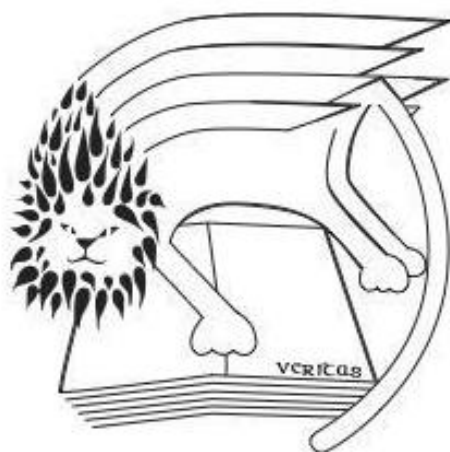


St. Mark's Catholic School



ATTENDANCE POLICY

Effective Date:	Review Date:	Prepared by:	Designated SLT:	Governor's Committee:
Sept 2024	Sept 2025	LOC	LOC	Pastoral

Our Mission:

St Mark's is a Catholic community inspired by Gospel values where relationships are rooted in love. At the heart of our mission is a commitment to live out our faith and a dedication to embrace excellence in all that we do. We believe in education that instils possibilities, transforms lives and enables all to fulfil their potential.

Principles

- Promoting good attendance and punctuality is the responsibility of the whole school community.
- Good attendance is crucial to maximising students' potential, progress and achievement.
- Good school attendance and behaviour reduces social exclusion
- The relationship between attendance and a student's attitude to learning and behaviour is understood by all staff.
- Good attendance is essential if students are to take full advantage of school and gain the appropriate skills, which will equip them for life.
- The staff of St Mark's School will work in partnership with parents and other professionals to improve attendance, to identify vulnerable students and to meet the needs of those whose attendance is poor.
- Good attendance will be seen as an achievement in its own right and explicitly recognised as such by St Mark's Catholic School. The attendance policy is based on the premise of equal opportunities for all and promotes inclusion for all students.
- St Mark's Catholic School aims to improve its annual attendance by creating a culture where good attendance is a "normality"

Legal duties

This policy takes account of the statutory duties as set out in:

- The Education Act 1996 The Education (Pupil Registration) (England) regulations 2006 as amended
- The Education Act 2002
- The Education (School Day and School year) (England) Regulations 1999
- The Change of School Session Times (England) (Revocation) Regulations 2011
- Crime and Disorder Act 1998
- The Anti-Social Behaviour Act 2003
- The Education Act 2002 and 2005
- The Education and Inspection Act 2006 The Education (Parenting Contracts and Parenting Orders) 2007
- The Education (Penalty Notices) (England) Regulations 2007 as amended The Education and Skills Act 2008
- Keeping Children Safe in Education (Dept of Education) 2023

Aims

St Mark's Catholic aims to achieve good attendance by operating a policy within which staff, students, parents, the Education Welfare Service and others can work in partnership. The School will monitor attendance and ensure quick and early intervention if/when a problem is identified. The School promotes good attendance by:

- Developing a positive classroom climate in which a positive group identity produces welcoming lessons.
- Ensuring that the curriculum is engaging.
- Having high expectations of prompt attendance throughout the school day
- Collecting and analysing data to highlight trends with regard to cohort, gender, subject and to set targets where necessary.
- Collecting attendance data from Primary Schools as part of the Year 6/Year 7 transfer information.
- Regularly informing parents about their child's attendance, with a half-termly update.
- Monitoring lateness.
- Improving communication with parents about the importance of regular and punctual school attendance
- Involving students in developing positive strategies to improve attendance
- Giving attendance a continuing high profile by frequently updating information within year groups.
- Reducing the number of persistent absentees (students with an attendance below 95%)
- Publishing the Attendance Policy and times of the school day on the School website.

Responsibilities and Strategies

- The Director of Pastoral Care will monitor attendance throughout St Mark's Catholic School.
- The School is required to submit overall levels of absence and school attendance to the London Borough of Hounslow each half term. Attendance information is submitted to the DfE via the School Census.
- The designated teacher for Looked After Children, the Director of Pastoral Care, will monitor the attendance of these students.
- The Attendance Officer will submit attendance data to the Director of Pastoral Care, PPLs, the Head of Sixth Form and Education Welfare Officer (EWO) on a regular basis.
- Form tutors will monitor attendance closely.
- Staff who take students out on organised visits will give a list of the students, with dates and times of the visit, to the Attendance Officer.
- Staff who take students out of normal lessons for small group work will register them on the SIMS system.
- Parents are informed of their responsibilities, the measures taken by St Mark's School and the Education Welfare Service to ensure good attendance and how to seek support or advice in relation to attendance issues.
- Vulnerable and "at risk" students will be closely monitored by the Director of Pastoral Care, PPLs and form tutors.
- Those responsible for students' placements off-site will provide the Attendance Officer with a regular record of their attendance.

