) within a 10 school week period. This can span school holidays and/or academic years. (Appendix 6)

As of September 2025, in line with changes to government guidance, FPNs may be issued where a child is taken out of school for **8 or 9 unauthorised sessions** for a family holiday during an INSET or bank holiday week, or if parents take steps to avoid the use of a fixed penalty notice by taking their child out of school for 9 sessions to avoid meeting the 10-session threshold for an FPN. (Appendix 7)

In addition, a FPN can be sought **when a suspended/excluded pupil is in a public place during school hours.**

FPNs will be issued to any adult defined as a parent under the Education Act 1996 (see section 2.)

In instances of holidays in term time, particularly with separated parents, leniency will be considered regarding the parent who was not party to the holiday. When reviewing whether a parent should be included, elements of collusion around the absence will be considered.

The Government has recommended schools send out a Notice to Improve (Appendix 12) to parents at the earliest opportunity of attendance concerns, however this is **not necessary** when the absence is solely linked to a holiday in term time.

If absence continues, an escalation process applies:

- **First Referral** - the first time unauthorised absence is referred and leads to a FPN being issued, the amount will be £160 per parent, per child if paid within 28 days. Reduced to £80 if paid within 21 days.
- **Second Referral** – the second time unauthorised absence is referred and leads to a FPN being issued the amount will be for £160 per parent, per child, with no reduction offered for early payment.
- **Third Referral** – the third time unauthorised absence is referred a FPN will not be issued and instead either result in the:
  - Matter being presented directly to the Magistrates Court. A prosecution can result in the parent receiving a criminal record and fines of up to £2,500.
  - Matter being addressed via an alternative pathway with an Investigating Officer being allocated. The Government has been clear in respect of siblings, and where there is more than one child in the family, each parent can receive 2 FPNs per child.

This escalation process is relative to each parent separately against each child separately. Please note, for repeat offences of holidays in term time, court action will be the likely outcome. In addition, absences in respect of 15 school days or more for a holiday a FPN will not be offered and instead the matter will be referred directly to the Courts.

Please note, there is no right of appeal to a FPN, and it remains a parent's decision whether to accept the offer and pay the FPN or not. Unpaid FPNs may lead to court action being instigated at the Magistrates Court.

## 6. Related Policies

To underpin the values and ethos of our school and our intent to ensure that pupils at our school attend school regularly and reach their full potential, the following policies are integral to this approach:

- Safeguarding and child protection
- Supporting pupils with medical needs
- Admissions policy
- Behaviour and Anti-bullying
- Inclusion Policy
- Learning and Teaching Policy

## 7. Statutory Framework

This policy has been devised in accordance with the following legislation and guidance:

- Working together to improve school attendance, DfE (2024)
- Children missing education, DfE (2025)
- Keeping children safe in education, DfE (2026)
- Working together to safeguard children, DfE (2026)
- A guide for schools on communicating with parents about attendance, DfE [2026]
- Providing remote education: guidance for schools (August 2024)

# Appendix 1:

## Leave of absence request form



**Please note:** There is no general right to authorise absence for a family holiday, recreation or leisure activities. If you take your child out of school without permission the absence will be unauthorised, and the local authority may consider legal action. **You are advised not to make any arrangements until your request has been considered.** As per our school's attendance policy, the law requires parents to seek permission from the Headteacher to take their child out of school during term time. The law states permission can only be granted if:

1. An application has been made in advance by the parent the child normally lives with; **and**
2. There are exceptional circumstances.

Please also note that, if on the rare occasion circumstances are deemed exceptional by the Headteacher, the duration your child is permitted to be away from school may only be determined by the Headteacher and will be considered on its individual merit.

