



St Mary the Virgin

CE PRIMARY SCHOOL

Attendance Policy



Date Established	Autumn 2024
Revised	Spring 2026
Review Date	Autumn 2027
Author	Head teacher

Contents

Our Aims	3
Learning	3
Safeguarding	4
The Law relating to attendance.....	4
The Law relating to safeguarding	4
Expected Levels of Attendance	4
St Mary the Virgin CE Primary School	5
Parents and pupils can expect the following from school	6
Roles and Responsibilities for Attendance Champion	6
Roles and responsibilities	6
Procedures	7
Types of absence.....	8
Authorised absences	8
Unauthorised absences.....	8
Pupils with a social worker	10

Attendance Policy

Attendance Champion: Jenny Williamson

We aim to ensure that all children attend school regularly and on time to enable them to take full advantage of the educational opportunities available. Regular, punctual attendance is valued and positively encouraged for all our pupils.

Some pupils find it harder than others to attend school. This policy sets out how school staff will work with pupils, parents, and partners to promote, encourage and support regular attendance at school and remove any barriers to attendance. We as a school have fully considered our obligations under the Equality Act 2010 and considerations under the UN Conventions on the Rights of the Child.

Our Aims

To set clear expectations and aspirations that all pupils have a high standard of school attendance and punctuality. To improve children's attainment through good attendance. To make attendance a priority for everyone. To ensure there is a clear process to identify and address emerging attendance concerns. To work effectively with parents, pupils, and partners through building trusted relationships to work together to remove barriers to attendance.

We are committed to the following:

- A welcoming, stimulating and safe learning environment.
- To listen to parents and pupils to understand barriers to attendance.
- To build trusted relationships with parents and pupils where attendance concerns can be discussed and understood.
- High expectations of our pupils and all staff.
- A broad, balanced and relevant curriculum.
- To recognise and celebrate achievements in all areas of school life.
- Equal access to all aspects of the curriculum and school life.
- High quality teaching using a variety of teaching strategies.
- A range of resources that are effectively used to support and challenge learning.
- To provide experiences, which will develop our pupils' spiritual, moral and cultural understanding.
- Support, guidance and training for all those who teach and work with our children.
- To foster and maintain links with our wider community. WHY ATTENDANCE IS IMPORTANT

Learning

Learning at our school is inclusive, interactive and sequential, requiring the participation of the pupils with the teacher and peers during learning time. This is affected when a pupil is absent or persistently late— not only for that pupil, but for the dynamics of the entire class. This is both during their absence as well as upon their return, when time is taken to reintegrate them into the learning context of the class. Additionally, catch up tasks can help make up for lost work, but cannot replicate the discussions led by the teacher and/or children, questions raised by other pupils, or the activities conducted in class.

Safeguarding

Children may be considered at risk if they do not attend school regularly. Safeguarding the interests of each child is everyone's responsibility. Within the context of this school, promoting the welfare and life opportunities for every pupil encompasses: Attendance, Strong Relationship Management, Health and Safety, Access to the Curriculum and Anti-bullying. Not attending school on a regular basis will be considered as a safeguarding matter.

The Law relating to attendance

Section 7 of the Education Act 1996 states that 'the parent of every child of compulsory school age shall cause him / her to receive full-time education suitable: (a) to age, ability and aptitude and (b) to any special educational needs he/ she may have, either by regular attendance at school or otherwise'.

The Law relating to safeguarding

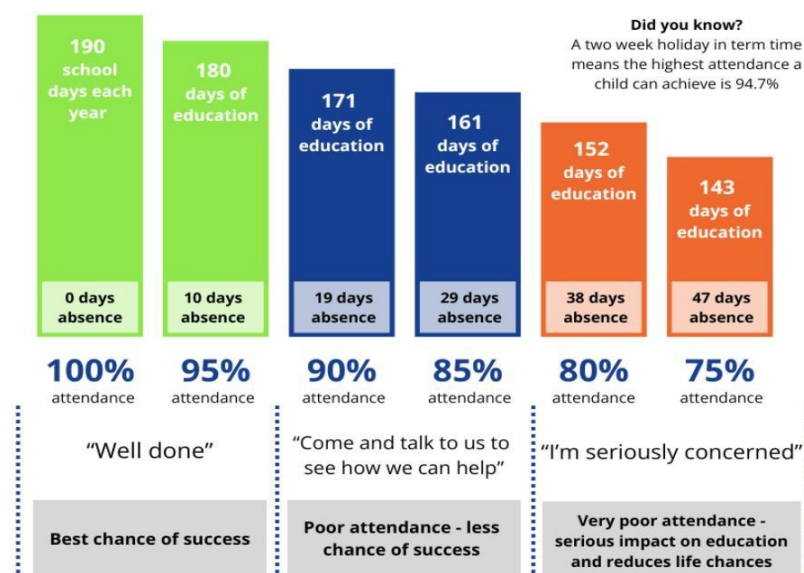
Section 175 of the Education Act 2002 places a duty on local authorities and governing bodies to have regard to guidance issued by the Secretary of State regarding safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children and students under the age of 18.

