



## **ATTENDANCE POLICY 2011/2012**

### **Rationale**

All children of compulsory school age have the right to an efficient full-time education, regardless of age, aptitude, ability and any special needs s/he may have. Regular school attendance is essential if a child is to make the most of the educational opportunity available to them. St Marychurch takes seriously its responsibility to monitor and promote the regular attendance of all its pupils. It acknowledges that irregular attendance seriously disrupts continuity of learning, undermines educational progress, can lead to underachievement and low attainment and impedes the child's ability to develop friendship groups within school.

This policy seeks to ensure that all parties involved in the practicalities of school attendance are aware and informed of attendance matters in school and to outline the schools commitment to attendance matters. It details the responsibilities of individuals and groups involved and the procedures in place to promote and monitor pupil attendance.

### **Purposes**

1. To have clear, relevant guidelines for register keeping which are carefully and routinely carried out by staff.
2. To ensure that good attendance has a high priority with pupils, parents and teachers, actively supported by the Attendance Improvement Officer.
3. To demonstrate clearly stated procedures for swift follow-up when there is a concern about an absence.
4. To recognise that matters relating to the quality of the curriculum and teaching and to the school's ethos and relationships are most significant in encouraging good attendance.
5. To understand the action that can and will be taken by the Attendance Improvement Officer to ensure good attendance.

## Rights, responsibilities and roles

### School

1. All staff will understand the registration process in the school.
2. All registers will be completed accurately at the beginning of each morning and afternoon session, and returned to the school office promptly.

**NB: Incomplete or inaccurate registers are unacceptable; they provide a daily record of attendance which may be required in a Court of Law.**

3. The school will ensure that clear attendance information is regularly communicated to parents through a variety of media: newsletters, school prospectus and parents meetings.
4. The school will inform parents monthly of attendance figures and annually of the whole school attendance target via the school newsletter.
5. The school will accurately record and monitor all absenteeism and lateness.
6. The school will identify clear procedures to identify and follow up all absence and lateness allocating individual staff roles and responsibilities.
7. The school will annually review its attendance policy and associated procedures.

### Parents

1. Parents have a legal responsibility to ensure their child regularly attends the school at which they are registered. Failure to fulfill this duty may result in the Local Authority taking legal action.
2. Parents are responsible for ensuring that their child attends school regularly, punctually, properly dressed and equipped and in a fit condition to learn.
3. Parents are responsible for immediately informing school of the reason for any absence by phone call on the first morning of any absence and thereafter.
4. Parents should avoid arranging family holidays in term time.
5. Parents can expect the school to keep them fully informed of their child's attendance/punctuality record.

## Pupils

Pupils have a responsibility to themselves and others to play a positive role in the life of the school and to make the most of the educational opportunities available.

### **What is expected of the pupils:**

- To respect themselves and others
- To do all they can to attend school regularly and punctually
- To inform a trusted adult if they feel that they are being bullied
- To encourage friendship and a sense of belonging
- To be happy and encourage others to feel happy

## Authorised/Unauthorised absence

All absences must be explained by a parent. The school will then decide whether or not it will authorise the absence.

### **Acceptable reasons for the authorisation of absences are:**

- Illness (1)
- Exceptional family circumstances such as a bereavement
- Days of religious observance
- Unavoidable medical/dental appointments (2)
- Holidays up to 10 days (see school's policy on term time holiday (3))

### **Absences from school will not be authorised for:**

- Holidays not agreed
- Birthdays
- Shopping
- Looking after family members
- Visiting relatives

#### (1) Illness

Evidence of a GP appointment may be requested following 3 days of illness and where a child's attendance is below 90% and/or is regularly away from school due to illness.

Referral to School Nurse may be made to offer advice and support to the family.

#### (2) Medical/dental appointments

All routine (non emergency) appointments should be made, whenever possible, outside of school hours. Should a child need to have an appointment during school hours, evidence of this appointment will need to be provided. Failure to provide evidence may result in the school unauthorising the absence.

### (3) Holidays in term time

The school strongly urges parents to avoid booking family holidays during term time. Leave for such holidays will only be granted in special circumstances.

The Head Teacher has discretionary power to grant leave of up to 10 days for the purpose of an annual holiday during term time. This is not an entitlement and parents cannot expect leave of absence for the purpose of a holiday to be granted.

Schools can only agree to more than 10 school days absence in exceptional circumstances.

#### Guidelines

The school will judge each holiday request on a case by case basis.

All requests for holidays in term time need to be made using the appropriate form prior to the holiday being taken and returned to the school for consideration before the holiday commences.

Parents will be notified if the absence has been authorised or not.

There are three periods when holidays will not be authorised:

- The first three weeks in September: this is a period when all children must attend in order to settle into their new classes.
- For year 6 children from the beginning of the summer term until the end of SATs week: year 6 children must attend school during these weeks for revision and testing.
- If a child's attendance is below 90%.

**\*\* Parents who take their children out of school without authorisation could be subject to a £50 penalty notice per child, per parent from the Local Authority.**

## Procedures for following up absence/lateness

### First day reporting

Parents are reminded of the first day contact procedure at the beginning of each term via the school newsletter.

