

Attendance Information

Attendance Procedures and Penalty Notices: A Guide for Parents and Carers

Our Commitment

At St Marys Catholic Voluntary Academy, we believe that excellent attendance is essential for children to achieve their full potential. We are committed to working in partnership with parents and carers to promote good attendance and provide support where difficulties arise.

This appendix should be read alongside the school's Attendance Policy and summarises the key attendance procedures, parental responsibilities and the sanctions that may be applied where attendance concerns are not resolved.

Your Responsibilities as a Parent or Carer

Parents and carers have a legal responsibility to ensure that their child attends school regularly and punctually.

You should:

- Ensure your child attends school every day unless they are too unwell to attend.
- Notify the school by **9.00am** on the first day of any absence, giving the reason for the absence.
- Keep the school informed if your child remains absent.
- Provide evidence whenever possible for any absence
- Avoid booking holidays or other family events during term time.

Reporting an Absence

- If we do not receive a reason for absence, or the reason is not accepted, or your child has below 90% attendance, the absence will be recorded as unauthorised, unless evidence is provided to verify the absence.
- Where we are unable to contact parents, we will follow our safeguarding procedures to ensure your child is safe, this may include a home visit by 'Attendance Matters' Education Welfare Officer.
- A home visit may be made on the **first day of absence** when there has been no contact from home.
- If your child is absent from school for **three consecutive school days or more**, our Education Welfare Officer may carry out a home visit, regardless of the reason for the absence. This is part of our safeguarding responsibilities to ensure your child is safe and well, and to offer support to help them return to school when they are able.

Punctuality

Children are expected to arrive at school on time every day.

Persistent lateness affects learning and is monitored in the same way as attendance. Where a pupil arrives after the register has closed without an acceptable reason, this will be recorded as an **unauthorised late mark (Code U)** and counts towards unauthorised absence.

Medical Appointments

Whenever possible, appointments should be arranged outside school hours. Where this is not possible, pupils should attend school before and after the appointment wherever practical. The school request evidence of appointments before authorising the absence.

Leave of Absence During Term Time

- The law does not allow holidays during term time except in exceptional circumstances.
- Requests must be made in advance using the school's Leave of Absence Request Form.
- The Headteacher will consider each request individually. Family holidays, cheaper travel, birthdays, family celebrations or parental work commitments will not normally be considered exceptional circumstances.
- Unauthorised leave may result in a Penalty Notice being issued.
- If a leave of absence form has been completed and your child is absent directly before or after a holiday, the absences will be recorded as an unauthorised holiday code, unless evidence is provided.

How We Support Good Attendance

Where attendance begins to cause concern, we will work with families to understand any barriers and provide support.

- Parent and carers will be invited into school to attend a supportive meeting to discuss any barriers to your child attending school regularly and put a plan in place to support an improvement in your child's attendance, this may include a referral to appropriate support services, 4 weeks of attendance targets will be set at this meeting.
- If your child is absent during this monitoring period, a home visit may be conducted to offer support and check on their wellbeing.
- If there is no improvement in attendance, parents and carers will be invited to attend a formal meeting which will be chaired by a school governor or a member of SLT with the Education Welfare Officer present, a plan of support will be agreed by all at the meeting. Attendance targets will be agreed.
- If there is no improvement after this meeting, then the parents and carers will be sent a Notice to Improve, and a Penalty Notice will be issued by the Local Authority if there are further unauthorised absences.

Our aim is always to resolve attendance concerns through support before formal enforcement is considered wherever appropriate.

Attendance Monitoring and Enforcement

In line with Department for Education guidance and the North East Lincolnshire Council Code of Conduct they can consider legal action when:

A child has missed 10 sessions (5 days) or more of school for unauthorised reasons in a 10 week period. Please note that even a lesser period of unauthorised absence may amount to a penalty notice on a case-by-case basis. The 10-school-week period may span school holidays and half terms.

Penalty notice fines will be issued to each parent (including stepparents), for each child who is absent from school without permission or good reason.

National Penalty Notice Framework

Where the legal threshold is met, the Local Authority may issue a Penalty Notice.

First Penalty Notice

- £80 per parent, per child if paid within 21 days.
- £160 per parent, per child if paid within 28 days.

Second Penalty Notice

(Within a rolling three-year period)

- £160 per parent, per child.
- Payable within 28 days.

Third Offence

A third offence within three years cannot be dealt with by another Penalty Notice. The Local Authority may instead begin legal proceedings through the Magistrates' Court. If convicted, parents may receive a fine of up to £1,000.

Education and Supervision orders are also considered

Penalty Notices Are Issued Per Parent, Per Child

Under Section 576 of the Education Act 1996, a "parent" includes:

- All biological parents.
- Anyone with parental responsibility.
- Anyone who has care of the child.

This means each parent may receive a separate Penalty Notice for each child.

For example, where two parents take two children on an unauthorised holiday, each parent may receive two Penalty Notices.

Working in Partnership

Our school recognises that families sometimes experience difficulties which may affect attendance. We encourage parents and carers to speak to us as early as possible if they need support.

By working together, we can ensure that every child has the best possible opportunity to succeed, enjoy school and achieve their full potential.