Working Partnerships

- The EWO fulfils the statutory duty of the London Borough of Hounslow in enforcing regular school attendance. In doing so it enables the School and parents/carers to meet their respective responsibilities.
- Parents are informed of the procedures and expectations when their child is first admitted to the St Mark's School. They will also be advised on the School's policy at New Intake Evening.
- St Mark's Catholic School works closely with the London Borough of Hounslow and other services to identify ways in which their work will support improved attendance.

Recording Attendance

Pupils are expected to attend school for the full 190 days each year unless there is a good reason for absence. Where a student is absent from school the school must differentiate between authorised and unauthorised absence. **By law, only the school can approve absence, not parents.** Generally, school will accept an explanation as to why a student may be absent. However, in certain circumstances School may require further evidence to justify the explanation e.g. high level of absence for minor health reasons, unusual patterns of absence for instance the same day each week or frequent broken weeks or, where the School believes unauthorised leave of absence has been taken.

Parent

- Parents/Carers must ring in on the school's dedicated absence line on the first day of illness and then on all subsequent days. Messages can be left on the voicemail system.
- It is expected that parents will provide an explanation (rather than 'ill') if their child is absent.
- We will mark absence due to physical or mental illness as authorised unless the school has a genuine concern about the authenticity of the illness.
- Where the absence is longer than 5 days, or there are doubts about the authenticity of the illness, the school for ask for medical evidence, such as a doctor's note, prescription, appointment card or other form of appropriate evidence.
- If the school is not satisfied with the evidence, the absence will be marked as unauthorised and parents will be notified of this.
- If there is no contact from the parent and the student fails to attend school, the attendance office will contact home by telephone and email. This will be repeated and followed up by a telephone call or letter if no explanation is received. These contacts will be recorded.
- If a student has been absent for more than 3 days with continued unexplained absence, in the first instance the DSL will be informed and a referral made to the EWO (Educational Welfare Officer).
- Pupils who fail to return to the St Mark's Catholic School on the agreed day after a fixed – term exclusion, with no explanation, will also be subject to first day contact by the Attendance Officer.
- Attending a medical or dental appointment will be counted as authorised as long as the pupil's parent notifies the school in advance of the appointment. **However, we encourage parents to make medical and dental appointments out of school hours where possible. Where this is not possible, the pupil should be out of school for the minimum amount of time necessary.**

Registration

- The twice-daily registration of students (AM and PM) is a legal requirement. The accuracy of registration is essential and registers may be required in a court of law for example as evidence in prosecutions for non-attendance at school. Copies of these registers are kept as a legal requirement.
- All staff must be vigilant when registering students for lessons, and report immediately any unexplained absence of a student who has attended lessons already during the day. This should be reported to the Attendance Officer and recorded.
- We will also record whether the absence is authorised or not
- The nature of the activity, where a pupil is attending an approved educational activity
- The nature of circumstances, where a pupil is unable to attend for exceptional circumstances

We will keep every entry on the attendance register for 6 years are the date on which the entry was made.

The school day starts at 8.35am and ends at 3.05pm.

Pupils must arrive in school by 8.30am on each school day.

Lateness

- All students are required to arrive at the St Mark's Catholic School, attend registration and attend all lessons on time.
- If a student arrives late, before the end of AM registration, they should report directly to their form tutor where they will be marked as late. If they arrive after AM registration, they should report to Student Services to sign in, the Attendance Officer will record the mark accordingly.
- Students attend a late detention at break time of the same day.

Monitoring

- Form tutors will ensure that good attendance is maintained by regularly reminding students of the importance of attendance.
- The attendance officer in Student Service will monitor and record all attendance data.
- Improved attendance will be acknowledged and rewarded.
- The Attendance officer will liaise with the Director of Pastoral Care on a weekly basis regarding attendance.

Leave of absence during term time

The headteacher will allow pupils to be absent from the school site for certain educational activities, or to attend other schools and settings.

The headteacher will only grant a leave of absence to a pupil during term time if the request specific circumstances set out in the [2024 school attendance regulations](#). These circumstances are:

- Taking part in a regulated performance or regulated employment abroad
- Attending an interview
- Study leave
- A temporary, time-limited part-time timetable
- Exceptional circumstances

A leave of absence is granted at the headteacher's discretion, including the length of time the pupil is authorised to be absent for.

Leave of absence will not be granted for a pupil to take part in protest activity during school hours.

As a leave of absence will only be granted in exceptional circumstances, it is unlikely a leave of absence will be granted for the purposes of a family holiday.

The school considers each application for term-time absence individually, taking into account the specific facts, circumstances and relevant background context behind the request.