On the first day of absence the parent/carer should ring or e-mail school before 09:30am to inform the office that their child will be away and give a reason for the absence. An indication of the likely period of absence is requested.

[absence@st-marychurch-primary.torbay.sch.uk](mailto:absence@st-marychurch-primary.torbay.sch.uk)

**Absence Answer phone:** 01803 317999 or 329070

Admin staff keeps a log of absence calls and reasons received each day.

Immediately after registration class teachers send their registers to the office.

If any member of staff is concerned about an absence they should liaise with the admin staff to clarify any reasons or knowledge for the absence. If still concerned, they should relay to the Head Teacher or Deputy Head Teacher.

Between 09:30am – 10:30am admin staff will text parents of any child whose absence is unexplained. They will telephone parents/carers of any child who is subject to a CAF or whose attendance at the last monitoring was below 90% and whose absence is unexplained. Parents will be called on each consecutive day that the absence remains unexplained.

School must begin enquiries as to the whereabouts of a child and family within 10 school days or sooner.

School should inform the Attendance Improvement Officer within 10 school days or sooner of a child's continued absence from school and a Children Missing from Education (CME) referral should be made to the Attendance Improvement Service.

Where a child is absent due to moving schools they will stay on the school roll until notification of arrival from the new school.

***\*\* If the child is subject to a child protection plan or if the school has particular safeguarding concerns, the school will immediately notify the local social work team and the Attendance Improvement Officer. \*\****

Reasons for absence may be offered, verbally by phone, or by e-mail but must be followed by a letter on the child's return to school. The school may then decide if it wishes to authorise the absence or record it as an unauthorised absence.

A reason for a period of absence is always required. The school will contact parents who have not offered a reason. If no reason is provided within one week of return the school will mark the absences as unauthorised.

	1 <sup>st</sup> Day of Absence	2 Days after period of absence/ on return from absence	1 <sup>st</sup> week after period of absence
Parent	Contacts school with reason by phone and/or letter	Parent provides a letter stating reason for absence	Parent provides a letter stating reason for absence
School	School will text parent to inform them that the child is not in school and enquire about a reason why. A follow up phone call may be made. The school will phone for any child subject to an Absence CAF or whose attendance at last monitoring was below 90%.	Record any reasons given.  If no reason given School sends a formal request via the child requesting a reason for absence	Check to see if parent has communicated with school. Record any reasons.  If no reason has been received the register is marked as an unauthorised absence if no response from parent.

### Lateness

There are two negative results caused by pupils who constantly arrive late. These are:

- The loss of education suffered by the pupil which over a year can add up to a significant proportion of their time at school.
- The disruption to other children in their class as the teacher's attention is taken from the task at hand.

Pupils should arrive in school for registration by 8.55am. Pupils who arrive after 9.05am are considered late. Children arriving late after 9.15am are considered late after registration. An appropriate mark is recorded in the registers daily and entered on the computer through the Attendance programme weekly.

The strategies that the school will use to tackle lateness will include:

- Doors will be locked at 9:05am. Any children arriving after this time will be expected to enter the school via reception and write in the late book.
- The Attendance Improvement Officer and a member of school staff will implement late gates on a regular basis.
- Parents of those children logged as a late arrival during late gates will receive a letter; this letter will include information about the Parenting Support Facilitator's weekly drop in.
- All children's attendance records will be checked every half term for lates before registers close (L) and lates after registers close (U – an unauthorized session). Where either/or these lates cumulate to unacceptable levels in a half term the school will write to parents in order to work together towards improving punctuality.

***\*\* 10 or more 'late after registers close' (U) could result in the Local Authority issuing a fixed penalty notice \*\****

### Attendance letters

All pupils with attendance below 90% will have their attendance analysed on a fortnightly basis by the Attendance Improvement Officer and the admin staff, in order to identify persistent absentees and those pupils at risk of becoming persistent absentees.

Absences may be unauthorised by the school where no reason has been given or where the school feels the reason is unacceptable.

Where a pupil's attendance is below 90% and there are unauthorised absences the following actions may be taken:

**Attendance letter 1** will be sent advising the parent that their child's attendance has dropped below 90%.

**Attendance letter 2** will be sent after 2 weeks, if no improvement has been made, with an appointment to see the Head Teacher.

**Attendance letter 3** will be sent after two weeks, if there is still no improvement, stating that a referral will be made to the Attendance Improvement Service.

### Strategies for promoting attendance

Each week the class with the highest attendance percentage will be celebrated during Friday's Worship.

Certificates are distributed:

- At the end of the school year to every child with 98%+ attendance across the whole school year.
- To children who have made a significant improvement in their attendance.

#### Collection of attendance data

At the beginning of each term the Head Teacher and Attendance Improvement Officer will analyse the results of the latest census data and produce an appropriate action plan for the term ahead.

#### Attendance targets

The Head Teacher and the School Improvement Partner will set school attendance targets annually.

#### Adoption

Date: December 2011

To be reviewed: September 2012