I would like to request permission for leave of absence for my child for the reasons detailed below:  
(further information can be attached if required).

|                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                           |  |
|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--|
| <b>Pupil's full name</b>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                  |  |
| <b>Class</b>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                              |  |
| <b>First date of absence</b>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                              |  |
| <b>Last date of absence</b>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                               |  |
| <b>Date of return to school</b>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                           |  |
| <b>Number of school days absent</b>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                       |  |
| <b>Reason for request including why you believe your circumstances to be exceptional</b>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                  |  |
|                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                           |  |
| <p><b>*Please note: Further evidence may be requested by the school to explain why the absence is exceptional.</b></p> <p><b>If you have a child/ren at another school/s, please detail their name/s and which school/s they attend below</b></p> <p><b>Pupil's name, name of school and school telephone number:</b></p> |  |
|                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                           |  |
| <b>Full name of person making request (note requests must be made by a parent who the pupil normally lives with)</b>                                                                                                                                                                                                      |  |
| <b>Relationship to child</b>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                              |  |
| <b>Signature</b>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                          |  |
| <b>Date</b>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                               |  |





**St Mary's Church of England Primary School**  
**Normandy**  
**Horsham**  
**West Sussex**  
**RH12 1JL**

Headteacher: Mrs E. McLaughlin  
Telephone: 01403 265999  
E-mail: [office@stmarysschoolhorsham.co.uk](mailto:office@stmarysschoolhorsham.co.uk)  
Website: [stmarysschoolhorsham.co.uk](http://stmarysschoolhorsham.co.uk)

Dear **[parent's name]**,

**RE: Absence during term time – [child's name / DOB]**

Thank you for your application for absence in term time for **[child's name]**. Whilst we appreciate your circumstances, we do not approve any absences during term time unless they are due to exceptional circumstances as per the guidance from the Department of Education.

If you choose to take your child out of school for the above unauthorised leave, we will notify the local authority and further action including legal action may be considered.

Please note that such a Penalty is issued to each parent for each child taken out of school. A Penalty Notice is a fine of £80 which increases to £160 if not paid within the first 21 days. Thereafter if the Penalty remains unpaid after 28 days this may result in legal action being taken against you. Parents have a duty to ensure their child's regular attendance at school and failure to do so is an offence under Section 444(1) of the Education Act 1996. If a 2<sup>nd</sup> fine is accrued within a rolling 3-year period, it then increases to a full £160 (they can't pay the lower rate) and if there is a 3<sup>rd</sup> referral in a rolling 3-year period, this will go straight to court. The fine does not go to the school.

I have noted the dates that **[child's name]** will be absent from St Mary's CE Primary School. Dates of leave and the registers will be marked with the G code (unauthorised family holiday) for this period.

If you would like to discuss the matter further, please contact the school office.

Yours sincerely,

Headteacher

## How can I support my child's attendance and punctuality?

- Ensure your child arrives early or on time for school every day and is ready to learn. Arriving after registration is recorded as an unauthorised absence. Pupils must be in class ready to be registered by 8:45 am.
- If your child appears to be only slightly unwell, you should still send them to school. We have staff who will contact you if their condition deteriorates [see NHS guidance overleaf]
- Book any medical appointments outside of school hours. If this is unavoidable, please book for as late in the afternoon as possible and inform the school of appointments in advance.
- Supply a copy of the appointment card or hospital letter if your child has an appointment during school hours.

## What should I do if my child is not 'fit' to go into school?

### 'On the day' absences:

On each day your child is unfit to come to school, please report this absence by telephoning or emailing the school office to let us know. In the message you must leave your child's full name and year group and give the specific reason for absence. The information you give will be recorded on our official register.

### Leave of Absence

There may be exceptional circumstances where you need to request a leave of absence for your child. Please use our 'Leave of absence request' form to make these types of requests. The form should be submitted 1 month in advance of the leave of absence, via [office@stmarysschoolhorsham.co.uk](mailto:office@stmarysschoolhorsham.co.uk). You will receive a letter in response, to advise if the request has been approved or not approved.

# Is my child too ill for school?



**Does your child have a high temperature (38°C or more)?**

**YES** Keep them off school until it goes away.

**NO** Follow the guidance below.

Your child can usually go to school with a mild cough or cold if they are otherwise well. If you do keep your child at home, it's important to phone the school or nursery on the first day and give them the reason.

