

Attendance and Punctuality Policy

1. Introduction

- Parents have a legal obligation to ensure their children attend school regularly.
- Children who miss a significant part of their schooling through absence and lateness rarely achieve their full potential. As well as missing lessons, their patchy attendance makes it more and more difficult to catch up.
- Children who are out of school without good reason are put at greater risk than those who attend school regularly.
- Patterns of attendance are habit forming – children whose attendance is poor develop attitudes towards school which can jeopardise the whole of their later education. This, in turn, can be damaging to their employment prospects in adult life.

2. Attendance

- Children are expected to attend school for the full 190 days of the academic year, unless there is a good reason for absence. There are two types of absence, Authorised Absence and Unauthorised Absence. The only person who is able to authorise absence of any kind is the headteacher.
- Absences which may, depending on the circumstances, be authorised include:
 - Illness which is serious enough to make school attendance inadvisable
 - Medical and dental appointments
 - Pastoral reasons, such as attendance at funerals etc.
 - Other family circumstances of a pastoral nature
- Absences which will **not** be authorised include:
 - Birthday treats
 - Shopping trips
 - Holidays in term time in excess of 10 school days in any year
 - Holidays during SATs week (dates are advertised every year in the school newsletter)
- If a child is absent, parents/carers should contact the school by 10:30 .m. on the first day of absence giving and explanation of the absence. The school will decide whether to authorise the absence. When an absence is **not** authorised, the parents/carers will be informed.
- If no reason for the absence is given on the first day of absence, the school will send home a letter (see appendix 1) seeking an explanation for the absence. If this is not completed and returned to the school by return, the parent/carer will be contacted by 'phone to seek an explanation for the absence.

3. Completing the register

- There is a legal requirement that the school keeps accurate registers, providing a daily record of the attendance of all pupils. Registers at Stella Maris are kept electronically, with paper printouts also available for scrutiny when required.
- Teachers have a duty to see that the paper register input forms which are used to update the electronic registers are completed regularly, accurately and punctually.

4. Family holidays during term time

- Parents/carers are strongly urged to avoid booking a family holiday during term time. Parents do not have the right to take their child out of school for such a holiday. The headteacher does have the authority to grant leave of absence up to a maximum of 10 days in any one school year on behalf of the school governors. Such leave of absence cannot be granted for any purpose other than a family holiday.

- In considering whether or not to authorise leave for a family holiday, the school will consider each case individually, taking into account factors such as a child's overall attendance record and the reason for the holiday. The school will not authorise leave of absence for family holidays during SATs week.
- If, in spite of the school's advice to avoid holidays during term time, parents feel they have no alternative, they must request leave of absence in advance. This is done by completing a holiday form at least two weeks before the first day of intended absence and returning it to the school office. Holiday forms are available from the school office on request.

5. Lateness

- School begins at 8:50 a.m. and all pupils are expected to be in school for registration at this time. The whistle is blown at 8:45 a.m. to allow pupils time to hang up their coats and make their way into class. Any child arriving later than 8:55 a.m. must enter the school via the main entrance, where their name will be recorded in the late book. If the pupil is accompanied by a parent/carer they will be asked to give an explanation for the lateness, which will also be recorded in the register.
- Pupils arriving in school after 9:05 a.m. will have this recorded in the register as an unauthorised absence. This will be monitored by the Educational Welfare Officer. In addition, the headteacher may send home a letter (appendix 2) regarding persistent late arrival at school.
- Parents should note that the Educational Welfare Officer has the discretion to take action in respect of pupils who regularly arrive late (after 8:55 a.m. but before 9:05 a.m.). This can result in court proceedings being commenced.

6. Penalties for Unauthorised Absence

- Penalty Notices will be sent to parents whose children take unauthorised absence from school of at least 10 sessions (5 days) in any school season (Autumn – Terms 1 and 2, Spring – Terms 3 and 4, and Summer – Terms 5 and 6).
- The following circumstances will be considered as appropriate reasons for the issuing of Penalty Notices:
 - Truancy including truancy sweeps
 - Parentally-condoned absences
 - Excessive holidays in term time
 - Excessive delayed return from extended holidays
 - Persistent lateness after the register has closed
- On receipt of the Notice, the penalty is £50 if paid within 28 days, rising to £100 if paid after 28 days but within 42 days. Failure to pay the penalty in full by the end of the 42 day period may result in prosecution by the Local Authority.

7. What can parents/carers do to help?

- Let the school know as soon as possible why your child is absent. Please also remember to send in a note with your child on their return to school.
- Try to make non-urgent appointments outside school time.
- Do not allow your child to have time off school unless it is really necessary.

8. What can parents/carers do if they are worried?

- Talk to your child if you think they are trying to avoid school for some reason – it may be something that can be resolved very easily.
- Talk to the school's Children and Families Liaison Officer who may be able to give support and guidance.
- Talk to the headteacher and other members of school staff.
- You may also contact the Educational Welfare Officer who will work with you and the school to resolve the situation (contact details available through the school office).