Expected Levels of Attendance

Attending school regularly and on time has a positive impact on learning, progress and therefore the best life chances for pupils.

Research shows that attendance and punctuality are important factors in school success.

Getting the most out of school



St Mary the Virgin CE Primary School

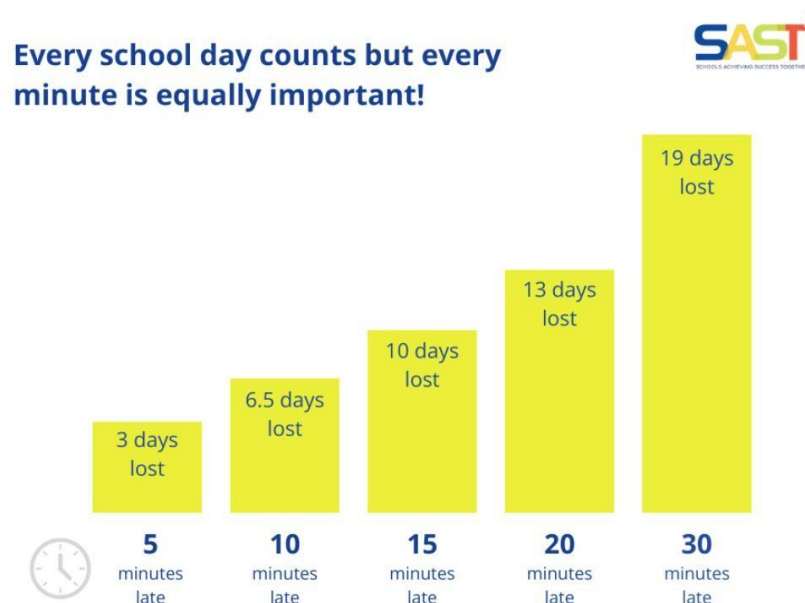
Our school day begins at 8:45am and finishes at 3:15pm.

Children who arrive between 8.45am to 8:50am will be marked present. Children who arrive after 8.50am but before 9am will be marked as late (code L) on the register.

If a child arrives at school after the registration session has ended, they must immediately go to the school office to sign in and provide a reason for the lateness.

Children will usually be accompanied by their parent/s if late after the registration session has ended. In the absence of a satisfactory explanation, the register will be marked as unauthorised late absence (code U). A 'U code' constitutes an unauthorised absence for the whole morning or afternoon session. Legal action may be taken for continued U code absences. Vulnerable pupils should always be accompanied to their first lesson by a member of school staff in order to ensure they are settled in their learning. It is important that pupils are punctual so that they do not miss out on the beginning of each school day. Children must attend on time to be given a present mark for the start of the day. If a pupil arrives late to school every day, their learning begins to suffer.

Below is a graph showing how being late to school every-day over a school year adds up to lost learning time.



We expect the following from parents and carers:

- To ensure their children attend school regularly and punctually.
- To notify the school of your child's absence- on each morning of absence and provide a specific reason for the absence.
- To ensure that their children arrive in school well prepared for the school day.
- To talk to a member of school staff about any problem or reason that may prevent them from attending school.
- Inform the School of up-to-date contact numbers and details.
- Schools are required to hold more than one emergency contact per child (KCSIE 2024).

- Emergency contact numbers should be provided and updated by the parent with whom the pupil normally resides.

Parents and pupils can expect the following from school

- Early contact with parents when a pupil fails to attend school without providing good reason
- Regular, efficient and accurate recording of attendance
- To inform parents if a pupil's attendance falls below expected levels
- To listen and understand the barriers to school attendance and offer appropriate support and agree appropriate plans to improve attendance
- Follow up support if needed

When a child is absent and the school cannot contact parents, those leading schools/responsible for attendance matters or safeguarding, will continue to try and make contact. Where necessary (and by the third day of absence at the latest), they will make a welfare visit to the home address to confirm the safety of the child. A record of attempts and contact will be made on the school's system. It is the requirement of school to inform the Local Authority when a child has 10 days absence due to illness, cumulative or consecutive- or when it is believed they will be unable to attend (The "section 19" duty)

Roles and Responsibilities for Attendance Champion

St Mary the Virgin CE Primary School has an Attendance Champion (Mrs Williamson), a named senior member of staff with responsibility for attendance issues.