| Should go in                                                                                                                                                                                                | Should go in<br>(let the school know)                                                                                                                                                                                     | Seek treatment before<br>returning to school                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                            | Keep them off (at first)                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                |
|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <b>A cough, cold or sore throat</b><br>Fine with slight cough or common cold symptoms, such as a runny nose, sore throat or headache, as long as they're otherwise well and do not have a high temperature. | <b>Cold sores</b><br>Encourage them not to touch the blister or kiss anyone while they have the cold sore, or to share things like cups and towels.                                                                       | <b>Impetigo</b><br>They'll need treatment from a pharmacist or GP, often with antibiotics. Keep them off school until all the sores have crusted over and healed, or for 48 hours after they start antibiotic treatment. Encourage your child to wash their hands regularly and not to share things like towels and cups with other children at school. | <b>Ear infection</b><br>If your child has an ear infection and a high temperature or severe earache, keep them off school until they're feeling better or their high temperature goes away.                                                                                                                             |
| <b>Threadworms</b><br>Speak to your pharmacist, who can recommend a treatment.                                                                                                                              | <b>Conjunctivitis</b><br>Fine unless they are feeling very unwell. Seek advice from your pharmacist. Encourage your child not to rub their eyes and to wash their hands regularly.                                        | <b>Ringworm</b><br>See your pharmacist unless it's on their scalp, in which case you should see a GP. It's fine for your child to go to school once they have started treatment.                                                                                                                                                                        | <b>Measles</b><br>They'll need to see a GP. Call the GP surgery before you go in, as measles can spread to others easily. Keep your child off school for at least 4 days from when the rash first appears. They should also avoid close contact with babies and anyone who is pregnant or has a weakened immune system. |
|                                                                                                                                                                                                             | <b>Head lice &amp; nits</b><br>You can treat head lice and nits without seeing a GP.                                                                                                                                      | <b>Scarlet fever</b><br>They'll need treatment with antibiotics from a GP. Otherwise they'll be infectious for 2 to 3 weeks. Your child can go back to school 24 hours after starting antibiotics.                                                                                                                                                      | <b>Vomiting &amp; diarrhoea</b><br>Stay away from school until they have not been sick or had diarrhoea due to illness for at least 2 days (48 hours).                                                                                                                                                                  |
|                                                                                                                                                                                                             | <b>Hand, foot &amp; mouth disease</b><br>If they seem well enough to go to school, there's no need to keep them off. Encourage your child to throw away any used tissues straight away and to wash their hands regularly. | <b>Chickenpox</b><br>Keep them off school until all the spots have crusted over. This is usually about 5 days after the spots first appeared.                                                                                                                                                                                                           |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                         |
|                                                                                                                                                                                                             | <b>Slapped cheek syndrome</b><br>Once the rash appears, they're no longer infectious. Let the school or teacher know if you think your child has slapped cheek syndrome.                                                  |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                         |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                         |

**Feeling worried or anxious:** It's normal for any of us to feel worried sometimes. We may get a tummy ache or headache, or Avoiding school can sometimes make a child's worries about going to school worse. If your child is struggling, please speak to explore available help. If your child is still struggling and it's affecting their everyday life, you should contact GP or school n

or sleeping.  
possible to

## Appendix 4: Attendance codes

The following codes are taken from Working Together to Improve School Attendance

| Code | Definition                                                                                                                         | Scenario                                                                                                                                                                                                                                        |
|------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| /    | Present (am)                                                                                                                       | Pupil is present at morning registration                                                                                                                                                                                                        |
| \    | Present (pm)                                                                                                                       | Pupil is present at afternoon registration                                                                                                                                                                                                      |
| L    | Late arrival                                                                                                                       | Pupil arrives late before register has closed                                                                                                                                                                                                   |
| B    | Off-site educational activity approved by the school.<br>Schools must also record the nature of the approved educational activity. | Examples of nature of activity <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• 1) Attending taster days at college</li><li>• 2) Attending courses at college</li><li>• 3) Attending unregistered alternative provision arranged by the school</li></ul> |
| D    | Dual registered                                                                                                                    | Pupil is attending a session at another setting where they are also registered                                                                                                                                                                  |
| K    | Attending education provision arranged by the Local Authority<br>Schools must also record the nature of the provision              | <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Attending courses at college</li><li>• Attending unregistered alternative provision such as, home tutoring</li></ul>                                                                                    |
| P    | Sporting activity                                                                                                                  | The pupil is attending a place for an approved educational activity that is a sporting activity                                                                                                                                                 |
| V    | Educational visit or trip                                                                                                          | An educational visit or trip arranged by or on behalf of the school and supervised by a member of school staff                                                                                                                                  |
| W    | Attending work experience                                                                                                          | The pupil is attending a place for an approved educational activity that is work experience provided under arrangements made by a local authority or the school as part of the pupil's education                                                |