Requests for leave of absence during term time should be made in writing to the Headteacher as far in advance as possible. The headteacher may require evidence to support any request for leave of absence. If a pupil is over compulsory school age (e.g. sixth form), leave can be requested or agreed by the pupil or a parent they normally live with.

Other valid reasons for **authorised absence** include (but are not limited to):

- Illness (including mental-health illness) and medical/dental appointments
- Religious observance – where the day is exclusively set apart for religious observance by the religious body to which the pupil's parent(s) belong(s). If necessary, the school will seek advice from the parent's religious body to confirm whether the day is set apart
- Parent(s) travelling for occupational purposes – this covers Roma, English and Welsh gypsies, Irish and Scottish travellers, showmen (fairground people) and circus people, bargees (occupational boat dwellers) and new travellers. Absence may be authorised only when a traveller family is known to be travelling for occupational purposes and has agreed this with the school, but it is not known whether the pupil is attending educational provision
- If the pupil is currently suspended or excluded from school (and no alternative provision has been made)

Other reasons the school may allow a pupil to be absent from the school site, which are not classified as absences, include (but are not limited to):

- Attending an offsite approved educational activity, sporting activity or visit or trip arranged by the school
- Attending another school at which the pupil is also registered (dual registration)
- Attending provision arranged by the local authority
- Attending work experience
- If there is any other unavoidable cause for the pupil not to attend school, such as disruption to travel caused by an emergency, a lack of access arrangements, or because the school premises are closed

Our school will make use of the full range of potential sanctions – including, but not limited to, those listed below – to tackle poor attendance. Decisions will be made on an individual, case-by-case basis.

Penalty notices

The headteacher (or someone authorised by them), local authority or the police can fine parents for the unauthorised absence of their child from school, where the child is of compulsory school age, by issuing a penalty notice.

If the school issues a penalty notice, it will check with the local authority before doing so, and send it a copy of any penalty notice issued.

Before issuing a penalty notice, the school will consider the individual case, including:

- Whether the national threshold for considering a penalty notice has been met (10 sessions of unauthorised absence in a rolling period of 10 school weeks)
- Whether a penalty notice is the best available tool to improve attendance for that pupil
- Whether further support, a notice to improve or another legal intervention would be a more appropriate solution
- Whether any obligations that the school has under the Equality Act 2010 make issuing a penalty notice inappropriate

Each parent who is liable for the pupil's offence(s) can be issued with a penalty notice, but this will usually only be the parent/parents who allowed the absence. The payment must be made directly to the local authority, regardless of who issues the notice. If the payment has not been made after 28 days, the local authority can decide whether to prosecute or withdraw the notice.

If issued with a **first** penalty notice, the parent must pay £80 within 21 days, or £160 within 28 days. If a **second** penalty notice is issued to the same parent in respect of the same pupil, the parent must pay £160 if paid within 28 days.

A **third** penalty notice cannot be issued to the same parent in respect of the same child within 3 years of the date of the issue of the first penalty notice. In a case where the national threshold is met for a third time within those 3 years, alternative action will be taken instead.

A penalty notice may also be issued where parents allow their child to be present in a public place during school hours without reasonable justification, during the first 5 days of a suspension or exclusion (where the school has notified the parents that the pupil must not be present in a public place on that day). These penalty notices are not included in the National Framework, not subject to the same considerations about support being provided, and do not count towards the limit as part of the escalation process.

In these cases, the parent must pay £60 within 21 days, or £120.

Notices to improve

If the national threshold has been met and support is appropriate, but parents do not engage with offers of support, the school may offer a notice to improve to give parents a final chance to engage with support.

Notices to improve will be issued in line with processes set out in the local code of conduct for the local authority area in which the pupil attends school.

They will include:

- Details of the pupil's attendance record and of the offences
- The benefits of regular attendance and the duty of parents under [section 7 of the Education Act 1996](#)
- Details of the support provided so far
- Opportunities for further support, or to access previously provided support that was not engaged with
- A clear warning that a penalty notice may be issued if attendance doesn't improve within the improvement period, along with details of what sufficient improvement looks like, which will be decided on a case-by-case basis
- A clear timeframe of between 3 and 6 weeks for the improvement period
- The grounds on which a penalty notice may be issued before the end of the improvement period

Following up on unexplained absence

Where any pupil expected to attend the school does not attend, or stops attending, without reason the school will:

- Call the pupil's parents on the first day of absence to ascertain the reason.
- Identify whether the absence is approved or not.
- Identify the correct attendance code to use and input it as soon as the reason for the absence is ascertained – this will be no later than 5 working days after the session for which the pupil was absent.
- Call the parent on each day the absence continues without explanation, to make sure proper safeguarding action is taken where necessary. If absence continues, the school will consider involving an education welfare officer (EWO).