Members of school staff, both teaching and non-teaching, have responsibility for attendance issues in school.

If you have a concern about your child's attendance your first point of contact is Mrs Williamson. You can contact Mrs Williamson through the school office on 01747824446 or alternatively through our email at office@stmarygillingham.dorset.sch.uk . Please DO NOT use Class Dojo for attendance communications.

Attendance matters are reviewed by the Head of School and the Deputy Head of School. Attendance issues are reported on a minimum termly basis, to the Academy Committee (Governing body).

School will liaise with the Local Authority Attendance Support Team at a minimum, termly. We also are well supported by our Academy SAST Directors including the Head of Safeguarding who support, especially in complex cases. Their role encompasses monitoring, supporting and challenging the school.

Roles and responsibilities

The School Attendance is 'everyone's business' in this school. The foundation of securing good attendance is that our school is a calm, orderly, safe, and supportive environment where all pupils want to be and are keen and ready to learn. The school and partners will work with pupils and parents to remove barriers to attendance by building strong and trusting relationships and working together to put the right support in place.

Role	Responsibilities
Attendance Officer	Daily attendance tracking, first response calls, maintaining the watch list, and preparing reports for EWO.
Deputy Designated Safeguarding Lead	Implement attendance strategies, conduct home visits, coordinate with external agencies, lead weekly data reviews.
Safeguarding Lead	Address attendance issues linked to safeguarding, provide comprehensive support for vulnerable students.
Class Teachers	Monitor daily attendance, address issues, engage with parents, and support students in maintaining attendance.
Parents/Carers	Ensure regular attendance, communicate issues affecting attendance, participate in interventions.
Pupils	Attend school regularly and communicate any barriers to attendance to a trusted adult.

Procedures

Following policy and procedures consistently:

Our school procedures follow the expectations set out by the Department for Education in the guidance School Attendance (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations (2024). Our procedures are based around the principles and stages of:

Preventing poor attendance:

- Early intervention and Early Help to address early patterns of poor attendance and agree ways to improve
- Targeted interventions (including Early Help and Formal interventions) for those children who are persistently absent or severely absent
- Understanding barriers to individuals' attendance and agree individual plans for children with specific needs.
- Formal Statutory Interventions where support has not been effective or engaged with. Where attendance has deteriorated rapidly, there are concerning patterns of absence, unauthorised absences, or parents have not responded to concerns raised, a referral may be made straight to the Dorset County Council Inclusion Officer for the attendance process for addressing attendance concerns and where appropriate legal action including the issue of penalty notices will be followed.
- Many children will experience normal but difficult emotions that make them nervous about attending school, such as worries about friendships, schoolwork, examinations or variable moods. It is important to note that these pupils are still expected to attend school regularly- in many instances, attendance at school may serve to help with the underlying issues such as being away from school might exacerbate it, and a prolonged period of absence may heighten anxious feelings about attending in future.

- School staff play a critical role in communicating this expectation to parents. We will work alongside families to ensure that such circumstances do not act as a barrier to regular attendance by mitigating anxious feelings in school as much as possible.
- Some pupils face more complex barriers to attendance. This can include pupils who have long term physical or mental health conditions or who have special educational needs and disabilities (SEND). Their right to an education is the same as any other pupil and therefore the attendance ambition for these pupils should be the same as it is for any other pupils, but additional support may need to be provided.

In developing this support, the usual processes relevant to any attendance case apply:

- Understanding the individual needs of the pupil and family
- Working in partnership with the pupil and family to put in-school support in place and working with other the local authority and other agencies where external support is needed (and available)
- Regularly reviewing and updating the support approach to make sure it continues to meet individual needs.

Penalties and Protocol relating to specific local authorities can be found here:
<https://www.dorsetcouncil.gov.uk/w/schoolattendance> Dorset Council Somerset-
<https://www.somerset.gov.uk/children-families-and-education/school-life/>

Types of absence

Every half-day absence from school is classified by the school as either authorised or unauthorised. This is why information about the cause of any absence is always required from parents/carers. As a school, we will always work with parents (and other agencies, as appropriate) to understand the reasons underlying absence.

Authorised absences

Authorised absences are mornings or afternoons away from school for a good reason like illness, medical/dental appointments which unavoidably fall in school time, emergencies or other unavoidable causes or exceptional circumstances.