| Code                             | Definition                                                                                                                                                                                              | Scenario                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                   |
|----------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <b>Absent – leave of absence</b> |                                                                                                                                                                                                         |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                            |
| <b>C</b>                         | Leave of absence for exceptional circumstances<br>Generally, a need or desire for a holiday or other absence for the purpose of leisure and recreation would not constitute an exceptional circumstance | Schools must judge each application individually considering the specific facts and circumstances and relevant background context behind each request. Where a leave of absence is granted, the school will determine the number of days a pupil can be absent from school |
| <b>C1</b>                        | Leave of absence for the purpose of participating in a regulated performance or undertaking regulated employment abroad                                                                                 | All schools can grant leaves of absence for pupils to undertake employment (paid or unpaid) during school hours                                                                                                                                                            |
| <b>C2</b>                        | Leave of absence for a compulsory school age pupil subject to a part-time timetable                                                                                                                     | All pupils of compulsory school age are entitled to a full-time education. In very exceptional circumstances, where it is in a pupil's best interests, there may be a need for a temporary part-time timetable to meet their individual needs                              |
| <b>E</b>                         | Excluded                                                                                                                                                                                                | Suspended or permanently excluded and no alternative provision made                                                                                                                                                                                                        |
| <b>I</b>                         | Illness (not medical or dental appointment)                                                                                                                                                             | The pupil is unable to attend due to illness (both physical and mental health related). Schools should advise parents to notify them on the first day the child is unable to attend due to illness                                                                         |
| <b>J1</b>                        | Interview                                                                                                                                                                                               | Attending an interview for employment or for admission to another educational institution                                                                                                                                                                                  |
| <b>M</b>                         | Medical appointment                                                                                                                                                                                     | Attending a medical or dental appointment                                                                                                                                                                                                                                  |
| <b>R</b>                         | Religious observance                                                                                                                                                                                    | The pupil is absent on a day that is exclusively set apart for religious observance by the religious body the parent(s) belong to                                                                                                                                          |
| <b>S</b>                         | Study leave                                                                                                                                                                                             | Studying for a public examination. Must be used sparingly with revision opportunities in school                                                                                                                                                                            |
| <b>T</b>                         | Parent travelling for occupational purposes                                                                                                                                                             | The pupil is a mobile child and their parent(s) is travelling in the course of their trade or business and the pupil is travelling with them                                                                                                                               |
| <b>X</b>                         | Non-compulsory school age pupil not required to attend school                                                                                                                                           |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                            |

| Code                                                                 | Definition                                                              | Scenario                                                                                                                                                                                         |
|----------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <b>Absent - unable to attend school because of unavoidable cause</b> |                                                                         |                                                                                                                                                                                                  |
| <b>Q</b>                                                             | Unable to attend the school because of a lack of access arrangements    | This is linked to transport not other access arrangements                                                                                                                                        |
| <b>Y1</b>                                                            | Unable to attend due to transport normally provided not being available | The school is not within walking distance of the pupil's home and the transport to and from the school that is normally provided for the pupil by the school or local authority is not available |
| <b>Y2</b>                                                            | Unable to attend due to widespread disruption to travel                 |                                                                                                                                                                                                  |
| <b>Y3</b>                                                            | Unable to attend due to part of the school premises being closed        |                                                                                                                                                                                                  |
| <b>Y4</b>                                                            | Unable to attend due to the whole school site being unexpectedly closed | Adverse weather                                                                                                                                                                                  |
| <b>Y5</b>                                                            | Unable to attend as pupil is in criminal justice detention              | In police detention, remanded to youth detention, awaiting trial or sentencing, or detained under a sentence of detention.                                                                       |
| <b>Y6</b>                                                            | Unable to attend in accordance with public health guidance or law       |                                                                                                                                                                                                  |
| <b>Y7</b>                                                            | Unable to attend because of any other unavoidable cause                 | An emergency has prevented the pupil from attending. The unavoidable cause must be something that affects the pupil, not just the parent.                                                        |