- Where relevant, report the absence to the pupil's social worker or youth offending team officer.
- Where appropriate, offer support to the pupil and/or their parents to improve attendance.
- Identify whether the pupil needs support from wider partners, as quickly as possible, and make the necessary referrals.

Where support is not appropriate, not successful, or not engaged with, a notice to improve, penalty notice or other legal intervention may follow.

Interventions

If attendance for a student falls below 95%, a number of intervention measures are triggered. These are discussed at the weekly meeting between the Attendance Officer and the Director of Pastoral Care.

1. **Letter 1** - sent to parents/carers explaining that attendance has dropped below 95% and offering help from the St Mark's to improve this figure.
2. **Letter 2** - sent to parents/carers if there is no improvement in attendance after letter 1. This details the most up to date attendance figure and gives a 4-week target for improvement.
3. **Meeting** with the Director of Pastoral Care or Pupil Progress Leader - If there is no improvement after letter 2, the Director of Pastoral Care or PPL will meet with the parents and the student in school. Discussions will centre around the reasons for the poor attendance figure and how the school can help improve this. We will also explore if further help is needed from other organisations (ie: CAMHS, GPs, EWO, etc). A Home School Agreement form is signed by the student, parents and the Director of Pastoral Care.
4. **EWO referral** - if there is no improvement this referral is made and the school will work with the parents and EWO to improve attendance.

All interventions are documented and records kept by the Attendance officer.

Performance indicators

- Improvement in overall School attendance figure.
- Reduction in persistent absentees.
- Action is taken on students whose attendance is below 95%.
- To have 100% registration (am/pm registration and every lesson)
- All registers are taken within 10 minutes of the start of a lesson.

Monitoring Attendance

The school will monitor attendance and absence data (including punctuality) half-termly, termly and yearly across the school and at an individual pupil, year group and cohort level.

Specific pupil information will be shared with the DfE on request.

Data will be collected each term and published at national and local authority level through the DfE's school absence national statistics releases. The underlying school-level absence data is published alongside the national statistics.

The school will benchmark its attendance data at whole school, year group and cohort level against local, regional, and national levels to identify areas of focus for improvement, and share this with the governing board.

Analysing attendance

The school will:

- Analyse attendance and absence data regularly to identify pupils, groups or cohorts that need additional support with their attendance, and
- Identify pupils whose absences may be a cause for concern, especially those who demonstrate patterns of persistent or severe absence
- Conduct thorough analysis of half-termly, termly, and full-year data to identify patterns and trends
- Look at historic and emerging patterns of attendance and absence, and then develop strategies to address these patterns

Using data to improve attendance

The school will:

- Develop targeted actions to address patterns of absence (of all severities) of individual pupils, groups or cohorts that it has identified via data analysis
- Provide targeted support to the pupils it has identified whose absences may be a cause for concern, especially those who demonstrate patterns of persistent or severe absence, and their families (see section 8.4 below)
- Provide regular attendance reports to (class teachers/form tutors) to facilitate discussions with pupils and families, and to the governing board and school leaders (including special educational needs co-ordinators, designated safeguarding leads and pupil premium leads)
- Use data to monitor and evaluate the impact of any interventions put in place in order to modify them and inform future strategies
- Share information and work collaboratively with other schools in the area, local authorities and other partners where a pupil's absence is at risk of becoming persistent or severe, including keeping them informed regarding specific pupils, where appropriate

Reducing persistent and severe absence

Persistent absence is where a pupil misses 10% or more of school, and severe absence is where a pupil misses 50% or more of school. Reducing persistent and severe absence is central to the school's strategy for improving attendance.

The school will:

- Use attendance data to find patterns and trends of persistent and severe absence
- Consider potential safeguarding issues and, where suspected or present, address them in line with Keeping Children Safe in Education
- Hold regular meetings with the parents of pupils who the school (and/or local authority) considers to be vulnerable or at risk of persistent or severe absence, or who are persistently or severely absent, to:
 - Discuss attendance and engagement at school
 - Listen, and understand barriers to attendance
 - Explain the help that is available
 - Explain the potential consequences of, and sanctions for, persistent and severe absence
 - Review any existing actions or interventions
 - Provide access to wider support services to remove the barriers to attendance, in conjunction with the local authority, where relevant
 - Consider alternative support that could be put in place to remove any barriers to attendance and re-engage these pupils. In doing so, the school will sensitively consider some of the reasons for absence
 - Implement sanctions, where necessary

Covid 19 impact on attendance

The school continues to promote full attendance, reinforce our high expectations and closely monitor attendance. Students should attend school unless they have symptoms or have tested positive for Covid 19. There is no longer a requirement for students to self-isolate as close contacts under the age of 18. This is an exceptional time, and we recognise that absence may be unavoidable.