Unauthorised absences

Unauthorised absences are those which the school does not consider reasonable or justifiable. If school has followed its attendance procedures and a pupil continues to have unauthorised absences, the school may see seek advice from the local authority School Attendance Support Team or request legal interventions from the School Attendance Legal Team.

Examples of unauthorised absences are:

- Parents/carers keeping their child off school unnecessarily.
- Absences which are not explained satisfactorily.
- Pupils who arrive at school after the register has closed and without a legitimate reason
- Days off for shopping, birthdays or looking after other children.

- Day trips and other leave in term time which have not been agreed by the head teacher.
- Days that exceed an amount of leave agreed by the head teacher.

St Mary the Virgin CE Primary School Procedures	
Absence	Procedure
Illness	Contact the school office- office@stmarygillingham.dorset.sch.uk Leave a message 01747 824446 Please DO NOT use Class Dojo for attendance communications. Not all illness requires an absence from school. For minor childhood ailments such as coughs, colds, earaches we would not expect children to be absent. However, when a parent makes the assessment that their child is unfit for school, they should follow the above absence process. If a child is absent from school parents should contact the school on the first day of absence to inform the school of the reason for absence. Parents are expected to maintain contact with the school throughout the absence. It is a school's decision whether to accept a reason for a child's absence and whether to authorise that absence. In the majority of cases, a parent's explanation of their child's illness can be accepted without
	question or concern. In circumstances where there are concerns about a child's attendance or reason for absence, further evidence of a child's illness may be requested.
Leave of absence request	Parents are required to complete a Term Time Leave of Absence Request Form in advance of planned absence taking place. We ask that this is at least four weeks before the required absence, where possible, to enable the school to consider and respond to the request. Parents must detail and evidence the exceptional circumstance of the request. In accordance with The Education (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2006 and subsequent Amendments, SAST Schools are unable to authorise any period of absence unless it is for exceptional circumstances. If leave is not authorised and the parent proceeds to take their child out of school, the absence will be marked as unauthorised. Although such absence maybe unauthorised, it is better that the school knows where the child is, and that they are safe rather than missing. Parents may be issued with a penalty notice or be subject to prosecution by the local authority for unauthorised leaves of absence.
Medical Appointments	Parents should avoid making routine medical appointments and dental appointments during the school day. In the majority of cases, appointments can be made outside of the school day/during the school holidays. Where appointments have to be taken during the school day, only the time for the appointment and travel to and from will be classed as an authorised absence. Pupils are expected to return to school for the remainder of the day/attend school prior to the appointment. Parents are required to provide a copy of an appointment letter or card prior to the day of the appointment.
Other Absence reasons	Other reasons for absence must be discussed with the school on each occasion. Notes will not necessarily be accepted as providing valid reasons. The school will follow DFE guidance and not authorise absences for shopping, birthdays or childminding. If we do not receive notification of your child's absence, it will be assumed that your child is on their way to school and if they do not arrive, the absence will be followed up accordingly. We will contact you by telephone if your child fails to arrive at school after the register has closed and no parental contact has been made. If, at the time the attendance register is taken, an absence is recorded in that register using the code N. We will ensure that reasonable steps

	are taken to establish the circumstances of your child's absence and that the register is amended within five schooldays.
Religious Observance	We recognise that children of certain faiths may need to participate in days of religious observance and that this may be a reason given for a leave of absence request. Where a day of religious observance falls during school time and has been exclusively set apart for religious observance by the religious body to which the child belongs-the absence from school will be authorised. Parents are requested to give advance notice if they intend their child to be absent. Evidence from the religious body may be required.

Pupils with a social worker

We will inform a pupil's social worker if there are unexplained absences from school. Legislation, statutory guidance, linked SAST policies. Our school attendance policies comply with the legal frameworks, statutory requirements and relevant guidance laid out in the following:

<https://www.legislation.gov.uk/uksi/2024/208/contents/made>
https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/65e8ae343649a2001aed63aa/Summary_table_of_responsibilities_for_school_attendance_applies_from_19_August_2024_.pdf
<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/working-together-to-improve-school-attendance/toolkit-for-schoolscommunicating-with-families-to-support-attendance>
<https://www.legislation.gov.uk/uksi/2024/208/contents/made>
<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/working-together-to-safeguard-children--2>
https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/550416/Children_Missing_Education_-_statutory_guidance.pdf

Our school attendance policy reflects and references the following statutory guidance and SAST policies:

SAST Inclusion, Suspension and Exclusion Policy
SAST Equality and Diversity Policy
SAST Supporting Children with Medical Needs Policy
SAST Children with Health Needs Who Cannot Attend School Policy
SAST SEND Policy
SAST Behaviour Principles
School safeguarding policies