| Code                        | Definition                               | Scenario                                                                                                                                                                                          |
|-----------------------------|------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <b>Unauthorised absence</b> |                                          |                                                                                                                                                                                                   |
| <b>G</b>                    | Unauthorised holiday                     | Holiday not granted by the school                                                                                                                                                                 |
| <b>N</b>                    | Reason for absence not yet established   | Pupil is absent for an unknown reason (this code should be amended when the reason emerges, or replaced with code O if no reason for absence has been provided after a reasonable amount of time) |
| <b>O</b>                    | Absent in other or unknown circumstances | Where no reason for absence is established or the school is not satisfied that the reason given                                                                                                   |
| <b>U</b>                    | Arrival after registration               | A pupil has arrived late after the register has closed but before the end of session.                                                                                                             |

| Code                        | Definition                                  | Scenario                                                                                                      |
|-----------------------------|---------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <b>Administrative Codes</b> |                                             |                                                                                                               |
| <b>Z</b>                    | Prospective pupil not on admission register | To enable schools to set up registers in advance of pupils joining the school to ease administration burdens. |
| <b>#</b>                    | Planned whole school closure                | Whole school closure due to half-term/bank holiday/INSET day/use of whole school as polling station           |



Headteacher: Mrs E. McLaughlin

Telephone: 01403 265999

E-mail: [office@stmarysschoolhorsham.co.uk](mailto:office@stmarysschoolhorsham.co.uk)Website: [stmarysschoolhorsham.co.uk](http://stmarysschoolhorsham.co.uk)

[DD/MM/YYYY]

Dear Parents / Carers of [Child's Name]

**Re: School Attendance**

Thank you for speaking to me earlier about [child's name]'s attendance. As discussed, [Child's Name]'s current attendance is [ATTENDANCE]%. A copy of his/her attendance record is attached for your information.

Regular attendance is important, as missing school disrupts learning and can have a long-term negative impact on many areas of development, including academic performance. For this reason, identify dips in attendance early so that we can address them and ensure attendance does not become a long-term issue.

To put attendance into perspective:

| 95% attendance                                                             | 90% attendance                                                                | 85% attendance                                                        | 80% attendance                                                             |
|----------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| = 2 weeks off in a year                                                    | = 4 weeks missed a year                                                       | = 6 weeks missed a year                                               | = 8 weeks missed a year                                                    |
| <b>A full term</b> of school missed by the time they finish primary school | <b>Two full terms</b> of school missed by the time they finish primary school | <b>A year</b> of school missed by the time they finish primary school | <b>Over a year</b> of school missed by the time they finish primary school |

We **are becoming / remain** concerned about [Child's Name]'s attendance and would like to work with you to improve this.

[insert details of discussion / actions to date / next steps / meeting arrangements]

Yours sincerely,

Headteacher



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**RH12 1JL**

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[DD/MM/YYYY]

Dear Parents / Carers of [CHILD'S NAME]

**Re: Absence for term time holiday**

I am writing regarding [CHILD'S NAME]'s recent absence from school, which was recorded as unauthorised due to a family holiday. During this period, [CHILD'S NAME] missed 8/9 sessions (equivalent to 4/4.5 school days), including a week that also contained an INSET day, bank holiday, or end-of-term closure.

As outlined in our Pupil Attendance Policy, current government and local authority guidance (from September 2025) advises schools to refer cases to the Local Authority for a fixed penalty notice (FPN) to be issued when a pupil reaches 8–9 unauthorised sessions for a family holiday.

In line with this guidance, we have therefore made a referral to the Local Authority. They will contact you directly in due course with further information.

If you have any questions or would like to discuss this further, please do not hesitate to get in touch.

Yours sincerely,

Headteacher



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[DD/MM/YYYY]

Dear Parents /Carers of [CHILD'S NAME]

**Re: Absence for term time holiday**

I am writing regarding [CHILD'S NAME]'s recent absence from school, which was recorded as unauthorised due to a family holiday. During this period, [CHILD'S NAME] missed [NUMBER] sessions (equivalent to [NUMBER] school days)

As outlined in our Pupil Attendance Policy, current government and local authority guidance (from September 2025) advises schools to refer cases to the Local Authority for a fixed penalty notice (FPN) to be issued when a pupil reaches 10 unauthorised sessions for a family holiday.

In line with this guidance, we have therefore made a referral to the Local Authority. They will contact you directly in due course with further information.

If you have any questions or would like to discuss this further, please do not hesitate to get in touch.

Yours sincerely,

Headteacher



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[DD/MM/YYYY]

Dear Parents / Carers of [CHILD'S NAME]

**Re: School Attendance / Medical Evidence**

I am writing regarding [CHILD'S NAME]'s current attendance record, which is something all schools are required to track and monitor regularly.

**[CHILD'S NAME]'s attendance continues to be a concern at [ATTENDANCE]% for this term and [ATTENDANCE]% cumulatively for the year.**

[Summary and reminder of progress and actions to date]

Thank you for providing medical evidence for some of the absences this term. Please continue to do so for any medical absences going forward to be marked as authorised.

Yours sincerely,

Headteacher



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[DD/MM/YYYY]

Dear Parents /Carers of [CHILD'S NAME]

**Re: Medical evidence**

I am writing to update you on [CHILD'S NAME]'s attendance.

Over the past year, their cumulative attendance has reached [ATTENDANCE]%. This is a great improvement—well done! Regular attendance plays a key role in supporting children's learning, and this positive change will help to strengthen their progress and attainment.

Due to this sustained improvement, we will no longer require medical evidence to authorise absences at this time. Please note that if attendance becomes a concern again, this requirement may need to be reintroduced.

For your reference, I have attached a copy of their attendance record. If you have any questions or would like to discuss this further, please feel free to get in touch.

Yours sincerely,

Headteacher



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[DD/MM/YYYY]

Dear parent/guardian,

### Notice to Improve Attendance

**Pupil Name:**

**Pupil DOB:**

**Year Group:**

School attendance is hugely important. For your child to gain the full benefit from their education, for their learning, wellbeing, and wider development, they need to attend on time, every day possible.

If a child of compulsory school age who is registered pupil at a school fails to attend regularly at the school, the child's parent may be guilty of an offence under S.444 Education Act 1996. The offences under the Education Act 1996 also include when a pupil is accessing alternative provision.

On reviewing our records, it is clear we have raised our concerns with you regarding Pupil Name's attendance and this included (delete or edit as appropriate):

- **Telephone Calls** – We have contacted you every day your child was absent to understand the reason for this and to offer support with any issues your child may be having.
- **Attendance Concern Letter** – We have written to you, letting you know of our concerns around your child's attendance at school and the impact of their continued absence, inviting you to contact us to discuss the situation further.
- **An Attendance Support Meeting Invite** – We have invited you to a meeting to discuss your child's attendance and absence. We notified you of the consequences should your child continue to have unauthorised absence and you did not effectively engage in the support offered.
- **Timetable Amendments** – We introduced an individualised timetable as a method of improving your child's attendance. This has not been engaged with regardless of the adaptations implemented.
- **Attendance Contract** – We proposed an attendance contract and this was implemented/declined or failed to be met.

Unfortunately, despite the actions taken, attendance remains a cause of concern and your child has been recorded as absent without authority for [X] sessions; each school day is made up of 2 sessions.

You now have 20 school days in which to improve your child's attendance. During this time, you must ensure your child shows significant improvement in attendance and avoid them having any unauthorised absence from school.

Should further unauthorised absence occur, a referral may be made to the Local Authority for consideration of a Fixed Penalty Notice (FPN) and/or Court action including the use of Education Supervision Orders (ESO). It remains the Local Authority's decision on the type of intervention offered or used.

If a FPN is used, they are issued per parent, per child and are charged at £160 if paid within 28 days. In some cases, you may be offered the opportunity to pay a reduced amount of £80 if paid within 21 days.

Please note a referral may be made as soon as any further unauthorised absence is recorded, and we do not have to wait until the end of the 20 day period.

Should you wish to discuss your child's attendance please do make contact at the earliest opportunity.

Yours sincerely

Headteacher